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**RESEARCH ARTICLE**

## Language Learning Strategies, Styles and Academic Achievement in English of Elementary Learners: Basis for Reading Program Intervention

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### ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to determine the learning styles and language learning strategies used by elementary learners and how these two factors are related to their academic achievement in English. It was conducted in the north cluster of elementary schools of the Schools Division of Santiago City in the School Year 2023-2024. The respondents were the 325 learners of Grades 4 to 6 selected using a 95% degree of confidence and 5% allowable error and distributed to schools chosen using a proportionate allocation formula. It used the descriptive-correlational research design wherein data were gathered through the adapted survey questionnaires of 2019 VARK Learning Styles and the Language Strategy Use Survey from Cohen et al. (2019), validated by the panel of experts. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, t-test, and Kendall's tau-b correlation. Results showed that elementary learners were acquiring language learning strategies; they preferred kinesthetic, read/write, and auditory learning styles. There was no significant difference between male and female pupils in their language learning strategies and learning styles. Learning styles had no bearing on the use of language learning strategies; however, language learning strategies made profound contributions to academic achievement. This study concluded that learning styles and language learning strategies can help learners succeed academically. Hence, it is highly recommended that the proposed reading intervention program be used by teachers implementing catch-up Fridays, with consideration of the learning styles and language learning strategies of learners. Future studies will be undertaken with the results of this study as a reference.

### KEYWORDS

Academic achievement, Elementary learners, Language acquisition

### ARTICLE INFORMATION

**ACCEPTED:** 01 September 2024

**PUBLISHED:** 26 September 2024

**DOI:** 10.32996/ijllt.2024.7.10.2

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### 1. Introduction

The academic achievement of pupils in English is crucial to every 21st century learner because it is one of the factors to succeed in the academe and in the world's labor market. The English language gives learners access to a wider range of resources and opportunities both in their own countries and consequently makes them competitive in the global arena.

The English language plays a crucial role in the development of communication skills of 21st-century learners because it is an international language. In this regard, the Department of Education included English as one of the academic subjects in formal schooling. In the Philippines, the K-12 basic education curriculum offers English as an academic subject from Grades 1-12. It aims to produce learners with strong communication skills, not only in Filipino but also in English language (RA 10533, 2012). Filipino learners are expected to develop their communication skills continuously through the English curriculum.

However, despite the education initiatives, learning English as a second language (ESL) is challenging for non-native English countries (Nuriska, 2021). Recent studies also revealed similar and different findings on facilitating and hindering factors in learning

English. One of these hindering factors is the poor reading performance of learners as revealed by previous standards reading assessment tests such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). PISA 2022 scores published in December 2023 showed that students in the Philippines remain among the world's weakest in math, reading, and science. The country's overall score showed no significant improvement from 2018 when it first joined the test (Balancio, 2023). The results underscored the need to improve students' knowledge of the most fundamental competencies of reading, mathematics, and science. Moreover, EDCOM II (2023) reported that learners who are most in need of remediation are often those who did not participate in Learning Camps, an end-of-school-year remediation program. As a result, most of them are not equipped with foundational competencies in reading.

The declining reading performance of learners challenges the teachers' and educational leaders' creativity to initiate appropriate interventions in addressing learners' needs. Reading, as the basic competency, must be prioritized by every educational institution as mandated by the Department of Education through its DM 001, 2024. All schools shall implement the Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) every catch-up Friday. It is imperative that learners use their learning strategies and styles for self-paced learning during catch-up Fridays.

Based on recent studies, how learners learn their second language depends on their learning styles and language learning strategies. For instance, when learners watch and listen to sounds through YouTube, they imitate how English speakers speak as they communicate with their families and friends. Consequently, such a situation will contribute to their language learning strategies (LLS) in listening, speaking, vocabulary, and translation (Bayuong et al., 2019). Listening and translation strategies are the common preference of learners to learn a second language (Bayuong et al., 2019; Moneva et al., 2020), which implies that elementary pupils have the capability to learn as long as they are assisted on their LLSs. How the learners use their LLSs will determine their language learning levels (Ates & Yayli, 2022). Thus, LLSs are crucial and helpful in learning English as a second language (ESL).

However, ESL countries encountered some challenges in the learning process. In Malaysia for instance, most ESL learners are very dependent on teachers and have difficulty in achieving a certain level of fluency (Adan & Hashim, 2021). The unawareness of learners to their learning strategies also affects how they learn English as their second language (Bayuong et al., 2019). It is then suggested that teachers should provide appropriate support to improve the LLS of the pupils. Furthermore, related studies suggested that both teachers and pupils must be conscious of the latter's abilities and preferences while selecting appropriate LLSs. Also, most prior studies have focused on successful and good language learners; therefore, further study is needed to help and guide struggling learners to be on a level with good language learners (Adan & Hasim, 2021).

The locale of this study also experiences some issues and concerns in learning English as a second language. Since most families do not use English at home, learning venues in learning English are learners' exposure to different social media and to their academic subjects taught in English. Based on observations, most pupils have difficulties in acquiring curriculum content in subjects where English is used as the medium of instruction. Such situations defer the learning process. Added to the hindering factors in learning English were the restrictions experienced by the learners from the recent Covid-19 home quarantine rules. The key stage 2 learners for the school year 2023-2024 were the products of Distant Modular Learning when teachers had limited instructional supervision of each learner's learning process. Most of them learn by themselves and through the help of their immediate families. Since they were limitedly supervised, they had limitations in learning English as their second language. As a result, it is observed that pupils hardly read or understand their readings in English. Likewise, they hardly use English to communicate their insights and feelings. Moreover, communication skills are identified as learning losses, and the school's learning recovery plan for 2023-2024 is included as a priority improvement area.

Recognizing the role of language teachers as primary agents for the continuous development of communication skills of Filipino learners, it is necessary to have studies on how learners better learn English as their second language as a basis for determining appropriate learning support for the learners in this time of recovery period. This move corresponds to Sustainable Development Goal 4, which is ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. As learners receive appropriate intervention, it will surely motivate them to pursue their schooling. As the participation rate increases, teachers will definitely be encouraged to improve their teaching and facilitation skills to improve the learning process.

The abovementioned premises were the driving forces in the conduct of this study. It aimed to have a deeper understanding of the learning styles and language learning strategies and how these two factors are related to the academic achievement of pupils in English. Results served as a reference in finding solutions to move away from hurdles in learning English as a second language.

## **2. Literature Review**

Recent literature on language learning strategies has explained the basic concepts and processes of how they are used in learning a second language, such as Soliman and Gorospe (2024). Furthermore, Cohen et al. (n.d.) identified different language learning strategies such as listening, vocabulary, speaking, reading, writing, and strategic use of translation, which became a point of interest for succeeding researchers such as Salam, Sukarti, and Arifin (2020); Bayuong, Hashim, and Yunus (2019); and Samardali and Ismael (2017). They explored how language learning strategies are used by individuals to acquire a second language.

Other researchers are also interested in the learning styles of Filipino learners when acquiring a second language. Continuous practice and use of the English language in the classroom may help learners improve their English proficiency (Santos et al., 2023) and contribute to their academic achievement. Meanwhile, Benitez (2023) described kinesthetic learners as those who love interactive activities.

Recent studies are also interested in how learning styles relate to learners' learning strategies. Some studies, such as Eshete and Tefera (2022) and Balci (2017), revealed that learning styles contribute to language learning strategies in acquiring a second language.

Furthermore, this study aimed to add to the emerging issue of how language learning strategies contribute to the academic achievement of learners. Some studies, like Eshete and Tefera (2022), confirm the positive relationship between the two in which effective use of LLS may improve the academic performance of learners.

Therefore, this study added to the existing literature on the relationship between language learning strategies, learning styles, and academic achievement of Filipino learners that will eventually serve as a reference for future studies and intervention programs.

## **3. Methodology**

This chapter focuses on the utilization of the research design, and explanation of the locale, respondents of the study, instrumentation, and statistical treatment of data.

### **3.1 Research Design**

This study employed a quantitative approach, specifically the descriptive-correlational method, to determine the relationship between the learners' language learning strategies, styles, and academic achievement in English. Collected quantitative data from the respondents were analyzed using appropriate statistical tools. Results were interpreted and discussed to describe the learning styles and language learning strategies of learners. Additionally, quantitative data on learning styles and language learning strategies were correlated to the academic grades of pupils to describe the relationship between academic achievements and learning styles and language learning strategies.

### **3.2 Research Locale and Respondents**

The respondents of this study were the elementary learners of North Cluster, Schools Division of Santiago City, during the School Year 2023-2024. It included the learners from the three grade levels (Grades 4, 5, and 6). The researcher used random sampling to select the respondents for the study. From the 2,082 total population size, 325 were selected as the sample size of the study at 95% degree of confidence and 5% allowable error (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). After getting the sample size of the respondents, the researcher gathered the actual respondents from different schools using the proportionate allocation formula. The administration and the study were conducted in the vicinity of the school.

### **3.3 Research Instrument**

A self-administered questionnaire called Survey Questionnaire on Learning Styles and Language Learning Strategies was used to investigate the different learning styles and language learning strategies of elementary pupils in learning English as their second language. It was translated into Filipino because the first language of the target respondents in this study is Filipino; hence, it was assumed by the researcher that learners could comprehend the questionnaire more when written in Filipino. It contains the following: Part I contains statements pertaining to different learning styles of pupils. It was adapted from Fleming's VARK model (VARK Learn Limited, 2019), and it is modified based on the context of the elementary pupils. Each statement contains four (4) multiple choices that represent the four learning styles.

- a) The researcher counted the number of each of the VARK letters the pupils circled to get their score for each category
- b) The learning style with the highest number of respondents was considered the preferred learning style.

Part II contains statements on different language learning strategies employed by the pupils in learning the English language. It was adapted from the Language Strategy Use Survey (Cohen et al., 2019), and statements were modified according to the context of Filipino learners. Each statement was rated according to a 3-point Likert scale ranging from never used to useful.

### **3.4 Data Gathering Procedure**

In gathering the needed data, the following procedures were undertaken by the researcher:

1. A survey questionnaire was administered personally by the researcher;
2. Data were collated, coded, and encoded using spreadsheet application and SPSS software, and
3. Analysis and interpretation of data were done by the researcher.

### **3.5 Statistical Treatment**

In treating the data, the following tools and techniques were used:

1. Mean was used to determine the language learning strategies of the learners;
2. Frequency was used to determine the learning styles;
3. Mean was used to determine the academic achievement level of the pupils;
4. Independent t-test was used to determine the difference between males and females in terms of their:
  - a. language learning strategies, and
  - b. learning styles, and
5. Kendal tau b correlation was used to determine a) the relationship between language learning strategies and styles and b) the relationship between language learning strategies and pupils' academic achievement in English.

### **3.6 Ethical Considerations**

The consent of the participants was obtained, and they were ensured that they understood what they agreed to. Their participation in this study was voluntary in nature. Also, their personal information was treated with high confidentiality. Likewise, a permit to gather data was also sought from the proper authorities.

## **4. Results and Discussion**

This study aimed to determine the relationship between the learners' language learning strategies, styles, and academic achievement in English using the descriptive-correlational method. Data were gathered using survey questionnaires floated to 325 respondents in the North Cluster of public elementary schools in Santiago City. The questionnaire consists of respondent profiles, indicators to determine the language learning strategies of learners with a 3-point Likert scale ranging from never used to useful, and multiple-choice items on learning styles.

### **4.1 Language Learning Strategies of Elementary Learners**

Related literature presented different models of language learning strategies that provide opportunities to assist learners in becoming aware of what helps them to learn the second language. Though some studies revealed that Filipino learners do not use learning strategies such as Gaerlan (2016) because they regarded English as not important, other studies highlighted the role of language learning strategy in promoting learner autonomy in learning a second language. In this regard, this study explored the preferred language learning strategies of key stage 2 learners consisting of Grades 4 to 6 in the locale of this study.

Based on the gathered data, results revealed that most of the elementary learners had their own preferred language learning strategies that were categorized as useful or learning its use. In listening language learning strategies, most of them preferred to listen to the English language, made every effort to understand what they had heard without translating it word-for-word into the Filipino language, and usually asked for clarification if they hadn't understood it the first time around. It demonstrated their preference for how they understand the new language in conversation by listening to the English language and the meaning of the message without using a translation strategy. Asking the speakers to slow down if they think they are speaking too fast was their least preference. This is attributed to their choice as listeners to understand the message in any communication. These added to the literature that listening strategies lead to better comprehension (Bao & Guan, 2019). When teachers are aware of the listening strategies of their learners, they can design a learning support system for learners learning the second language. Vice versa, learners need to be aware of their listening strategies that would help them improve their listening skills.

Using the vocabulary learning strategies, most learners preferred to use words just learned in order to see if they work for them rather than having a system on the use of flash cards to learn new words depicting their eagerness to learn the proper use of words in their daily communication. The results demonstrate that key stage 2 learners are learning the use of vocabulary learning strategies to improve their reading and learning the second language. This implies that both the school and parents must further

their support of the learners by providing opportunities to enrich their vocabulary. Especially in today's generation of learners who are greatly influenced by technology, teachers and parents may consider technological vocabulary learning strategies, which are already commonly used by the learners, as revealed in the study of Laffey (2020). He recommended further research on the implications of vocabulary teaching and strategy instruction. Further research may suggest how to motivate learners to actively engage with new words, enabling them to decode meanings from context and apply strategies like using word roots, prefixes, and suffixes. A strong vocabulary enables learners to articulate their thoughts effectively, both orally and in writing. By teaching vocabulary, teachers may equip learners with the tools to express themselves accurately. Learners may learn how to select appropriate words for different contexts and audiences.

In speaking language learning strategies, most learners preferred to ask the person they are talking with often to help them out, revealing their interest in learning the English language. However, their least preferences include asking themselves how an English speaker might say something and attempting to practice saying it that way, directing the conversation to topics for which they know the vocabulary, and anticipating what the other person is going to say based on what has been said. The results suggest that teachers, particularly in rural regions, may improve their teaching practices to help learners raise their awareness of their preferred language learning strategies and thereby strengthen their confidence level. This is consistent with Wong et al.'s (2020) proposal that teachers play a role in enhancing students' knowledge of their chosen LLS, which will help them build the confidence to communicate in their second language.

In using the reading language learning strategy, learners preferred to often plan how they are going to read a text, monitor to see how their reading is going, and then check to see how much of it they understood, showing their eagerness to track their reading progress as a way of learning the second language rather than guessing the approximate meaning through the use of clues from the surrounding context. The results suggest that the school must provide an appropriate reading intervention program to aid the reading capability of the learners so they can fully use their reading abilities in learning the English language.

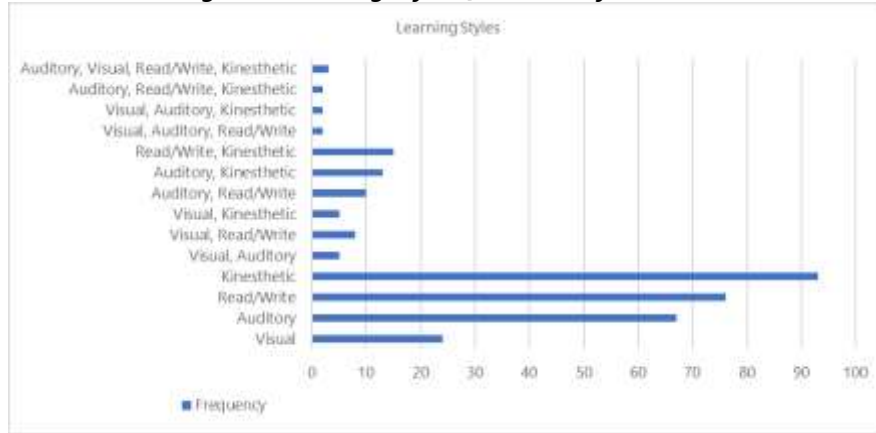
Through the use of writing language learning strategies, learners preferred to take class notes in the English language as a way of remembering new words rather than writing the alphabet of the English language. Hence, classroom instruction should consider writing activities and assessments as a way of helping learners (Soliman & Gorospe, 2024) to learn a second language. Intensive writing activities will improve learners' ability to properly use a second language in communicating their ideas and experiences.

Translation language learning strategies enable learners to plan out what they want to say or write in the Filipino language and then translate it into the English language to ensure proper translation rather than being cautious about transferring words or concepts directly from the Filipino to the English language. Translation is a useful and successful instrument in learning a second language (Bayuon et al., 2019), which teachers should consider in classroom instructions to assist learners in learning the second language. However, teachers should be careful not to misuse it in classroom instruction to provide learners an opportunity to think about and use a second language. It is crucial to remember that the primary areas in which translation might be useful are described as clarifying new words and phrases, addressing grammatical concerns, teaching idioms and culture-bound expressions, clarifying reading passages, dealing with errors due to first language interference, assessing learners' reading and listening comprehension, and describing classroom activities. Samardali and Ismael (2017) recommended that teachers should make translation the final choice and encourage learners to pick out the meaning from context.

#### **4.2 Learning Styles of Elementary Learners**

Learners' chosen style of learning new knowledge is determined by their learning styles. Recent studies have proved that different people learn in different ways. Likewise, learners use different learning styles to acquire a second language.

**Figure 1. Learning Style of Elementary Learners**

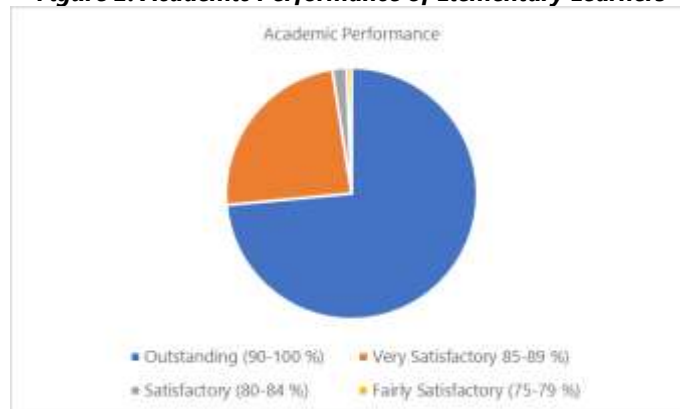


Most of the learners preferred primarily the kinesthetic as their learning style; second was read/write, and third was auditory. The results conform with the study of Salam et al. (2020), in which kinesthetic individuals prefer to experiment hands-on and never read the directions beforehand when learning. Likewise, Benitez (2023) revealed that learners preferred kinesthetic style and involved themselves in interactive activities. Kinesthetic learning, which involves physical movement and tactile experiences, can be an effective approach to learning a second language. For learners who resonate with this learning style, incorporating activities that engage the body can enhance language acquisition. For example, practicing vocabulary through gestures or actions can help reinforce memory retention and improve recall. Role-playing scenarios or acting out dialogues enable learners to embody language usage in real-life contexts, making language learning more dynamic and engaging. Additionally, interactive exercises such as language games or even dancing to music with lyrics in the target language can stimulate kinesthetic learners and reinforce linguistic concepts. By integrating movement and physical experiences into language learning activities, kinesthetic learners can enhance their understanding and proficiency in the second language while enjoying a more immersive and interactive learning experience. Meanwhile, the second preference of elementary learners is consistent with Al-Seghayer (2021), wherein writing helps learners remember new learning. On the contrary, the result of Alkooheji and Al-Hattami (2018) revealed that reading/writing is the least preferred perceptual mode for learners. Though results of recent studies may differ on the frequency of use of reading and writing strategies, results confirm that reading and writing help learners to learn a second language. Therefore, the results suggest that teachers should consider the use of words and text when presenting information to the learners so that they can easily learn the English language. In general, learning styles help learners acquire a second language, which is similar to the results of Ambubuyog et al. (2023), primarily through listening. Active listening is essential in language learning and acquisition, and it affects numerous parts of the learning process. It is implied that language teachers in charge of teaching English as a second language should pay attention to active listening.

**4.3 Academic Performance of Elementary Learners**

Academic performance in English is a critical aspect of a learner’s educational journey, as proficiency in the language is often a prerequisite for success in various academic disciplines and professional fields. This study examined the academic performance of learners in English.

**Figure 2. Academic Performance of Elementary Learners**



Most of the elementary pupils performed outstandingly in English subjects, revealing the profound contributions of their learning styles and language learning strategies. It could be inferred then that most of the learners whose learning styles were kinesthetic, read/write, and auditory, as revealed in the previous section, performed outstandingly in English subjects. Therefore, teachers should take into consideration the learning styles of learners when planning and implementing English classes. When learners continue to practice and use the English language, it will help them improve their English proficiency (Santos et al., 2023) and eventually help them improve their academic performance in English.

#### **4.4 Differences Between Male and Female in Language Learning Strategies and Learning Styles**

Recent studies suggested that there are notable differences between male and female elementary learners in language learning strategies. While both genders employ various strategies to acquire language skills, their preferences and tendencies often diverge. Meanwhile, learning styles influence how learners acquire new information. Recent studies have shown that people learn in different ways. Learners vary greatly in terms of age, gender, social, cultural, and educational backgrounds. Understanding the differences between males and females in their learning styles in learning a second language can have several implications for language instruction. In this regard, this study explored the differences between males and females in terms of language learning strategies and learning styles to contribute to the existing literature on the differences between males and females as the basis for further improvement of practices in teaching English as a second language.

Similar to the results of the study of Dika et al. (2021), there was no significant difference between male and female pupils in their language learning strategies and learning styles, even though they differ in frequency of use. Results show that both males and females can best learn the English language according to their preferences and frequency of use. Therefore, this study suggests that teachers should be aware of the learning style preferences of both males and females so as to tailor their instruction to meet the needs of all learners (Silitonga et al., 2020). By embracing an understanding of male and female learning styles, teachers can promote gender equity in second language learning and facilitate more successful language acquisition outcomes for all learners.

#### **4.5 Relationship between and among the Language Learning Strategies and Learning Styles and Academic Achievement in English**

The relationship between language learning strategies and learning styles lies in their reciprocal influence on each other. Learners often employ language learning strategies that align with their dominant learning styles, leveraging their preferred modalities to enhance language acquisition and comprehension. This study examined their relationship so as to assist elementary learners in their second language acquisition. Results show that the learning styles have no bearing on the listening strategies of elementary learners; however, the higher the respondents' learning style, the chance that they will also increase their frequency in the use of listening for those keywords as well as the speaker's tone of voice as clues to the meaning; use of vocabulary strategies in remembering words and situations where they heard or saw the word; and use of strategic translation strategy specifically from English to Filipino translation to easily remember concepts. Some language learning strategies have profound contributions to the academic achievement of learners in English. These include 1) listening strategies such as remembering unfamiliar sounds, listening to keywords, speakers' emphasis, and asking for clarifications; 2) vocabulary strategies such as analyzing sentence structure, association of sounds, mental image of new words, and the use of new words to sentences; 3) speaking strategies such as saying new expressions repeatedly, planning out what to say, asking questions, anticipating, and switching back to own language; 4) reading strategies such as extensive reading activities, tracking on reading progress; 5) writing strategies such as tracking of writing progress; and 6) translation strategies such as from Filipino to English language and vice versa. Results support the studies of Eshete and Tefera (2022) and Balci (2017), which revealed that learning styles contribute to language learning strategies in acquiring a second language. Furthermore, the results of this study add to the emerging issue of how language learning strategies contribute to the academic achievement of learners. Studies by Eshete and Tefera (2022) expounded that effective use of language learning strategies may improve the academic performance of learners.

#### **4.6. Reading Intervention Program**

Language learning strategies and learning styles play important roles in how learners learn the English language through reading. English is the key language to excel in academic subjects, primarily in Mathematics, Science, and English. Teachers have to assist learners in their reading activities as the primary means of learning English as their second language.

Based on the result of this study, reading is one of the best ways for learners to learn a second language. However, school reports revealed that below average and average learners are struggling in reading. Thus, the crafted reading intervention program would help teachers in the conduct of reading activities during catch-up Fridays. Furthermore, the designed reading intervention program will guide learners on their reading activities parallel to their learning strategies and styles. They will also be guided in determining their reading level, reading progress, and how to handle reading disruptions.

## 5. Conclusion

Public elementary learners recognize the importance of language learning strategies when learning English as their second language. Their preferences depicted how those strategies helped them learn the English language easily and effectively. They also use their learning styles, preferably kinesthetic, read/write, and auditory, respectively, which indicates that they are learning best through hands-on experiences, taking information displayed in words and text, and using listening as a way of learning the second language. Their outstanding performance in English depicted the positive contributions of learning styles and language learning strategies in learning a second language. The higher the learners learn the English language, the higher the chances are that they will perform well in English subjects.

Meanwhile, male and female learners have similar language learning strategies and learning styles, though they have differences in frequency of use, indicating that both of them have equal opportunities to excel in acquiring English as their second language.

Though learning style has no bearing on their language learning strategies, results indicated that frequency of use of learning strategies would give chances to the learners to use language learning strategies, specifically listening for those keywords and speaker's tone; use of vocabulary strategies in remembering words and situations where they heard or saw the word; and use of strategic translation from English to Filipino to easily remember concepts. Such will eventually reinforce their acquisition of the second language. Furthermore, language learning strategies can contribute positively to the academic achievement of learners in English, including remembering unfamiliar sounds, listening to keywords, speakers' emphasis, asking clarifications; analyzing sentence structure, association of sounds, mental image of new words, using new words to sentences, saying new expressions repeatedly, planning out what to say, asking questions, anticipating, and switching back to own language, extensive reading activities and tracking reading progress, tracking writing progress; and translation strategies from Filipino to English language and vice versa.

Lastly, the proposed reading intervention program crafted in this study can improve learners' reading ability by enhancing their language learning strategies and styles with the assistance of their reading teachers.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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