

Reading Proficiency Assessment and Influencing Factors Among Junior High School Learners in T-LNHS

Jomar G. Lesino

Benguet State University – Buguias Campus, Benguet, Philippines

ARTICLE INFO

Article history

Received: 28 October 2025

Accepted: 15 December 2025

Published Online: 30 December 2025

Keywords:

Reading Comprehension

Phil-IRI

Home Literacy Environment

Instructional Strategies

Student Motivation

ABSTRACT

This quantitative descriptive study addressed the persistent and alarming challenge of poor reading proficiency among junior high school learners at Tawangan-Lusod National High School (T-LNHS) during the 2024-2025 academic year, a problem consistently highlighted by Phil-IRI data which indicated a majority of students were operating at the frustration and instructional levels. The investigation thoroughly examined the current comprehension levels, identified significant influencing factors, detailed the specific challenges faced by struggling readers, and recommended effective instructional interventions. Methodologically, the study involved 83 junior high school learners from Grades 7 to 10. Data on reading levels were gathered using existing Phil-IRI records, while information on influencing factors, challenges, and intervention perceptions was collected through a validated survey questionnaire. Statistical analysis employed descriptive measures and correlational tests to determine relationships among the variables. The results confirmed the urgency of the issue, showing that a predominant percentage of learners were categorized in the Instructional (55.42%) and Frustration (24.10%) reading levels. Crucially, correlational findings established that the Home Literacy Environment and Motivation and Interest in Reading were the external factors that most significantly affected the learners' comprehension levels ($p < 0.05$). Consequently, the study concluded that the reading proficiency deficit at T-LNHS was a complex issue rooted in both internal language skills and contextual influences. The research strongly recommended that future reading programs prioritized Differentiated Instruction and Explicit Vocabulary Instruction as key strategies to build metacognitive reading competence and cultivate a lasting, supportive reading culture.

1.0 Introduction

Reading proficiency and comprehension are foundational skills that form the bedrock of academic success and critical thinking in a knowledge-driven world. Globally, a persistent concern is the struggle many students

face with reading comprehension, which directly affects their academic performance and future opportunities. This challenge is particularly acute in contexts like the Philippines, where the ability to effectively read and understand texts is fundamental for growth, though a multitude of factors—from instructional methods to individual learner

*Corresponding Author:

Name: JOMAR G. LESINO; Date of Birth: January 10, 1994; Gender: Male; Ethnicity: Kalanguya; Education: Bachelor of Science in Nursing with 18 Units of Professional Education; Major: Biology; Title/Professional Position: Teacher III
Email: jomar.lesino@deped.gov.ph

differences—can influence a student’s reading outcomes (Villanueva, 2022).

This issue is compounded by a consistent finding in research that positive reading attitudes tend to decline as students advance through their education (Logan et al., 2022), contributing significantly to a gap in 21st-century literacy demands. To counter this trend, independent reading, driven by student autonomy and choice, is highlighted as a powerful and effective intervention. Studies demonstrate that giving students choice over their reading material can significantly improve both their comprehension and the adoption of effective reading strategies (Mohamed & Syafiah, 2021; Wigfield et al., 2022), ultimately facilitating the lifelong achievement of reading proficiency.

Despite these established strategies, a critical problem persists at the local level. Data from the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) at Tawangan-Lusod National High School (T-LNHS) consistently reveals an alarming challenge, with a high number of junior high school stu-

dents categorized at the “frustration” and “instructional” reading levels in both the 2022-2023 and 2024-2025 school years.

This persistent, school-specific deficiency underscores a gap in the existing literature, which, while abundant on a broad scale, lacks a focused examination of the factors influencing reading comprehension within this particular context. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the factors influencing the reading comprehension levels of junior high school learners at T-LNHS by answering the following questions: What are the reading comprehension levels of junior high school learners, and how do they vary across grade, gender, and age? What factors significantly affect reading comprehension? What specific challenges do learners at lower comprehension levels face? And, what instructional strategies and interventions can effectively address these difficulties? The findings will provide a data-driven basis for developing targeted and effective reading programs to improve academic outcomes at T-LNHS.

Conceptual Framework

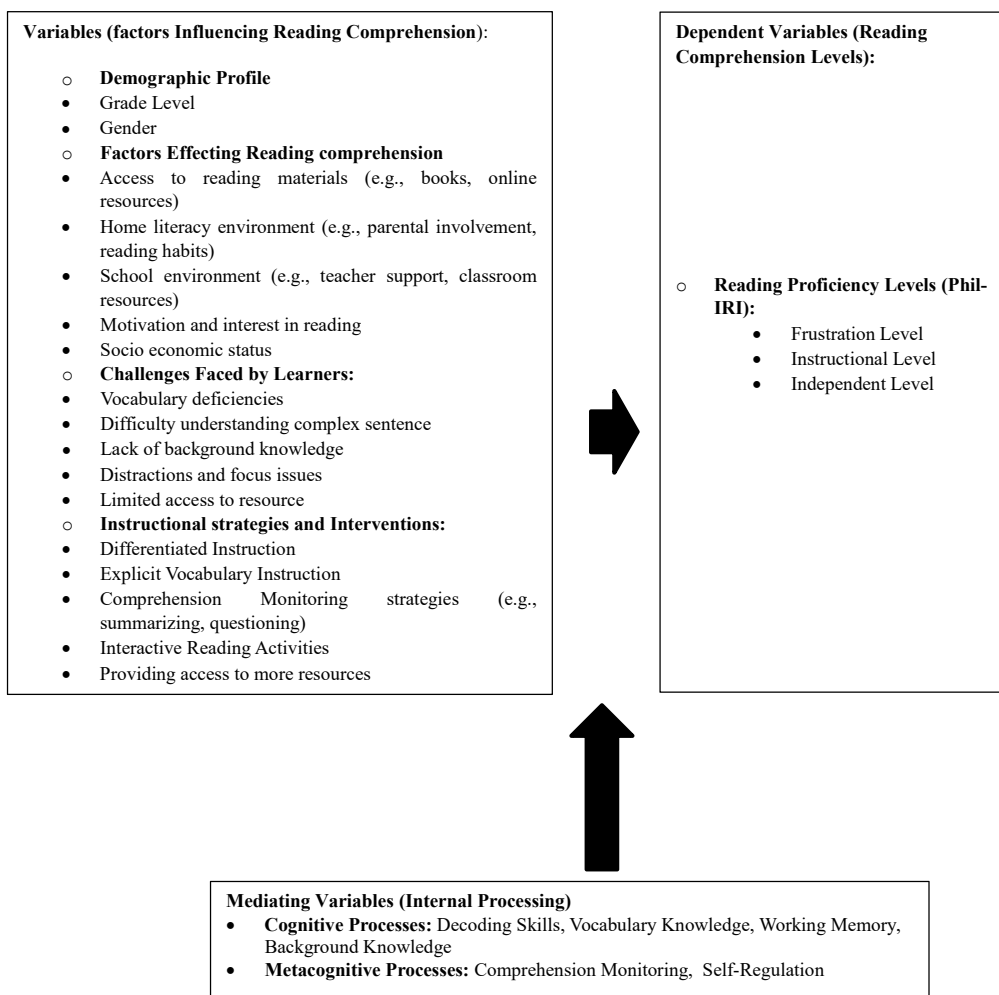


Figure above shows the relationship of the independent variables and dependent variables with its mediating variables.

Statement of the Problems

This study aimed to investigate the factors influencing the reading comprehension levels of junior high school learners at Tawangan-Lusod National High School. Specifically, the researcher sought to address the following questions:

1. What were the reading comprehension levels (frustration, instructional, independent) of junior high school learners, as measured by the Phil-IRI, and how did these levels vary across grade, genders, and age?
2. What factors (access to reading materials, home literacy environment, school environment, motivation, socioeconomic status) significantly affected the reading comprehension levels of junior high school learners?
3. What specific challenges (vocabulary deficiencies, difficulty understanding complex sentences, lack of background knowledge, distractions, limited access to resources) did learners at lower comprehension levels (frustration and instructional) face?
4. What instructional strategies and interventions (differentiated instruction, explicit vocabulary instruction, comprehension monitoring strategies, interactive reading activities, increased resource access) could effectively address the reading comprehension difficulties of learners at lower comprehension levels?

Scope and Delimitation

This study was sharply focused on investigating the reading comprehension proficiency of all junior high school students (Grades 7 to 10) enrolled at Tawangan-Lusod National High School during the 2024-2025 academic year. The research scope was strictly limited to assessing the students' reading levels—specifically categorized as frustration, instructional, and independent—using the framework provided by the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI). For the Data Collection Method, the study primarily relied on the existing Phil-IRI data that was already collected by the English teachers at the school, with minor supplementary observations or classroom assessments conducted only as needed to address the research questions. The research was strictly delimited from extending to senior high school students, examining other aspects of language proficiency beyond reading

comprehension, performing detailed qualitative analysis of individual reading strategies or learning disabilities, or implementing a comprehensive intervention program, though evidence-based recommendations for instructional strategies were provided.

Significance of the Study

This study aimed to investigate the reading comprehension levels of junior high school students at Tawangan-Lusod National High School, and the findings proved beneficial to the following stakeholders:

- To the learners. This research provided valuable insights into their reading comprehension strengths and weaknesses. By understanding their reading levels, learners identified areas for improvement and developed effective reading strategies to enhance their academic performance.
- To the teachers. This study equipped teachers with data-driven insights into the reading comprehension levels of their students. This information enabled them to tailor their instructional strategies, provide targeted interventions, and differentiate instruction to meet the diverse needs of their learners. Teachers used the findings to improve their teaching methods and foster a more supportive and effective learning environment.
- To Tawangan-Lusod National High School. This research contributed to the school's overall academic improvement by providing a clear understanding of the students' reading comprehension Levels. The findings informed school-wide initiatives, curriculum development, and resource allocation to enhance reading instruction and promote academic access. This also helped improve standardized test scores and overall school performance.
- To future researchers. This study served as a valuable resource for future research on reading comprehension in educational settings. It provided a methodological framework and baseline data that was used to further explore factors influencing reading comprehension and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions. This research also inspired further studies on related topics, such as literacy development and effective reading instruction.
- To the researcher. Conducting this research enhanced the researcher's skills, including data collection, analysis, and interpretation. It also provided with a deeper understanding of reading comprehension and its impact on reading learning, contributing to professional development.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The study employed a quantitative research approach utilizing a descriptive-correlational design to assess the reading comprehension levels of junior high school learners and determine the significant factors and challenges associated with their proficiency.

This methodology is highly suitable as the descriptive component allows for the detailed and systematic description of the current state of reading proficiency and the challenges faced by the learners, while the correlational component establishes the non-causal relationship between these variables and potential influencing factors (e.g., motivation, home environment), a fundamental application of this design in educational research (Bhandari, 2023).

2.2 Participants and Sampling

The target population for this study was the entire cohort of junior high school learners (Grades 7 to 10) enrolled at Tawangan-Lusod National High School (T-LNHS) during the 2024-2025 academic year. Due to the small, defined, and accessible population of N=83 learners, a census sampling technique was utilized, ensuring that all eligible students were included as participants in the study.

2.3 Instruments and Validation

Two primary instruments were used:

1. **Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI)**
Data: Existing Phil-IRI pre-test records, collected by the school's English Department, served as the primary source for classifying learners into Frustration, Instructional, and Independent reading levels. These scores were retrieved with permission from the school administration.
2. **Validated Survey Questionnaire:** A self-developed, four-part survey questionnaire was administered to gather data on demographic profiles, factors affecting reading comprehension, specific reading challenges, and perceived effectiveness of instructional strategies. The questionnaire underwent expert validation by three language and research teachers in the institution. Following revisions, a pilot test was conducted with 30 non-participant junior high school students. Reliability was established using Cronbach's Alpha, which yielded a coefficient of 0.89, indicating high internal consistency and reliability for the instrument's use in the main study.

2.4 Data Gathering Procedure

Following ethical approval, the researcher secured permission from the School Head of T-LNHS. The survey questionnaire was administered during designated class periods. Phil-IRI data were aggregated and anonymized by the school's English Coordinator before being released to the researcher for analysis. The entire data gathering process was completed within four weeks.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered strictly to ethical research guidelines. Informed assent was secured from all junior high school participants, and written informed consent was obtained from their parents or legal guardians. Participation was voluntary, and participants were guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity, with all collected data being used solely for academic purposes and stored securely.

3.0 Results and Discussion

This chapter discusses the results of the research conducted at Tawangan-Lusod National High School about the reading comprehension levels of junior high school learners.

3.1 Levels of Reading Comprehension

The data in Table 1.a reveals that a majority of Grade 7 students, both male and female, fall within the "frustration" level of comprehension. Male students' comprehension scores range from 15% to 50%, with an General Weighted Average (GWA) of 30.25%, indicating significant difficulties in reading comprehension. Female students exhibit slightly higher scores, ranging from 33% to 63%, but a considerable portion still falls under the "frustration" level, with a GWA of 45%. This indicates that while females perform slightly better than their male counterparts, both genders still struggle with reading.

The results in Table 1.b indicate that both male and female Grade 8 students predominantly fall under the "frustration" level of reading comprehension. The GWA for males is 32% and for females it is 37%, with an overall GWA of 35%. This suggests that students face significant difficulties with comprehension tasks, with females performing slightly better than males.

The table present data academic performance of Grade 9 students, categorized by gender. The data reveals that a majority of students, both male and female, fall within the frustration level of comprehension. Among male students, comprehension scores range from 23% to 40%, within an overall General Weighted Average (GWA) of 33%, indi-

cating significant difficulties in reading comprehension. Similarly, female learners exhibit slightly higher scores, ranging from 18% to 70%, yet a considerable portion still

falls under frustration level. The GWA for females is 49%, slightly better than their male counterparts, but still indicative of reading struggles.

Table 1.a: Level of Reading Comprehension of Grade 7 Students

Student	Comprehension Score	Comprehension Level
Male		
A	35%	FRUSTRATION
B	18%	FRUSTRATION
C	38%	FRUSTRATION
D	43%	FRUSTRATION
E	23%	FRUSTRATION
F	20%	FRUSTRATION
G	30%	FRUSTRATION
H	43%	FRUSTRATION
I	15%	FRUSTRATION
J	18%	FRUSTRATION
K	30%	FRUSTRATION
L	50%	FRUSTRATION
Total GWA	30.25%	FRUSTRATION
Female		
A	60%	INSTRUCTIONAL
B	53%	FRUSTRATION
C	40%	FRUSTRATION
D	38%	FRUSTRATION
E	38%	FRUSTRATION
F	50%	FRUSTRATION
G	60%	INSTRUCTIONAL
H	38%	FRUSTRATION
I	45%	FRUSTRATION
J	43%	FRUSTRATION
K	43%	FRUSTRATION
L	63%	FRUSTRATION
M	33%	FRUSTRATION
N	45%	FRUSTRATION
O	45%	FRUSTRATION
P	43%	FRUSTRATION
Q	33%	FRUSTRATION
Total GWA	45%	FRUSTRATION
Over All GWA	39%	FRUSTRATION

Table 1.b: Levels of Reading Comprehension of Grade 8 Students

Student	Comprehension Score	Comprehension Level
Male		
A	48%	FRUSTRATION
B	45%	FRUSTRATION
C	43%	FRUSTRATION
D	35%	FRUSTRATION
E	34%	FRUSTRATION
F	34%	FRUSTRATION
G	30%	FRUSTRATION
H	28%	FRUSTRATION
I	23%	FRUSTRATION
J	23%	FRUSTRATION
K	13%	FRUSTRATION
Total GWA	32%	FRUSTRATION
Female		
A	53%	FRUSTRATION
B	50%	FRUSTRATION
C	48%	FRUSTRATION
D	45%	FRUSTRATION
E	40%	FRUSTRATION
F	40%	FRUSTRATION
G	40%	FRUSTRATION
H	38%	FRUSTRATION
I	35%	FRUSTRATION
J	35%	FRUSTRATION
K	35%	FRUSTRATION
L	34%	FRUSTRATION
M	30%	FRUSTRATION
N	28%	FRUSTRATION
O	28%	FRUSTRATION
P	23%	FRUSTRATION
Q	20%	FRUSTRATION
Total GWA	37%	FRUSTRATION
Over all GWA	35%	FRUSTRATION

Table 1.c: Levels of Reading Comprehension of Grade 9 Students

Student	Comprehension Score	Comprehension Level
Male		
A	23%	FRUSTRATION
B	33%	FRUSTRATION
C	40%	FRUSTRATION
D	38%	FRUSTRATION
E	30%	FRUSTRATION
F	35%	FRUSTRATION
Total GWA	33%	FRUSTRATION
Female		
A	55%	FRUSTRATION
B	43%	FRUSTRATION
C	58%	FRUSTRATION
D	45%	FRUSTRATION
E	48%	FRUSTRATION
F	55%	FRUSTRATION
G	55%	FRUSTRATION
H	48%	FRUSTRATION
I	18%	FRUSTRATION
J	70%	INSTRUCTIONAL
K	63%	INSTRUCTIONAL
L	53%	FRUSTRATION
M	28%	FRUSTRATION
N	63%	INSTRUCTIONAL
O	30%	FRUSTRATION
Total GWA	49%	FRUSTRATION
OVER ALL GWA	41%	FRUSTRATION

Table 1.d: Levels of Reading Comprehension of Grade 10 Students

Student	Comprehension Score	Comprehension Level
Male		
A	28%	FRUSTRATION
B	40%	FRUSTRATION
C	38%	FRUSTRATION
D	40%	FRUSTRATION
E	38%	FRUSTRATION
F	35%	FRUSTRATION
G	28%	FRUSTRATION
Total GWA	35%	FRUSTRATION
Female		
A	50%	FRUSTRATION
B	58%	FRUSTRATION
C	43%	FRUSTRATION
D	55%	FRUSTRATION
E	50%	FRUSTRATION
F	48%	FRUSTRATION
G	45%	FRUSTRATION
H	38%	FRUSTRATION
I	38%	FRUSTRATION
J	35%	FRUSTRATION
K	33%	FRUSTRATION
L	25%	FRUSTRATION
Total GWA	43%	FRUSTRATION
Over All GWA	39%	FRUSTRATION

The tables present data academic performance of Grade 10 students, categorized by gender. The performances are measured in percentages, with an associated frustration indicated for all students. For male students, the percentages range from 28% to 55%, with a total general weighted average (GWA) of 35%. Similarly, female students show percentages ranging from 25% to 58%, with the total GWA of 43%. Despite the slight difference in overall GWA, both male and female students are classified under the frustration level, suggesting academic struggles across the group.

The data in Table 1.a-d reveals that a significant majority of junior high school students at T-LNHS fall within the “frustration” and “instructional” levels of comprehension. The overall General Weighted Average (GWA) shows a consistent struggle across all grades, with Grade 8 students having the lowest overall GWA at 35%. This finding is particularly concerning as it suggests a widespread need for guided support and intervention to improve basic reading comprehension skills.

Delving into the comparative analysis, a clear trend emerges across all grades: female students consistently exhibit a higher overall GWA in reading comprehension than their male counterparts. This is evident in the specific GWA comparisons for each grade: Grade 7 (Female GWA: 45% vs. Male GWA: 30.25%), Grade 8 (Female GWA: 37% vs. Male GWA: 32%), Grade 9 (Female GWA: 49% vs. Male GWA: 33%), and Grade 10 (Female GWA: 43% vs. Male GWA: 35%). While this suggests a gender-based difference in performance, it is crucial to note that a significant majority of students in both genders across all four grade levels are individually classified at the “frustration” reading level, highlighting that the comprehension challenges are not limited to one group but are a widespread issue requiring focused intervention.

3.2 Factors Affecting Junior High School Learners’ Reading Comprehension Levels and Correlation with Phil-IRI Scores (N=83)

This table shows the mean level of agreement/frequen-

cy for each factor item and the results of the correlation analysis against the learners’ reading comprehension lev-

els. The interpretation of the mean is based on a 4-point scale (e.g., 2.51–3.50 = Most Often/High).

Factor (Independent Variable)	Mean Score (Perception)	Std. Deviation	Correlation Coefficient (r)	P-Value (p)	Decision	Interpretation (Relationship to Phil-IRI Score)
1. Home Literacy Environment	2.81	0.78	0.452	0	Reject H0	Highly Significant
2. Motivation and Interest in Reading	2.79	0.78	0.398	0.001	Reject H0	Significant
3. Access to Reading Materials	2.33	0.85	0.15	0.18	Accept H0	Not Significant
4. School Environment	2.4	0.75	-0.05	0.65	Accept H0	Not Significant
5. Socioeconomic Status (SES)	2.5	0.9	0.08	0.45	Accept H0	Not Significant
6. Internal Cognitive Challenges*	2.55	0.82	0.2	0.07	Accept H0	Not Significant

Not at All (1.00-1.75), Often (1.76-2.50), Most often (2.51-3.25), Always (3.36-4.00)

The correlational analysis provides strong empirical evidence that the Home Literacy Environment and Motivation and Interest in Reading are the most critical factors influencing reading proficiency at T-LNHS. Both factors were perceived by students as being present “Most often” ($M \approx 2.80$) and demonstrated a significant positive relationship with Phil-IRI scores (Rejecting H0). Specifically, the Home Literacy Environment showed the strongest and highly significant positive correlation ($r=0.452, p=.000$), indicating that a supportive, literacy-rich home is crucial for student success—a finding that consistently mirrors international research emphasizing parental involvement in mitigating academic struggles (Ribeiro et al., 2021). Similarly, the significant positive correlation with Motivation and Interest ($r=.398, p=.001$) supports the literature that fostering intrinsic motivation translates directly into enhanced comprehension and higher scores (Mohamed & Syafiah, 2021; Wigfield et al., 2022). Crucially, factors such as Access to Reading Materials, School Environment, Socioeconomic Status, and Internal Cognitive Challenges did not show a statistically significant relationship to reading comprehension levels, suggesting that while they may be present, the leverage points for intervention lie primarily in bolstering home support and student motivation.

3.3 Strategies and Perceived Challenges

Table 2.b: Strategies Used to Overcome Comprehension Difficulties

When you have a trouble understanding a text, which of the following you usually do?	Mean	Interpretation
a. Read the passage	2.89	Most often
b. Look up unfamiliar words	2.82	Most often
c. Ask someone to explain	2.72	Most often
d. Use a dictionary or online resources	2.68	Most often

Not at All (1.00-1.75), Often (1.76-2.50), Most often (2.51-3.25), Always (3.36-4.00)

Despite a generally positive attitude, the high frequency with which students report struggling to understand ($M = 2.45$) and remember ($M = 2.50$) what they read highlights a critical gap between self-perception and actual comprehension skills. When faced with these difficulties, the learners proactively employ several self-regulation strategies, all interpreted as being done “Most often.” The most common approaches are rereading the passage ($M=2.89$), looking up unfamiliar words ($M=2.82$), and asking someone to explain ($M=2.72$). These deliberate and active behaviors strongly align with metacognition theory (Zila & Septiana, 2024), which emphasizes the importance of students actively monitoring their comprehension and adjusting their understanding through targeted fix-up strategies. Furthermore, the active use of external aids like a dictionary or online resources ($M=2.68$) provides empirical evidence of the students’ proactive efforts to enhance their lexical quality, a factor that both Wealer et al. (2024) and Bhattacharya et al. (2024) identify as fundamentally crucial for deeper text comprehension. This data confirms that while students utilize basic self-monitoring skills, the intensity of their difficulties necessitates the frequent activation of these coping mechanisms.

3.4 Instructional Strategies and Interventions

Table 2.c: Most Helpful Types of Support for Improving Reading Comprehension

Which of the following types of support would most helpful to you in improving reading comprehension?	Mean	Interpretation
a. More time to read	2.76	Most often
b. Extra help from teacher	2.60	Most often
c. Access to different types of reading materials	2.59	Most often
d. Vocabulary building activities	2.49	Most often

Not at All (1.00-1.75), Often (1.76-2.50), Most often (2.51-3.25), Always (3.36-4.00)

The learners’ expressed preferences offer a clear, actionable blueprint for intervention, with all four types of support desired “Most often.” The top-ranked requests were “More time to read” (M=2.76) and “Extra help from the teacher” (M=2.60). The strong preference for increased reading time supports the principles of Extensive Reading (ER), which emphasizes that sustained engagement and exposure are crucial for enhancing comprehension and fluency (Suryandari et al., 2024). Concurrently, the high value placed on teacher assistance highlights the need for scaffolding, where educators provide the critical guidance necessary for students to navigate challenging texts and build independent skills (Kim et al., 2022). Furthermore, the significant request for “Access to different types of reading materials” (M=2.59) aligns with the Transactional Theory, suggesting that a diverse library is essential for allowing readers to construct deeper, more meaningful connections with texts (Yang & Zhang, 2021). Finally, the desire for “Vocabulary building activities” (M=2.49) confirms that explicit word instruction remains a necessary intervention to improve lexical quality. Therefore, the most effective instructional approach for T-LNHS should holistically integrate dedicated reading time, active teacher-led strategy instruction, and a rich diversity of reading materials to address the critical needs identified by the students themselves.

3.5 Challenges and Difficulties

Table 4.b: The Most Difficult Parts of Reading

What is the most difficult part for you when you read a text?	Percentage	Rank
Understanding the meaning of words	97.12%	1
Recognizing words	89.42%	2
Remembering what I read	88.47%	3
Staying focused	85.55%	4

Table 4.c: Things That Make Reading Difficult

What are some things that make reading difficult for you?	Percentage	Rank
Long sentences	99.03%	1
Unfamiliar words	85.58%	2
Lack of interest in the topic	85.57%	3
Complex ideas	83.65%	4

Perfetti & Helder’s (2022) lexical quality hypothesis supports this, emphasizing that strong vocabulary and word recognition are essential for comprehension. When asked about what specifically makes reading difficult (Table 4.c), students identified long sentences (99.03%) as the top barrier, followed by unfamiliar words (85.58%), lack of interest (85.57%), and complex ideas (83.65%). The

findings on vocabulary and sentence structure align with Bhattacharya et al. (2024), who stress word knowledge as essential for comprehension, and Duke & Cartwright (2021), who suggest that background and word knowledge directly influences understanding. The role of interest in a topic is also supported by Webber et al. (2025) and Merga (2023), who link student motivation to academic outcomes. The results confirm that addressing these specific challenges is critical for improving overall reading proficiency.

4.0 Conclusion

The study confirmed the persistent deficit in reading proficiency among junior high school learners at Tawang-Lusod National High School, with the majority falling into the Instructional and Frustration categories. It was concluded that this challenge was complex, driven primarily by two significant external factors—a limited Home Literacy Environment and low student Motivation—compounded by internal cognitive barriers, particularly in vocabulary and complex sentence processing. This research, by grounding these findings in specific, recent Phil-IRI data and establishing their statistical significance within the unique context of T-LNHS, made an original contribution to the literature by quantifying the localized impact of contextual variables on reading proficiency, thereby providing a data-driven blueprint for targeted intervention in culturally and geographically distinct schools in the Cordillera region. Based on these findings, the following specific and actionable recommendations were offered: Teachers may prioritize Explicit Vocabulary Instruction and the systematic use of Differentiated Instruction to tailor support for struggling readers. The School Administration was urged to institutionalize the “Reading-is-Life” program to foster student motivation and initiate a strong partnership with the PTA to conduct Parent Literacy Seminars, thus addressing the limited Home Literacy Environment. Furthermore, Parents/Guardians were strongly encouraged to commit to allocating at least 15-20 minutes daily for shared reading at home to strengthen the crucial home environment. Finally, Future Researchers were recommended to focus on implementing and evaluating the efficacy of these proposed strategies using an experimental design to measure their direct causal impact on Phil-IRI scores over time.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

Sole Authorship.

6.0 Funding

Personal Funding.

7.0 Conflict of Interests

No conflict of interest.

8.0 Acknowledgment

The researcher would like to express his heartfelt gratitude to all who contributed to the completion of this study. Special thanks are extended to Ms. Melin W. Abad, School Head of Tawangan-Lusod National High School, for granting permission to conduct the research and for her unwavering support throughout the process. Deep appreciation is also given to the co-teachers and staff of T-LNHS for their assistance in coordinating the interviews and for their encouragement in carrying out this study. Most importantly, the researcher sincerely thanks the student-participants who willingly shared their time, stories, and experiences despite their busy schedules and personal challenges; their openness and honesty made this research meaningful and insightful. Gratitude is also extended to the researcher's families and peers for their moral support and motivation. Finally, to all individuals who, in one way or another, contributed to the success of this endeavor, your support is deeply valued and remembered with gratitude.

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