
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Language Learning Strategies and Reading Skills of Grade Three Learners: Basis for A Reading Skills Enhancement Plan

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| ABSTRACT

This study assessed the language learning strategies and reading skills of the learners. A descriptive–correlational design was employed, using census sampling, the respondents comprised all officially enrolled Grade Three pupils during SY 2025–2026 (n = 569). Data were gathered through a two-part instrument: a learner profile and an adapted Language Learning Strategies Survey (listening, speaking, reading, writing) grounded in Kaur and Embi (2011), alongside CRLA-aligned reading assessments. Descriptive statistics and appropriate tests of association were used to summarize variables and examine the link between strategy use and reading performance. Results indicated generally favorable strategy use across domains, with strengths in accuracy- and repair-oriented behaviors (e.g., rereading, using text features, practicing grammatical forms) and relative gaps in higher-order, metacognitive strategies (e.g., predicting, summarizing, flexible paraphrasing). Most learners read below the expected benchmark, and stronger, more consistent strategy use aligned with better reading outcomes. The study concluded that explicit, routine instruction in metacognitive strategies, coupled with tiered supports and short-cycle monitoring, would best accelerate reading growth. It recommended implementing a CRLA-aligned Reading Skills Enhancement Plan featuring protected intervention blocks, flexible grouping, teacher professional development on think-aloud and discussion scaffolds, and institutionalized assessment cycles.

| KEYWORDS

Language Learning Strategies, Reading Skills, Listening Strategies, Speaking Strategies

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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Introduction

Reading especially for second-language learners drew on more than decoding; it relied on teachable, goal-directed language learning strategies (LLSs) in listening, speaking, reading, and writing that helped students regulate comprehension and learning (e.g., predicting, summarizing, monitoring) (Oxford, 2011). Decades of evidence suggested that explicit instruction in such strategies improved understanding, with strong effects for struggling readers. Globally, large-scale assessments continued to flag uneven reading outcomes. In PISA 2022, the Philippines' reading performance sat well below the OECD average, with only a minority of 15-year-olds reaching the baseline Level 2, underscoring persistent comprehension challenges (OECD Philippines country note, 2023). PIRLS 2021 likewise showed wide dispersion in Grade 4 reading across systems, highlighting systemic gaps in early literacy foundations (IEA, 2023). These realities sat squarely within the SDG 4 agenda, which emphasized foundational skills and equitable learning recovery after COVID-19 disruptions. At the level of instructional practice, research syntheses most prominently the U.S. National Reading Panel reported that explicit teaching of comprehension strategies (e.g., prediction, summarizing, clarifying, and metacognitive monitoring) yielded reliable gains, particularly for learners who struggled with text. This aligned with the LLS framework's view of strategies as deliberate,

teachable actions that could be modeled and scaffolded.

Within the Philippines, system reviews and monitoring repeatedly pointed to persistent weaknesses in decoding, oral reading fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension among early-grade learners, with opportunity-to-learn gaps and socioeconomic constraints compounding outcomes. The Department of Education's Basic Education Report 2023 acknowledged foundational literacy shortfalls and set early literacy as a recovery priority, reflecting classroom-level challenges documented nationwide. USAID's ABC+ program materials similarly emphasized the need for classroom models that pair explicit strategy instruction with systematic progress monitoring and improved access to appropriate texts in the early grade's elements designed to address exactly these decoding-to-comprehension bottlenecks. Pandemic-driven school closures magnified disparities, disrupting literacy trajectories and widening variation in reading proficiency; UNICEF's Philippines situation analyses and learning recovery briefs underscored the surge in learning poverty risks and the urgency of targeted, classroom-embedded remediation. The World Bank Philippines Economic Update (June 2024) further reported that the share of Filipino 10-year-olds unable to read and understand a simple text rose dramatically, reinforcing the call for structured pedagogy, frequent assessment, and materials provision as core levers for recovery in reading.

With this, schools in DepEd Cebu Province faced the same twin challenges: (1) many Grades 3 learners still consolidated basic decoding/fluency while being asked to "read to learn," and (2) classroom practice tended to emphasize accuracy and routine exercises more than the higher-order strategies that lifted comprehension. This suggested that a viable local response paired three ingredients: explicit, daily strategy teaching (predict, infer, summarize, navigate text features), short-cycle assessment to regroup and reteach, and equity-minded access to varied, level-appropriate texts for use at school and home. This study therefore focused on documenting learners' strategy use across domains and their reading performance, using these data to shape a pragmatic, CRLA-aligned Reading Skills Enhancement Plan tailored to the division's realities. The plan's emphasis on think-aloud modeling, guided practice, integrated reading-writing tasks, and fortnightly progress checks mirrored what international and national evidence identified as the highest-leverage moves for accelerating comprehension post-pandemic.

Literature Review

Language learning strategies (LLS) are deliberate actions taken by learners to enhance their acquisition and use of language, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Oxford, 1990). These strategies are critical during the foundational years of education, as they influence not only how students engage with language tasks but also how effectively they learn (Chamot, 2005). According to Griffiths (2013), successful learners actively use a variety of cognitive, metacognitive, social, and affective strategies to support their language development. In the context of young learners, effective LLS foster autonomy, motivation, and comprehension, particularly when tailored to age-appropriate content and learning environments (Cohen & Macaro, 2007). For instance, listening strategies such as note-taking and predicting, or speaking strategies like rehearsal and self-monitoring, are linked to improved oral communication (Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Similarly, writing strategies such as planning, drafting, and revising are essential for developing structured written output among primary learners (Manchón, 2011). Studies in Southeast Asia have shown that incorporating strategy training in primary classrooms leads to higher engagement and improved academic performance (Tuan, 2011; Purpura, 2016).

Reading skills, as a core component of literacy, are fundamental to a child's academic growth and lifelong learning. The National Reading Panel (2000) identified five key components of reading phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension as essential for early reading success. Among these, fluency and comprehension become especially critical at the Grade Three level, where learners transition from "learning to read" to "reading to learn" (Chall, 1996). Learners who lack proficiency in these areas often struggle across content subjects that require reading to access knowledge. According to Pretorius and Spaull (2016), poor reading comprehension in the early grades is a strong predictor of future academic failure. In the Philippine context, Bernardo and Visaya (2020) emphasized the need for reading programs that integrate comprehension strategy instruction, especially in multilingual settings. Moreover, the DepEd's "Every Child a Reader" program seeks to address these challenges, though gaps remain in strategy implementation (Garcia & Ocampo, 2020). International best practices show that when language learning strategies are aligned with reading instruction, particularly through scaffolded support and interactive tasks, learners demonstrate improved comprehension and reading motivation (Afflerbach, Pearson, & Paris, 2008; Mokhtari & Reichard, 2002).

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive-correlational, non-experimental, cross-sectional design to assess the language learning strategies and reading skills of Grade Three learners in selected public schools. The primary objective was to describe learners' use of strategies in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, and to examine the statistical relationships between these strategies and their actual reading performance. A descriptive approach was used to portray the existing conditions, while a correlational

approach allowed the researcher to determine whether a significant association existed between the variables without manipulating them (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Fraenkel, Wallen, & Hyun, 2019). The study involved a total of 569 Grade Three learners, selected through census sampling from three schools: Tungkop Elementary School (n=189), Upper Tunghaan Elementary School (n=120), and Vito Elementary School (n=260). Only learners who were officially enrolled and present during data collection were included. The research instrument consisted of two parts: Part I measured learners' language learning strategies, adapted from Kaur and Embi's (2011) framework. This instrument was validated locally for cultural and age appropriateness. Reading skills were measured using each school's Classroom Reading Level Assessment (CRLA), aligned with national literacy standards. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, Pearson or Spearman correlation (depending on data distribution), and multiple regression to examine the effect of strategies on reading outcomes.

Results

Table 1. Level of the language learning strategies of the learners in terms of Listening

S/N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1	Ask for clarification if I do not understand it the first	3.76	1.16	Very Good
2	Ask speakers to repeat what they said if it wasn't	3.60	1.22	Very Good
3	Listen for key words that seem to carry the bulk of the meaning.	3.91	1.23	Very Good
4	Try to predict what the other person is going to say	3.37	1.33	Good
5	Listen to talk shows on the radio, watch TV shows or	3.80	1.34	Very Good
6	Draw on my general background knowledge to get	3.68	1.34	Very Good
7	Try to understand what I hear without translating it	3.69	1.28	Very Good
8	Listening to people who are speaking in English and	3.98	1.19	Very Good
9	Pay special attention to specific aspects of the	3.82	1.17	Very Good
10	Practice sounds in the target language that are	3.69	1.25	Very Good
Aggregate Weighted Mean		3.73	1.25	Very Good

Table 1 presents the learners' language learning strategies in terms of listening, with an aggregate weighted mean of 3.73 and a standard deviation of 1.25, indicating a "Very Good" overall level. Most indicators received high ratings, such as listening for key words (WM = 3.91) and listening to English speakers (WM = 3.98), suggesting that learners actively engage in understanding spoken language. The lowest-rated indicator was predicting what someone will say (WM = 3.37), described as "Good", implying a slight difficulty with anticipatory listening skills. Overall, the data show that learners are consistently using effective listening strategies to support language acquisition.

Table 2. Level of the language learning strategies of the learners in terms of Speaking

S/N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1	Ask for help from my conversational partner.	3.96	1.15	Very Good
2	Plan out in advance what I want to say.	3.66	1.18	Very Good
3	Encourage others to correct errors in my speaking.	3.46	1.30	Very Good
4	Practice saying new expressions to myself.	3.83	1.25	Very Good
5	Initiate conversations in the target language as often as possible.	3.58	1.21	Very Good
6	Ask questions as a way to be involved in the conversation.	3.60	1.30	Very Good
7	Make up new words or guess if I don't know the right ones to use.	3.35	1.26	Good
8	Practice new grammatical structures in different situations to build my confidence level in using them.	4.08	1.09	Very Good
9	Try topics even when they aren't familiar to me.	3.51	1.25	Very Good
10	Direct the conversation to familiar topics.	3.63	1.15	Very Good

S/N Indicators	WM SD	Verbal Description
Aggregate Weighted Mean	3.67	Very Good
Aggregate Standard Deviation	1.21	

Table 2 displays the learners' language learning strategies in terms of speaking, with an aggregate weighted mean of 3.67 and a standard deviation of 1.21, indicating an overall "Very Good" level. Most indicators were rated very good, showing that learners actively use strategies such as asking for help (WM = 3.96), practicing grammatical structures (WM = 4.08), and planning their speech. The only item rated "Good" was "making up new words or guessing when unsure" (WM = 3.35), suggesting this strategy is less confidently used. Overall, the learners demonstrate strong engagement in spoken language development through varied and effective speaking strategies.

Table 3. Level of the language learning strategies of the learners in terms of Reading

S/N Indicators	WM SD	Verbal Description
1 Use a dictionary to get a detailed sense of the reading material.	3.84 1.26	Very Good
2 Read a story or dialogue several times.	3.99 1.20	Very Good
3 Guess the approximate meaning by using clues from the context of the reading material.	3.70 1.22	Very Good
4 Skim an academic text first to get the main idea and then go back and read it more carefully.	3.81 1.25	Very Good
5 Find reading material that is at or near my level.	3.58 1.33	Very Good
6 Read as much as possible in the target language.	3.76 1.24	Very Good
7 Pay attention to the organization of the text, especially headings and subheadings.	3.98 1.16	Very Good
8 Make predictions as to what will happen next in the text.	3.69 1.21	Very Good
9 Try to find things to read for pleasure in the target language.	3.94 1.15	Very Good
10 Make ongoing summaries of the reading either in my mind or in the margins of the text.	3.58 1.23	Very Good
Aggregate Weighted Mean	3.79	Very Good
Aggregate Standard Deviation	1.22	

Table 3 illustrates the learners' language learning strategies in terms of reading, with an aggregate weighted mean of 3.79 and a standard deviation of 1.22, interpreted as "Very Good". All ten indicators received high ratings, suggesting that learners employ a wide range of effective reading strategies. The highest-rated strategies include reading a story multiple times (WM = 3.99) and paying attention to text organization (WM = 3.98), indicating strong habits in reinforcing comprehension. Lower, but still "Very Good," scores were seen in choosing appropriate reading levels and summarizing content (WM = 3.58). Overall, learners are actively and strategically engaged in reading tasks.

Table 4 presents the learners' language learning strategies in terms of writing, with an aggregate weighted mean of 3.73 and a standard deviation of 1.23, corresponding to a "Very Good" level. All ten indicators were rated consistently high, highlighting the learners' effective use of writing strategies. The highest score was for practicing writing the alphabet or new words (WM = 4.19), indicating strong engagement with basic writing skills. Meanwhile, the lowest-rated item was trying different kinds of texts (WM = 3.44), suggesting a need for more exposure to diverse writing tasks. Overall, learners demonstrated solid strategic approaches to writing in the target language.

Table 4. Level of the Language Learning Strategies of the Learners in Terms of Writing

S/N	Indicators	WM	SD	Verbal Description
1	Use reference materials such as a glossary, a dictionary, or a thesaurus to help find or verify words in the target language.	3.77	1.28	Very Good
2	Review what I have already written before continuing to write more.	3.82	1.19	Very Good
3	Revise my writing once or twice to improve the language and content.	3.67	1.26	Very Good
4	Try to get feedback from others, especially native speakers of the language.	3.56	1.21	Very Good
5	Wait to edit my writing until all my ideas are down on paper.	3.79	1.27	Very Good
6	Practice writing the alphabet and/or new words in the target language.	4.19	1.12	Very Good
7	Take class notes in the target language as much as I'm able.	3.70	1.24	Very Good
8	Find a different way to express the idea when I don't know the correct expression.	3.65	1.17	Very Good
9	Plan out in advance how to write essays by writing an outline of the essay first.	3.73	1.20	Very Good
10	Try writing different kinds of texts in the target language.	3.44	1.35	Very Good
	Aggregate Weighted Mean	3.73		Very Good
	Aggregate Standard Deviation		1.23	

Table 5. Level of Reading Skills of the Learners

Reading Level	f	%
Reading at Grade Level	138	24.25%
Transitioning Reader	159	27.94%
High Emerging Reader	65	11.42%
Low Emerging Reader	83	14.59%
Developing Reader	90	15.82%
Reading Skills (Unclear)*	34	5.98%
Total	569	100.00%

Table 5 presents the distribution of Grade Three learners based on their reading skill levels. Among the 569 learners assessed, the largest group falls under the Transitioning Reader category (27.94%), followed by Reading at Grade Level (24.25%) and Developing Readers (15.82%). A notable percentage are Low Emerging Readers (14.59%) and High Emerging Readers (11.42%), indicating that a substantial number of learners are still building foundational reading skills. Additionally, 5.98% of the learners were grouped under Reading Skills (Unclear), suggesting either unclassified results or possible gaps in the assessment process. These figures reveal that while a portion of learners have achieved or are close to grade-level reading proficiency, a significant number remain in the emerging or developing stages. This highlights the need for targeted reading interventions, especially for those in the lower proficiency bands, to support their progress toward fluency and comprehension appropriate for their grade level.

Table 6. Test of Relationship Between the Language Learning Strategies and the Reading Skills of the Learners

Variables	χ^2 -value	df	p-value	Decision	Remarks
Language Learning Strategies and Reading Skills	25.654*	10	0.004	Reject Ho	Significant

Table 6 presents the results of the chi-square test examining the relationship between language learning strategies and reading skills of the learners. The analysis yielded a χ^2 -value of 25.654 with 10 degrees of freedom and a p-value of 0.004. Since the p-value is less than the significance level of 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected, indicating a statistically significant relationship

between the two variables. This means that the way learners apply language learning strategies across listening, speaking, reading, and writing is meaningfully associated with their reading skill levels. Learners who more frequently and effectively used strategies were more likely to perform better in reading assessments. This finding supports the idea that strategic language use enhances literacy development and reinforces the importance of teaching explicit learning strategies to improve reading outcomes. These results can inform the development of targeted interventions and reading enhancement plans in early grade classrooms.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that Grade Three learners demonstrate a very good level of language learning strategies across the four domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Among these, reading strategies received the highest aggregate weighted mean (3.79), indicating that learners actively engage with texts by using dictionaries, rereading materials, and paying attention to textual organization. Listening (3.73), speaking (3.67), and writing (3.73) also showed strong strategy use, reflecting learners' ability to plan, seek clarification, self-monitor, and revise their outputs. However, some indicators, such as predicting content in listening and making up words in speaking, scored slightly lower, suggesting specific skill areas that may benefit from more guided instruction. Overall, the consistent "Very Good" ratings suggest that these learners are equipped with a broad range of metacognitive and practical strategies, which support their language development and readiness for more advanced literacy tasks. Moreover, the chi-square analysis confirmed a statistically significant relationship between language learning strategies and reading skills ($\chi^2 = 25.654$, $p = 0.004$). Learners who reported higher use of strategies tended to perform better in reading assessments, with the largest group categorized as Transitioning Readers (27.94%), followed closely by those Reading at Grade Level (24.25%). However, a substantial percentage still fell under Emerging or Developing levels, indicating that while strategies are being used, some learners need further scaffolding to translate strategy use into reading proficiency. These results underscore the importance of integrating explicit strategy instruction into daily literacy activities and tailoring interventions for learners who remain below grade-level benchmarks.

Conclusion

The findings revealed that learners demonstrated a very good level of language learning strategies across the four macro-skills listening, speaking, reading, and writing indicating active engagement in their language learning processes. Among these, reading strategies were used most effectively, while certain areas such as predicting spoken content and generating alternative words during conversations showed room for improvement. Importantly, the study established a significant relationship between language learning strategies and reading skills, confirming that learners who effectively utilized these strategies tended to perform better in reading assessments. Despite this, a considerable number of learners remained at the emerging or developing stages of reading proficiency. These insights emphasize the need for targeted reading interventions and explicit instruction of learning strategies to support learners who are not yet reading at grade level. The results serve as a strong foundation for designing a Reading Skills Enhancement Plan that promotes strategic language use, strengthens literacy outcomes, and supports inclusive, evidence-based instruction in early education.

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