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ENHANCING LITERAL COMPREHENSION LEVEL AMONG JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS: A STUDY ON READING COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT
Reading comprehension is a fundamental skill that underpins academic success, yet it continues to be a challenge for many students in the Philippines. Recent international assessments, including PISA 2022, have highlighted the country's low performance in reading, raising concern among educators and policymakers. This study focuses on assessing the literal reading comprehension level of junior high school students at Silanga National High School (SNHS) in Catbalogan City, Samar. Using a descriptive design, the study evaluated students' ability to identify main ideas, recall details, sequence events, and recognize explicit information. Findings revealed that many students struggle with literal comprehension, particularly in sequencing and recalling details, which hinders their ability to progress to higher-level comprehension skills. Contributing factors such as socio-economic challenges, instructional gaps, and language-related difficulties further affect students' performance. These results underscore the urgent need for targeted intervention programs that strengthen foundational reading skills, provide adequate support for disadvantaged learners, and integrate effective instructional strategies. The study recommends localized and evidence-based interventions to improve students' reading comprehension and overall academic performance.

Keywords: Reading Comprehension, Literal Level, Junior High School, Philippines, Education, Intervention.

1. INTRODUCTION
Reading comprehension is one of the most essential academic skills, as it enables learners to extract meaning from text, understand concepts, and apply knowledge across subject areas. However, students in the Philippines continue to experience challenges in this domain. The 2022 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) ranked the Philippines 77th out of 81 participating countries in reading, signaling a critical problem that extends to performance in other areas such as Science and Mathematics. This result has raised widespread concern among educators, researchers, and policymakers, especially since the country has long been recognized for its English language proficiency (Manlapig, 2020).

Literal reading comprehension is regarded as the foundation of reading, as it focuses on recognizing the main idea, identifying supporting details, sequencing events, and recalling information (Budi & Zuhro, 2023). Without mastery of literal comprehension, students struggle to advance toward higher order reading skills such as inference, analysis, and evaluation. Despite its importance, many Filipino learners at the secondary level continue to have

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difficulties in this area. Similar issues have also been reported internationally among students learning English as a foreign language, where low motivation and linguistic challenges hinder reading development (Naniwarsih & Andriani, 2018).

Several studies have underscored the decline in reading performance among Filipino students; however, most of these investigations tend to generalize comprehension difficulties without differentiating between levels of comprehension. Moreover, while some researchers advocate building strong literacy skills in the first language before transitioning to second-language instruction, the simultaneous teaching of Filipino and English in Philippine schools has sometimes caused confusion and cognitive overload for learners (Manlapig, 2020). As a result, there remains a lack of localized studies that focus exclusively on literal comprehension, particularly among junior high school students in public schools such as Silanga National High School (SNHS) in Catbalogan City, Samar.

The present study aims to examine the literal reading comprehension skills of junior high school students at SNHS. Specifically, it seeks to identify the aspects of literal comprehension in which students struggle the most, determine the underlying socio-economic, instructional, and language-related factors affecting their reading ability, and assess the implications for academic performance. The findings of this research are expected to serve as a basis for developing targeted interventions that will strengthen reading comprehension skills and support students' overall learning outcomes

2. METHODOLOGY

A. ***Research Data***

The research data were gathered from junior high school students and teachers of Silanga National High School (SNHS) in Brgy. Silanga, Catbalogan City, Western Samar, during School Year 2024–2025. Using a stratified sampling procedure, 200 students from Grades 7 to 10 were initially assessed, ensuring representation across all year levels. From this group, 98 students who demonstrated literal-level reading comprehension were identified and included in the detailed analysis.

In addition, eight teachers of English and Filipino participated in the qualitative component to provide professional insights regarding instructional practices, observed challenges, and learner difficulties. The primary sources of data included the comprehension section of the 2018 Nelson–Denny Reading Test (NDRT, Forms I & J), open-ended survey responses, semi-structured interviews, and selected school records obtained with permission for triangulation.

B. ***Research Design***

The study employed an explanatory mixed-methods design that combined quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive analysis of literal reading comprehension among students. The quantitative strand focused on measuring students' ability to recognize main ideas, recall details, sequence events, and understand explicitly stated information using the NDRT administered under standardized procedures. Descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used to summarize the findings, while inferential tools were applied to explore possible relationships between comprehension levels, grade levels, and academic performance.

Meanwhile, the qualitative strand adopted a phenomenological approach, using open-ended survey items and semi-structured interviews with both students and teachers to capture deeper

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insights into experiences, perceptions, and contextual factors affecting reading comprehension. Responses were transcribed, coded, and analyzed thematically, with credibility enhanced through triangulation, member checking, and expert validation. Ethical considerations were strictly observed, including informed consent, confidentiality, and secure handling of data, ensuring that the study upheld research integrity while addressing its objectives.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter contains the presentation, analysis, and discussion of the data that were gathered. The essential aspects of reading comprehension at the literal level, along with the perceived challenges and factors, are presented. Also, an intervention program that aims to enhance the literal reading comprehension of junior high school (JHS) students of Silanga National High School (SNHS) is proposed.

Reading Comprehension Level of the Students

A reading comprehension test was given to 200 JHS students of SNHS using the 2018 Nelson-Denny Reading Test, and the results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Reading comprehension level of JHS students of SNHS.

Level	Frequency	Percent (%)
Applied	29	14.5
Interpretive	73	36.5
Literal	98	49.0
Total	**200**	**100.0**

Table 1 illustrates the reading comprehension of SNHS JHS students, and most students belong to the "Literal" category. Among 200 respondents, 98 students, or 49.0%, exhibited a literal level of reading comprehension, which means that almost half of the population only possesses a surface-level or basic ability to read and interpret written texts. Such a high percentage indicates a high percentage of students having reading challenges that may affect their overall performance and indicates the necessity of special reading interventions or support programs. Moreover, 73 students, or 36.5% of the participants, fell under the "interpretive" level of comprehension. This represents the population of students who can understand texts beyond what is explicitly stated and can make connections between ideas. At the opposite end, just 29 students, or 14.5%, have an “Applied” comprehension. This low percentage indicates that few students can fully understand advanced reading materials.

These results highlight an alarming case for SNHS because it is expected that JHS students to have at least an interpretive level as they enter secondary education. According to Nurjanah and Putri (2022), the literal level of reading comprehension is the foundation of reading and should be developed in the early stages of literacy, which is in primary education. However, from the data gathered, a significant portion of JHS students in SNHS are still at the literal level. Therefore, it is of higher importance to focus on students who are on the literal level so that they will be able to catch up with peers and ultimately be better equipped to read and understand texts in secondary education, which are of greater difficulty.

Aspects of Literal Reading Comprehension

The aspects of reading comprehension of the 98 JHS students of SNHS who were classified at a literal level were assessed according to getting the main idea, recognizing details

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and supporting information, sequencing events, and recalling information. With regards to getting the main idea, the scores of students are interpreted and summarized as follows.

Table 2.1. The level of literal reading comprehension of JHS respondents of SNHS in terms of getting the main idea.

Level	Frequency	Percent (%)
Proficient	4	4.08
Developing	23	23.47
Emerging	43	43.88
Beginning	24	24.49
No attempt	4	4.08
Total	**98**	**100.00**

Table 2.1 indicates the extent of literal reading comprehension of JHS respondents in SNHS in terms of getting the main idea. From the data, most students at the literal level of reading comprehension belong to emerging levels at 43.88%, meaning that they possess a poor to below average capability for determining the main idea of a text. There are a few students (24.49%) who exhibit beginning comprehension skills, and 23.47% are at the developing level. Still, only 4.08% of the respondents are proficient, and 4.08% did not attempt to identify the main idea from the assessment. These results show an alarming level of reading comprehension, especially since students are already in JHS.

Similarly, the literal reading comprehension was also evaluated in terms of recognizing details and supporting information. The classification of the levels is summarized in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2. The level of literal reading comprehension of JHS respondents of SNHS in terms of supporting details

Level	Frequency	Percent (%)
Proficient	6	6.12
Developing	11	11.22
Emerging	44	44.90
Beginning	24	24.49
No attempt	13	13.27
Total	**98**	**100.00**

Table 2.2 shows the extent of literal reading comprehension of JHS respondents in SNHS in terms of recognizing details and supporting information. From the data, most students, or 44.90%, belong to the emerging level, indicating that they have a poor to below-average ability to recognize key details in a text. This is followed by students at the beginning level, at 24.49%. Few (11.22%) of respondents were classified as developing, while only 6.12% were proficient. Additionally, 13.27% did not attempt to recognize supporting details. These results highlight the need for efforts to assist students who are at a literal level of reading comprehension, in their ability to recognize details and supporting information effectively.

The literal reading comprehension of students was also assessed according to the level of proficiency regarding sequencing the events of a text. The summary of classifications is shown in Table 2.3.

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Table 2.3. Level of literal reading comprehension of JHS respondents of SNHS in terms of sequencing events.

Level	Frequency	Percent (%)
Proficient	4	4.08
Developing	26	26.53
Emerging	21	21.43
Beginning	37	37.76
No attempt	10	10.20
Total	**98**	**100.0**

Table 2.3 shows the level of literal reading comprehension of JHS respondents in SNHS in sequencing events. These results show a lower level compared to the previous two aspects, as student-respondents are classified at the beginning level. This means that SNHS JHS students at the literal level of reading comprehension have poor abilities to sequence events. Although 26.53% and 21.43% are on the developing and emerging level. Moreover, only 4.08% were proficient in sequencing events, while even more students (10.20%) made no attempts. These findings suggest the urgent need to improve this aspect of literal reading comprehension. Such intervention should focus more on improving students' capacity to logically organize information and narrative structures better.

Finally, the literal reading comprehension of JHS respondents of SNHS was evaluated in terms of recalling information, and the results are shown as follows.

Table 2.4. The level of literal reading comprehension of JHS respondents of SNHS in terms of answering recall questions.

Level	Frequency	Percent (%)
Proficient	3	3.06
Developing	10	10.20
Emerging	31	31.63
Beginning	44	44.90
No attempt	10	10.20
Total	**98**	**100.0**

Table 2.4 shows the level of literal reading comprehension of JHS respondents in SNHS in terms of answering recall questions. Based on the data, most of the student respondents (44.90%) are at the beginning level. Of all aspects, answering recall questions has the highest percentage at the beginning level. This means that SNHS JHS students at the literal level of reading comprehension have poor abilities in answering recall questions. In addition, 31.63% of respondents were classified at the beginning level, 10.20% were developing, 10.20% also made no attempts, while only 3.069% were proficient. This result highlights the need to improve the students' abilities in answering recall questions.

This result is consistent with studies in the Philippines. Cabural and Infantado's (2020) study showed that Grade 10 students were found to lack proficiency in literal comprehension tasks, especially in sequencing events. Alpitche-Bunda and Pineda (2023) also recognized the gaps in vocabulary and answering recall questions across Filipino pupils. The SNHS results, though, emphasized sequencing as a marked weakness, implying that learners can make

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distinctions between main ideas and details (means = 3.17 and 3.06, respectively) but struggle in organizing these components temporally or causally. This differentiation highlights that literal understanding is not unitary; it consists of distinct skills, some of which—such as sequencing—demand higher-order organization. Naniwarsih and Andriani (2018) are also parallel with the study, such that although Indonesian students generally performed well on literal comprehension, gaps in vocabulary stunted their reconstructive ability for answering recall questions and recognizing details.

Moreover, the better performance in identifying the main idea suggests that the problem is not with lexical knowledge but with understanding text structure. Labarrete (2019) on ALS learners reinforces this as students were able to find the main idea but struggled with outlining, consistent with weaknesses in organizing information. This indicates a systemic problem with how information is presented. Philippine traditional pedagogies tend to focus on rote memorization of facts rather than analytical exercises, such as organizing details, observed by Decena (2021), who discovered that teachers prioritized recalling information compared to critical thinking activities.

A poor performance in recognizing details, sequencing events, and answering recall questions has also far-reaching consequences. Nurjanah and Putri (2022) conducted a longitudinal study that showed that without the capability to organize texts, the students' ability to evaluate cause-and-effect relations or synthesize information is also affected. To illustrate the sequencing of the timeline of historical events needs to be able to evaluate its socio-political significance in the present. JHS students' developing sequencing abilities thus indicate a potential for stagnation at the literal level, hampering academic advancement. This is also in line with Caraig & Quimbo's (2022) study, wherein only 7% of Filipino senior high school learners mastered science-text comprehension, largely because they could organize information they read from texts in different subjects.

Addressing these issues demands pedagogical shifts. Interventions must prioritize scaffolded exercises in text structure analysis, graphic organizers for sequencing, and retrieval practice for recall—strategies proven effective in low-literacy contexts (Naniwarsih & Andriani, 2018). Without urgent action, JHS learners risk remaining trapped at the literal level, ill-equipped for the inferential and critical thinking demands of higher education.

Challenges in Literal Reading Comprehension

Thematic analysis, following the work Braun and Clarke (2006), was conducted to answer the research question of what the perceived challenges are, intrinsic and extrinsic factors affecting the teaching–learning of literal reading comprehension level among SNHS JHS students. Table 4 presents the central themes, subthemes, and codes that were used for this analysis.

Table 3. Themes, subthemes, and codes on challenges in literal reading comprehension among JHS students of SNHS.

Themes	Subthemes	Codes
1. **Environmental distractions and unengaging content reduce focus during reading tasks.**	1.1 Noise and Interruptions	- Noise in the classroom from other students
	1.2 Culturally Irrelevant Materials	- Digital distractions like social media applications
	1.3 Texts lacking real-world application	- Lack of real-world relevance
		- Abstract scientific/theoretical terms

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2. Students struggle with technical vocabulary and culturally unfamiliar language, which obstructs literal comprehension.	2.1 Complex Vocabulary in Technical/Academic Texts 2.2 Unfamiliar Cultural References 2.3 Confusion in Figurative Languages	- Deep/unfamiliar terms - Technical terms in science and math - Old English - - Figurative language
3. Students find sentences complex and disorganized, hindering their ability to understand literal meaning.	3.1 Overly long sentences 3.2 Poor organization of texts 3.3 Dense non-fiction or information-bearing texts	- Long sentences and phrases - Complex sentence structure - Poor text organization - Flowery words - Excessive details in non-fiction
4. **The curriculum fails to provide adequate scaffolding or localized materials to support comprehension.**	4.1 Lack of vocabulary-building strategies 4.2 Lack of Localized Materials 4.3 Absence of relevant analogies 4.4 Memorization-focused instruction	- Unpreparedness for texts with technical words - Culturally relevant disconnected curriculum - Memorization-focused teaching methods - Absence of vocabulary-building strategies
5. Students rely on passive reading strategies.	5.1 Use of Passive Reading Strategies 5.2 **Poor note-taking habits** 5.3 Lack of awareness of reading strategies	- Reliance on memorization - Rereading without analysis - Anxiety during reading tasks - Easily read content on social media - Poor memorization techniques

From the data gathered, the first theme shows that e**nvironmental distractions and unengaging content reduce focus during reading tasks.** External distractions, such as noise and interruptions, coupled with disinterest in content that readers see as irrelevant, diminish students' focus and retention. The subthemes here include **classroom noise, lack of engagement with foreign-centric materials,** and **stress-induced cognitive overload.** These factors hinder concentration and undermine motivation to comprehend texts. These are supported in statements such as:

> *"Noise and interruptions can significantly affect my reading comprehension."* (Grade 7 Respondent 5)

> *"I don't understand why read about government and history and they are boring and pointless."* (Grade 8 Respondent 2)

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> *"Science and math reading are difficult and no use in real life"* (Grade 9 Respondent 5)
>
> *"My classmates sometimes are taking to me and it is hard to read"* (Grade 10 Respondent 4)
>
> *"A poor classroom environment, including distractions like outside noise, can hinder their focus." (Teacher Respondent 3)*
>
> *"When students are not given interesting and relatable reading materials, they show less motivation in improving their comprehension." (Teacher Respondent 7)*

Classroom noise in overcrowded classrooms hinders concentration is a central theme in Philippine low-resource schools as observed by Panisigan (2021). In addition, foreign materials are seen by students as culturally irrelevant, including Westernized texts, which disconnects the students and diminishes comprehension (Labarrete, 2019). Stress and anxiety also disrupt retention by scattering working memory, as evidenced in Decena's (2021) research that connects test anxiety with comprehension failures. Cooper (1989) pointed out that disengagement from irrelevant content reinforces passive learning, hindering critical thinking. Aside from these studies, socio-cultural Theory (SCT) and Cognitive Load Theory account for these difficulties. The SCT (Vygotsky, 1978) highlights how noise interferes with shared learning spaces. Moreover, texts that are seen as culturally irrelevant content do not interest students, which is emphasized in Constructivist Theory wherein relevance plays an important factor in comprehension (Piaget, 1973).

The second theme that was derived is that **students struggle with technical vocabulary and culturally unfamiliar language, which obstructs literal comprehension.** The JHS students at SNHS struggle with reading materials that contain specialized or technical words or vocabulary, along with poorly organized sentence structures. Examples of these are vocabulary that is found in scientific, legal, or mathematical subjects. The subthemes for this central theme include complex terms in technical/academic texts, unfamiliar cultural references, and confusion in figurative language. These are illustrated in statements such as:

> *"Big words in science and math make me feel it is difficult to read.* (Grade 7 Respondent 1)
>
> *"Malalalim na salita [deep words] in Filipino books are hard. I don't understand them."* (Grade 7 Respondent 3)
>
> *"Old and deep English in some stories feels like a hard language to read."* (Grade 10 Respondent 8)
>
> *"Filipino because the texts are challenging to interpret."* (Grade 8 Respondent 12)
>
> *"Yes, they can't actually comprehend the text because of vocabulary knowledge, background knowledge, attention and focus, reading strategies, motivation, and interest." (Teacher Respondent 1)*

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> *"The reading materials often exceed my students' level of reading comprehension... texts commonly contain unfamiliar vocabulary and ideas, making it difficult for them to relate." (Teacher Respondent 3)*

These challenges overwhelm the students' ability to uncover the literal meaning of the text presented. This might be potentially because unfamiliar terms and disorganized content strain cognitive processing and reduce engagement. And as a result, this inhibits the literal reading comprehension of the learner. JHS students who are struggling with technical vocabulary and structural complexity can be understood by considering the concepts under the Schema Theory and Cognitive Load Theory (CLT). Schema Theory (Rumelhart, 1980) describes that prior knowledge in students influences how they decode technical terms in domains (e.g., scientific vocabulary). When readers encounter new terminology in texts that do not invoke corresponding schemas, students are not able to latch on new information onto existing schemes, resulting in a lack of understanding. CLT (Sweller, 1988) also makes clear how cluttered, ill-structured texts place extensive cognitive load on working memory, which maybe beyond the capacity of the student. Moreover, complex narratives direct students, especially with poor foundation, to spend cognitive effort in decoding the meaning of words instead of synthesizing the information that they have read. Culturally irrelevant materials, such as Western literature, increase these problems as students may see it as being irrelevant to their daily lives (Labarrete, 2019).

The third theme is that **students find sentences complex and disorganized, hindering their ability to understand the literal meaning.** The JHS students have expressed encountering significant difficulties with complex sentence structures. The subthemes for this include overly long sentences, poor organization of texts, and dense non-fiction or information-bearing texts. These issues hinder literal reading comprehension because instead of synthesizing new information, the learners spend time on decoding the mechanics of the sentences. This experience is present in statements such as:

> *"Sentences are very long. I sometimes forget at the end.* (Grade 7 Respondent 22)

> *"Sometimes I can't understand flowery sentences. I feel lost."* (Grade 10 Respondent 8)

> *"Many information are in the text given by teacher"* (Grade 7 Respondent 1)

> *"May words nga diri ako maaram meaning di ko lugod naintindihan [There are words that I don't know making me unable to understand].* (Grade 9 Respondent 1)

> *"Diverse reading levels in the classroom and lack of prior knowledge... Minimal reading practice affects comprehension skills." (Teacher Respondent 4)*

> *"Students can recognize sounds and letters, but when asked about what they read, they cannot answer, meaning no comprehension occurred." (Teacher Respondent 8)*

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This theme in general can be explained through some of the theoretical underpinnings of the study, such as the CLT of Sweller (1988). It can be said that highly dense syntax, such as "nested phrases, multiple clauses", increases the cognitive load of the learner. As a result, an overloaded cognitive load would swamp the working memory as learners struggle to decode grammatical syntax and relations. "Multiple perspectives," as a student pointed out, along with highly detailed texts in non-fiction texts, add extraneous cognitive load, drawing attention away from central content towards structural decoding. Overloaded non-fiction texts (e.g., "too much technical information" in Grade 7) exacerbate these problems by requiring dual processing of jargon and complicated concepts. In addition, the Constructivist Theory (Piaget, 1973) explains that students require guided opportunities to reconstruct the meaning of texts that they read. In this regard, collaborative strategies, such as group discussions or graphic organizers, might offset these challenges by assisting students in reorganizing disorganized content into meaningful patterns.

The fourth theme that was generated from qualitative data on challenges highlights that **the curriculum fails to provide adequate scaffolding or localized materials to support comprehension. Several related studies have pointed out that there are** systemic issues in curriculum design, such as inadequate scaffolding for technical terms and overreliance on Western-centric texts, which compound with SNHS students' comprehension challenges. Subthemes include **lack of vocabulary-building strategies, lack of localized materials, absence of relevant analogies, and memorization-focused teaching.** These challenges in learning leave students unprepared to engage with complex or abstract content, especially when they move to higher grade levels. These are observations in present in statements such as:

> *"When I read I am afraid that my teacher will get angry because I can't answer questions [after]"* **(Grade 7 Respondent 8)**
>
> *"Lessons don't teach us how to understand hard words and sentence[s]."* **Grade 7, Respondent 5**
>
> *"The examples are from abroad and I do not understand why it is need[ed] to read it [them]."* **(Grade 9 Respondent 10)**
>
> *Yes, because I cannot relate to the topic I read."* **(Grade 10 Respondent 1)**
>
> *"The absence of reading materials that suit their level of understanding and are enjoyable and engaging to them."* **(Teacher Respondent 2)**
>
> *More contextualized and interesting reading materials suitable to the levels of learners would help."*
> *(Calls for systemic changes to address scaffolding and cultural relevance.* **(Teacher Respondent 5)**

The lack of scaffolding for technical vocabulary indicates systemic problems in the curriculum (Caraig & Quimbo, 2022). Labarrete (2019) observed that Western-oriented materials isolate students, and abstract concepts learned without practical analogues, such as nuclear physics, are still out of reach. In addition, Decena's (2021) recommendations for differentiated instruction are consistent with students' demands for example-based learning, but teacher education programs hardly focus on such practices. Moreover, SCT and Constructivist Theory point to systemic problems in education. SCT (Vygotsky, 1978)

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emphasized the lack of scaffolding, which deprives learners of development in comprehension skills in general. Constructivism stresses that abstract ideas or complex words need to be scaffolded or supported by experiential, culture-bound analogies to establish schemas. Schema Theory describes how Western-focused texts are not supportive of existing knowledge in learners, preventing schema activation. CLT (Sweller, 1988) also explains that jargon-laden materials place intrinsic load without scaffolding, overburdening learners. Nurjanah& Putri (2022) insistence on localized materials resonates with Constructivist and SCT tenets, promoting contextually grounded instruction.

Finally, the fifth theme that was derived from the data emphasizes that **students rely on passive reading strategies**. Some responses of the JHS students of SNHS show that they rely on memorization and repetition rather than active engagement. This presents a reflection of the systemic gaps in the Philippine education system, particularly in developing students' metacognitive skills. Subthemes that were established include **reliance on memorization over critical analysis, poor note-taking habits**, and **lack of awareness of reading strategies**. Such techniques, coupled with cognitive overload, prevent long-term retention and literal comprehension of texts. This is present in statements as:

> *"I read it again sometimes or even in our house just to understand the questions."* (Grade 7 Respondent 8)
>
> *"Memorize keywords but I sometimes do not understand."* (Grade 10 Respondent 7)
>
> *"I don't know how to summarize."* (Grade 10 Respondent 8)
>
> *"Yes, because you need to read and repeat to answer the questions."* (Grade 8 Respondent 1)
>
> *"Students need assistance and remedial instruction regarding the proper or historical use of words before using them in their own sentences." (Teacher Respondent 1)*
>
> *"Students perform well when guided, but they often face challenges when working on their own." (Teacher Respondent 4)*

Rote memorization is a common passive technique utilized in Philippine classrooms, potentially including SNHS. This is because the exam-driven education systems favor recall instead of analytical and critical processing of information (Ahmadi, 2021). According to Nurjanah and Putri (2022), metacognitive impairments such as ineffective summarization cause retention failure, as learners do not have strategies to monitor understanding. Mengduo and Xiaoling (2010) promote active learning strategies such as peer teaching. Nevertheless, traditional pedagogies never incorporate such strategies. In addition, Constructivist Theory and Interactive Compensatory Model (ICM) provide the context for such problems. Constructivism (Piaget, 1973) challenges rote memorization as contrary to active knowledge construction. Passive approaches overlook metacognitive processes such as summarization, which ICM (Kintsch, 1998) points to as essential for filling vocabulary deficiencies. Memorization of keywords without understanding them is an example of neglect of schema-building, which results in shallow comprehension. CLT further states that repetition without synthesis

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augments the germane load inefficiently, since mental effort is misplaced instead of encouraging critical processing.

Intervention Program

Action Plan for Intervention Program on Literacy Reading Comprehension in Silanga National High School

This action plan provides a detailed approach to improving literal reading comprehension at SNHS. It ensures that students receive targeted support and have access to resources that will help them improve their foundational reading skills.

Objectives of the Intervention Program:

1. To improve students' capacity to understand and recall explicit information in texts by emphasizing vocabulary enhancement, sentence structuring, and breaking down complex texts into manageable components.
2. To enhance students' vocabulary, particularly with technical or unfamiliar terms, through interactive learning methods like flashcards, role-playing, and bilingual dictionary use.
3. To encourage students to actively engage with texts by teaching effective note-taking strategies, such as using the 3-Column Method and underlining key details, to help them better absorb and retain information.

Program Monitoring and Evaluation:

1. **Progress Monitoring:** Biweekly comprehension checks (Phil-IRI) to track students' progress in literal reading comprehension.
2. **Data Analysis:** A Reading Task Force (teachers, parents, and students) will meet monthly to analyze data and make necessary adjustments.
3. **Goal:** Move 50% of students from "Beginning" to "Developing" level within one academic year.

Timeline	Objectives/Goals	Intervention Activities	Materials/Resources	Estimated Budget
Week 1-2	**Teacher Training**	- Conduct a 2-week teacher training workshop focused on strategies for improving literal reading comprehension.	- Training manuals, PowerPoint presentations, handouts	PHP 10,000 (for materials and facilitator fees)
Week 3-4	**Vocabulary Building**	- Implement multisensory vocabulary-building activities (flashcards, role-playing, bilingual dictionaries).	- Flashcards, toy experiments, bilingual dictionaries (English Filipino), whiteboards	PHP 5,000
Week 5-6	**Translation Challenges & Cultural Relevance**	- Introduce "Translation Challenges" for	- Literature books (Filipino & Western), worksheets	PHP 3,000

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Timeline	Objectives/Goals	Intervention Activities	Materials/Resources	Estimated Budget
		archaic words and integrate Filipino literature for reading lessons.		
Week 7-8	**Text Deconstruction**	- Introduce text deconstruction: break down complex texts, color-code main points, and simplify sentences.	- Markers, colored pens, printouts of reading passages	PHP 2,500
Week 9-10	**Peer Word-Buddy System**	- Implement the Peer Word-Buddy System where stronger students help struggling peers with weekly vocabulary exercises.	- Word maps, worksheets, student notebooks	PHP 1,500
Week 11-12	**Graphic Organizers**	- Use graphic organizers (timelines, flowcharts) for sequencing texts, especially for science and history.	- Large charts, markers, and printed templates for organizers	PHP 2,000
Week 13-14	**Active Reading & Notetaking**	- Teach students the 3-Column Note-Taking Method and practice active reading strategies.	- Notebooks, printed templates for notetaking, pens	PHP 1,000
Week 15-16	**Structured Reading Environment**	- Establish "quiet zones" for focused reading sessions and implement "Zero-Interruption Protocol."	- Posters for classroom rules, phone storage containers	PHP 3,000
Week 17-18	**Localized Learning Materials**	- Develop Filipino-oriented reading modules and integrate local history and science examples.	- Localized textbooks, local history books, science illustrations	PHP 4,000
Week 19-20	**Text-to-Life Activities**	- Conduct weekly "Text-to-Life" activities (e.g., analyzing	- Local newspaper articles, community posters, project materials	PHP 2,000

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Timeline	Objectives/Goals	Intervention Activities	Materials/Resources	Estimated Budget
		community posters, local farm tools).		
Ongoing (Weekly)	**Choice-Based Reading Circles & Gamified Comprehension**	- Organize reading circles with leveled texts of interest; implement gamified comprehension checks.	- A variety of reading materials (sports articles, mythology), gamified quiz tools	PHP 2,500
Monthly	**Monitoring & Evaluation**	- Conduct biweekly comprehension checks using Phil-IRI; analyze student progress.	- Phil-IRI assessment sheets, data analysis tools	PHP 1,500

Total Estimated Budget: PHP 36,000

4. CONCLUSION

This study provides compelling evidence of the urgent need to strengthen literal reading comprehension among junior high school students of Silanga National High School (SNHS). The findings revealed that nearly half of the students are at the literal level of comprehension, demonstrating limited ability to identify main ideas, recall details, sequence events, and answer recall questions. Such results affirm that the problem lies not only in the students' reading habits but also in systemic instructional practices that fail to cultivate foundational literacy skills. Therefore, curriculum planners and educators must adopt integrative reading strategies that connect classroom reading tasks to real-life contexts, emphasizing vocabulary development, sentence structure analysis, and comprehension-building exercises.

Based on the results, teachers and school administrators play an essential role in implementing effective reading interventions. Administrators should support professional development for teachers through literacy-focused training, localized material development, and systematic monitoring of reading progress. Meanwhile, teachers must use differentiated instruction and scaffolded strategies to address learners' diverse reading needs. When teachers are provided with sufficient training and contextualized materials, the quality of instruction improves, and students are better able to comprehend and apply what they read.
On deeper reflection, the teacher's role goes beyond the simple act of assigning reading passages.

It involves guiding students in building metacognitive awareness, developing strategies to decode unfamiliar vocabulary, and constructing meaning from texts. Teachers should therefore utilize the findings of this research as a basis for creating classroom interventions that encourage active engagement—such as peer reading activities, use of graphic organizers, and contextualized reading exercises. These approaches help transform passive readers into active

learners who can analyze and interpret information effectively. It cannot be denied that students are the primary beneficiaries of literacy improvement programs.

Hence, they must be encouraged to read with purpose, reflect on meaning, and practice comprehension strategies regularly. Developing literal comprehension should not be viewed as a mechanical process but as an empowering step toward becoming critical and independent readers. By doing so, they can bridge the gap between literal and higher-level comprehension, which is essential for academic success.

In summary, this research has shown that the challenges in literal reading comprehension are rooted in both individual and systemic factors. Yet, it also underscores the potential of every learner to improve when provided with proper guidance, engaging materials, and consistent support. The proposed intervention program therefore serves as a practical framework to enhance students' reading abilities. Ultimately, fostering literal comprehension is not merely about reading words—it is about understanding meaning, building confidence, and cultivating a culture of literacy that empowers learners to succeed academically and socially.

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