
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Unraveling The Complexities of Reading Comprehension Among Learners with Special Educational Needs in Philippine Inclusive Settings

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| ABSTRACT

This research explored reading comprehension complexities among Filipino Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSEs) in inclusive education settings. It analyzed factors influencing their comprehension and educators' use of standard assessments to inform a targeted action plan. A descriptive-correlational study was conducted in two DepEd Cebu Province public schools with 90 Special Education (SpEd) and General Education (Gen. Ed.) teachers selected via convenience and purposive sampling. Data, collected through a three-part survey on LSEN reading proficiency, assessment tool utilization, and influencing factors, were analyzed using frequency count, weighted mean, and Spearman rho correlation. Findings revealed varied LSEN reading comprehension levels, with stronger foundational skills but challenges in vocabulary, syntax, and higher-order comprehension. Educators showed limited use of diverse assessments, favoring Informal Reading Inventories over Curriculum-Based Measurement and customized methods. Educators perceived individual, instructional, and environmental factors as having limited influence, yet a strong positive correlation emerged between standard assessment tool utilization and LSEN reading proficiency. Therefore, addressing LSEN reading challenges necessitates varied, contextually relevant assessments, a deeper understanding of individual learner characteristics, effective instruction, and recognition of environmental influences for equitable literacy development.

| KEYWORDS

Reading comprehension, special educational needs (LSEs), assessment tools, individual factors, instructional practices, environmental influences

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

Inclusive education aims to provide all learners, including those with special educational needs, the opportunity to learn together in mainstream classrooms. While promoting social integration and equity, this approach presents unique challenges, particularly in diverse and inclusive settings. For the learners with special needs (LSEs), key difficulties include processing complex verbal instructions, retaining information, and comprehending written material. Notably, East Asian nations like China, Hong Kong, Korea, and Singapore consistently outperform Southeast Asian countries such as Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand in international reading assessments, despite comparable educational spending (Perera & Asadullah, 2019).

The pervasive reading difficulties among children in the Philippines represent a significant educational challenge, one that is alarmingly pronounced among LSEs and urgently needs addressing to mitigate low academic achievement. Poor reading skills are frequently cited as a primary factor in these low scores. The 2019 Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) report revealed that a substantial proportion of Filipino fifth-grade students demonstrated minimal proficiency in reading, writing and

mathematics (Abril et al., 2022). Furthermore, even before the COVID-19 pandemic, Filipino education officials were concerned about students' weak reading abilities. This concern was highlighted by the 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results, where the Philippines ranked last in reading comprehension among 79 participating countries (Misanes & Pascual, 2023). Despite its national significance, the issue of reading difficulties among Filipino learners, especially LSEs, persists as a crucial challenge for stakeholders due to the lack of a categorically determined understanding of its principal cause(s) and consequently, appropriate solutions.

While the existing literature in the Philippines acknowledges the significant challenges in reading comprehension among students, particularly LSEs in inclusive settings, there is a limited understanding of the specific cognitive profiles and the interplay of individual factors (beyond general categories like "learning disabilities") that uniquely contribute to reading comprehension difficulties in Filipino LSEs within diverse classroom environments. Furthermore, there is a need for more localized research on the effectiveness of specific, culturally relevant instructional interventions and assessment practices specifically designed to address these cognitive and individual profiles of Filipino LSEs in inclusive classrooms.

Therefore, evaluating the state of reading comprehension is vital for identifying specific obstacles encountered by LSEs, including cognitive factors, socio-emotional issues, and other contributing elements. Consequently, this study aims to conduct a multidimensional analysis of the determinants of reading comprehension in LSEs within an inclusive setting in two public schools from the Department of Education (DepEd) Cebu Province Division during the 2023-2024 school year. The optimal intent of the current study is to develop a targeted action plan.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Reading Comprehension Skills of LSEs

Difficulties in literal comprehension significantly impede learners with special educational needs (LSEs). These students often struggle with recalling factual details, identifying main ideas, and recognizing specific information, particularly when language processing or limited prior knowledge is a factor. Developing literal comprehension is fundamental for understanding more complex aspects of reading and improving overall academic achievement (Sulfasyah et al., 2023). Expanding on this foundation, inferential comprehension—the ability to make connections and draw conclusions from text—presents another hurdle for many LSEs, especially those with autism spectrum disorders or language impairments. Explicit instruction in inference-making strategies, along with visual and contextual supports and questioning during reading, can foster this skill (Sulfasyah et al., 2023).

Beyond drawing inferences, effective reading comprehension also relies on the ability to actively process and retain information. Working memory deficits can significantly hinder this process for LSEs, making it difficult to remember details, follow complex narratives, or integrate new information with existing knowledge. Strategies such as breaking down tasks, using visual aids, and ensuring repeated exposure to key information can support working memory (Brunfaut et al., 2021). In addition to memory, maintaining attention and focus is another crucial cognitive function impacting reading comprehension in LSEs. Difficulties in sustaining concentration can lead to misunderstandings and incomplete engagement with the material. Structured and engaging lessons, visual cues, prompts, and opportunities for movement and short breaks can support learners facing these challenges (Vaughn et al., 2024).

As learners actively engage, higher-order cognitive skills, such as critical thinking, become increasingly important for deeper understanding. Many LSEs struggle with connecting ideas, questioning assumptions, or drawing logical inferences, particularly those with cognitive or learning disabilities. Employing effective questioning techniques, encouraging classroom discussions, and providing problem-solving activities can foster critical thinking skills (Mohseni et al., 2020). Extending beyond analysis, problem-solving skills are integral to reading comprehension. LSEs may find it challenging to identify problems within a text, generate solutions, or apply effective strategies to overcome reading difficulties. This is particularly relevant for those with executive functioning deficits. Explicitly teaching problem-solving strategies, using real-world scenarios to contextualize textual challenges, and encouraging collaborative learning can support the development of these skills (Vaughn et al., 2024).

2.2 Assessment Practices in Reading Comprehension for LSEs

Informal Reading Inventories (IRIs) are valuable tools for educators to assess the individual reading levels of LSEs. By evaluating their performance on passages of increasing difficulty, IRIs help pinpoint strengths and weaknesses in comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary (Ru & Lee, 2021). Complementing these individual measures, Curriculum-Based Measurement (CBM) offers a standardized and efficient method for regularly monitoring the development of LSEs' reading skills. This approach provides data on fluency, accuracy, and comprehension, enabling timely instructional adjustments and personalized learning goals in inclusive settings (Snyder & Ayres, 2020). While CBM monitors progress, Criterion-Referenced Tests (CRTs) evaluate a student's

performance against specific learning objectives, determining mastery of skills like phonemic awareness or vocabulary knowledge within inclusive education.

Moving beyond formal tests, qualitative methods, such as observation and anecdotal records, provide rich insights into LSENs' reading behaviors, strategies, and attitudes. Systematic observation captures engagement and comprehension approaches, while anecdotal records offer deeper understanding of individual reading journeys (Stahl et al., 2019). Another qualitative approach involves portfolios—comprehensive collections of student work that showcase progress and achievements in reading over time. In inclusive environments, portfolios allow LSENs to demonstrate comprehension through diverse artifacts like written reflections and projects (Arumugham, 2019).

Recognizing diverse needs, customized assessments are specifically designed to address the unique needs and abilities of LSENs, providing detailed information on individual strengths and weaknesses to facilitate targeted instruction and support (Vaughn et al., 2024). In contrast to tailored approaches, standardized tests offer a consistent and objective means of measuring reading comprehension skills across different student groups and educational settings. They help identify areas of strength and need and inform strategies to reduce achievement gaps (Vaughn et al., 2024). In addition to these measures, performance-based tasks require LSENs to apply their reading comprehension skills in authentic, real-world contexts. These tasks assess students' ability to analyze, interpret, and synthesize information while fostering critical thinking and problem-solving (Heydarnejad et al., 2022).

To gain broader perspectives, parent and teacher questionnaires gather valuable information about LSENs' reading behaviors, preferences, and support systems at home and school. This approach strengthens collaboration and enhances reading development (Oduor et al., 2024). Nonetheless, reading logs or journals encourage self-reflection on the reading process, promoting metacognition and self-awareness. These logs also facilitate communication between students, teachers, and parents, fostering a collaborative approach to supporting reading comprehension skills (Vaughn et al., 2024).

2.3 Influence of Individual Factors on Reading Comprehension

The interactive model of reading comprehension posits that both bottom-up processing (involving letter and word decoding) and top-down processing (utilizing context and prior knowledge) operate concurrently for comprehensive understanding (Rumelhart, 2022). Expanding on this idea, foundational decoding skills like phonemic awareness enable initial text processing, while top-down skills like inference actively aid meaning construction (Alvermann et al., 2019). A critical challenge arises with phonological processing deficits, often seen in dyslexia, which hinder sound manipulation—a fundamental reading skill (Rehfeld et al., 2022). As a direct result, targeted phonics instruction proves beneficial for struggling decoders. Similarly, difficulties with reading fluency, manifesting as slow reading and errors in LSENs and frequently linked to dyslexia or ADHD, negatively impact both comprehension and engagement (Metsala & David, 2022). Furthermore, when considering the element of prosody (intonation and phrasing), poor prosody affects the clear conveyance of meaning. Modeling and consistent practice can significantly improve it (Groen et al., 2019).

Shifting the primary focus, the Simple View of Reading clearly highlights that both decoding (encompassing phonics and word recognition) and linguistic comprehension (involving vocabulary and syntax understanding) are vital components for effective reading (Duke et al., 2021). Specifically, in this context, limited vocabulary significantly hinders text understanding. Explicit instruction and promoting wide reading are key strategies for vocabulary growth (Quinn et al., 2020). Moreover, a deeper understanding of vocabulary substantially enhances accurate interpretation of texts (Taghizadeh & Khalili, 2019). In a related manner, syntactic difficulties directly impede both comprehension and clear expression. Direct grammar instruction and consistent practice are beneficial interventions (Pooresmaeil et al., 2019). Equally important to consider is that morphological awareness significantly aids in understanding complex words. Explicit teaching of word parts can effectively foster this crucial skill (Levesque et al., 2019). It is important to note that strong language comprehension skills alone cannot fully compensate for poor decoding abilities when attempting to access written material (Hoover, 2023).

Considering broader cognitive influences, connectionist models strongly emphasize the interconnectedness of reading skills, including phonological processing, orthographic recognition, and semantic understanding. These skills progressively develop through consistent exposure and dedicated practice (McClelland & Rumelhart, 2020; Gibbons, 2019). Furthermore, it is evident that stronger underlying cognitive skills can significantly facilitate both decoding and information retention. Various factors such as resilience, personal interests, and motivation also play a significant role in reading development among all LSENs (Mawila, 2022). In terms of learning strategies, learners who demonstrate effective self-regulation of their learning processes, including setting achievable goals and actively monitoring their understanding of the material, tend to achieve better overall outcomes in reading comprehension (Capin et al., 2023).

2.4 Impact of Instructional and Environmental Factors on Reading Comprehension

Effective assessment and well-designed instruction must precisely identify learning needs and provide targeted remediation for struggling learners, ensuring balanced development of decoding skills and contextual understanding (Lestari et al., 2023; Cho et al., 2019). To elaborate further, thoughtful reading exercises simultaneously build decoding abilities and encourage the use of context clues and background knowledge (Phichiensathien, 2021). In cases where learners exhibit decoding difficulties, such as dyslexia, they significantly benefit from additional, targeted phonics instruction. Conversely, those needing more robust comprehension support require focused vocabulary development and structured comprehension practice (Nation, 2019).

Furthermore, integrating phonics interventions with explicit comprehension strategy instruction, such as summarization and question-answering, supports comprehensive reading development for all learners, including those with special educational needs (Taboada et al., 2021). Specifically, focused interventions provide intensive practice in specific reading areas, like phonics or vocabulary, thereby strengthening the neural connections essential for automatic processing (Plaut et al., 2020; Ellis & Humphreys, 2020). Considering the unique challenges faced by LSEs with significant phonics difficulties impacting decoding and fluency, explicit and systematic phonics instruction tailored to individual needs is crucial in inclusive settings (Double et al., 2019).

Shifting our focus to adaptive learning technologies, these offer personalized reading instruction by dynamically adjusting difficulty based on individual performance. This consequently strengthens cognitive connections for effective reading comprehension (McClelland et al., 2020). Beyond technological integration, teacher expertise in areas such as phonics, vocabulary development, and comprehension techniques is undeniably vital for LSEs' reading development (Vaughn et al., 2024; Afflerbach et al., 2020). Moreover, the consistent implementation of differentiated instruction, with varied approaches thoughtfully accommodating individual learning profiles, is a crucial framework for inclusive classrooms (Accardo & Finnegan, 2019; Vaughn et al., 2024).

Turning our attention to broader contextual factors, LSEs' academic success in inclusive environments frequently depends on the degree of effective collaboration among educators, actively involved parents, and specialized support professionals (Tiernan et al., 2020). In addition, consistent co-facilitation of instruction between the structured school setting and the supportive home environment is essential for developing LSEs' critical reading competencies (Gokbulut et al., 2020). Within supportive school settings, the ready and equitable availability of essential resources like engaging materials, supportive technology, and tailored support services significantly impacts learning outcomes (Asri et al., 2021).

Similarly, within the home environment, active parental involvement and consistent encouragement are key environmental factors influencing LSEs' ongoing reading development. For instance, parents engaging in read-alouds, facilitating book discussions, and encouraging regular reading habits reinforce school-taught literacy skills, creating a more cohesive learning experience (Dong et al., 2020). Ultimately, a supportive home environment that explicitly values literacy and proactively provides reading opportunities builds confidence and motivation in LSEs. Furthermore, strong parent-teacher partnerships ensure consistent instructional strategies and shared expectations, effectively fostering the development of critical reading comprehension skills (Gokbulut et al., 2020).

2.5 Pedagogical Approaches to Enhancing Reading Comprehension

Cultivating a classroom atmosphere where students are encouraged to share their unique understandings and personal responses to texts can significantly improve their comprehension and make the reading process more personally relevant (Wilson, 2021). To illustrate this further, when learners feel their perspectives are valued, they tend to engage more deeply with the material. Consequently, this active engagement fosters a more profound level of understanding. Moreover, connecting personal experiences to the text enhances its significance for the student. In essence, creating a supportive space for individual interpretation enriches the overall reading experience. Ultimately, this approach transforms reading from a passive task to an active meaning-making process.

This evolving understanding of reading comprehension implies that instructional methods should be flexible and adapt to students' developing grasp of the material. For example, incorporating activities that promote thoughtful reflection and classroom dialogue can assist students in deepening their comprehension as they continually interact with and interpret the text. Specifically, providing opportunities for students to discuss their interpretations with peers can broaden their understanding. Furthermore, encouraging students to reflect on their reading process helps them become more metacognitively aware. In other words, adaptive teaching strategies acknowledge the dynamic nature of comprehension. As a result, learning becomes a continuous process of meaning negotiation.

An educational strategy that values students' contributions and backgrounds can be particularly beneficial in supporting diverse learners, including those with special educational needs. This approach makes reading a more inclusive and personalized endeavor (Gusler et al., 2022). Notably, when student input is valued, it can create a more equitable learning environment. Furthermore, tailoring reading experiences to individual backgrounds can increase student motivation. Consequently, this personalized approach can make reading more accessible and engaging for all learners. Indeed, acknowledging and integrating students' experiences can bridge potential learning gaps. Ultimately, this fosters a sense of belonging and relevance in the reading process.

For LSEs, this approach can be especially empowering, as it affirms their individual viewpoints and promotes interaction with texts in a manner that supports their unique comprehension styles and modes of expression (Yandell, 2020). Specifically, validating their perspectives can boost their confidence as readers. Additionally, encouraging diverse forms of expression allows them to demonstrate understanding in ways that suit their strengths. Consequently, this can lead to increased engagement and a more positive reading experience. Moreover, it acknowledges the diverse ways in which LSEs process and make sense of information. This inclusive approach can unlock their potential for reading comprehension.

The relationship between the application of standardized assessment tools and LSEN proficiency is evident in their capacity to inform teaching practices grounded in evidence. Specifically, standardized assessments offer dependable reference points that educators can utilize to evaluate the effectiveness of their teaching methodologies (Calet et al., 2020). Consequently, this data-driven approach allows for the refinement of instructional strategies. Furthermore, reliable benchmarks help educators track student progress and identify areas for improvement. In other words, assessment data provides valuable insights into what teaching methods are most effective. Ultimately, this evidence-based approach aims to enhance the learning outcomes for LSEs.

3. Methodology

As the current study aims to describe the prevailing situation regarding the level of LSEN proficiency in reading comprehension components and the degree of educator utilization of assessment tools, while also examining relationships between variables—specifically the extent to which various factors (individual, instructional, environmental) influence reading comprehension and the correlation between educators' use of assessment tools and LSEN proficiency—the employment of a descriptive-correlational design is appropriate. The utilization of such research design is suitable as it examines the relationship between two or more variables without manipulating them. It identifies patterns and measures the strength and direction of associations, helping researchers understand how variables are related and predict potential outcomes based on these relationships (Fitria, 2019).

For this study, a public national high school and a public elementary school from Minglanilla District 1 of the Department of Education (DepEd) Cebu Province Division are identified as the research locales. These two institutions were selected because the researcher has firsthand knowledge of the prevailing issues affecting LSEs at these schools, whose reading comprehension skills are at significant risk if not timely and appropriately addressed through intervention. Utilizing both convenience and purposive sampling techniques (Quinto & Cacanindin, 2024), 90 willing Special Education and General Education teachers, who have all been exposed to inclusive environments, were deliberately chosen and invited as respondents.

The survey questionnaire is divided into three (3) parts, namely: Part 1 contained the survey for LSEs' demonstration of proficiency in various components of reading comprehension as assessed by their educators while Part 2 has the survey for the degree where educators do utilize standard assessment tools in gauging the reading comprehension skills. Part 3 does show the survey indicators which assess the extent to where the identified factors influence reading comprehension in LSEs. Accordingly, the 15 indicators in Part 1 are primarily referenced from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (National Reading Panel, 2000). The 10 indicators for Part 2 were sourced from the ebook entitled 'The ABCs of CBM: A Practical Guide to Curriculum-based Measurement. Additionally, the 30 indicators for Part 3 were essentially derived from the ebook 'Reading for Understanding: Toward an R&D Program in Reading Comprehension.

To collect the necessary data, the researcher secured official approval from both the Schools Division Superintendent of DepEd Cebu Province Division and the School Manager(s) through formal written requests. Informed consent documents were developed during this phase to allow educators to indicate their participation preferences. These documents detailed participant responsibilities, questionnaire procedures, research benefits, and risk assessments. After receiving authorization from the appropriate DepEd officials, consent forms were distributed to prospective respondents prior to the actual survey-taking. Expressly, both Special Education and General Education teachers alike were willing respondents in this recent study. Observing well the crucial provisions from RA 1073 or the Data Privacy Act of 2012 in the Philippines, ethical guidelines, especially concerning data confidentiality, were communicated before administering the survey, too. The researcher, through the assistance of a compensated research aide, administered the questionnaires and provide guidance to the respondents as needed in the

concerned schools. Following survey completion, all instruments were retrieved and the information was methodically organized, tabulated, and examined using suitable statistical methods. The resulting findings are presented in the succeeding parts.

Choosing the right statistical tools is crucial for ensuring accurate data analysis, drawing valid conclusions, and making informed decisions based on survey data. This choice enhances the study's reliability and credibility in research or decision-making. Both descriptive and inferential statistics have been used to treat the raw data gathered from the survey. The frequency count and weighted mean were used to determine the level where LSENs demonstrate proficiency in various components of reading comprehension and the extent to which these identified factors influence reading comprehension in LSENs in terms of individual, instructional and environmental factors. On the other hand, the Spearman rho correlation has been utilized to infer whether or not there is a possible correlation between the educators' use of standard assessment tools and the proficiency of LSENs across various components of reading comprehension.

4. Results and Discussions

Table 1. Level of Proficiency demonstrated by LSENs in various components of Reading Comprehension as assessed by their Educators

No	Indicators	\bar{x}	SD	Verbal Description
1	Phonemic Awareness: I observe that the LSEN can identify & manipulate individual sounds in words (e.g., phonemes).	1.80	0.40	Somewhat proficient
2	Phonics: The LSEN demonstrates understanding of the relationship between letters and sounds when reading.	1.80	0.40	Somewhat proficient
3	Fluency & Rate: The LSEN reads words accurately and at an appropriate speed during reading tasks.	1.77	0.43	Somewhat proficient
4	Prosody: The LSEN uses appropriate expression and intonation while reading aloud.	1.64	0.48	Not proficient
5	Breadth of Vocabulary: The LSEN demonstrates knowledge of a wide range of words.	1.63	0.48	Not proficient
6	Depth of Vocabulary: The LSEN understands the meanings of words, including multiple meanings and nuances.	1.59	0.49	Not proficient
7	Syntax: The LSEN observably understands sentence structure and grammar rules.	1.58	0.50	Not proficient
8	Morphology: The LSEN recognizes and understands word structures (e.g., prefixes, suffixes).	1.69	0.47	Not proficient
9	Literal Comprehension: The LSEN understands the explicit meaning of the text.	1.58	0.50	Not proficient
10	Inferential Comprehension: The LSEN makes inferences and understands implicit meanings in the text.	1.67	0.47	Not proficient
11	Evaluative Comprehension: The LSEN evaluates, analyzes, and forms opinions about the text.	1.74	0.44	Not proficient
12	Working Memory: The LSEN can hold and manipulate information while reading.	1.72	0.45	Not proficient
13	Attention and Focus: The LSEN sustains attention on reading tasks and maintains focus.	1.63	0.48	Not proficient
14	Critical Thinking: The LSEN analyzes, synthesizes, and evaluates information from the text.	1.66	0.48	Not proficient
15	Problem Solving: The LSEN applies information from the text to solve problems.	1.64	0.48	Not proficient
<i>Average Weighted Mean</i>		1.68	0.46	Not proficient

Legend: 3.25–4.00 Fully proficient; 2.50–3.24 Proficient; 1.75–2.49 Somewhat proficient; 1.00–1.74 Not proficient

Table 1 reveals that LSENs are performing below the proficiency threshold in most areas of reading comprehension. Only three indicators—Phonemic Awareness, Phonics, and Fluency & Rate—reached the "Somewhat proficient" classification, while the remaining twelve indicators fell into the "Not proficient" category. The fundamental decoding skills appear to be relatively more developed compared to higher-order comprehension abilities. Notably, areas involving syntax, literal comprehension, and vocabulary depth showed the lowest proficiency levels. The average weighted mean confirms a general lack of proficiency across

all reading comprehension components. Standard deviations across all indicators remained relatively consistent, suggesting a uniform pattern of assessment by educators. The data reveals a clear developmental pattern where basic reading skills have begun to develop, but more complex comprehension processes remain underdeveloped among the LSEs in this inclusive education context.

Regarding the level of proficiency demonstrated by LSEs in various components of reading comprehension, the overall results indicate a developmental progression in reading acquisition for LSEs in Philippine inclusive settings, characterized by relatively stronger foundational skills (phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency) compared to more advanced comprehension abilities. However, a significant challenge emerges from the consistently "Not proficient" ratings across comprehension components, vocabulary dimensions, grammatical understanding, and cognitive processes, highlighting areas requiring targeted intervention. This consistent low proficiency underscores the critical necessity of early intervention programs to address reading challenges before achievement gaps widen. Building upon this understanding, interventions should strategically leverage the relatively stronger foundation in phonemic awareness and phonics to systematically develop more complex comprehension skills.

Consequently, teachers necessitate professional development focused on differentiated instruction strategies specifically targeting vocabulary development, syntax, morphology, and varying comprehension levels. Furthermore, to effectively address these diverse needs, concerned schools must prioritize the adoption of comprehensive assessment tools capable of identifying specific reading difficulties and informing individualized educational plans. Specifically, research indicates that LSEs with memory limitations encounter difficulties in processing text, and strategies such as task segmentation, visual supports, and content repetition have been shown to enhance information retention (Brunfaut et al., 2021). Moreover, another key aspect to consider is that concentration issues significantly impede reading success for LSEs, but organized instruction, visual prompts, and strategic pauses can improve their engagement with learning materials (Vaughn et al., 2024). In addition, findings suggest that many LSEs grapple with reasoning challenges, and targeted inquiries, group conversations, and analytical exercises are effective in developing more sophisticated comprehension abilities (Mohseni et al., 2020). Finally, evidence also points to the fact that text-based problem identification poses a hurdle for LSEs, yet direct strategy instruction combined with peer learning opportunities can strengthen their textual navigation skills (Vaughn et al., 2024).

Table 2. Degree to which Educators utilize Standard Assessment Tools in gauging the Reading Comprehension Skills

No	Indicators	\bar{x}	SD	Verbal Description
1	I utilize Informal Reading Inventories to assess the reading abilities of LSEs.	1.78	0.42	Somewhat utilized
2	I regularly use Curriculum-Based Measurement to monitor the progress of LSEs in reading comprehension.	1.74	0.44	Not utilized
3	I utilize Criterion-Referenced Tests to assess specific reading comprehension skills of LSEs.	1.69	0.47	Not utilized
4	I use observation & anecdotal records to gather qualitative insights into LSEs' reading comprehension skills.	1.72	0.45	Not utilized
5	I compile portfolios of LSEs' work samples to demonstrate their progress in reading comprehension.	1.61	0.49	Not utilized
6	I create customized assessments to evaluate the specific reading comprehension skills of LSEs.	1.57	0.50	Not utilized
7	I use standardized tests with accommodations to assess the reading comprehension abilities of LSEs.	1.62	0.49	Not utilized
8	I assign performance-based tasks to LSEs to assess their application of reading comprehension skills.	1.64	0.48	Not utilized
9	I use parent/teacher questionnaires to gather information on LSEs' reading behaviors & support at home & school.	1.64	0.48	Not utilized
10	I encourage LSEs' parents to maintain reading logs or journals to record their child's reading experiences.	1.67	0.47	Not utilized
<i>Average Weighted Mean</i>		1.67	0.47	Not utilized

Legend: 3.25–4.00 Always utilized; 2.50–3.24 Often utilized; 1.75–2.49 Sometimes utilized; 1.00–1.74 Not utilized

Among the ten assessment approaches surveyed, Table 2 shows that only Informal Reading Inventories reached the threshold of being "Somewhat utilized," while all other assessment methods fell into the "Not utilized" category. Nonetheless, the creation of

customized assessments specifically designed for LSEs divulged the lowest implementation rate among educators. The average weighted mean across all indicators confirms a general pattern of inadequate utilization of formal assessment tools and strategies, with remarkably consistent standard deviations suggesting uniform assessment practices across the surveyed educators.

Building upon these foundational insights regarding proficiency, the limited utilization of diverse assessment tools reveals a significant gap in comprehensively evaluating reading comprehension among LSEs. Educators demonstrate a slight preference for Informal Reading Inventories, suggesting greater comfort with adaptable, less structured approaches. However, the underutilization of systematic tools like curriculum-based measurements and criterion-referenced tests indicates challenges in implementing data-driven instruction. Particularly concerning is the minimal use of customized assessments that would benefit LSEs' unique learning needs. Limited parent/teacher questionnaires and home reading logs represent missed opportunities for establishing crucial home-school connections. These patterns likely reflect systemic challenges including inadequate training, resource constraints, time limitations, and insufficient knowledge about specialized assessment approaches for diverse learners. Such findings necessitate that the concerned schools must address resource allocation, preparation time, and teacher-student ratios to facilitate comprehensive assessment. Correspondingly, schools may establish collaborative assessment systems involving parents, specialists, and general educators. Furthermore, culturally and linguistically appropriate assessment tools may need to be developed, as standardized measures may not adequately reflect Filipino LSEs' unique profiles.

Specifically, research highlights that Informal Reading Inventories are utilized to assess individual LSE reading levels, identifying strengths and weaknesses in comprehension, fluency, and vocabulary through passages of increasing difficulty (Ru & Lee, 2021). In contrast, findings indicate that a Curriculum-based measurement provides standardized, regular monitoring of reading development, yielding data on fluency, accuracy, and comprehension to guide instructional adjustments for LSEs (Snyder & Ayres, 2020). Furthermore, evidence suggests that customized assessments directly address the unique needs of LSEs, offering detailed information on individual strengths and weaknesses to facilitate targeted instruction and support (Vaughn et al., 2024). Additionally, it has been observed that observation and anecdotal records offer valuable insights into LSEs' reading behaviors, comprehension strategies, and attitudes, providing a richer understanding that complements formal assessment measures (Stahl et al., 2019). Finally, research demonstrates that Criterion-referenced tests evaluate LSE performance against specific learning objectives, thereby determining their mastery of essential reading skills within inclusive educational settings.

Table 3. Extent to which Individual Factor influences Reading Comprehension

No	Indicators	\bar{x}	SD	Verbal Description
1	The LSEs' ability to sustain attention during reading tasks influences their comprehension.	1.77	0.43	Fairly influential
2	The LSEs' understanding of phonics affects their ability to read unfamiliar words.	1.68	0.47	Not influential
3	The LSEs' interest in reading materials influences their engagement and comprehension.	1.63	0.48	Not influential
4	The LSEs' physical health, including factors like fatigue & stamina, impacts their ability to focus on reading tasks.	1.71	0.46	Not influential
5	The LSEs' rate of language development affects their understanding of complex texts.	1.60	0.49	Not influential
6	The LSEs' ability to use multiple learning styles improves their comprehension.	1.72	0.45	Not influential
7	The LSEs' experiences with different types of texts affect their understanding and interpretation.	1.72	0.45	Not influential
8	The LSEs' ability to self-regulate during reading tasks influences their understanding of the text.	1.66	0.48	Not influential
9	The LSEs' vocabulary breadth and depth are crucial for understanding the text.	1.59	0.49	Not influential
10	The LSEs' ability to work collaboratively with peers during reading activities enhances their understanding.	1.58	0.50	Not influential
<i>Average Weighted Mean</i>		1.67	0.47	Not influential

Legend: 3.25–4.00 Strongly influential; 2.50–3.24 Moderately influential; 1.75–2.49 Fairly influential; 1.00–1.74 Not influential

As can be gleaned, Table 3 discloses that educators generally perceive most individual factors as having limited influence on reading comprehension outcomes for LSEs. Only one factor—the ability to sustain attention during reading tasks—reached the threshold of being "Fairly influential," while all other factors were rated as "Not influential." Interestingly, factors traditionally considered essential for reading comprehension, such as vocabulary breadth and depth, received some of the lowest influence ratings. The overall assessment demonstrates a consistent pattern of educators attributing minimal influence to individual factors in determining reading comprehension outcomes for LSEs.

Moving beyond assessment tools to examine learner characteristics, the recognition of attention sustainability as the sole fairly influential factor suggests educators may prioritize observable classroom behaviors over less visible cognitive processes. The low ratings for foundational components like phonics understanding, vocabulary knowledge, and language development are concerning, as this pattern may reflect limited understanding of the complex interplay between individual characteristics and reading comprehension. These consistently low ratings suggest educators in Philippine inclusive settings may not sufficiently consider LSEs' unique profiles when addressing reading comprehension challenges. Hence, assessment practices should incorporate tools identifying specific individual factors to guide individualized interventions. It is essential that the education bureau supports smaller class sizes and additional resources to better address individual needs. Nevertheless, school-based learning communities should foster collaborative examination of student work to deepen educators' understanding of how these individual factors concretely influence reading performance, thereby strengthening their capacity to implement appropriate interventions tailored to each LSE's unique profile.

Somehow, the theoretical framework of the Interactive reading model posits that comprehensive understanding arises from the combination of bottom-up decoding and top-down processing, utilizing context and prior knowledge (Rumelhart, 2022). In considering specific learning differences, research indicates that phonological processing deficits, which are common in dyslexia, significantly hinder the sound manipulation abilities crucial for reading development (Rehfeld et al., 2022). Furthermore, the Simple View of Reading model underscores that decoding and linguistic comprehension are essential and distinct components for effective reading development (Duke et al., 2021). Moreover, empirical studies have shown that limited vocabulary significantly hinders text comprehension, and explicit instruction coupled with the promotion of wide reading are effective strategies for enhancing vocabulary growth (Quinn et al., 2020). Finally, research on learner agency suggests that self-regulating learners, who actively set goals and monitor their comprehension, tend to achieve better reading outcomes (Capin et al., 2023).

Table 4. Extent to which Instructional Factor influences Reading Comprehension

No	Indicators	\bar{x}	SD	Verbal Description
1	The effectiveness of the teaching methods used influences the LSEs' reading comprehension.	1.69	0.47	Not influential
2	The availability and use of assistive technology tools enhance LSEs' reading comprehension.	1.72	0.44	Not influential
3	The modifications in reading materials (e.g., simplified texts) influence the LSEs' comprehension.	1.68	0.46	Not influential
4	The integration of metacognitive strategies (e.g., self-monitoring) enhances the LSEs' comprehension.	1.66	0.48	Not influential
5	The frequency and quality of feedback provided during reading tasks influence the LSEs' comprehension.	1.63	0.48	Not influential
6	The relevance and interest level of reading materials affect the student's engagement and comprehension.	1.64	0.48	Not influential
7	The pacing of reading instruction affects the LSEs' ability to comprehend texts.	1.70	0.46	Not influential
8	The availability of reading resources (e.g., books, digital texts) impacts the LSEs' engagement & understanding.	1.60	0.49	Not influential
9	The teacher's expertise and knowledge in teaching reading comprehension skills affect the LSEs' learning.	1.66	0.48	Not influential
10	The teacher's ability to assess and respond to individual reading needs influences the student's comprehension.	1.62	0.49	Not influential
<i>Average Weighted Mean</i>		1.66	0.47	Not influential

Legend: 3.25–4.00 Strongly influential; 2.50–3.24 Moderately influential; 1.75–2.49 Fairly influential; 1.00–1.74 Not influential

On the other hand, Table 4 exposes educators' perceptions regarding how instructional factors influence reading comprehension among the Filipino LSEs. Strikingly, all ten instructional factors examined were rated as "Not influential" in affecting reading comprehension outcomes. Among these factors, assistive technology utilization received the highest rating, though still falling within the "Not influential" category, while the availability of reading resources received the lowest rating. The general assessment demonstrates a consistent pattern where educators attribute minimal influence to instructional factors in determining reading comprehension outcomes for LSEs, with remarkably uniform standard deviations suggesting consensus among the respondents.

Shifting our focus from individual to instructional considerations, the universal perception that instructional factors are not influential contradicts fundamental principles of effective inclusive education. This pattern may indicate underlying issues: educators might experience instructional inefficacy when working with LSEs, lack specialized training, face resource constraints limiting implementation of effective approaches, or attribute reading challenges primarily to student factors rather than instructional variables. The low rating for resource availability suggests systemic challenges within the inclusive setting. Such findings point to a necessity to outline and carry out comprehensive reforms in Philippine inclusive education. Thus, the concerned schools, in particular, may prioritize building efficacy by demonstrating the tangible impact of effective instructional approaches through relevant courses of action. For example, school administrators may invest in the professional development of their teachers in this matter. Also, resource allocation to ensure appropriate materials and assistive technologies are available must be carefully considered.

Research demonstrates that targeted assessment practices, when paired with differentiated instruction, create optimal pathways for struggling readers by addressing specific learning gaps in both decoding and comprehension (Lestari et al., 2023). Furthermore, studies have highlighted that the systematic integration of phonics with explicit comprehension strategies provides comprehensive literacy support for diverse learners with varied learning profiles (Taboada et al., 2021). Moreover, evidence strongly suggests that teacher expertise in evidence-based literacy practices significantly influences reading outcomes for students with special educational needs in inclusive settings (Vaughn et al., 2024). In addition, findings indicate that effective classroom differentiation, utilizing varied instructional approaches based on individual learning profiles, creates accessible literacy environments for all students (Accardo & Finnegan, 2019). Finally, research underscores that educational success for students with learning differences depends substantially on collaborative partnerships between educators, families, and specialized support professionals (Tiernan et al., 2020).

Table 5. Extent to which Environmental Factors influences Reading Comprehension

No	Indicators	\bar{x}	SD	Verbal Description
1	The level of parental involvement in the LSEs' reading activities affects their reading comprehension.	1.74	0.44	Not influential
2	The frequency of reading-related activities with family members impacts the LSEs' engagement and/or understanding.	1.72	0.45	Not influential
3	The socioeconomic status of the LSEs' family affects access to reading resources and opportunities.	1.56	0.50	Not influential
4	The quality and accessibility of reading materials provided by the school influence the LSEs' engagement.	1.66	0.48	Not influential
5	The availability of educational support and enrichment programs influences the LSEs' reading development.	1.61	0.49	Not influential
6	The teacher's responsiveness to the LSEs' individual needs influences their reading comprehension.	1.59	0.49	Not influential
7	The inclusion of culturally relevant texts enhances the LSEs' engagement and comprehension.	1.61	0.49	Not influential
8	The supportiveness of the school environment influences the LSEs' willingness to participate in reading activities.	1.74	0.44	Not influential
9	The availability of after-school reading programs influences the LSEs' reading development.	1.67	0.47	Not influential
10	The involvement of community organizations in promoting literacy influences the LSEs' engagement with reading.	1.62	0.49	Not influential
	<i>Average Weighted Mean</i>	1.65	0.47	Not influential

Legend: 3.25–4.00 Strongly influential; 2.50–3.24 Moderately influential; 1.75–2.49 Fairly influential; 1.00–1.74 Not influential

Furthermore, Table 5 demonstrates a consistent pattern where educators perceive all environmental factors as having limited influence on reading comprehension outcomes. None of the ten environmental factors evaluated reached even the "Fairly influential" threshold. Parental involvement and school environment supportiveness received the highest ratings, though still within the "Not influential" category, while socioeconomic status received the lowest rating. The overall assessment demonstrates a remarkably uniform pattern where educators consistently attribute minimal influence to environmental factors in determining reading comprehension outcomes for LSENs in Philippine inclusive classrooms.

Expanding our analysis to broader contextual influences, the widespread belief that environmental factors lack influence contradicts fundamental principles of ecological systems theory and socio-cultural perspectives on learning. This pattern may indicate concerning possibilities: educators might have limited awareness of how home, school, and community environments impact reading development; they may feel powerless in addressing environmental barriers; or they could be attributing reading challenges primarily to student-centered deficits rather than contextual factors. The particularly low rating for socioeconomic status is especially concerning, given extensive research documenting its significant impact on educational outcomes. These perceptions likely influence how educators conceptualize reading challenges among LSENs, potentially leading to an overemphasis on remedial approaches rather than environmental modifications. In light of these insights, strengthening educators' understanding of how environmental factors shape reading development becomes essential, highlighting the interplay between home, school, and community contexts. Consequently, it is imperative that schools establish home-school partnership models that leverage parental involvement while mitigating socioeconomic barriers to accessing resources. Ultimately, ensuring equitable access to quality materials and support programs across diverse contexts requires adopting an ecological perspective that recognizes the powerful role environmental modifications play in supporting reading development for all LSENs.

Nevertheless, research highlights that effective collaboration among educators, engaged parents, and specialized support staff often determines the academic success of LSENs in inclusive settings (Tiernan et al., 2020). Furthermore, studies have shown that consistent instructional co-facilitation between school and home is a key factor in developing LSENs' critical reading skills (Gokbulut et al., 2020). Moreover, evidence indicates that accessible and equitable resources, such as engaging materials, supportive technology, and tailored services, significantly impact learning outcomes within supportive school environments (Asri et al., 2021). In addition, findings underscore that active parental involvement and consistent encouragement at home are crucial for LSENs' continuous reading development. For instance, parents who read aloud, discuss books, and encourage regular reading reinforce school literacy skills, creating a more unified learning experience (Dong et al., 2020).

Table 6. Test of Significance on the Correlation between the Paired Research Variables

Paired Variables	r-value	Strength of Correlation	p-value	Decision	Result
Degree to which Educators utilize Standard Assessment Tools in gauging the Reading Comprehension Skills and Level of Proficiency demonstrated by LSENs in various components of Reading Comprehension	0.6991	Strong	0.0000*	Reject Ho	Statistically significant

*Significant at $p < 0.05$ (two-tailed)

The correlative probe reveals a strong positive relationship ($r = 0.6991$) between educators' utilization of standard assessment tools and the reading comprehension proficiency demonstrated by these Filipino LSENs. This association indicates that as educators increase their implementation of structured assessment methods, there is a corresponding improvement in students' reading comprehension abilities. The statistical significance ($p < 0.05$) of this relationship further confirms that this pattern is not due to random chance but represents a meaningful connection between assessment practices and student outcomes in inclusive Philippine classroom settings.

Connecting assessment practices with reading outcomes more directly, the strong correlation coefficient suggests that appropriate assessment methodologies play a crucial role in effectively evaluating and subsequently enhancing reading comprehension among LSENs. When educators employ standardized, validated assessment tools, they appear better equipped to identify specific reading comprehension challenges, track progress accurately, and implement suitable interventions based on

reliable data. This relationship emphasizes the importance of assessment literacy among teachers working with LSENs and highlights how proper measurement techniques can bridge the gap between identifying learning needs and achieving improved reading outcomes in inclusive environments. Additionally, the association between assessment tool utilization and LSENs' reading proficiency suggests a critical need for the Department of Education to develop contextualized assessment frameworks that accommodate the country's linguistic diversity while remaining sensitive to various disabilities. Such findings suggest that local school divisions could prioritize capacity-building programs focused on assessment literacy, particularly in underserved regions where special education resources remain limited. Additionally, this evidence supports advocating for budget allocations that enable schools to acquire appropriate assessment tools and materials, addressing the often-significant resource disparities between urban and rural Philippine schools. Such targeted investments could help fulfill the promises of inclusive education policies like RA 11650 (Inclusive Education Act), ultimately creating more equitable learning environments where Filipino LSENs can develop essential reading comprehension skills regardless of geographic or socioeconomic circumstances.

Accordingly, research indicates that creating environments where students share personal text interpretations improves comprehension and makes reading more relevant through deeper engagement with material (Wilson, 2021). Furthermore, pedagogical approaches suggest that instructional methods should adapt to students' developing comprehension, incorporating reflective activities and classroom dialogue to deepen understanding through ongoing text interaction. Moreover, studies have shown that educational strategies valuing diverse student contributions and backgrounds benefit learners with special needs, making reading more inclusive and personally meaningful (Gusler et al., 2022). In addition, findings highlight that for LSENs, affirming individual viewpoints and supporting unique comprehension styles empowers them as readers while promoting diverse forms of textual engagement (Yandell, 2020). Finally, evidence underscores that standardized assessment tools inform evidence-based teaching practices by providing reliable reference points to evaluate instructional effectiveness and track LSEN reading progress (Calet et al., 2020).

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings, the multifaceted analysis of reading comprehension among Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSENs) in Philippine inclusive settings, as outlined by the developmental progression in foundational skills alongside persistent challenges in advanced comprehension, underscores a complex interplay of factors. The limited utilization of diverse assessment tools hinders comprehensive evaluation, while the nuanced understanding of individual learner characteristics beyond observable behaviors remains crucial. Furthermore, the perceived lack of influence of instructional and environmental factors contradicts established educational theories, highlighting potential gaps in educators' training, resource allocation, and contextual awareness. Ultimately, addressing the reading comprehension challenges of LSENs in the Philippines necessitates a holistic approach that integrates appropriate and varied assessment methodologies, acknowledges individual learning profiles, leverages effective instructional practices, and recognizes the significant impact of broader contextual influences to foster more equitable and successful literacy development.

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