



## ***CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES IN TEACHING READING COMPREHENSION***

**John Panelo Laroya<sup>1</sup>, Neil Tristan Negrillo Baga<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup>Department of Education, Philippines (Student, Saint Louis College, Philippines)

<sup>2</sup>Faculty, Saint Louis College, Philippines

Email Correspondence: [john.laroya@deped.gov.ph](mailto:john.laroya@deped.gov.ph)

### ***Abstract***

*This study explored the challenges encountered along with the strategies employed by the teachers in teaching reading comprehension. The results showed the two main challenges: linguistic challenges and systemic challenges. The strategies employed by the participants in addressing these issues are contextualized learning activities and personalized learning tasks. Nonetheless, this study accentuates the critical need for a revamp of teaching reading strategies, stressing the significance of adaptable and appropriate methods that cater to individual needs. The results indicate that enhancing reading comprehension teaching necessitates a holistic strategy that combines classroom interventions and systemic changes in the learning environment.*

**Keywords:** *Challenges, Strategies, Teaching Reading Comprehension*

### **INTRODUCTION**

From the ancient era to the contemporary world, literacy remains an essential cornerstone of civilization. Automation, digitization, and artificial intelligence have already dominated the information landscape, yet literacy retains its paramount importance. It is not merely a skill; rather, it is a fundamental aspect of life that empowers individuals to navigate the complexities of existence. Literacy serves as a vital key to both thriving and surviving amidst the myriad challenges of time. It is an indispensable tool for facilitating the exchange of ideas, fostering critical thinking, and promoting informed decision-making.

Reading is the bedrock of education. It is a gateway and cornerstone in learning across all subject areas. It is the mother of all skills. With this skill, students may find it easier to cope with the learning demands at school particularly in understanding the content of books (Aviani, 2021). Several benefits automatically follow by solely reading like increased

OPEN  ACCESS



**Creation is distributed under the Creative Commons License Attribution  
Share Alike 4.0 International Published in  
<https://ejournal.umpri.ac.id/index.php/smart/index>  
SMART Journal: Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied  
Linguistics**

### *Challenges and strategies...*

vocabulary and trained reasoning skills (Ambarita et al., 2021). It also improves cognitive skills, fosters critical thinking and problem-solving abilities ( Nacharova, & Mikerova, 2022).

Moreover, comprehension is the heart of reading. Reading without comprehension is not reading or learning at all. Reading and comprehension are two things that cannot be separated. Reading is not just about recognizing the letters of a text. It goes beyond what is explicitly printed or written. Reading comprehension happens when the letters in a text turn into ideas and thoughts (Carmen, 2021). The primary objective in the act of reading is always understanding.

Generally, reading comprehension is one of the most complex skills to be mastered and taught. Across the different regions and countries, many students need help with reading comprehension. In 2022, UNICEF reported that only two-thirds of 10-year-olds globally are estimated to be able to read and understand a simple written story. This jives with the World Literacy Foundation (2024) report, which claimed that 770 million people around the world are unable to read a single word and a total of two billion people struggle in reading a sentence. This data further implies that there is a higher percentage of people who have issues in reading comprehension. In a local setting, according to World Bank data on learning poverty for 2022, at least 90% of ten-year-old Filipino children struggle to read a simple text. Even before the COVID-19 pandemic impeded children's academic progress, learning poverty in the Philippines was estimated to be 70% prior to the outbreak.

The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a globally recognized benchmark developed by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). PISA is a continuous scheme that tracks the trends or changes in the knowledge and abilities among the learners around the world. In each round of PISA, a different learning domain is focused. The major domain in 2015 was Science, as it was in 2006. Reading was the major domain in 2018, as it was in 2009. Mathematics was also a focus on 2012 and 2022. Basically, PISA evaluates the proficiency of 15-year-old learners in three major areas: Reading, Mathematics, and Science. On top of that, PISA assesses not only the students' ability to demonstrate knowledge but also their capability to apply it. It further focuses on the mastery of concepts, comprehension of ideas and functionality in various situations. The test questions in this test do not measure memorization of facts but rather,

the application of knowledge and problem-solving skills. Hence, PISA assesses the degree to which learners have developed the knowledge and skills essential for contributing to societal growth and advancement. Furthermore, PISA results have become a crucial measure of the existing standards of a nation's education system. Countries worldwide base their educational reforms or programs on PISA results as they provide insights into what makes a good or bad education system. In 2018, the Philippines participated in PISA for the first time. Among the 79 participating countries, the Philippines scored lowest in reading and second lowest in Mathematics and Science. In 2022, on its second participation in PISA, the Philippines also ended up in the 77th spot, still among the countries with the lowest proficiency in reading, Mathematics, and Science.

Meanwhile, Adao et al. (2023) mentioned that one of the challenges in teaching reading is the need for more skills among teachers. A teacher with insufficient methods also needs more solutions to the students' reading problems. In the study of Ranico (2023), crafting lesson plans catering to diverse learners is a challenge for teachers in teaching reading comprehension among seventh-grade students.

Given the claims, issues, and challenges above, it is undeniable that the role of a teacher is crucial. A teacher's knowledge in teaching reading along with strategies and methods in teaching reading comprehension, potentially impact the learners' reading abilities. Teachers are the forerunners in elevating the reading skills of the learners. They are primarily responsible for ensuring quality education among the learners.

The various research conducted both on local and global sets either generally focused on teaching reading, teaching reading comprehension, or challenges in teaching reading only. There are limited studies investigating the challenges and strategies in teaching reading comprehension. Thus, this study aims to fill the gap by determining challenges and strategies in teaching reading comprehension, particularly among secondary school teachers. This study is not only about identifying the challenges and strategies in teaching reading comprehension. It is about improving the delivery process and the learning outcomes.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study used a qualitative method. Specifically, it employed a transcendental phenomenological design to explore the organization of consciousness and essence of lived

## *Challenges and strategies...*

experiences among the participants. The eight participants were selected through purposive sampling. They were chosen from the pool of Teacher I- Master Teacher II position holders, Bachelor in Secondary Education Major in English or Filipino graduates and Reading Program implementers. Furthermore, the instrument used is a semi-structured interview development guide which underwent validation prior to data collection. Face-to-face interviews were then conducted after obtaining necessary approvals, clearance and consent. Consequently, the interview responses were analyzed through Modified Van Kaam Method by Moustakas. It involved eight steps such as horizontalization, reduction and elimination, creation of textural descriptions, creation of structural descriptions, creation of composite textural and structural descriptions and theme identification to uncover insights into the challenges and strategies teachers face in teaching reading comprehension.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### ***Teaching Reading Comprehension Challenges***

Based on the sharing of the eight participants, there are two types of challenges in the instruction of reading comprehension. These are linguistic and systemic. Linguistic challenges generally encompass the internal struggles or issues that a learner encounter in comprehending, processing and retaining information. Meanwhile, systemic challenges are the issues that the teacher, curriculum, text and environment pose in teaching reading comprehension. It points more to the external factors which add complexity to teaching reading comprehension.

### ***Main Theme 1: Linguistic Challenges***

Language is a structured yet dynamic system of communication which involves various symbols, sounds, characters and meanings. Language is not only a collection of words and codes but a set of rules and systems. Given its complexity, language learners encounter hurdles in language learning. Learners with linguistic challenges, or in a sense, language problems encounter difficulties in the learning of macro skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing. In the context of reading, linguistically challenged learners struggle in the basic components of reading such as phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension. The weak foundational skills, the basic reading skills or low language proficiency level among the learners further complicate the

instruction of reading comprehension. On lieu of this, language learning is further exacerbated by an anxiety and demotivation in reading. The negative attitude in reading among the learners make the inculcation of comprehension harder. Thus, linguistic challenges encompass not only the mental abilities but also the emotional conditions of learners in reading or language learning.

### ***Individual Reading Issues***

This subtheme denotes that every learner showcases a distinctive reading performance in each reading class. Every learner possesses a remarkable language ability that is far different from others. Two of the individual reading issues among the learners that the participants observed are reading strategy insufficiency and reading disengagement. On the one hand, reading strategy insufficiency refers to the lack of effective reading techniques particularly when dealing with complex texts. On the other hand, reading disengagement is the lack of understanding on the purpose, process and strategies involved in reading. Learners who are disengaged in reading mostly don't invest much time, attention and effort in the reading process.

In consonance with abovementioned, Participant 1 mentioned that texts from foreign countries often create comprehension difficulties for learners who lack familiarity with the cultural contexts embedded within them. She stated, "The text is from other countries. They are not familiar with what is said in the text." This unfamiliarity leaves students feeling lost regarding the main ideas the author intends to convey. The challenge faced by Participant 1 signifies that the learners are unaware of their cognitive processes or critical thinking abilities. The learners of Participant 1 do not employ techniques in understanding the context or content of a text such as rereading, looking for context clues or activating prior knowledge.

Meanwhile, Participant 1 observed that her learners exhibit a negative attitude when confronted with lengthy texts. She stated, "If the text is long, they don't want to read it. They are lazy." This resistance or avoidance reduces the learners' focus. It makes them less likely to think critically and employ reading strategies. Without reading strategies, readers may struggle in retaining and processing information. This further makes lengthy texts more complex and less engaging.

Moreover, the learners of Participant 4 exhibit reading disengagement. As shared by Participant 4, "When I let them read stories, they cannot understand. So, if I will be asking

### *Challenges and strategies...*

them questions about the stories they have read, no answer at all.” This lack of comprehension reflects a broader issue: many students simply do not enjoy reading. Participant 4 noted that her students prefer other activities over reading, which creates a burden when initiating reading tasks. She remarked, “Many of the students don't like to read. They are fonder of role-playing. Reading is like a burden from their heart. It's trapping them to learn, comprehend the story.” This reluctance traps students in a cycle of disengagement, hindering their ability to comprehend the material. Along with this, Participant 6 mentioned, “Upon observation, our learners now are more on skills, they want to perform, they are not stagnant, there are more on interactive activities.” This suggests that engagement in reading tasks is closely tied to learners' interests and the types of activities presented.

### *Developmental Language Gaps*

One of the significant challenges encountered in the realm of teaching reading comprehension is addressing the issue of learners who exhibit signs of comprehension unreadiness. Generally, comprehension unreadiness is the inability of a learner to understand a text due to weak basic skills in reading such as phonemic awareness, fluency and vocabulary.

It is highly observed if the learners fall behind their expected language and speech milestones. Participant 2 emphasized this concern, stating, “First, the struggle is for learners that are still under the word level. Since they are not good at reading, how much more in comprehension? This sentiment is also echoed by Participant 3, who noted, “They are having difficulty in word and paragraph reading. So simple paragraph, they cannot even comprehend.” In line with this, Participant 2 shared “For other students, they don't even know how to read, like the CVC (Consonant, Vowel, Consonant), the basic one.”

Meanwhile, Participant 8 observed that his learners tend to rely on literal meanings, stating, “Because they're just stuck in the denotative, in the basic meaning, definition. When they're in the contextualized, or in the contemplative, they can't understand anything.” This reliance on lower order thinking skills (Low Order Thinking Skills) restricts their ability to draw conclusions and link concepts, hindering deeper understanding of texts. He noted, “They're always very literal.” Likewise, Participant 8 mentioned “In comprehension, it takes time for their brain to load.”

### ***Main Theme 2: Systemic Challenges***

The comprehension of a text's meaning is not only dependent on a learner's language ability but also to the external factors or environmental conditions. Every aspect that surrounds a learner in language learning could either facilitate or hinder progress. With an abundance of reading materials and teaching strategies with a well-structured curriculum as a learning map, teaching reading comprehension becomes manageable. Conversely, with a scarcity of learning resources, inadequacies of teaching methods and complexity of curriculum, teaching reading comprehension becomes significantly harder. Thus, the systemic challenges in teaching reading comprehension pertain to the interconnected issues in the education ecosystem. The challenge roots from the environment's lack of atmosphere and support in reading, teachers' insufficient training along with curricular. Together, these hurdle a learner in acquiring and developing reading comprehension skills.

#### ***Environmental Constraints***

The instruction of reading comprehension becomes more challenging because of limited educational materials and technological resources. Hence, literacy environment inadequacies and language learning deficits potentially impede the learners towards the inculcation of reading comprehension. Literacy environment inadequacies further encompass the scarcity of learning or reading tools and reading culture while language learning deficits entails the insufficiency of language trainings, programs or interventions for learners.

Participant 3 emphasized this abovementioned issue, stating, "They don't have materials at home, that's why we provide it." This lack of resources extends to technology, with Participant 3 noting, "Some of them don't have gadgets that can help them read, if not the case, some have gadgets, but they use them for games" The absence of a reading culture among students is a broader reflection of teaching reading comprehension challenges. The lack of a reading culture diminishes cognitive engagement and hinders the development of critical thinking skills.

Furthermore, the K to 12-curriculum in the Philippines introduces English as a learning area in the third quarter of third grade, with the mother tongue serving as the medium of instruction for the first three years. This delay in exposure leads to challenges for secondary school students when reading English texts, reflecting Participant 5's observations. Participant 5 noted that learners' difficulties may stem from inadequate

### *Challenges and strategies...*

exposure to the English language. She explained, “Maybe the learners are not really exposed to English. They were not exposed to the English language until Grade 3. They were only able to engage with English reading in Grade 3.”

On the other hand, the introduction of the MATATAG Curriculum has complicated teaching reading comprehension. Participant 3 remarked, “The MATATAG Curriculum is far advanced. For them, the lesson is boring because of poems and poetry.”

#### ***Pedagogical Limitations***

Teaching reading comprehension presents several challenges that educators must navigate to foster effective learning. A significant concern, as highlighted by Participant 6, is the limitation of teaching reading strategies or instructional deficiencies. She stated, ““The challenge is in vocabulary enrichment. Particularly, how will I make my learners appreciate everything. When you say words, they don't appreciate it.” The experience of Participant 6 emphasizes the necessity of employing diverse and innovative teaching strategies to bridge the learning gap among students. Inflexible methods that overlook various learning styles hinder student involvement and comprehension.

Meanwhile, Participant 7 expressed concerns about methodological misalignment or outdated teaching strategies, remarking, “The strategy that we learned for teaching reading and other skills is somehow obsolete for their generation.” He highlighted the need for more comprehensive training for language teachers particularly within the Department of Education (DepEd) to keep pace with evolving educational demands.

#### ***Teaching Reading Comprehension Strategies***

There are two types of strategies employed by the participants in teaching reading comprehension. The first type is Contextualized Learning Activities. This includes cultural connection, life-based sharing, and vocabulary enrichment. The second type is Personalized Learning Tasks. This encompasses individual assessment, one-on-one and buddy reading, and technology integration.

#### ***Main Theme 1: Contextualized Learning Activities***

Generally, contextualized learning activities are enrichment tasks that are highly connected to the learners' real-life experiences and diverse cultural backgrounds. In this strategy, teachers provide learning materials with authentic and meaningful contexts—making learners more highly engaged with their reading. Likewise, this strategy involves

life-based integration and application. Teachers who utilize this strategy encourage their learners to apply their learning in their reading to their daily communication or social relationships.

Furthermore, one of the contextualized learning activities employed by the participants in teaching reading comprehension is cultural connection. As for Participant 1, she begins her reading class with a relatable narrative that highlights the culture of the text's country of origin. This contextualization aids students in connecting with the material: "When I start with a lesson, I start with a story about the country where the text came from so that they can familiarize themselves with the culture," she explained.

As for Participant 3, she incorporates real-life examples and humor into her lessons, stating, "I often give some examples in real-life situations like in poetry. Sometimes, when it's boring, I put in the pick-up lines. When they're laughing, that's when it comes out." Additionally, strategies such as vocabulary enrichment or "Word of the Day" (WOD) fosters a sense of relevance by connecting vocabulary to students' lives, encouraging its ongoing use in daily conversations. Participant 6 echoed this sentiment, noting that this practice extends beyond their language subjects. As she said, "For the vocabulary activity, I encourage them to use these words in their daily lives like in their communication with their friends or family members and not only in our English class."

### ***Main Theme 2: Personalized Learning Tasks***

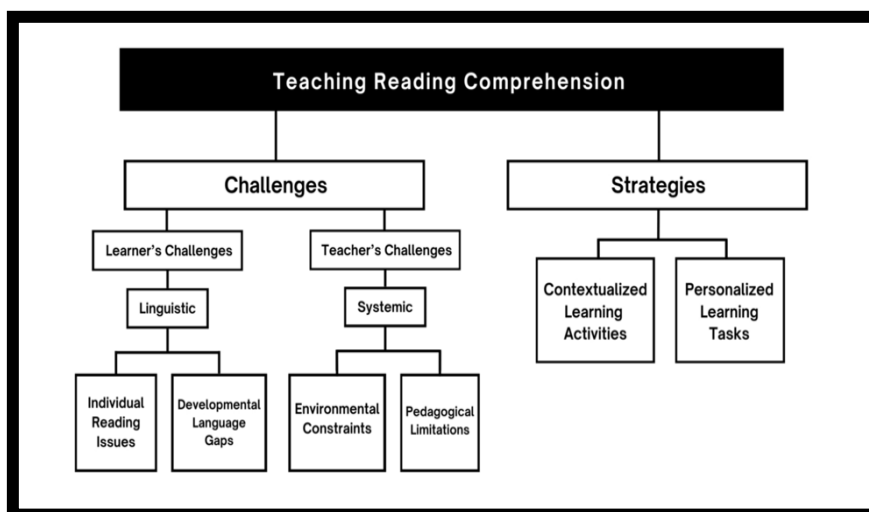
Given its name, the center of this strategy is the learner himself or herself. Personalized learning tasks are instructional activities that are particularly tailored to the learner's reading interests, pace and levels. This strategy involves not only individualized support but also collaborative or paired learning. Besides, this strategy incorporates innovative methods which make reading more appealing to the readers. It further encourages every educator to be creative, resourceful and strategic in the inculcation of reading comprehension.

For Participant 7, he always begins his reading class by assessing the reading performance of his learners. Through this way, he is being oriented on the suitable and differentiated strategy that he will employ to his students. As he mentioned, "First is we need to assess their level. That's the most important. First is you need to assess their level. That's where you start."

## *Challenges and strategies...*

Meanwhile, Participant 5 adopts a hands-on approach, implementing one-on-one as a reading strategy particularly for non-readers and those needing additional support. As she relayed “First, we do it one by one. We have this one-by-one reading strategies, especially for non-readers. Even for enhancement readers, learners who are undergoing the enhancement reading activities.” Likewise, Participant 2 employs personalized learning task in a collaborative approach. Accordingly, she assigns her independent level readers to frustration level readers, allowing the latter to develop their reading skills in a supportive and friendly environment. As she said “So, during their break time or lunch break, I assign the best readers, the good readers in class to have their reading buddy. I also give simple reading materials.”

Finally, leveraging technology also enhances reading engagement significantly. Participant 8 describes using interactive storybooks that animate when hovered over, captivating students' interest and contributing to improved reading proficiency. As he said “Before, what I used to do, I used to have a storybook. Then, if you hover it, it's animated. If you hover the cursor, the definition will appear. Then, I'll ask them to read it again.



**Figure 1.** Teaching Reading Comprehension Framework

Figure 1 shows the answers to the research question, “What are the challenges encountered, and strategies employed by the public secondary school teachers in teaching reading comprehension?”

The findings of the study reveal the complexity and criticality of teaching reading comprehension. The findings indicate that teaching reading comprehension is highly

influenced and impeded by external and internal factors which require diverse instructional approaches as solutions. The key findings further suggest that effective reading comprehension instruction requires a multifaceted technique which considers the learner's condition, the teacher's strategies, the environmental set up along with the curricular and textual structures.

Furthermore, the final themes emerged, whereas linguistic and systemic are identified as challenges with contextualized learning activities and personalized learning tasks noted as strategies, are aligned to previous research. The key findings of this study are supported and corroborated by various studies which primarily delve into education or language instruction.

According to Mahoro et al., (2024), in the study entitled "Exploring Reading Comprehension Challenges in Setswana Home Language Classroom: Learners and Teachers' Perspectives, a linguistic challenge identified is the poor foundational reading skills among the learners while the systemic challenge is the insufficient literacy instruction or inadequate primary school preparation. Meanwhile, in the study of Munir et al., (2024), cultural issues and language barriers are noted as linguistic challenges while limited resources and teacher's training are concluded as systemic challenges.

### ***Teaching Reading Comprehension Challenges***

#### ***Main Theme 1: Linguistic Challenges***

**Individual Reading Issues.** One of the linguistic challenges in the instruction of reading comprehension is individual reading issues. This issue involves the various concerns on the learner's side including the reading strategy insufficiency. In a sense, reading strategy insufficiency is the inability of a learner to apply comprehension techniques such as looking for context clues, rereading and prior knowledge activation. This phenomenon is aligned with the Schema Theory of Frederic Barlett. As to the Schema Theory, the reading process requires an active interaction between the text and the reader's existing knowledge. When a reader's schema is activated, comprehension improves, enabling a reader to connect ideas, anticipate information, and engage meaningfully with the content (Belouiza et al., 2024). Thus, a learner potentially encounters difficulties in reading because of inactivated schema. A learner's background knowledge is foundation or scaffold for new learning or comprehension. It is highly important for teachers to activate a learner's prior knowledge before reading a text. A pre-reading activity or assessment could

### *Challenges and strategies...*

further help the learners make connections between their existing knowledge and new knowledge. Caabay et., al (2024) supports that those structured interventions focused on background knowledge activation greatly enhances reading comprehension skills.

Moreover, reading disengagement is another individual reading issue. Reading disengagement encompasses the demotivation, reluctance or avoidance of the learners in reading. As evidenced by various studies, this phenomenon generally results in negative learning results. Sur & Unal (2024) posited that higher level of engagement is related to improved comprehension skills. This is in congruence to Liao (2024) which mentioned that engagement results to better comprehension while disengagement leads to poor learning outcomes.

In line with the abovementioned, motivation plays a crucial role in enhancing reading comprehension. Several studies claim that highly motivated readers are more likely to develop their comprehension skills. A love or pleasure in reading indeed shapes the understanding of a certain text. A reader who views reading as a beneficial and interesting activity often achieves efficiency in learning. Thus, reading engagement results in reading achievement. This could be supported by Li et al., (2024) which reported that personal enjoyment in reading engages a reader in a text which leads to better comprehension outcomes. This also agrees with Yusniar & Purnamalia (2024) which asserted that there is a positive correlation between reading motivation and comprehension skills, with motivated learners achieving higher scores on comprehension examinations.

In consideration of the points previously stated, educators should strive to inculcate the motivation in reading among the learners. Educators should carry out a motivating learning atmosphere that would invite or encourage the learners to immersing themselves on books. Either way, parental encouragement and involvement in the reading activities of their children could significantly boost the reading motivation, creating a positive feedback loop in their learning ( Wahyuni & Indartuti, 2023).

### ***Developmental Language Gaps***

Comprehension unreadiness is one of the signs that a learner exhibits developmental language gaps. Consequently, a learner who is comprehension unready, who hardly recognizes words, sentences and vocabulary, faces obstacles not only in reading or language subjects but also in other disciplines. As stated by James et. al., (2024), students with poor

reading skills struggle in reaching academic standards particularly in areas such as Math and Science which require comprehension on problem solving. In South Africa, weak foundational skills in Isixhosa Home Language are linked to poor exam results, suggesting that reading skills are vital for academic achievement (Cutalele-Maqhude, 2023). Likewise, weak reading skills diminish self-confidence and motivation among the learners which leads to academic disengagement (Salsabilla et al., 2023)

In view of the mentioned studies, addressing the developmental language gaps requires tailored and early interventions or programs. One effective method is differentiation or individualized instruction. As reported by Mogan & Yasin (2022), implementing individualized learning plans enables focused skill enhancement, particularly for students with learning disabilities. Besides, strategy-based interventions based on Bloom's Taxonomy, have demonstrated effectiveness in improving reading comprehension abilities (Olifant, 2024). Otherwise, use of graphic aids and organizers and incorporation of students' cultural background can improve engagement and understanding (Munir et al., 2024).

## ***Main Theme 2: Systemic Challenges***

### ***Environmental Constraints***

The poorly structured curriculum, limited reading resources or absence of reading culture are obstacles that impede effective reading comprehension instruction. Many studies highlight the relationship between learning environment set up and comprehension skills. According to Rugyema (2023), a positive reading culture is associated with improved comprehension skills. In Uganda, teachers reported that learners with consistent reading habit excelled more in reading comprehension tasks. Likewise, Islam & Das (2023) asserted that unavailability of reading resources greatly hinders reading comprehension abilities among secondary school learners. This lack of resources, along with curricular focus, leads to struggle among the learners in understanding a text, which in turn impacts their academic success and cognitive growth.

On the other side, the K to 12-curriculum in the Philippines introduces English as a learning area in the third quarter of third grade, with the mother tongue serving as the medium of instruction for the first three years. This delay in exposure has long term negative effects that extend beyond primary education. As for some secondary school learners who read English texts, unfamiliarity with simple vocabulary along with fluency

### *Challenges and strategies...*

problems are still evident. Meanwhile, the introduction of the new MATATAG Curriculum has presented issues among the teachers and the learners. Regarding its curricular map, some teachers find it complex to be navigated. Some lessons were also reported as abstract, tedious and traditional which possibly do not fit the current generation.

Hence, critical planning and evaluation before implementation is essential in every curriculum. In the context of enhancing reading comprehension skills, a well-defined curriculum allocates adequate time for language training, thereby exposing the language at an early age. Daily exposure to English enhances students' understanding of explicit information and basic texts (Bongcawil et al., 2024). This claim aligns with Lev Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory, which posits that a language-rich environment results in cognitive development. Research by Porsch et al., (2023) also indicated that early exposure to English results to better reading skills. As for Tomora (2024), early bilingualism is linked to improved cognitive flexibility and problem-solving skills.

Furthermore, an effective curriculum should prioritize essential skills and knowledge while avoiding unnecessary complexity that may confuse both teachers and students. It must also be dynamic, responsive, and innovative, evolving with societal needs, technological advancements, and cultural contexts (Sania et al., 2021).

#### ***Pedagogical Limitations.***

Pedagogical limitations such as instructional deficiencies and methodological misalignment clearly pose challenge in the instruction of reading comprehension. A teacher who has few strategies in her pocket often faces struggles in elevating the reading level of the learners. Yet, among all strategies employed by educators, Constructivist Learning, also known as Learner-Centered Teaching, as introduced by Jean Piaget in 1950, exhibits remarkable potential in enhancing the reading skills of learners. This educational approach places a strong emphasis on active participation from the learners themselves, encouraging them to take ownership and responsibility for their own learning process. Learner-Centered Teaching promotes collaborative learning environments, where peer discussions and group activities play a pivotal role. Such interaction fosters a supportive learning community, effectively boosting students' confidence while simultaneously reducing anxiety levels (Venkadeswaran & Ramanathan, 2024).

Nonetheless, despite of an effective strategy mentioned, educators should never cease in developing, innovating and learning more strategies through focused group discussions and trainings. As reported by Strauss (2024), teacher training is paramount in enhancing reading outcomes as it equips educators with the most efficient reading assessment tools and strategies. This aligns with Chikuni et al., (2024) which posited that targeted training among the teachers improves skills which lead to better instructional delivery, ultimately fostering effective reading instruction.

### ***Teaching Reading Comprehension Strategies***

#### ***Main Theme 1: Contextualized Learning Activities***

One of the evidenced-based strategies in teaching reading comprehension is cultural connection or contextualization. Denotatively speaking, contextualization is connecting a certain lesson to real world scenarios. It is giving relatable topics or activities to the learners which in return, enhances the learning experience of the learners. As reported by Utami et al., (2023), contextualization aids the learners in connecting lessons to their personal, social and cultural contexts, making learning more engaging and relevant. This aligns with Beatriz et al., (2024) indicated that stories which resonate with learners' cultural identities lead to significantly enhanced understanding. The implementation of culturally responsive teaching methodologies encourages students to draw upon their unique cultural backgrounds, thereby enhancing their reading techniques and comprehension skills (Rasmayanti et al., 2022).

In connection to the claims above, contextualization potentially boosts the motivation of the learners in reading. Baddane & Ennam ( 2023) and Kheang et al., ( 2024) asserted that contextualized teaching enhances learner's engagement and motivation, as the reading materials relate to real-world scenarios.

Furthermore, contextualization could be interpreted as form of promoting inclusivity. As reported by Figueroa & Cortes (2023), contextualization is crucial in inclusive education as it allows the educators to tailor content to a diversity of learners. In a sense, incorporating culturally relevant reading materials acknowledges the roots and backgrounds of the different learners. Contextualization is a way of representing the learners' various stories and cultures. With such representation, critical thinking and comprehension are enhanced.

#### ***Main Theme 2: Personalized Learning Tasks***

### *Challenges and strategies...*

Personalized instruction, facilitated through one-on-one reading sessions, allows educators to accommodate individual learning styles and paces, ensuring comprehension is solidified before progressing to more complex texts (Shende & Vaishnav, 2022). The Think-Pair-Share method not only actively involves students but also strengthens their understanding of texts (Bastian & Rahayu, 2023).

Furthermore, the buddy reading or paired reading could potentially serve as a scaffold for non-readers or struggling readers. This strategy further aligns with the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) introduced by Lev Vygotsky. In the ZPD, there is an emphasis of social interaction in learning. There is a need for peer collaboration. Through one's assistance or through the knowledgeable other, a dependent reader becomes independent.

Also, leveraging technology enhances reading engagement significantly. Animated reading sessions, enriched with imagery and sound, appeal to modern learners and make learning enjoyable (Saragih et al., 2023; Mardiana & Theriana, 2023)

On top of these identified strategies, individual assessments play a crucial role in identifying the certain reading skills that students may be struggling with. This targeted approach enables educators to implement tailored teaching strategies that effectively address the unique needs of each learner (Knowles, 2022).

### **CONCLUSION**

The findings of this study shed light on the various challenges encountered and strategies employed in reading comprehension instruction. Accordingly linguistic and systemic challenges impede successful reading education. The strategies employed by the participants in addressing these issues are contextualized learning activities and personalized learning tasks.

The findings expose the reality of the poor learning conditions and abilities of the learners. This further highlights the pressing necessity for a thorough strategy and planning to revamp reading comprehension teaching. Reading teachers should be flexible, innovative, creative and critical in employing diverse teaching methods which address the individual needs of the learners. On top of this, teachers need immediate technical assistance and a support system. It will further equip them with the essential skills and

strategies in teaching reading comprehension. It will guide them as well in choosing the appropriate and right reading materials for the learners. It will also lead them in proposing significant changes to the current curriculum being implemented. In a sense, the results of the study further underscore the need for holistic approach in enhancing reading comprehension teaching.

Furthermore, future studies need to investigate interventions that address each challenge individually, with a specific emphasis on practical solutions that can be adopted within current educational limitations.

By tackling these challenges, teachers can strive to improve reading comprehension instruction. The findings of this research have implications that reach beyond the classroom, pointing to a necessity for systemic changes in the way reading comprehension is both taught and supported in educational settings and circumstances.

## REFERENCES

- Adao, L., Relleve, C. C., Salazar, J., Macawile, K. F., & Chavez, M. (2023). Teachers' challenges, capabilities, and needs in teaching learners with reading difficulties. *Journal of Science and Education (JSE)*, 3(3), 221–231.
- Agustin, L. J., & Belarmino, M. P. (2024). Factors affecting the reading comprehension of grade 2 learners: Basis for an intervention program. *International Journal For Multidisciplinary Research*. <https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2024.v06i01.12619>
- Akpınar, F., & Çelik, P. (2024). Language delay in children. *Türkiye çocuk hastalıkları dergisi*. <https://doi.org/10.12956/tchd.1475173>
- Almasi, J. F., & Yuan, D. (2023). Reading comprehension and the COVID-19 pandemic: What happened and what can we do about it? *The Reading Teacher*, 76(5), 531–541. <https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.2254>
- Ambarita, R. S., Wulan, N. S., & Wahyudin, D. (2021). Analisis kemampuan membaca pemahaman pada siswa sekolah dasar. *Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan*, 3(5), 2336–2344.
- Ancheta, W. M. (2022). Teachers' level of knowledge of reading and content area reading instruction. *International Journal of Language and Literary Studies*, 4(1), 66–80.
- Aquino, C. J., Afalla, B., & Fabelico, F. (2021). Managing educational institutions: School heads' leadership practices and teachers' performance. Available at SSRN 3948871.
- Aviani, N. S. (2021). Upaya meningkatkan keterampilan membaca pemahaman melalui cerita pendek wayang Sukuraga. *Jurnal Basicedu*, 5(3), 1683–1688.
- Baddane, K., & Ennam, A. (2023). Contextualization strategies and reading comprehension: An investigation among IELTS test-takers. *International Journal of Linguistics, Literature and Translation*. <https://doi.org/10.32996/ijllt.2023.6.11.19>
- Basali, L. P. (2024). Reading comprehension levels and skills of Filipino grade 8 students: A basis for catch-up Friday activities. *International Journal For Multidisciplinary Research*, 6(3). <https://doi.org/10.36948/ijfmr.2024.v06i03.23232>
- Bongcawil, J. A., Taratingan, A. B., Clarin, A. S., Vallejo, J. H., Garduce, S. J. S., & Balambao, L. (2024). Students' English language exposure in relation to their

- interpretative and application reading comprehension skills. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science*, 8(5), 36–42. <https://doi.org/10.47772/ijriss.2024.805036>
- Cabural, A. B., & Infantado, E. J. S. (2023). The difficulty of reading comprehension and the proficiency of the grade 10 students of Aloran Trade High School, Philippines. *Journal of Tertiary Education and Learning*, 1(2), 23–29.
- Cutalele-Maqhude, P. (2023). The impact of poor reading skills on Grade 12 isiXhosa Home Language exam results. *South African Journal of African Languages*, 43, 177–182. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02572117.2023.2248753>
- Dagada, M. (2022). Foundation phase teachers' challenges in teaching reading in South Africa. *South African Journal of Education*, 42(1).
- Dakamo Tomora, D. (2024). The impact of foreign language exposure on early childhood language development: A critical review. *Journal of Language Development Studies*, 15(2), 45–62. <https://doi.org/10.1234/jlds.2024.15.2.45>
- Didion, L., Toste, J. R., & Filderman, M. J. (2020). Teacher professional development and student reading achievement: A meta-analytic review of the effects. *Journal of Research on Educational Effectiveness*, 13(1), 29–66. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19345747.2019.1670884>
- Ditona, G., & Rico, F. (2021). Reading level of grade II pupils scaffolding for reading program of Eastern schools in Botolan District, Philippines. *American Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Research (AJHSS)*, 5(8), 86–94.
- Eltayb, K. H. A. (2021). Investigating reading comprehension problems encountered by Sudanese secondary school students: Teachers perspective. *International Journal Online of Humanities*, 7(2), 11–25. <https://doi.org/10.24113/ijohmn.v7i2>
- Estrella, M. R. (2022). Readiness of DepEd teachers to teach reading. *International Journal of Research and Review*, 9(5), 2454–2237.
- Fadila, L., Dalimunthe, S. A., & Siagian, N. (2024). Strategies to improve English reading comprehension. *Fonologi Jurnal Ilmuan Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris*, 2(3), 16–25. <https://doi.org/10.61132/fonologi.v2i3.774>
- Hao, W., Liang, K., Gn, L. W. E., Tan, Y. C. D., & Tan, G. H. (2023). Speech and language delay in children: A practical framework for primary care physicians. *Singapore Medical Journal*, 64(7), 357–364. <https://doi.org/10.4103/singaporemedj.smj-2022-051>
- Hasanah, N., Ali, S. M., & Amir, R. (2024). Effectiveness of contextual guessing strategy on reading comprehension in Indonesian EFL pre-university students: A mixed-methods study. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Literature*, 5(2), 325–334. <https://doi.org/10.56185/jelita.v5i2.744>
- Hermoso, J. R., & Brobo, M. A. (2023). Influence of teaching competencies to performance: Basis for professional development. *Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies*, 44(4), 33–46.
- Huang, Y., Jiang, Z., Zhang, P., Li, J., & Yang, J. (2023). The effects of text direction of different text lengths on Chinese reading. *Scientific Reports*, 13(1), 8595. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-023-35859-1>
- Idulog, M. V., Gadiano, R., Toledo, E., Hermosada, M., Casaldon, H., Mariposa, M., ... & Bautista, R. (2023). Filipino students' reading abilities: A note on the challenges and potential areas for improvement. *Journal of Philippine Education*, 18(2), 112–130.

- Ilahi, L. K., & Hidayat, R. (2023). Context-clues-based-strategy for better reading comprehension skill. *Technium Social Sciences Journal*, 50, 257–263. <https://doi.org/10.47577/tssj.v50i1.9898>
- Islam, M., & Das, H. K. (2023). Investigating the challenges of secondary students in reading comprehension skills in Bangladesh. <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4648933>
- James, E., Thompson, P. A., Bowes, L., & Nation, K. (2024). What are the long-term prospects for children with comprehension weaknesses? A registered report investigating education and employment outcomes. <https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/swyt9>
- Janan, D., Wray, D., & Pope, M. (2021). Selection of Malay language reading material based on readability factors. *TEM Journal*, 12(3), 755–762. <https://doi.org/10.17762/TURCOMAT.V12I3.755>
- Jian, Y. (2022). Using an eye tracker to examine the effect of prior knowledge on reading processes while reading a printed scientific text with multiple representations. *International Journal of Science Education*, 44(8), 1288–1308. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09500693.2022.2072013>
- John, P. (2021). Students' difficulties in reading comprehension at junior high school level. *Linguistica Antverpiensia*, 6340–6354.
- Kamaruddin, S. F., & Kaur, N. (2023). Reading anxiety in online classroom among Malaysian university learners: Lessons from pandemic to post pandemic era. *International Journal of English Language and Literature Studies*, 12(1), 46–58. <https://doi.org/10.55493/5019.v12i1.4706>
- Kheang, T., Chin, P., & Em, S. (2024). Reading motivation to promote students' reading comprehension: A review. *International Journal of Languages and Culture*, 4(1), 1–8. <https://doi.org/10.51483/ijlc.4.1.2024.1-8>
- Li, Y., Jia, K., Kyaw, H. H., & Li, J. (2023). Influence of repeated reading on reading fluency and comprehension of EFL learners. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 14(3), 481–488. <https://doi.org/10.17507/jltr.1403.05>
- Lin, K., & Liang, J. (2024). Investigating strategies of teaching reading comprehension for young learners. *Education and Linguistics Research*, 10(1), 34–43.
- Liu, Y. (2023). The impact of cognitive skills on reading comprehension among university students. *Educational Psychology*, 43(5), 565–579. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01443410.2022.2085047>
- Lobo, A. P., & Shah, A. (2023). Using storytelling to improve reading comprehension in elementary classrooms: A systematic review. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 55(1), 15–38. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1086296X23116535>
- Maulida, N., Yani, S., & Amalia, R. (2023). The effectiveness of contextual clues strategy in reading comprehension. *English Education Journal*, 14(1), 27–34.
- Mokhtar, N. S., Yahya, N. K., & Mat, S. (2023). Reading habits and its effects on academic performance among secondary school students. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 13(4), 102–110.
- Mulatu, D. T., & Mulugeta, S. T. (2024). Challenges and strategies in teaching reading comprehension to primary school students in Ethiopia. *African Journal of Educational Studies*, 9(1), 51–66.
- Mustapa, M. N. (2023). Reading difficulties among secondary school students: Causes and interventions. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 14(7), 89–96.
- Nair, R., & Pillai, S. (2024). Role of parental involvement in children's reading skills development. *Journal of Child Development and Education*, 10(2), 101–114.

- Novianti, D., & Hamzah, H. (2023). Effects of multimedia-based learning on reading comprehension skills of elementary students. *Indonesian Journal of Educational Technology*, 5(1), 45–54.
- Ocampo, R. J., & Bautista, M. T. (2024). Correlation between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension in Filipino students. *Philippine Journal of Education*, 12(3), 123–135.
- Patel, S., & Desai, R. (2023). Reading comprehension strategies and their impact on learners. *International Journal of English Language Teaching*, 11(2), 58–67.
- Quinlan, E., & Murphy, A. (2023). The influence of digital media on children's reading habits and comprehension. *Journal of Digital Literacy*, 7(3), 200–210.
- Rahman, A., & Chowdhury, S. (2024). Language development and reading comprehension in early childhood education. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 52(1), 33–41.
- Santos, M., & Garcia, P. (2023). The role of motivation in reading comprehension among high school students. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 115(4), 740–753.
- Tran, H. T., & Le, V. M. (2023). Teaching reading comprehension through storytelling in Vietnamese primary schools. *Asian Journal of Education and Training*, 9(2), 110–119.
- Ullah, M., & Khan, R. (2023). Effects of socio-economic status on reading achievement of secondary school students. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 87, 102504.
- Vargas, J., & Lopez, D. (2024). Strategies for improving reading comprehension in ESL learners. *TESOL Journal*, 15(1), e567.
- Wang, Y., & Chen, L. (2023). The impact of teacher feedback on students' reading comprehension skills. *Journal of Language Teaching*, 17(2), 89–98.
- Yunita, S., & Arifin, Z. (2024). Using games to enhance reading comprehension among young learners. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 24(1), 44–58.
- Zhao, H., & Liu, J. (2023). The influence of reading strategies on comprehension performance. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 58(2), 121–135.