

Emphasis on Reading Comprehension: Instructional Strategies for Addressing the English Proficiency Gap Among Senior High School Students

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ABSTRACT. This study determined the effectiveness of instructional strategies in addressing the English proficiency gap through reading comprehension among senior high school students at Sulu National School. Using a descriptive-correlational design, 100 respondents were selected through purposive sampling. Data were analyzed using frequency, percentage, weighted mean, standard deviation, Pearson's Product Moment Correlation, t-test, and one-way ANOVA. The study examined respondents' demographic profiles, English proficiency, instructional strategies, and learning outcomes. Findings showed that most respondents were female, aged 15 years and above, Grade 12 students, with parents who were college graduates and belonged to the lower-income bracket. Students demonstrated an average level of English proficiency, while instructional strategies and learning outcomes were rated as good, indicating that the strategies effectively supported reading comprehension. No significant differences were found in English proficiency, instructional strategies, and learning outcomes when grouped by gender, grade level, or parents' educational attainment. However, a significant difference emerged based on parents' monthly income, suggesting that socioeconomic status influences reading development. Significant positive correlations were found among English proficiency, instructional strategies, and learning outcomes, with instructional strategies exhibiting a very strong relationship with improved learning outcomes. These findings support the instructional framework of Villarente and Moral (2024), emphasizing that learner-centered reading strategies enhance comprehension and English proficiency. The study highlights the importance of strengthening evidence-based instructional practices and school-based reading interventions to bridge the English proficiency gap and improve learning outcomes among senior high school students.

KEYWORDS: *Reading Comprehension, English Proficiency, Instructional Strategies, Learning Outcomes, English Language Education, Reading Intervention, Senior High School Students*

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Introduction

Reading comprehension is a fundamental component of language proficiency and a critical determinant of academic success. It enables learners to construct meaning from written texts, develop critical thinking skills, and engage effectively in academic discourse. As academic demands increase, strong reading comprehension becomes essential for achieving positive

educational outcomes and preparing learners for higher education and future employment. Despite its importance, many senior high school students continue to experience difficulties in reading comprehension, contributing to persistent gaps in English proficiency (Martin & Ahn, 2020; Rogers, 2022).

In the Philippine educational context, improving English proficiency remains a significant concern, particularly as students encounter increasingly complex academic texts. Limited reading comprehension restricts learners' ability to participate effectively in classroom instruction and meet academic expectations (Department of Education, 2021; Mallela & Wallace, 2018). These challenges have become more evident in the post-pandemic period, emphasizing the need for systematic and responsive reading interventions to address persistent learning gaps (Divinagracia, 2023).

These concerns are likewise evident in the province of Sulu, where limited reading comprehension skills continue to affect senior high school students' academic performance and preparedness for higher education and future employment. Addressing these challenges requires examining the instructional strategies employed by teachers to determine pedagogical practices that effectively support reading development and improve English proficiency.

Accordingly, this study aims to investigate the instructional strategies used to enhance reading comprehension among senior high school students in Sulu. Specifically, it seeks to examine existing pedagogical approaches, identify effective instructional practices, and determine areas requiring improvement. The findings are expected to provide evidence-based insights that may inform the development of targeted instructional interventions to strengthen reading comprehension and improve English proficiency among senior high school learners.

Research Questions

1. What is the demographic profile of the English language learners in terms of:
 - 1.1. Age;
 - 1.2. Gender;
 - 1.3. Grade level;
 - 1.4. Parents' educational attainment; and
 - 1.5. Parents' monthly income?
2. What is the level of instructional strategies for addressing the English proficiency gap among senior high school students in terms of:
 - 2.1. English proficiency;
 - 2.2. Instructional strategies; and
 - 2.3. Impact on learning outcomes?
3. Is there a significant difference in the level of instructional strategies for addressing the English proficiency gap among senior high school students based on their:
 - 3.1. Age;
 - 3.2. Gender;
 - 3.3. Grade level;
 - 3.4. Parents' educational attainment; and
 - 3.5. Parents' monthly income?
4. Is there a significant correlation among the subcategories subsumed under the level of instructional strategies for addressing the English proficiency gap among senior high school students?

Literature

Reading Comprehension and English Proficiency

Reading comprehension is a core component of English language proficiency, enabling learners to construct meaning, interpret information, and develop critical thinking skills essential for academic success. Grounded in Vygotsky's Social Development Theory, reading development is facilitated through guided interaction and instructional scaffolding that progressively strengthen learners' comprehension of increasingly complex texts (van der Veer, 2020).

Research consistently shows that strong reading comprehension is positively associated with higher English proficiency and academic achievement, highlighting the integral role of literacy in language development (Mihret & Joshi, 2025; Adora et al., 2024; Galiza, 2022). Furthermore, English proficiency enhances learners' confidence in communicating effectively in both academic and real-world contexts (Españo et al., 2025). However, many senior high school students continue to struggle with inferential, evaluative, and integrative comprehension, emphasizing the need for instructional approaches that foster deeper understanding beyond literal reading (Manuel, 2022; Junaidi et al., 2024).

Instructional Strategies for Enhancing Reading Comprehension

Research emphasizes that evidence-based instructional strategies play a vital role in improving reading comprehension and addressing English proficiency gaps among senior high school students. Learner-centered approaches, including differentiated instruction, scaffolding, and dialogic discourse, enhance comprehension by accommodating diverse learning needs and promoting active engagement with texts (Jufrianto et al., 2023; Atanda, 2019; Ocampo, 2018).

Interactive strategies such as vocabulary-building activities, language games, and role-playing likewise strengthen language proficiency through meaningful participation (Magno et al., 2024). In addition, explicit vocabulary instruction, strategic reading techniques, individualized reading programs, and other evidence-based interventions have been shown to improve comprehension, literacy development, and reading performance (Montante, 2024; Agustin et al., 2023; Pocaan et al., 2022; Olabiyi et al., 2025; Chen, 2023; Santos, 2024).

Personalized learning, guided reading interactions, constructive feedback, contextualized instruction, multimedia integration, and instructional scaffolding further support English language development, reading engagement, and comprehension (Eustaquio et al., 2025; Chavez et al., 2023; Chavez et al., 2025). Collectively, these findings underscore the importance of varied, evidence-based instructional strategies in strengthening both reading comprehension and English proficiency.

Implementation Challenges and Research Gap

Despite evidence supporting effective reading instruction, many senior high school students continue to experience difficulties in reading comprehension due to persistent instructional and contextual challenges. Limited vocabulary, inadequate teacher preparation, and curriculum implementation issues remain significant barriers to improving reading comprehension and English proficiency (Ligudon & Ildefonso, 2022; Kilag et al., 2024; Abejuela et al., 2023).

While previous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of specific instructional strategies and reading interventions, relatively few have comprehensively examined the instructional practices teachers employ to address English proficiency gaps through reading comprehension among senior high school students. Addressing this gap is essential for identifying effective instructional strategies that enhance reading comprehension and support English language development across diverse educational contexts.

Methodology

1. Research Design

This study employed a quantitative descriptive-correlational research design. The design was utilized to describe the extent of reading comprehension, instructional strategies, English proficiency, and impact on learning outcomes, as well as to determine the relationships among the identified variables.

2. Participants and Sampling

The respondents of the study were English college teachers from public higher education institutions (HEIs) in Sulu during the Academic Year 2025-2026. Participants were selected using a non-probability purposive sampling technique. The study adhered to ethical standards by ensuring voluntary participation, maintaining respondent confidentiality, and obtaining the necessary institutional permissions prior to data collection.

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents

Public Senior High School/Strands	Number Of Respondents
1. STEM	25
2. ABM	25
3. GAS	25
4. Arts in Designed	25
Total:	100

3. Instruments

Data were gathered using a structured survey questionnaire adapted and patterned from standardized instruments used in previous studies. The questionnaire consisted of two parts: Part I obtained the respondents' demographic profile, including age, gender, year level, parental educational attainment, and parents' monthly income, while Part II measured reading comprehension through the dimensions of English proficiency, instructional strategies, and impact on learning outcomes. To ensure content validity and contextual suitability, the instrument was reviewed by at least two experts from the Graduate Studies faculty of Sulu State College.

4. Data Collection Procedure

Prior to data collection, the researcher secured permission from the Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies and the principals of the selected public senior high schools in Sulu. The validated questionnaires were personally administered by the researcher and subsequently retrieved upon completion to ensure a high response rate and completeness of the collected data.

5. Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Frequency counts and percentages were used to describe the respondents' demographic profiles. Means and standard deviations determined the extent of reading comprehension in terms of English proficiency, instructional strategies, and impact on learning outcomes. Independent samples t-test and one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were employed to examine differences in the extent of reading comprehension based on respondents' profiles. Finally, the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient (Pearson's r) was used to determine the significant relationships among the subcategories of reading comprehension: English proficiency, instructional strategies, and impact on learning outcomes.

Results

1. Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Analysis of the demographic profile of the respondents ($N = 100$) indicates that all participants (100%) are 15 years old and above. The sample is predominantly female (53%), with

a slight majority of Grade 12 students (54%). In terms of parents' educational attainment, most respondents have college graduate parents (78%). Regarding parents' monthly income, the largest proportion of respondents comes from families earning ₱5,001–₱10,000 per month (44%), indicating that most belong to the lower-income income bracket.

Table 2: Demographic Profile of the Respondents

Demographic Variable	Number of Respondents (n=100)	Percentage (%)
Age		
15 years old and above	100	100.0%
Gender		
Male	47	47.0%
Female	53	53.0%
Grade Level		
Grade 11	46	46.0%
Grade 12	54	54.0%
Parents' Educational Attainment		
College graduate	78	78.0%
College with master's unit	13	13.0%
Master's degree with doctoral degree	9	9.0%
Parents' Monthly Income		
5,000 pesos & below	30	30.0%
5,001- 10,000 pesos	44	44.0%
10,001 - 20,000 pesos	11	11.0%
20,001 - 30,000 pesos	7	7.0%
30,001 - 40,000 pesos	4	4.0%
40,001 pesos & above	4	4.0%

2. Level of Instructional Strategies for Addressing the English Proficiency Gap Among Senior High School Students

Overall, the respondents demonstrated an average level of English proficiency ($M = 3.3200$, $SD = .61233$), indicating that their reading comprehension skills remain moderate. All indicators under this domain were rated "Average," with comfort in reading English texts receiving the highest mean ($M = 3.48$). The implementation of instructional strategies was rated "Good" ($M = 3.5400$, $SD = .65597$), indicating that reading comprehension strategies are generally effective. Visual aids emerged as the highest-rated indicator ($M = 3.65$), while group discussions received the lowest mean ($M = 3.30$) and the only "Average" rating. The impact on learning outcomes was likewise rated "Good" ($M = 3.6000$, $SD = .70324$), suggesting that instructional strategies positively support students' learning. Applying reading strategies outside the classroom obtained the highest mean ($M = 3.71$), whereas the perceived link between reading comprehension strategies and academic performance recorded the lowest ($M = 3.51$).

Table 3: Level of Instructional Strategies for Addressing the English Proficiency Gap Among Senior High School Students

Statements	Mean	Standard Deviation (S.D.)	Descriptive Interpretation
English Proficiency	3.3200	.61233	Average
1. How would you rate your overall English proficiency?	3.05	.757	Average
2. How comfortable do you feel reading English texts?	3.48	.937	Average
3. How often do you encounter difficulties in understanding reading materials in English?	3.44	.880	Average

Statements	Mean	Standard Deviation (S.D.)	Descriptive Interpretation
4. How confident are you in your reading comprehension skills?	3.41	.889	Average
5. How do you compare your English proficiency with your peers?	3.22	.799	Average
Instructional Strategies	3.5400	.65597	Good
1. How effective do you find teacher-led reading comprehension strategies?	3.56	.935	Good
2. How often are group discussions implemented in your reading classes?	3.30	.772	Average
3. How useful do you find visual aids (e.g., charts, images) during reading lessons?	3.65	.857	Good
4. How often does your teacher provide feedback on your reading comprehension?	3.57	.935	Good
5. How often do you engage in independent reading activities assigned by your teacher?	3.62	.908	Good
Impact on Learning Outcomes	3.6000	.70324	Good
1. How has your reading comprehension improved since implementing new instructional strategies?	3.60	.876	Good
2. How often do you feel motivated to read in English?	3.64	.938	Good
3. How has your ability to analyze texts in English changed?	3.54	.904	Good
4. How do you perceive the link between reading comprehension strategies and your overall academic performance?	3.51	.759	Good
5. How often do you apply reading strategies outside the classroom?	3.71	.913	Good
Legend: (5) 4.50-5.00 = Excellent; (4) 3.50-4.49 = Good; (3) 2.50- 3.49 = Average; (2) 1.50- 2.49 = Poor; (1) 1.00- 1.49 = Very Poor			

3. Differences in the Level of Instructional Strategies Based on Demographic Profiles

Independent samples t-tests and one-way ANOVA were conducted to determine whether the level of instructional strategies differed across demographic characteristics. No statistical test was performed for age, as all respondents belonged to the same age group. Likewise, no statistically significant differences were found when respondents were grouped according to gender or grade level ($p > .05$).

A statistically significant difference was found only in English proficiency when respondents were grouped by parents' educational attainment, while instructional strategies and learning outcomes showed no significant differences. In contrast, parents' monthly income showed statistically significant differences across English proficiency, instructional strategies, and impact on learning outcomes. Post hoc Tukey analysis indicated that these differences primarily occurred between the highest-income group (₱40,001 and above) and lower-income groups, with additional differences in instructional strategies between the ₱5,001–₱10,000 income group and higher-income groups.

Table 4: Differences in the Level of Instructional Strategies for Addressing the English Proficiency Gap Among Senior High School Students

Demographic Grouping	Domains	Test Statistic (t / F)	p-value (Sig.)	Description
Gender				
	English Proficiency	.968	.335	Not Significant
	Instructional Strategies	.737	.463	Not Significant
	Impact on Learning Outcomes	.170	.865	Not Significant
Grade Level				
	English Proficiency	-.693	.490	Not Significant
	Instructional Strategies	1.877	.063	Not Significant
	Impact on Learning Outcomes	1.908	.059	Not Significant

Demographic Grouping	Domains	Test Statistic (t / F)	p-value (Sig.)	Description
Parents' Educational Attainment				
	English Proficiency	3.99*	.022	Significant
	Instructional Strategies	1.277	.283	Not Significant
	Impact on Learning Outcomes	2.882	.061	Not Significant
Parents' Monthly Income				
	English Proficiency	5.11*	.000	Significant
	Instructional Strategies	5.38*	.000	Significant
	Impact on Learning Outcomes	5.80*	.000	Significant

*Significance at alpha 0.05

4. Correlational Analysis Among the Subcategories of Instructional Strategies

Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (Pearson's r) was employed to examine the relationships among the three subcategories of instructional strategies. As presented in Table 5, all subcategories exhibited statistically significant positive correlations ($p = .000$). A high positive correlation was found between English Proficiency and Instructional Strategies ($r = .599$) and between English Proficiency and Impact on Learning Outcomes ($r = .595$). The strongest relationship was observed between Instructional Strategies and Impact on Learning Outcomes, which demonstrated a very high positive correlation ($r = .800$). Therefore, the hypothesis stating that there is no significant correlation among the subcategories of instructional strategies for addressing the English proficiency gap among senior high school students is rejected.

Table 5. Correlation Among the Instructional Strategies Subcategories

Variables	Pearson r	Sig.	N	Description
English Proficiency				
Instructional Strategies	.599**	.000	100	High
Impact on Learning Outcomes	.595**	.000	100	High
Instructional Strategies				
Impact on Learning Outcomes	.800**	.000	100	Very High

Note. **Correlation coefficient is significant at alpha .01, *Correlation coefficient is significant at alpha .05

Correlation Coefficient Scales Adopted from Hopkins, Will (2002): 0.0-0.1 = Nearly Zero; 0.1-0.3 = Low; 0.3-0.5 = Moderate; 0.5-0.7 = High; 0.7-0.9 = Very High; 0.9-1 = Nearly Perfect.

Discussion

The findings indicate that the respondents generally exhibit an average level of English proficiency, while the instructional strategies employed by teachers and their impact on learning outcomes are rated as good. This suggests that effective reading comprehension instruction supports students' learning and contributes to improved academic outcomes despite their moderate level of English proficiency. The demographic profile further reveals that most respondents are Grade 12 female students whose parents are college graduates, with the majority belonging to the lower-income bracket.

The analysis further shows that gender, grade level, and parents' educational attainment do not significantly influence English proficiency, instructional strategies, or learning outcomes. In contrast, parents' monthly income has a significant effect on all variables, highlighting the influence of socioeconomic conditions on students' access to educational resources, learning opportunities, and academic performance.

Furthermore, the correlational analysis reveals significant positive relationships among English proficiency, instructional strategies, and learning outcomes. English proficiency is strongly associated with both instructional strategies and learning outcomes, while instructional

strategies demonstrate the strongest relationship with learning outcomes. These findings underscore the importance of effective reading comprehension instructional strategies in enhancing English proficiency and promoting better academic outcomes.

Conclusion

The findings indicate that senior high school students generally exhibit an average level of English proficiency, while instructional strategies and learning outcomes are rated positively. Although gender, grade level, and parents' educational attainment do not significantly influence the variables examined, parents' monthly income has a significant effect, underscoring the role of socioeconomic conditions in shaping students' learning experiences and academic performance. Furthermore, the significant positive relationships among English proficiency, instructional strategies, and learning outcomes highlight the importance of effective reading comprehension instruction in addressing the English proficiency gap.

Based on these findings, schools should strengthen reading intervention programs and expand access to learning resources, particularly for students from low-income families. Teachers are encouraged to implement varied and interactive reading comprehension strategies, while parents should cultivate supportive reading environments at home. Students should actively engage in reading activities to enhance their language proficiency, and future researchers are encouraged to design and evaluate interventions that address the socioeconomic factors influencing English proficiency and learning outcomes.

(Disclaimer: While artificial intelligence (AI) was used for language enhancement, all concepts that were generated are entirely original.)

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