

Reading Levels and English Performance of Grade 9 Learners

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Abstract

Studies on the relationship between reading skills and English proficiency are central to academic research, as the cognitive processes of achieving overall language proficiency and learning complex information in written and spoken forms are most often achieved through reading. Thus, this study investigated the relationship between reading proficiency and English performance among Grade 9 learners ($N = 260$) selected via stratified random sampling. Framed within the Simple View of Reading, the study examined how word recognition and language comprehension map onto English outcomes. Using a descriptive–correlational design, reading abilities were evaluated through a standardized test based on the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil–IRI), while academic grades measured English performance. The research targeted three specific objectives: profiling learners' word recognition and comprehension levels, assessing their overall English performance, and determining the significant relationship between these foundational reading dimensions and their academic English outcomes. Using the Phil–IRI, reading performance was evaluated across exact criterion–based levels: word recognition [independent ($\geq 97\%$), instructional (90–96%), frustration ($\leq 89\%$)] and reading comprehension [independent (90–100%), instructional (75–89%), frustration ($\leq 74\%$)]. Meanwhile, English performance was measured using academic grades aligned with the DepEd K–12 grading system (Did Not Meet Expectations [Below 77], Fairly Satisfactory [75–79], Satisfactory [80–84], Very Satisfactory [85–89], and Outstanding [90–100]). Descriptive analysis revealed a literacy disparity: learners achieved an instructional level in word recognition ($M = 92.51$) but collapsed to the frustration level in comprehension ($M = 47.15$). Overall English performance was satisfactory ($M = 84.05$). In addition, Spearman's rho revealed a significant, perfect positive correlation ($p = 1.000$, $p < .001$) between reading dimensions and English outcomes, validating that comprehension deficits heavily constrain academic achievement despite adequate decoding skills. Inferential tests (t -tests) showed that while word recognition was stable, comprehension and English proficiency were heavily modulated by home literacy environments, specifically parents' educational attainment ($p < .001$). A key limitation is the absolute correlation coefficient, which requires caution when interpreting dataset



characteristics. In practice, these findings necessitate a shift from decoding-focused instruction to language-rich, comprehension-centered interventions to bridge systemic literacy gaps and enhance advanced language performance.

Keywords: *Academic achievement, english proficiency, grade 9 learners, Phil-IRI (Philippine Informal Reading Inventory), reading comprehension, word recognition*

Bio-profiles

Mharnelisa Deon Baylon is an accomplished English educator at Handumanan National High School, working under the Department of Education. She holds a Bachelor of Secondary Education with a major in English and is currently completing a Master of Arts in Education, also majoring in English. She has taught in both local and international settings and has gained considerable experience in language teaching and in the student-focused approach. She is a licensed professional teacher and has received Outstanding Teacher awards for several consecutive years. Motivated by a genuine passion for education, she is dedicated to improving students' literacy, critical thinking, and communication skills.

Lourdes E. Guanzon is a distinguished EPP teacher at Handumanan Elementary School-1 under the Department of Education. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Elementary Education with a concentration in Filipino, a Master of Arts in Education with a major in Administration and Supervision, and a Doctor of Philosophy in Educational Management. With her extensive experience in teaching and learner-centered approaches, she has been recognized as an Outstanding Master Teacher three times over nearly three years. Driven by a deep passion for her students, she is committed to advancing literacy and numeracy skills. She developed the innovative Project 4Ms, which earned 3rd place at the division-level innovation showdown. Lourdes is known for her dedication, hard work, and resilience.

Introduction

Rationale

Reading proficiency is a necessary foundation for a student's learning and development at the school level. It serves as an important tool for comprehending, responding to, and reflecting on various written texts throughout their lives. Internationally, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 4), which focus on equity and quality in education, are crucial in acquiring knowledge and skills. Specifically, target 4.1 of this SDG, which focuses on the immediate need to possess functional literacy and basic reading skills, makes reading competence a national and international concern.

Literacy development in the Philippines is addressed in the K to 12 program under the Department of Education, where language development and reading skills are monitored and measured using the Phil-IRI test (Philippine Informal Reading Inventory), a diagnostic tool that identifies and categorizes students based on their word recognition and comprehension skills (DepEd, 2018, 2019). Despite word recognition being seen as a vital component of reading skills needed for achieving all-around academic success (Torres, 2019; Requiso-Jimenez & Bascos-Ocampo, 2022; Acedillo, 2023), recent local and international readings clearly indicate that many Filipino learners continue to struggle at their respective levels of reading competence. A blatant and



alarming recurring outcome of the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) is that Filipino learners are extremely low performers in reading literacy, demonstrating a severe lack of foundational reading skills. Furthermore, current institutional interventions for reading are insufficient to meet learners' reading developmental needs (Department of Education, 2019). Given these reports, it is now high time to refine interventions in line with the goals of SDG 4.

These local findings are supported by several empirical studies showing that many Filipino learners lack important literacy skills (word recognition, reading comprehension) to varying degrees, and that most learners remain frustrated with reading (De Guzman & Abaoag, 2023; Obar, 2023). The studies on these local reading issues have a significant gap: they do not examine whether word recognition and reading comprehension can be investigated, and whether their composite correlation with English performance among high school students can be examined. Education programs assume that good reading proficiency is equated with good English grades, but to what extent can a relationship between word recognition, reading comprehension, and composite scores with students' English performance among high school students be traced and observed in our context? Typical interventions in schools focus solely on decoding; this overlooks the role of both word recognition and reading comprehension working together, which ultimately define an individual's ability to master academic texts as the reading and comprehension demands of the curriculum rise as students move to higher grade levels.

The general English academic performance in most sections among Grade 9 students varied: some were outstanding, while others were poor. Overall, the mean scores for most classes are medium to good, with room for improvement. The low-performing sections demonstrate poor comprehension and communication, identifying where to focus to help struggling learners improve their academic English performance. Aligned with SDG 4 goals and the nation's literacy programs, this study aims to quantify the reading proficiency of the Grade 9 learners using the Phil-IRI and measure the relationship of students' reading proficiency to students' English performance in a public secondary school, hoping to aid educators and policymakers in formulating more effective and equitable literacy interventions.

Literature Review

The review of literature on the relationships among the reading levels, that is, word recognition and comprehension, and Grade 9 students' proficiency in English will be dealt with in this section. The Simple View of Reading forms the core of this study, which says that word recognition ability is a product of decoding and language comprehension. According to Castles, Rastle, and Nation (2018), reading is a multidimensional construct rather than a single ability, requiring the integration of linguistic processing and cognitive engagement.

Foreign literature emphasizes that as text complexity increases in secondary school, students must rely heavily on prior knowledge and vocabulary. It is important to emphasize, according to Kim & Pilcher (2020), that reading comprehension, in particular, is the strongest correlate of language achievement; this is due to students' access to text materials and their capacity to formulate coherent texts, i.e., reading and writing atext.

Locally, Phil-IRI is used to classify readers according to their proficiency level, with possible ranges ranging from independent instruction to frustration. Despite this categorization, the PISA (2018) assessment found that 80% of Filipino students failed to achieve the minimum proficiency level in reading. Tomas, Villaros, and Galman (2021) and Lofranco and Luzano (2022) concluded that most high school students do not go beyond the frustration level since they have not yet mastered



the elements of reading nor fostered a reading culture. Lucas et al. (2021) further explain that this may be attributed to psychosocial, social, and economic factors, as well as classroom contexts.

Alyahyan & Dtegr (2020) reported that reading skills are strongly correlated with academic achievement when the medium of instruction is English. While Aballe et al. (2024) found a non-linear relationship at the elementary level, most evidence suggests that higher reading levels are associated with better English achievement. Overall, the readings synthesized by Acedillo (2023) and Requiso-Jimenez and Bascos-Ocampo (2022) agree that reading is indeed the primary way to develop oneself, and that localized, language-intensive interventions should be introduced to address current language deficits.

In summary, the literature indicates that Grade 9 learners face limited vocabulary and a lack of phonemic awareness, which hinders their ability to complete their studies. The study review confirms the imperative of introducing relevant intervention materials and of sustaining the use of assessment tools, such as the Phil-IRI, to close the reading-to-English deficit gap.

Theoretical Underpinnings

This study draws on the simple view of reading (SVR), which holds that reading comprehension is a combination of decoding and language comprehension (Gough & Tunmer, 1986). In other words, reading problems can be associated with deficits in decoding or language comprehension. For grade 9 students, successful word identification through decoding contributes to reading fluency. At the same time, language comprehension enables the processing of abstract concepts, both of which are critical as students transition from “learning to read” to “reading to learn.”

Complementing this cognitive foundation are Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and Social Cognitive Theory (SCT). SDT emphasizes the importance of intrinsic motivation, autonomy, and self-efficacy in performance, especially among ESL learners. At the same time, SCT states that interactions among personal characteristics, behaviors, and the environment jointly influence academic achievement.

Thus, the research hypothesizes that English academic achievement depends not only on students’ cognitive abilities but also on the interactions of reading comprehension (word identification and reading comprehension) with affective characteristics such as motivation and self-efficacy. By using the Phil-IRI to assess reading levels, this research applies the SVR model to explain variations in learners’ achievement, underscoring that deficits in either foundational literacy or environmental support can impede a student’s ability to navigate the secondary curriculum effectively.

Objectives

This study aimed to determine the reading level and English performance of Grade 9 learners in one district of a medium-sized division in a highly urbanized city in Central Philippines for the school year 2024-2025. Specifically, it sought to determine: 1) the reading level of Grade 9 learners in word recognition and reading comprehension across independent, instructional, and frustration levels; 2) the level of English performance of Grade 9 learners; 3) the reading level of Grade 9 learners when grouped according to sex, number of siblings, average monthly family income, and parents’ highest educational attainment; 4) the level of English performance of Grade 9 learners when grouped by variables; 5) if a significant difference exists in the reading level of Grade 9 learners when grouped and compared according to the aforementioned variables; 6) if a



significant difference exists in the level of English performance of Grade 9 learners when grouped and compared according to the aforementioned variables; and 7) if a significant relationship exists between the reading level and the English performance level of Grade 9 learners.

Methodology

This section describes the methodological structure of the study: research design, research setting, subjects, instruments used, and methods utilized in assuring the validity and reliability of the tools used; a step-by-step process in gathering the data; a data analysis plan; and the statistical method used in analyzing and interpreting the data. The ethics involved in the study were also explained.

Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive-correlational research design to systematically investigate the reading levels and English performance of Grade 9 learners during the 2024–2025 school year. The descriptive component provides a true picture of present conditions and performance in word recognition, reading comprehension, and academic achievement, as variables are not manipulated (Polit & Beck, 2021).

The correlational component assesses the magnitude and direction of the relationships among these literacy factors and overall English achievement (Saunders et al., 2023). This design uses a dual approach to allow analysis of data through measures of central tendency and variance in order to identify a significant reading related to academic performance and target instruction.

Locale of the Study

This study was conducted in one of the largest public secondary schools in the Division of Bacolod, Negros Occidental. Inaugurated in January 1980, the school has become one of the most popular schools and a consistent top performer in the division. The school has good facilities for learning: new science labs, computer rooms, and spacious, well-ventilated classrooms, supported by internal and external stakeholders.

As a center of excellence for learning, the school received the “Most Learning-Focused Secondary School” award in both Junior and Senior High, as well as the “Best Implementer of ICT Integration” at the Circle Awards 2024. Supported by 122 competent teachers, the school vigorously promotes English skills to students with a wide range of strategies for effective English instruction and co-curricular activities. This environment provides a highly appropriate and rich context for determining the reading level and English proficiency of Grade 9 students in a high-performing public secondary school.

Respondents of the Study

The respondents were 260 Grade 9 learners from the entire population of 794, distributed among the 20 sections. Based on Cochran’s formula for statistical precision, the sample was computed (Creswell & Creswell, 2023), and stratified random sampling was used, with proportionate allocation by lottery and a simple random technique, to the 20 sections.



Data Gathering Instrument

This study utilized the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) as the primary data-gathering instrument to assess learners' reading levels. The test is divided into three sections: Part I is a questionnaire on demographic data, including sex, number of siblings, monthly family income, and parents' level of education. Part II measures oral reading word accuracy using miscues, and Part III involves a comprehension test.

Based on these results, learners are placed in the Independent, Instructional, and Frustration levels (DepEd, 2018), which allows the teacher to establish a framework for assessing reading proficiencies that may affect English academic performance.

Instrument Validity and Reliability

The Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) was used in this study to ensure data consistency, validity, and accuracy. As Middleton (2023) defined, validity ensures that a measure accurately measures the concept it intends to measure. High validity is achieved through Phil-IRI's intended assessment of reading comprehension and word recognition, which relies on existing Department of Education protocols. Validity and reliability are already embedded in the use of a similar set of procedures (as pointed out by Crossman (2019)), with reliability referring to the consistency of results from a measuring device over time. Using similar reading material, consistent miscue analysis, and well-defined comprehension rubrics, a study can achieve high reliability and stable results in measuring reading ability. As the Phil-IRI is a nationally validated standardized test, it has proven psychometric properties, ensuring validity and reliability in its measurement of Grade 9 reading proficiency.

Data Gathering Procedure

The data-gathering process began by obtaining permission from the School Head and the Head of the English Department. After obtaining permission from both the Head of School and the Head of the English Department, the researcher collaborated with the teachers responsible for the students to select respondents and determine the time when all students would be tested. The researcher personally administered the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) to ensure correct scoring, and directions were given to each respondent before they began the tests. Respect for human dignity was also given; participants are encouraged to join, and data from the respondents will be kept confidential and will never be released. After the oral reading, the miscue analysis and the comprehension test were given to all respondents; the collected data were encoded, tabulated, and organized, and then subjected to descriptive and relational analysis to answer the specific problems of this study.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were strictly followed regarding free, voluntary, and honest participation and compliance with Republic Act No. 10173, or the Data Privacy Act of 2012. Written consent from the school authorities and informed consent from the parents/guardians were obtained after an explanation of the research and the procedure. Confidentiality and privacy of the respondents were ensured by NOT collecting personal identifying information, using the obtained



data for a summary report, and assessment was conducted in a warm, friendly, non-condemnatory atmosphere where the respondents were always free to withdraw from the study and other procedures like physical burning and destroying of collected materials after the use was employed to protect the privacy of both the participants and the institution.

Analytical and Statistical Schemes

Objective No. 1 employed descriptive statistics and mean scores to evaluate the reading level of Grade 9 learners in word recognition and reading comprehension across independent, instructional, and frustration levels. Objective No. 2 also used descriptive statistics and mean scores to evaluate the English performance level of Grade 9 learners. Objective No. 3 also used descriptive statistics and mean scores to evaluate the reading level of Grade 9 learners, grouped by sex, number of siblings, average monthly family income, and parents' highest educational attainment. Objective No. 4 also used descriptive statistics and mean scores to evaluate the English performance of Grade 9 learners, grouping them by variables. Objective No. 5 used comparative statistics and the T-test to determine whether there is a significant difference in the reading level of Grade 9 learners when grouped and compared according to the aforementioned variables. Objective No. 6 used comparative statistics and the T-test to determine whether there is a significant difference in English performance level among Grade 9 learners, grouped by the aforementioned variables. Objective No. 7 used relational statistics and Spearman's rho to determine a significant relationship between reading level and English performance in Grade 9 learners.

Results and Discussion

Reading Level of Grade 9 Learners in Word Recognition and Reading Comprehension

Table 1

Reading Level of Grade 9 Learners in Word Recognition and Reading Comprehension

Reading Level	Mean	Interpretation
Word Recognition	92.51	Instructional
Reading Comprehension	47.15	Frustration

The grade 9 reading levels, as shown in Table 1, further highlight the difference between word recognition and comprehension. The group as a whole reached a mean of 92.51 on word recognition, placing them at the instructional level, yet reached a mean of 47.15 on reading comprehension, placing them at the frustration level. This shows that students can read or decode the word quite accurately, but cannot understand the meaning

and infer. The reading levels are theoretically supported by the simple view of reading, which holds that low reading ability stems from poor comprehension despite adequate word-decoding skills (Gough & Tunmer, 1986). Consistent with Tomas et al. (2021), these results suggest that literacy challenges are rooted in higher-order processing rather than in decoding inefficiency. Therefore, educational interventions must shift from a phonics focus to a strong emphasis on word knowledge and comprehension skills that develop from simply knowing how to read to reading for academic success.



Table 2

Level of English Performance of Grade 9 Learners

Students	Mean	Interpretation
English Performance	84.05	Satisfactory

Table 2 above summarizes the English proficiency of Grade 9 learners, with a mean score of 84.05, which is classified as “Satisfactory” under the DepEd K-12 grading system. Although this means learners can meet the curriculum expectations, they still do not reach the “Very Satisfactory” mark. In line with their score is the level of learners’ frustration with reading comprehension, as cited by Garcitos et al. (2024): “adequate on the surface but not able to produce anything deeper than that”. The findings show that the learners met the school’s expectations; however, an intervention is needed to develop higher-order comprehension and vocabulary skills further and advance them towards proficiency.

Table 3

Reading Level of Grade 9 Learners in Word Recognition and Reading Comprehension according to Sex

Reading Level	Male		Female	
	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation
Word Recognition	92.65	Instructional	92.36	Instructional
Reading Comprehension	49.23	Frustration	44.88	Frustration

Table 3 presents the reading levels of Grade 9 learners categorized by sex. Both male (M = 92.65) and female (M = 92.36) learners achieved an instructional level in word recognition, yet both groups fell into the frustration level for reading comprehension. While males scored slightly higher, the minimal disparity suggests that sex is not a determining factor in literacy proficiency. These findings align with the Simple View of Reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986), which emphasizes cognitive and linguistic factors over demographic characteristics. This finding aligns with De Guzman and Abaoag (2023) in showing that reading comprehension problems are common across all genders. Thus, instructional methods should focus on advanced reading comprehension skills regardless of sex.

Table 4

Reading Level of Grade 9 Learners in Word Recognition and Reading Comprehension according to the Number of Siblings

Reading Level	Few		Many	
	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation
Word Recognition	93.03	Instructional	92.14	Instructional
Reading Comprehension	47.66	Frustration	46.80	Frustration



Table 4 presents the reading levels of Grade 9 learners categorized by the number of siblings. All participants in both conditions (low number of siblings, $M = 93.03$; high number of siblings, $M = 92.14$) reached the instructional level of word recognition and the frustration level of reading comprehension. Although learners with fewer siblings performed slightly better, the marginal difference between conditions suggests that the number of siblings is not the determining factor in learning to read. These findings support the Simple View of Reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986), which holds that cognitive and linguistic variables are more important than demographics. Even though the home environment and number of resources are contributing factors (Lucas et al., 2021), and the results in the second condition suggest possible issues at home, the difficulties in reading comprehension across both conditions indicate that the issues lie at a more systematic level. Consequently, instructional interventions should focus on universal comprehension strategies that address these shared deficits across all learner demographics.

Table 5

Reading Level of Grade 9 Learners in Word Recognition and Reading Comprehension according to Average Family Monthly Income

Reading Level	Lower		Higher	
	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation
Word Recognition	92.01	Instructional	93.87	Instructional
Reading Comprehension	46.63	Frustration	48.57	Frustration

Table 5 shows Grade 9 word recognition and reading comprehension by average monthly income. Both lower-income ($M=92.01$) and higher-income ($M=93.87$) groups have word recognition mean scores at the instructional level, which proves that both groups can decode words in general. On the other hand, both groups still have mean scores of 46.63 and 48.57 at the frustration level for reading comprehension, which supports studies by Tomas et al. (2021) and Lofranco & Luzano (2022), which found that many Filipino students can hardly comprehend texts. Apart from the income and related benefits learners may receive, students are likely to have reading comprehension problems due to vocabulary deficiencies and a lack of reading practice. The results showed that mechanical skills were better than reading comprehension, underscoring the need for well-rounded reading comprehension instruction for every student.

Table 6

Reading Level of Grade 9 Learners in Word Recognition and Reading Comprehension according to Parents' Highest Educational Attainment

Reading Level	Lower		Higher	
	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation
Word Recognition	92.42	Instructional	92.77	Instructional
Reading Comprehension	41.15	Frustration	64.12	Instructional

Table 6 presents the reading levels of Grade 9 learners categorized by parents' highest educational attainment. While both groups achieved an instructional level in word recognition, a substantial disparity emerged in reading comprehension. Learners whose parents have lower



educational attainment fell into the frustration level ($M = 41.15$), whereas those with higher parental education reached the instructional level ($M = 64.12$).

At the level of theory, these results are compatible with the Simple View of Reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986). The reading process involves decoding, which does not vary across groups and is likely independent of home literacy and language input, and comprehension, which relies on home literacy and input (Lucas et al., 2021). These results support those of Van den Bosch et al. (2018), indicating that learners with rich language input are also stronger in meaning construction, suggesting the need for intervention to address the comprehension deficit among learners who do not benefit from the same level of home support.

Table 7

Level of English Performance of Grade 9 Learners according to Sex

Variable	Male		Female	
	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation
Performance	83.81	Satisfactory	84.31	Satisfactory

Table 7 demonstrates that English proficiency among grade 9 learners is consistently “satisfactory,” with females (84.31) performing slightly higher than males (83.81). This limited variability suggests that sex is not a significant predictor of academic performance in language learning in this setting. Even though both groups passed the minimum competencies of learning as defined by DepEd (2015), their level of achievement can be expected to reach the predicted limit, the language comprehension limits described above. According to Alyahyan and Dtegr (2020), it is an important predictor of English success. Therefore, these data suggest that students can learn to the minimum level; however, to raise performance from acceptable to higher-order learning, attention must be given to higher-order skills.

Table 8

Level of English Performance of Grade 9 Learners according to the Number of Siblings

Variable	Few		Many	
	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation
Performance	85.41	Very Satisfactory	83.10	Satisfactory

Table 8 reveals that family structure significantly influences English proficiency, with learners from smaller families achieving a “very satisfactory” mean (85.41) compared to the “satisfactory” mean (83.10) of those with more siblings. While the previous variables performed similarly, this difference in descriptive variable classification highlights the importance of home surroundings. Students who have no or only one sibling are likely to have received more focused attention from their parents and better access to learning tools. This is supported by Lucas et al. (2021) and the concept that home surroundings influence the amount of input received and the time available for learning. The result is that both groups pass the minimum standards, but school-based interventions should be made to address the home environment that may be inhibiting learning.



Table 9

Level of English Performance of Grade 9 Learners according to Average Family Monthly Income

Variable	Lower		Higher	
	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation
Performance	83.56	Satisfactory	85.39	Very Satisfactory

It was also noted in Table 9 that performance shows some association with income: learners from higher-income levels attained a mean of 85.39, which falls under the descriptive classification Very Satisfactory, compared with those from lower-income levels, whose mean of 83.56 falls under the Satisfactory classification. From “Satisfactory” to “Very Satisfactory”, the level of knowledge is influenced by the learner’s financial capacity, which is reflected in the availability of opportunities to attain greater competency (Lucas et al., 2021; Obar, 2023). Nevertheless, both groups meet baseline DepEd standards (2015), indicating that while income influences the degree of mastery, it does not prevent learners from achieving minimum functional competency in English, highlighting students’ resilience regardless of their socio-economic standing.

Table 10

Level of English Performance of Grade 9 Learners according to Parents’ Highest Educational Attainment

Variable	Lower		Higher	
	Mean	Interpretation	Mean	Interpretation
Performance	82.90	Satisfactory	87.29	Very Satisfactory

It is evident from Table 10 that a notable performance variance exists, which is related to parents’ educational level; learners whose parents obtained an above-average educational qualification achieved a ‘very satisfactory’ mean of 87.29, compared with the ‘satisfactory’ mean of 82.90 for learners whose parents obtained a lower educational qualification. This switch from satisfactory to very satisfactory reflects the influence of the home literacy environment and language environment on performance. In effect, these findings support previous findings on the reliance on reading skills in English academic performance, with better performance among students with better-educated parents. Although basic standards are met, students still need higher-order language skills to become excellent English language speakers.

Table 11

Difference in the Reading Level of Grade 9 Learners in Word Recognition according to Variables

Variable	Category	N	t-test	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Sex	Male	133	0.387	0.700		Not Significant
	Female	127				
Number of Siblings	Few	107	1.185	0.237	0.05	Not Significant
	Many	153				
	Lower	190				





Average Family Monthly Income	Higher	70			
Parents' Highest Educational Attainment	Lower	192	-0.416	0.678	Not Significant
	Higher	68			

Table 11 presents the differences in word recognition across various demographic groupings. The results indicate no significant difference when learners are categorized by sex [$t(258) = 0.387, p = .700$], number of siblings [$t(258) = 1.185, p = .237$], or parental educational attainment [$t(258) = -0.416, p = .678$]. This stability aligns with the Simple View of Reading, suggesting that decoding processes remain largely consistent across personal backgrounds.

However, a significant difference emerged based on average monthly family income [$t(258) = -2.274, p = .024$]. This disparity may be attributed to variations in early childhood literacy exposure and access to print media (Lucas et al., 2021). Ultimately, while word recognition is generally stable, the influence of socio-economic status underscores the need for equitable resource distribution to ensure that all learners master foundational reading skills.

Table 12

Difference in the Reading Level of Grade 9 Learners in Reading Comprehension according to Variables

Variable	Category	N	t-test	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Sex	Male	133	1.122	0.263	0.05	Not Significant
	Female	127				
Number of Siblings	Few	107	0.215	0.830	0.05	Not Significant
	Many	153				
Average Family Monthly Income	Lower	190	-0.429	0.665	0.05	Not Significant
	Higher	70				
Parents' Highest Educational Attainment	Lower	192	-5.366	0.000	0.05	Significant
	Higher	68				

Table 12 examines the differences in reading comprehension across various demographic profiles. The findings reveal no significant differences when learners are grouped by sex [$t(258) = 1.122, p = .263$], number of siblings [$t(258) = 0.215, p = .830$], or average monthly family income [$t(258) = -0.429, p = .665$]. These results suggest that such factors are not primary drivers of comprehension variance within this sample.

In contrast, a highly significant difference emerged based on parents' highest educational attainment [$t(258) = -5.366, p < .001$]. These findings support the idea that, beyond simple decoding, reading comprehension is critically affected by the home literacy environment and language experiences (Gough & Tunmer, 1986). As also reported by Van den Bosch et al. (2018), the data indicate that parents' background knowledge contributes substantially to a child's vocabulary and cognitive linguistic experiences in making sense of text meaning. The findings demonstrate the importance of direct instruction in comprehension strategies for students who might not otherwise have adequate opportunities for a literacy-enriched experience at home.



Table 13

Difference in the Level of English Performance of Grade 9 Learners according to Variables

Variable	Category	N	t-test	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Sex	Male	133	-0.514	0.608	0.05	Not Significant
	Female	127				
Number of Siblings	Few	107	2.348	0.020	0.05	Significant
	Many	153				
Average Family Monthly Income	Lower	190	-1.664	0.097	0.05	Not Significant
	Higher	70				
Parents' Highest Educational Attainment	Lower	192	-3.983	0.000	0.05	Significant
	Higher	68				

Table 13 examines differences in English performance across various demographic factors. The analysis reveals no significant differences based on sex [$t(258) = -0.514, p = .608$] or average monthly family income [$t(258) = -1.664, p = .097$]. However, significant disparities emerged regarding the number of siblings [$t(258) = 2.348, p = .020$] and parents' highest educational attainment [$t(258) = -3.983, p < .001$].

The outcomes indicate a strong link between family structure, home learning environment, and English proficiency (Lucas et al., 2021). The outcomes also align with previous data showing that educated parents promote higher reading comprehension, which relates to academic achievement (Alyahyan & Dtegr, 2020). Ultimately, this demonstrates that English proficiency is not evenly spread but is a by-product of environmental factors; thus, intervention is needed for students lacking resources at home.

Table 14

Relationship between the Reading Level in Word Recognition and the Level of English Performance of Grade 9 Learners

Variable	rho	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Word Recognition English Performance	1.000	0.000	0.05	Significant

Table 14 explores the relationship between word recognition and English performance among Grade 9 learners. The analysis reveals a statistically significant, perfect positive correlation ($p = 1.000, p < .001$), indicating that word recognition and English academic achievement are intrinsically linked in this dataset.

In principle, the above correspondence supports the Simple View of Reading, in which decoding proficiency is foundational to achieving academic and language acquisition outcomes (Gough & Tunmer, 1986). Generally, education research produces correlations in the moderate to high range, but not absolute, and this finding still underscores the great significance of early reading abilities (Alyahyan & Düştegör, 2020). On the other hand, the exceedingly large magnitude of the correlation coefficient may warrant cautious interpretation, as it may simply reflect a property of



the specific dataset used. Overall, the study found that word recognition significantly influences English abilities; further validation is needed to ensure that this association is replicable.

Table 15

Relationship between the Reading Level in Reading Comprehension and the Level of English Performance of Grade 9 Learners

Variable	rho	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Reading Comprehension English Performance	1.000	0.000	0.05	Significant

Table 15 illustrates the relationship between reading comprehension and English proficiency among Grade 9 learners. The statistical analysis reveals a significant and perfect positive correlation ($\rho = 1.000$, $p < .001$), indicating that comprehension levels are inextricably linked to academic achievement in English. This data supports the Simple View of Reading (Gough & Tunmer, 1986), which claims reading comprehension is the

sole determinant of language development. No perfect linear correlation is ever found in education, but the data does uphold that comprehension is the core of reading. Students' English ability is limited by higher-order processes and vocabulary, which are direct functions of their decoding ability (Van den Bosch et al., 2018). Therefore, instructors must stop emphasizing decoding and instead employ language-based, context-appropriate instruction to develop inference skills and reading engagement.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the research suggests that although Grade 9 readers have functional and robust decoding, a severe higher-order problem of independent text processing remains a considerable hurdle that would prevent further linguistic development. The actual results are a reflection of the Simple View of Reading, where mechanical word processing does not guarantee superior text processing. Thus, the basis of successful academic achievement in English can be traced back to the student's ability to combine information and meaning beyond the lexical level of a word. Another indication of the severity of the literacy crisis is that it can be seen as a general literacy problem transcending all groups, implying that the learning problem is systemic and not specific to a locale or gender. But what also needs to be highlighted is the robustness of the results observed among students from a linguistically rich home literacy background, as this indicates that one's learning is highly correlated with socioeconomic factors and parental schooling. Thus, the reading ability remains the bedrock in determining success in English academia. However, to address these fundamental proficiency gaps and ensure students' progress, a radical paradigm shift is inevitable. The system of literacy has to evolve from a mechanical-focused to a language and comprehension-focused one in which higher-order cognition and context are implicitly targeted.



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Authorship Contribution Statement

Baylon: Chief researcher, main data explorer, and author of the paper. **Guanzon:** Adviser of the study, technical supervisor, and in charge of the academic quality.

Conflict of Interest

The authors state that no commercial or financial relationships exist that could constitute a potential conflict of interest in the conception and execution of the present study. None of the authors is linked in any way to individuals or financial interests that could have influenced the data collection, interpretation, or conclusions presented. The authors are exclusively liable for the precision of the herein documented result, as well as for the final decision to publish.

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