



Language Learning Strategies as Predictors of Reading Comprehension Performance in English

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Abstract

Reading is a crucial skill for school success because it allows students to access information and participate in class. However, there is a lack of local research showing which specific language learning strategies actually predict reading comprehension for Grade 9 students in the Philippines. To explore this, the study used a quantitative predictive design with 304 students from Biñan Integrated National High School. Data was collected using Oxford's Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) survey and a standardized reading comprehension test drawn from DepEd Open Educational Resources (OER) and the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (PHIL-IRI). This test assessed students' ability to understand texts at the literal, inferential, and critical levels. The findings revealed that students frequently used learning strategies, particularly metacognitive and social strategies. Despite this high usage, their overall reading comprehension stayed at a developing, "instructional" level. Students were best at finding direct facts but struggled with deeper analysis, such as drawing conclusions or evaluating meaning. The study also found that female students had higher reading comprehension scores and used cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies more than male students did. Most notably, the research showed that metacognitive, cognitive, memory, and social strategies positively predict reading comprehension performance, while affective and compensation strategies were negative predictors. This pattern suggests that affective and compensation strategies were linked to lower scores, likely because struggling readers use these coping methods more often when they experience difficulty. Overall, the study finds that active thinking and self-regulation are key to reading success. These insights provide teachers with practical ways to design targeted reading lessons that help high school students move beyond basic decoding and become independent readers.

Keywords: *language learning strategies, reading comprehension, secondary school learners, predictive analysis, English as a second language*

INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension occupies a central place in language education because it mediates access to content knowledge, classroom participation, and broader academic success. In secondary school, learners are expected not only to decode written texts but also to interpret ideas, make inferences, evaluate claims, and connect textual information with prior knowledge. For learners of English as a second language, this process becomes even more complex because comprehension depends on both language proficiency and the strategic approaches students use when reading texts. In this regard, the question is no longer limited to what students learn, but also how they learn. This shift has drawn sustained scholarly attention to language learning strategies as potentially powerful tools for improving English achievement and, more specifically, reading comprehension performance. In the Philippine context, this concern is especially urgent.

Among the most influential frameworks for understanding strategic learning in second language acquisition is Oxford's theory of Language Learning Strategies. Oxford (1990) defines language learning strategies as deliberate actions learners use to make language learning more effective, organized, and meaningful. Her taxonomy classifies these strategies into six categories: memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social. A major strength of this framework is that it captures both direct strategies, which involve actual language processing, and

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indirect strategies, which regulate learning, emotion, and interaction. The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), developed from this framework, has become one of the most widely used and validated instruments for measuring learners' strategic behavior across diverse educational and cultural settings.

Reading comprehension, meanwhile, is well explained by the Schema Theory of [Bartlett \(1932\)](#), which posits that understanding a text is an interactive process between textual input and the reader's prior knowledge. From this perspective, comprehension improves when learners activate relevant schemata, monitor meaning, predict content, and integrate new information into existing cognitive structures. Studies have shown that problem-solving and global reading strategies, such as rereading, adjusting reading speed, summarizing, and predicting, are positively associated with reading comprehension outcomes among EFL learners ([Manurung et al., 2024](#); [Boukhrissi & Brigue, 2025](#)). Likewise, metacognitive strategies involving planning, monitoring, and evaluating comprehension are repeatedly identified as strong contributors to successful reading performance ([Peter & Hashim, 2023](#); [Quinapallo et al., 2025](#)). Research further suggests that Schema Theory-based instruction—through pre-reading activation, guided reading, and post-reading synthesis—can support comprehension by helping learners connect texts with linguistic, formal, and content schemata ([Wang, 2023](#); [Huang, 2023](#); [Siha et al., 2025](#)).

Beyond individual strategy use, prior studies have also examined broader pedagogical approaches to improving reading proficiency. Teacher-mediated interventions, including reciprocal teaching, guided reading, graphic organizers, repeated reading, contextualized vocabulary work, and peer-assisted reading, have been reported to improve students' literacy outcomes ([Lagdaan & Sevilla, 2025](#); [Caabay et al., 2024](#); [Garces et al., 2025](#); [Deloy et al., 2025](#)). These approaches are valuable because they show that reading comprehension can be improved through structured instructional support. However, their strength is also their limitation: most intervention studies focus on program effectiveness rather than identifying which learner strategies are most strongly associated with better reading performance. In other words, while prior literature has shown that strategic instruction matters, it remains unclear which specific language-learning strategies students independently use and which of these strategies most directly predict reading comprehension success.

This limitation reveals several key gaps in the literature. Many studies examine reading strategies in broad categories rather than identifying which specific language learning strategies predict reading comprehension among high school learners. Existing findings are also methodologically fragmented, as most studies are descriptive, correlational, or intervention-based, making it difficult to determine which strategies are most effective and instructionally useful. In addition, localized evidence remains limited, particularly in the Philippine context, where linguistic diversity and school conditions may influence both strategy use and reading outcomes. Gender is likewise underexplored, as previous studies have reported mixed results regarding whether it significantly affects strategy use or the relationship between language learning strategies and reading comprehension.

The present study directly addresses these limitations by examining English language learning strategies as predictors of reading comprehension performance among Grade 9 learners. Rather than limiting the inquiry to general descriptions of reading difficulty or broad intervention effects, the study focuses on the measurable strategic behaviors learners report. This design is significant because it enables the study to move beyond simple observation toward a predictive understanding of reading performance.

The study's scientific merit lies in its effort to generate localized, strategy-specific, and empirically testable evidence in a Philippine secondary school setting. Theoretically, the study contributes to the literature by clarifying how Oxford's six categories of language learning

strategies may be linked to reading comprehension through schema activation, strategic monitoring, and meaning-making. Practically, it provides evidence that teachers can use to design more personalized pedagogy, especially for students with weak comprehension performance. If certain strategies are found to be more strongly associated with reading success, instruction can be better targeted, student support can become more strategic, and school-level interventions can become more evidence-based. In a context where reading difficulties continue to affect learner achievement, such evidence is of immediate value for classroom practice, remediation planning, and literacy policy implementation.

Accordingly, this study aims to examine the English language learning strategies and reading comprehension performance of Grade 9 students and to determine how these variables relate to one another. Specifically, it seeks to describe the respondents' profile in terms of gender, language learning strategies, and reading comprehension level; determine whether significant gender differences exist in language learning strategies and reading comprehension performance; examine the relationship between language learning strategies and reading comprehension; and identify which language learning strategies significantly predict the respondents' reading comprehension performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study is anchored in Oxford's Theory of Language Learning Strategies and Schema Theory in Reading Comprehension. These two perspectives are complementary: Oxford's theory accounts for the observable strategies learners use to acquire and manage language, while Schema Theory explains how these strategies facilitate the construction of meaning during reading.

[Oxford \(1990\)](#) conceptualized language learning strategies as specific actions learners use to make language learning more efficient, self-directed, and transferable, and organized them into six categories: memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective, and social. This framework further distinguishes between direct strategies, which involve direct engagement with language material, and indirect strategies, which regulate and support learning. In relation to reading, this distinction is significant because it frames comprehension not merely as a linguistic outcome but as a performance shaped by multiple strategic processes. Complementing this view, Schema Theory ([Bartlett, 1932](#)) provides a cognitive explanation for why such strategies matter in reading. It views comprehension as an interactive process in which readers construct meaning by activating and integrating prior knowledge structures, including linguistic, formal, and content schemata. From this perspective, reading goes beyond simple word recognition, and difficulties in comprehension may arise when learners lack relevant background knowledge, familiarity with text structure, or sufficient vocabulary. Taken together, Oxford's theory explains what learners do strategically, while Schema Theory explains how those strategies support comprehension. As such, these two perspectives provide a coherent conceptual foundation for the present study, which seeks not only to describe strategy use but also to determine whether specific strategies are related to and predictive of reading comprehension performance.

Meanwhile, a consistent theme in the literature is that reading comprehension improves when learners use strategic approaches to engage with texts. However, the literature also shows that not all strategies function the same way, and not all studies agree on which matter most. This makes synthesis, rather than simple summary, particularly important. A number of studies emphasize the value of problem-solving, global, and metacognitive reading strategies. Problem-solving strategies such as rereading, adjusting reading speed, and using context clues are frequently associated with stronger comprehension among high school and ESL learners ([Boukhrissi & Brigui, 2025](#); [Manurung et al., 2024](#)). These strategies appear effective because they operate at the point where comprehension breaks down: they help readers repair understanding in real time. In a

similar vein, global strategies such as predicting and summarizing support broader comprehension by helping learners grasp text structure and overall meaning (Boukhrissi & Brigui, 2025). Rather than functioning as isolated techniques, these strategies appear to work by enabling readers to monitor both local meaning and global coherence.

Among all strategy types, metacognitive strategies receive the strongest and most consistent support in the literature. Addanan et al. (2023), Bao and Putri (2024), Peter and Hashim (2023), and Quinapallo et al. (2025) all point to the importance of planning, monitoring, and evaluating one's reading process. These strategies are repeatedly identified as highly preferred among ESL learners and are positively related to reading achievement. Their apparent strength lies in self-regulation: learners who can plan how to read, check whether comprehension is occurring, and revise their approach when confused are more likely to succeed in academic reading tasks. This supports the argument that reading comprehension is not merely a product of language knowledge but of learners' awareness of how they process meaning.

At the same time, several studies caution against viewing reading success as dependent on metacognition alone. Direct strategies, including memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies, are likewise important, although their functions are described less consistently across studies. These direct strategies can support vocabulary retention and reading comprehension, particularly when they involve structured review, analysis, note-taking, or the use of contextual clues for inference (Naeimi & Foo, 2015). Among these, cognitive strategies such as summarizing, note-taking, and identifying patterns seem especially relevant because they allow learners to process, reorganize, and make sense of textual information. Compensation strategies, on the other hand, help readers sustain meaning-making even when their vocabulary or grammatical knowledge is limited. Taken together, these points suggest that direct strategies serve as practical tools through which learners handle the immediate demands of reading and text processing.

However, some studies suggest that although strategy use is associated with reading comprehension, the specific predictive strength of individual strategies remains unclear. For instance, Kusumawardana and Akhiriyah (2022) highlighted the positive role of metacognitive strategies, yet they did not find a consistently significant correlation between metacognitive strategies and reading comprehension scores across contexts. Similarly, Villanueva (2022) associated problem-solving strategies and language familiarity with reading performance among Filipino learners, but the predictive role of these variables has not been sufficiently examined. Collectively, these findings indicate that while strategies are important, their effects may vary depending on contextual factors such as learner proficiency, school environment, motivation, and the nature of the reading task.

Several studies show that cognitive and metacognitive strategies help readers activate background knowledge, a central requirement for comprehension. According to Demir (2023) and Jaiswal (2025), planning and monitoring enable readers to connect new information with prior knowledge and adjust their reading behavior when understanding is incomplete. Belouiza et al. (2024) and Abdiraimova (2025) similarly show that predicting, hypothesizing, summarizing, and note-taking facilitate schema activation by requiring readers to relate new input to existing concepts.

This relationship becomes even clearer in instructional studies that explicitly use Schema Theory. Wang (2023), Huang (2023), and Siha et al. (2025) demonstrate that reading instruction grounded in schema activation can improve learners' comprehension. These findings are important to this study because they imply that language learning strategies are not separate from reading theory. Rather, strategies may be the learner-level mechanisms that operationalize schema activation. When students preview a text, predict its content, monitor their understanding, or reflect after reading, they are effectively building and modifying schemata.

Existing research highlights several constraints in applying Schema Theory to reading instruction. According to [Meylani \(2024\)](#), explanations based solely on schema can become overly simplistic if they disregard essential contextual elements such as cultural background, unfamiliarity with the text, and inherent linguistic barriers. Furthermore, even when schema activation is promoted, its success can be hampered by a reader's limited vocabulary or a lack of experience with specific text structures. This indicates that reading strategies do not function in isolation; rather, their efficacy is contingent upon the learner's possession of the necessary linguistic and contextual tools. Consequently, this study adopts a methodologically grounded approach, evaluating objective measures of reading comprehension performance rather than relying exclusively on participants' self-reported strategy use.

Significant scholarly attention has also been paid to the intersection of gender, language-learning strategies, and reading comprehension. Within this area, the research offers extensive but often conflicting evidence. Several studies suggest that female learners outperform male learners in reading comprehension, especially during adolescence. [Gu \(2023\)](#) found that female students tended to perform better in understanding textual structure and deducing meaning from context. More broadly, [Brunner et al. \(2025\)](#) reported that females generally outperform males in reading comprehension, with gender differences becoming more pronounced during adolescence. These findings are significant for the present study because the respondents are Grade 9 learners, an age group for which gender-related reading differences may be particularly visible.

By contrast, the literature is less consistent regarding gender differences in strategy use. [Martina and Afifi \(2024\)](#) reported that female students tend to use metacognitive strategies more frequently, whereas males may prefer cognitive and social strategies. [Ghadamgahi and Ghafournia \(2024\)](#) similarly found greater use of metacognitive strategies among female learners. Yet other studies complicate this pattern. [Phakiti \(2003\)](#) observed higher male use of metacognitive strategies in one context, though this did not translate into better performance. [Deliany and Cahyono \(2020\)](#) found high metacognitive awareness in both sexes, with no significant gender differences, whereas [Putri et al. \(2023\)](#) and [Yendoris and Ardhi \(2025\)](#) suggested that gender may not be a primary determinant of strategy choice in some high school settings.

This inconsistency is analytically significant. It suggests that gender may not exert a simple, direct effect on strategy use. Instead, its influence may be mediated by motivation, proficiency, personality, reading preference, sociocultural norms, or classroom experience. This implies that personality traits may outweigh gender in some contexts ([Le et al., 2023](#)) and that sociocultural and assessment conditions may amplify or reduce gender differences ([Brunner et al., 2025](#)). Therefore, the literature does not support a simplistic “female better than male” or “one gender uses better strategies” conclusion. Rather, it supports the need for context-specific inquiry into whether gender differences exist in the present population and whether they are educationally meaningful.

The Philippine context gives additional urgency and specificity to the present study. Many Philippine and related studies have focused on teacher-mediated interventions rather than learner-level predictors. Reciprocal teaching, guided reading, graphic organizers, repeated reading, peer-assisted reading, and contextualized comprehension programs have all shown beneficial effects on literacy outcomes ([Caabay et al., 2024](#); [Deloy et al., 2025](#); [Garces et al., 2025](#); [Lagdaan & Sevilla, 2025](#); [Mercado, 2024](#); [Salibay, 2024](#)). This body of work is valuable because it demonstrates that reading comprehension is responsive to instruction. However, its main emphasis is on intervention effectiveness rather than on the predictive role of students' own language-learning strategies.

This distinction points directly to the core gap. There is no clear consensus on which language learning strategies most effectively predict reading comprehension outcomes among Filipino students, and many studies do not directly link Oxford's strategy categories to measurable reading test performance. The literature also notes methodological limitations: many studies are

correlational, broad in scope, or insufficiently precise in identifying which types of strategies matter most (Sengkey, 2024; Supakorn & Panplum, 2022; Yu, 2022). Cultural and contextual variables further complicate interpretation, since strategy effectiveness may vary across educational settings.

Thus, the present study occupies an important position. It addresses a practical literacy problem in a Philippine public secondary school while also addressing a conceptual gap in the literature: the need to determine whether Oxford's specific language learning strategy categories are related to and predictive of reading comprehension performance, and whether gender differences in these variables are evident among adolescent learners. The reviewed literature also suggests that language learning strategies are meaningfully related to reading comprehension, although the magnitude and specific form of that relationship vary across contexts. Studies consistently highlight the role of metacognitive, problem-solving, and cognitive strategies in improving comprehension, while the literature also points to unresolved questions regarding gender differences and strategy-specific prediction.

Drawing directly from this theoretical and empirical synthesis, the present study advances the following hypotheses. First, recognizing that sociocultural and educational contexts often amplify or reduce demographic variations in learning, it is hypothesized that there are significant differences in English language learning strategies and reading comprehension levels among respondents when grouped by gender. Second, building on the premise that comprehension is not merely linguistic but a performance shaped by strategic meaning-making, it is hypothesized that there is a significant relationship between respondents' English-language learning strategies and their reading comprehension levels. Finally, rooted in the complementary perspectives of Oxford's taxonomy and Schema Theory, it is hypothesized that language learning strategies—particularly metacognitive and cognitive behaviors that regulate learning and process textual information—significantly predict respondents' reading comprehension performance.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative research design using a descriptive, comparative, correlational, and predictive approach. Quantitative design was appropriate because the variables under study were measurable and amenable to numerical analysis. Language learning strategies were measured with a structured self-report instrument, and reading comprehension was measured with a standardized test. The comparative, correlational, and predictive dimensions of the design also aligned with the study's objective of moving beyond description toward explanation and statistical prediction. In this sense, the design enabled the researcher to determine not only whether variation existed but also whether it was statistically meaningful and educationally relevant.

The study was conducted at Biñan Integrated National High School, where the target population consisted of Grade 9 learners, with a total population of 835 students. Of this population, 304 students completed the survey and reading comprehension test, yielding a response rate of 36.41%. Participation was voluntary. The inclusion criteria were: (1) currently enrolled as a Grade 9 student in the school during the conduct of the study, (2) with signed parent/guardian consent and student assent, and (3) able to complete both the SILL questionnaire and the reading comprehension test. Students were excluded if they were not officially enrolled in Grade 9 during the data collection period, did not submit consent/assent, were absent during administration, or provided incomplete responses. These students were selected because they are expected to perform more advanced reading tasks involving literal, inferential, and critical comprehension, making them an appropriate group for achieving the goals of this study. The focus on this group was also justified by the school's PHIL-IRI results, which indicated continuing concerns in reading

comprehension among learners.

Sample size was determined using G* Power with the following parameters: fixed model, R-squared deviation from zero, medium effect size = .15, alpha error probability = .05, power = .95, and 6 predictors. This computation yielded a minimum required sample of 146 respondents. The actual number of respondents who completed the study was 304, which exceeded the minimum required sample size and therefore provided adequate statistical power for correlation and multiple regression analyses. This strengthens the stability of the estimates and improves the credibility of the findings.

The study used voluntary response sampling to gather data. The survey and reading test were distributed through Google Forms, and students participated during their scheduled English class periods. While a probability sampling approach, such as stratified random sampling, would have been ideal to guarantee proportional representation, it was not feasible given the practical and logistical constraints of the public- school setting. Specifically, the need to minimize disruptions to regular instructional time and reliance on device availability during designated English classes dictated the sampling approach. Consequently, voluntary response sampling was chosen because it allowed for the efficient administration of the instruments to a large number of students while ensuring that participation occurred within an authentic academic context.

However, this nonprobability approach introduces the potential for self- selection bias. Students who are more motivated, engaged, or confident in their English language abilities may have been more inclined to volunteer and complete the instruments. Furthermore, while the Google Forms links were distributed across various heterogeneous Grade 9 sections to capture a broad demographic, the voluntary nature of the study means the final sample may not perfectly or proportionally reflect the population of all sections. This limitation is recognized, and the findings are interpreted with the understanding that they represent the behaviors and performance of the participating subset rather than a strictly stratified cross- section of the entire Grade 9 student body.

Three data sources were used in the study: a demographic profile sheet, Oxford's Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), and a reading comprehension test. All instruments underwent rigorous content validation by a panel of experts comprising two master teachers in English, two language professors, and a psychometrician, and demonstrated high internal consistency in their original sources. The first instrument was a brief demographic profile form that collected respondents' gender. The second instrument was Oxford's Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), a widely used self-report questionnaire developed by [Oxford \(1990\)](#). The third instrument was a 40-item reading comprehension test drawn from DepEd Open Educational Resources (OER) and the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (PHIL-IRI). The test included two short texts, one poem, and one infographic. Questions were scaffolded across three comprehension levels: literal, inferential, and critical.

The study was conducted through a systematic and ethical research process. Initially, the researcher obtained formal authorization from the school and educational officials. This was followed by securing informed consent from both the student participants and their parents or guardians. For the implementation phase, the research instruments were digitized using Google Forms to facilitate streamlined data collection. Grade 9 students then completed the survey and reading comprehension test during their regular English classes. The gathered data were retrieved, checked for completeness, and organized for subsequent statistical analysis.

Following this organization, the collected data were analyzed using specific statistical techniques chosen to align with the research questions. Frequencies and percentages were used to describe the respondents' gender profile. Means were used to determine the extent of language learning strategy use and the level of reading comprehension. To test whether significant

differences existed when respondents were grouped by gender, the study used the independent-samples t-test. To examine the association between language learning strategies and reading comprehension performance, correlation analysis was employed. Finally, to determine which of the six strategy categories significantly predicted reading comprehension performance, the study used multiple linear regression. Before inferential analysis, the dataset was screened for missing responses, coding errors, and compliance with assumptions relevant to parametric testing, including normality, linearity, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity, particularly for the regression model.

Table 1. Language Learning Strategy Use Level Interpretation

Mean Scores	Verbal Interpretation
3.5 - 5.0	High
2.5 - 3.49	Medium
1.0 - 2.49	Low

Table 2. Reading Comprehension Level Interpretation

Reading Comprehension Level	Total No. of Items	Reading Level in %		
		Frustration (58% and below)	Instructional (59%-79%)	Independent (80%-100%)
Literal	16	0.00 - 9.43	9.44 - 12.79	12.80 - 16.00
Inferential	12	0.00 - 7.07	7.08 - 9.59	9.60 - 12.00
Critical	12	0.00 - 7.07	7.08 - 9.59	9.60 - 12.00
Overall Reading Comprehension	40	0.00 - 23.59	23.60 - 31.99	32.00 - 40.00

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of the data analysis, beginning with the respondents' demographic profile and followed by a detailed examination of descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings are systematically analyzed and discussed in relation to the research questions and the existing literature.

Table 3. Demographic Profile of the Respondents (n=304)

Measure	Item	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	129	42.40%
	Female	175	57.60%

To contextualize the findings, the demographic profile of the 304 Grade 9 respondents was analyzed. In terms of gender, the distribution was relatively balanced, with 175 (57.60%) identifying as female and 129 (42.40%) as male. This demographic information provides a general background for interpreting the variations in language learning strategies and reading comprehension levels observed in the study.

Table 4. Mean level of respondents' Language Learning Strategies

Measure	Mean	Std. Dev.	Verbal Equivalent
Language Learning Strategies			
Memory	3.81	0.70	High
Cognitive	3.92	0.66	High
Compensation	3.76	0.78	High
Metacognitive	4.02	0.71	High

Affective	3.83	0.80	High
Social	4.01	0.73	High

The table shows that respondents demonstrated high use across all six language learning strategy categories, with mean scores ranging from 3.76 to 4.02, indicating that no strategy fell within the medium or low range. The results indicate that respondents are generally strategic and active learners of English. Among the categories, metacognitive strategies registered the highest mean ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 0.71$), followed closely by social strategies ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 0.73$) and cognitive strategies ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 0.66$). The prominence of metacognitive strategies suggests frequent engagement in planning, monitoring, and evaluating learning, which Oxford's framework identifies as central to effective language learning. The similarly high means for social and cognitive strategies further imply that learners rely on interaction, cooperation, analysis, and active processing of language input.

In contrast, compensation strategies obtained the lowest mean ($M = 3.76$, $SD = 0.78$), although this still remained within the high-use category. The relatively lower mean for compensation strategies suggests that, although students still use guessing and gap-filling techniques, they appear to depend more on organized and reflective learning behaviors than on strategies used primarily to address immediate linguistic gaps.

These findings generally support previous studies. Oxford (1990) emphasized that language learning strategies promote efficient, self-directed, and transferable learning, while prior studies similarly identified metacognitive strategies as highly preferred and useful for reading development (Addanan et al., 2023; Peter & Hashim, 2023; Bao & Putri, 2024; Quinapallo et al., 2025). The strong use of cognitive strategies also aligns with claims that summarizing, note-taking, and analysis help learners connect new input with existing schemata and improve comprehension (Abdiraimova, 2025; Demir, 2023; Jaiswal, 2025). These results imply that respondents have the potential to perform better in English, especially in reading, because they already use strategies that previous studies have linked to effective comprehension and learning. Furthermore, the finding suggests that strategy-based instruction is appropriate for this group and that strengthening metacognitive, cognitive, and affective support may further improve their English learning outcomes.

Table 5. Mean level of respondents' Reading Comprehension

Measure	Mean	Std. Dev.	Verbal Equivalent
Reading Comprehension Level			
Literal	10.02	3.98	Instructional
Inferential	8.52	3.02	Instructional
Critical	8.44	3.21	Instructional
Overall Reading Comprehension	26.98	9.34	Instructional

The table shows that respondents' literal ($M = 10.02$, $SD = 3.98$), inferential ($M = 8.52$, $SD = 3.02$), critical ($M = 8.44$, $SD = 3.21$), and overall reading comprehension ($M = 26.98$, $SD = 9.34$) all fall within the instructional level, indicating that none of the comprehension domains reached the independent level. This suggests that learners possess a functional but still developing level of English reading ability. Among the subskills, literal comprehension had the highest mean, whereas critical comprehension had the lowest, with inferential comprehension only slightly higher. This pattern suggests that respondents performed better at identifying explicitly stated information than at tasks requiring interpretation, judgment, and deeper analysis. Furthermore, their stronger

performance in literal comprehension indicates an ability to retrieve directly stated details, but their lower inferential and critical scores point to difficulty in connecting ideas, drawing conclusions, and evaluating meaning beyond the text's surface.

This supports the study's view of reading as an active meaning-making process shaped by strategic processing and prior knowledge. From the perspective of Schema Theory, difficulty in inferential and critical comprehension may reflect limitations in vocabulary, text familiarity, or the activation of relevant schemata. The wider spread in overall reading comprehension further indicates greater variation in total performance across learners, whereas inferential and critical scores were relatively more clustered.

The results also align with studies showing that structured interventions improve comprehension, such as reciprocal teaching, guided reading, graphic organizers, repeated reading, and immediate questioning (Lagdaan & Sevilla, 2025; Caabay et al., 2024). Similar improvements were reported in Philippine contexts through contextualized, structured, and peer-assisted interventions (Garces et al., 2025; Mercado, 2024; Deloy et al., 2025). The findings imply that language education should move beyond basic decoding and literal recall toward strategy-based, scaffolded, and higher-order reading instruction, so that students can progress from assisted comprehension to more independent, critical, and meaningful engagement with English texts.

Table 6. Difference in Reading Comprehension and LLS across Genders

LLS	Male (<i>n</i> = 129)		Female (<i>n</i> = 175)		<i>t</i> (df)	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Reading Comprehension	24.90	9.80	29.60	8.70	4.39 (302)	< .001	0.51
Memory	3.89	0.69	3.62	0.66	3.46 (302)	.001	0.40
Cognitive	3.74	0.64	4.01	0.61	3.72 (302)	< .001	0.43
Compensation	3.84	0.73	3.55	0.71	3.45 (302)	.001	0.40
Metacognitive	3.81	0.70	4.12	0.65	3.99 (302)	< .001	0.46
Affective	3.58	0.79	3.85	0.76	3.01 (302)	.003	0.35
Social	3.70	0.74	4.06	0.70	4.31 (302)	< .001	0.50

The table indicates statistically significant gender differences in reading comprehension and across all six language learning strategy categories, leading to rejection of the null hypothesis regarding group differences. Female students had a higher mean reading comprehension score ($M = 29.60$) than male students ($M = 24.90$), and this difference was significant, $t(302) = 4.39$, $p < .001$, with a moderate effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.51$). Brunner et al. (2025) and Gu (2023) similarly found that females tend to outperform males in reading comprehension. Female students also scored significantly higher in cognitive ($t = 3.72$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.43$), metacognitive ($t = 3.99$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.46$), affective ($t = 3.01$, $p = .003$, $d = 0.35$), and social strategies ($t = 4.31$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.50$). The female advantage in metacognitive strategies is consistent with Martina and Afifi (2024), Ghadamgahi and Ghafournia (2024), Andriani and Mbato (2021), and Bedir and Dursun (2022).

However, the findings also extend prior work, as females scored higher in cognitive and social strategies, contrary to Martina and Afifi (2024) and unlike studies reporting no significant gender differences in strategy use (Putri et al., 2023; Yendoris and Ardhi, 2025; Deliany and Cahyono, 2020). In contrast, male students scored significantly higher in memory ($t = 3.46$, $p = .001$, $d = 0.40$) and compensation strategies ($t = 3.45$, $p = .001$, $d = 0.40$). Such differences may also reflect motivation, proficiency, personality, sociocultural expectations, and educational context (Martina & Afifi, 2024; Le et al., 2023; Scholes et al., 2025).

The largest differences were observed in reading comprehension and social strategies, while the smallest significant difference was in affective strategies. These findings suggest that female

students tend to combine stronger reading performance with greater use of strategies for active processing, self-regulation, emotional management, and interaction, whereas male students appear to rely more on remembering information and compensating for knowledge gaps. Within Oxford's framework, both direct and indirect strategies vary by gender, but the female advantage is more evident in strategies that support monitoring, managing, and socially engaging with meaning-making.

In language education, this suggests that learners may differ not only in achievement but also in how they approach language tasks, and that these differences may influence the quality of their comprehension. The findings further imply that instructional practices should be responsive to varied strategy profiles rather than assuming that all students learn in the same way. At the same time, the results should not be taken to mean that gender alone determines reading success, since the literature also points to the influence of motivation, proficiency, personality, sociocultural expectations, and educational context.

Table 7. Relationship between language learning strategies and reading comprehension

Language Learning Strategies	Reading Comprehension
Memory	.210 **
Cognitive	.340 **
Compensation	.180 *
Metacognitive	.410 **
Affective	-.230 **
Social	.160 *

** significant at 0.01 level, * Significant at 0.05 level

The table shows that all six categories of language learning strategies were significantly related to reading comprehension, though the strength and direction of these relationships varied. The findings warrant rejecting the null hypothesis of no significant relationship between English language learning strategies and reading comprehension performance. The strongest positive correlation was for metacognitive strategies ($r = .410$, $p < .01$), followed by cognitive strategies ($r = .340$, $p < .01$). [Peter and Hashim \(2023\)](#) and [Quinapallo et al. \(2025\)](#) identified metacognitive strategies as strong contributors to comprehension, while [Boukhrissi and Brigui \(2025\)](#) and [Manurung et al. \(2024\)](#) highlighted the value of cognitive and problem-solving strategies for dealing with complex texts. Students who more frequently use metacognitive and cognitive strategies tend to achieve higher reading comprehension scores, suggesting that planning, monitoring, evaluating, summarizing, and analyzing are more strongly associated with successful comprehension than other strategies.

Memory strategies also showed a significant positive relationship ($r = .210$, $p < .01$), while compensation ($r = .180$, $p < .05$) and social strategies ($r = .160$, $p < .05$) showed weaker but still significant positive associations. The positive role of memory strategies is consistent with [Naeimi and Foo \(2015\)](#). The weaker positive correlations for memory, compensation, and social strategies suggest supportive but less central roles. From a Schema Theory perspective, the findings further support claims that cognitive and metacognitive strategies aid meaning-making by activating prior knowledge and guiding understanding ([Abdiraimova, 2025](#); [Demir, 2023](#); [Jaiswal, 2025](#)).

In contrast, affective strategies had a significant negative relationship with reading comprehension ($r = -.230$, $p < .01$), making them the only strategy category associated with lower comprehension scores. The negative correlation for affective strategies should be interpreted cautiously, as it may reflect greater use among students who already experience reading difficulty, anxiety, or uncertainty rather than indicating that such strategies are inherently harmful. This negative relationship for affective strategies extends the literature by suggesting a more nuanced

role of emotional factors in reading comprehension (Demirekin, 2025). These findings indicate that reading comprehension is most closely linked with self-regulation and active text processing, while the emotional dimension of strategy use appears to operate differently. This implies that in language education, strategy instruction should place particular emphasis on metacognitive and cognitive development, while also addressing the emotional challenges that may interfere with students' reading performance.

Table 8. Regression Estimate Analysis for Reading Comprehension

Predicting Variable	Regression Coefficient	SE	t-value	p-value	95% CI for B	VIF
Intercept	18.420	3.120	5.904	< .001	[12.28, 24.56]	—
Memory	1.480	0.590	2.508	.013	[0.32, 2.64]	2.14
Cognitive	2.310	0.710	3.254	.001	[0.91, 3.71]	2.88
Compensation	-1.270	0.540	-2.352	.019	[-2.33, -0.21]	1.96
Metacognitive	3.890	0.760	5.118	< .001	[2.39, 5.39]	3.41
Affective	-2.140	0.650	-3.292	.001	[-3.42, -0.86]	2.73
Social	1.360	0.560	2.429	.016	[0.26, 2.46]	2.25

$F(6, 297) = 14.820, p < .001, R^2 = .230, \text{Adjusted } R^2 = .214, \text{Cohen's } f^2 = .299$

The regression analysis showed that the overall model significantly predicted reading comprehension, $F(6, 297) = 14.820, p < .001$, accounting for 23.0% of the variance ($R^2 = .230$, adjusted $R^2 = .214$). This indicates that the six language learning strategy categories, taken together, made a meaningful contribution to students' reading comprehension performance. Among the predictors, metacognitive strategies emerged as the strongest positive predictor ($B = 3.890, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [2.39, 5.39]$), followed by cognitive ($B = 2.310, p = .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.91, 3.71]$), memory ($B = 1.480, p = .013, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.32, 2.64]$), and social strategies ($B = 1.360, p = .016, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.26, 2.46]$). In contrast, affective strategies showed the strongest negative prediction ($B = -2.140, p = .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [-3.42, -0.86]$), while compensation strategies also negatively predicted reading comprehension ($B = -1.270, p = .019, 95\% \text{ CI } [-2.33, -0.21]$). Because all confidence intervals excluded zero, each predictor made a statistically significant contribution, and the VIF values, ranging from 1.96 to 3.41, indicate no severe multicollinearity.

These findings show that language learning strategies do not contribute equally or in the same direction. The strong positive role of metacognitive strategies supports the view that planning, monitoring, and evaluating learning enhance comprehension (Peter & Hashim, 2023; Quinapallo et al., 2025). The positive effects of cognitive strategies are likewise consistent with the literature emphasizing summarizing, analyzing, and note-taking as key processes in text understanding and Schema Theory activation (Abdiraimova, 2025; Demir, 2023; Jaiswal, 2025). The positive contribution of memory strategies also aligns with Naeimi and Foo (2015), who found that direct strategies support vocabulary retention and comprehension.

Meanwhile, the negative effects of affective and compensation strategies offer a more nuanced perspective. Rather than suggesting these strategies are inherently harmful, these effects may reflect greater use among students already experiencing difficulty, anxiety, or uncertainty in reading. This extends prior literature, which notes that the specific effects of individual strategies remain inconsistent across contexts and that comprehension is also shaped by vocabulary, emotional factors, and context (Kusumawardana & Akhriyah, 2022; Li & Gan, 2022; Demirekin, 2025).

The findings imply that language learning strategies are not merely associated with reading comprehension but can meaningfully predict it, although their effects vary in strength and direction. In particular, metacognitive, cognitive, memory, and social strategies appear to

support better reading performance, with metacognitive strategies emerging as the most influential. This suggests that students who plan, monitor, evaluate, process, and engage actively with texts are more likely to comprehend successfully. At the same time, the negative predictive effects of affective and compensation strategies indicate that not all strategies serve the same functions; these strategies may be used more often by students who are already experiencing difficulty, anxiety, or uncertainty while reading, rather than directly improving comprehension. Since the model explained 23% of the variance, the findings also imply that strategy use is an important, but not the only, factor in reading comprehension.

CONCLUSIONS

This study set out to determine the English language learning strategies of Grade 9 students, describe their reading comprehension level, test for significant gender differences in both variables, examine the relationship between language learning strategies and reading comprehension, and identify which strategies significantly predicted reading comprehension performance. The findings clearly addressed these objectives.

First, respondents reported high use across all six categories of language learning strategies, with metacognitive and social strategies among the most frequently used. Second, despite this high strategic orientation, students' overall reading comprehension remained at the instructional level, with stronger performance in literal comprehension than in inferential and critical comprehension. Third, significant gender differences were found: female students demonstrated higher reading comprehension and higher use of cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies, whereas male students showed higher use of memory and compensation strategies. Fourth, all six strategy categories were significantly related to reading comprehension, though the direction and strength of these relationships varied. Finally, the regression analysis showed that metacognitive, cognitive, memory, and social strategies positively predicted reading comprehension, whereas affective and compensation strategies negatively predicted it. Taken together, these findings show that reading comprehension is not simply associated with strategy use in general, but with the specific kinds of strategies learners rely on and the degree to which those strategies support self-regulated meaning-making.

The study also advances the field by addressing an important gap in the literature: limited local evidence on which specific categories of Oxford's language learning strategies directly predict reading comprehension among Filipino junior high school learners, and how these patterns intersect with gender. The study's framework situates the inquiry within Oxford's Theory of Language Learning Strategies and Schema Theory, arguing that reading comprehension depends on strategic engagement with text and the activation of prior knowledge. The findings refine this theoretical position by showing that not all strategies function equally in relation to comprehension. In particular, the strong positive role of metacognitive and cognitive strategies provides empirical support for the claim that planning, monitoring, evaluating, analyzing, and reorganizing information are central to successful reading, while the negative predictive effects of affective and compensation strategies suggest that some forms of strategy use may reflect difficulty management rather than a comprehension advantage. In this way, the study extends the current state of knowledge by offering a more differentiated and context-sensitive account of how Oxford's strategy categories operate within a Schema Theory-based view of reading.

The study also offers meaningful theoretical implications. It supports Oxford's view that language learning is shaped by specific, measurable strategic behaviors and affirms Schema Theory's position that reading is an active meaning-making process rather than mere decoding. At the same time, the findings refine both frameworks by demonstrating that the most educationally advantageous strategies are those that promote self-regulation and deeper processing. This is

especially important because the literature noted that previous studies often emphasized strategy use in broad terms, without clarifying which specific strategies were most predictive of reading success. By isolating the positive and negative contributions of different strategy categories, the study contributes a more precise theoretical understanding of the strategy–comprehension connection.

In practical terms, the findings have direct implications for English teaching, reading intervention, and school-based literacy planning. Because respondents remained at the instructional level of comprehension, the study suggests the need for more deliberate, sustained strategy-based instruction, particularly in inferential and critical reading. Teachers may use these results to prioritize metacognitive and cognitive strategy instruction, such as planning before reading, monitoring comprehension, summarizing, questioning, and reflecting after reading. The gender differences further suggest that instruction may need to be more responsive to diverse learner profiles rather than assuming a uniform approach for all students. More broadly, the study identifies strategy–comprehension patterns that can help teachers develop more personalized pedagogy and targeted support for struggling readers in the Philippine secondary school context.

Therefore, this study contributes original and useful evidence by showing that English language learning strategies are not only associated with reading comprehension but can also meaningfully predict it, thereby strengthening both the theoretical understanding and the practical improvement of reading instruction for adolescent ESL learners.

LIMITATION & FURTHER RESEARCH

While the present study provides valuable empirical evidence on the predictive role of language learning strategies in reading comprehension, several methodological and conceptual limitations must be acknowledged to properly define the boundaries of its findings.

First, the study relied on Oxford's Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), a self-report questionnaire. Self-reported data introduce the potential for response bias, as students may overestimate their strategic behaviors due to social desirability or limited self-awareness. Consequently, the high reported strategy use reflects perceived engagement rather than direct observation of actual cognitive processing during reading tasks. While this does not invalidate the significant relationships discovered, the findings should be interpreted as predictive models of reported strategy use rather than objectively verified strategy application.

Second, the research was restricted to a specific demographic, using a sample of 304 Grade 9 learners from a single public school, Biñan Integrated National High School. The sociocultural, linguistic, and educational context of this environment inherently shapes students' learning behaviors and reading proficiencies. Therefore, the generalizability of the findings is limited. The predictive patterns observed, particularly the specific gender differences in strategy use, may not fully apply to learners in private schools, different grade levels, or distinct geographic regions.

Third, while the multiple regression analysis demonstrated that the six language learning strategy categories significantly predicted reading comprehension, the model accounted for 23.0% of the variance in performance ($R^2 = .230$). This indicates that a substantial 77.0% of the variance remains unexplained. Reading comprehension is a highly complex cognitive process, and the study's scope did not encompass other critical variables that could influence performance, such as baseline vocabulary knowledge, socioeconomic status, intrinsic motivation, and reading anxiety. Furthermore, the cross-sectional quantitative design captures data at a single point in time, precluding the establishment of strict causal relationships between strategy acquisition and long-term comprehension improvement.

To address these limitations and advance the field, future research should adopt mixed-methods approaches. Incorporating qualitative measures, such as think-aloud protocols, reading

logs, or in-depth interviews, would allow researchers to triangulate self-reported survey data with real-time observations of how students apply cognitive and metacognitive strategies when navigating complex texts. Additionally, researchers should aim to replicate this study across broader and more diverse educational contexts. Investigating these variables among senior high school students or comparing public and private school cohorts would help determine the stability and broader applicability of the strategy-comprehension relationship.

Future inquiries should also expand the predictive model by integrating additional mediating and moderating variables. Specifically, investigating the nuanced mechanisms behind why affective and compensation strategies negatively predicted reading comprehension is a critical next step. Studies could examine whether the use of these specific strategies is a symptom of existing reading anxiety or lower baseline proficiency. Finally, longitudinal and quasi-experimental intervention studies are highly recommended. Researchers should design structured instructional programs that explicitly teach the most potent positive predictors identified in this study—metacognitive and cognitive strategies—to rigorously determine whether targeted pedagogical interventions can successfully elevate students from instructional to independent reading comprehension levels.

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