



# THE ROLE OF LEARNING STYLE PREFERENCE AND LEXICAL INFERENCE STRATEGIES ON THE READING COMPREHENSION OF EDUCATION STUDENTS: A MIXED-METHODS STUDY

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## ABSTRACT

This explanatory sequential mixed methods study aimed to assess the causal association of the reading comprehension of first year English-major students as viewed from the context of learning style preference and lexical inference strategies in the different state colleges and universities in Davao region. The quantitative strand utilized an adopted survey questionnaire distributed to three hundred respondents using stratified random sampling. The qualitative approach employed 17 informants from among the three hundred respondents. Ten were subjected to IDI and seven to FGD. The study revealed that the learning style preference of the respondents indicated high levels in visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. Moreover, the students perceive a high level of lexical inference strategies in terms of intralingual strategies and contextual strategies. On one hand, the students have a moderate rating of their reading comprehension in terms of literal, interpretive, and evaluation level while low for the creative level. Learning style preference found to have no significant relationship and influence on reading comprehension. In the contrary, lexical inference strategies found to have a significant relationship and a dominant influence on the reading comprehension of the students. The participants of the qualitative strand confirmed and disconfirmed with the quantitative results. Hence, the nature of data integration was revealed to be connecting-confirmation and connecting-expansion. In the broader context, this study will be of great help to the society since improving how students comprehend text translates to a more knowledgeable and capable society, fostering overall societal improvement.

**KEYWORDS:** Applied linguistics, Education, learning style preference, lexical inference strategies, reading comprehension, first year college students, Philippines

## INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is defined as the ability to analyze, interpret, and argue about a topic that has been read, allowing for problem-solving and knowledge application and it entails creating mental representations in working memory by combining external text with internal knowledge, encompassing coherence formation, inferences, and topic-specific models (Schnotz, 2023; Caracas, 2023). Accordingly, reading comprehension skill is vital for knowledge acquisition, incorporating aspects like oral comprehension, reading speed, vocabulary, syntax, and inference generation (Acedillo, 2023). However, Lina et al. (2021) highlighted that challenges persist, particularly among college students, who struggle with interpretative, evaluative, and critical levels, often excelling only in literal comprehension

In Indonesia, college students encounter hurdles in reading comprehension across multiple dimensions: literal, interpretative, evaluative, and creative. These challenges are exacerbated by teachers' limited pedagogical knowledge (Nurjanah, 2018). Harida (2014) also noted difficulties in understanding English texts among these college students due to vocabulary, especially the limited knowledge or mastery of vocabulary. Furthermore, deficiencies in reading comprehension skills at literal, inferential, and critical levels impede critical thinking and expression of subjective views (Cabural & Infantado, 2023). A study conducted by Mutakhirani et al. (2020) in Kenya echoed similar findings, emphasizing the need for enhanced reading practices and motivation.



In the local setting of Davao City, it was being highlighted that Grade 8 students face challenges with reading comprehension, particularly at the frustration level, impacting their overall academic performance (Larioque, 2019). To add, Pascual (2019) studies reveal that students exhibit low levels of reading comprehension which is exacerbated by factors such as limited exposure to English linguistic environments: poor reading habits among millennials, and high levels of reading anxiety.

This study seeks to address a research gap identified in previous studies, such as Rujani's (2019) exploration of the relationship between learning styles and reading comprehension, Anak et al. (2022) investigated learning style preferences among English Language Education students, and Juliana's (2018) study focused on lexical inferencing strategies and their effect on reading comprehension. While these studies delved into learning style preferences and lexical inferencing strategies, none have comprehensively explored the intricate connections between perceptual learning style preferences, lexical inferencing strategies, and reading comprehension among Education students in Region XI. The existing literature provides valuable insights into the aspects of reading competence and learning styles. However, there is a noticeable gap in exploring the intricate relationship between these variables. This gap emphasizes the necessity for a more focused investigation, which forms the foundation of this study's contribution to the existing knowledge.

This study delving into how Education students approach reading is exceptionally crucial. It aims to unravel the effect of their learning style preference and lexical inferencing strategies on reading comprehension—an urgent endeavor as strong reading comprehension are pivotal for success in both academic and real-life scenarios. By uncovering how students learn best, we empower educators to tailor teaching methods that benefit everyone. The outcomes will offer practical insights for teachers and curriculum planners, contributing to enhanced learning strategies. In the broader context, improving how students comprehend text translates to a more knowledgeable and capable society, fostering overall societal improvement. Therefore, the urgency and social relevance of this study lie in its potential to significantly shape the way students learn and thrive in the academic and broader societal landscape.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of learning style preference, lexical inferencing strategies, and reading comprehension among BSED-English students in the different State Universities and Colleges in Region XI?
2. Is the combined and singular influence of learning style preference and lexical inferencing strategies on reading comprehension among these students significant?
3. What are the standpoints of the participants on the salient points of the quantitative results?
4. How do the qualitative results explain the quantitative results of the study?

## METHODS

### Design

This study adopted a mixed methods design. Following the definition by Schoonenboom & Johnson (2017), mixed methods involve the integration of qualitative and quantitative approaches throughout various stages of the research process. Further, this study utilized an explanatory sequential mixed methods research design, combining both regression analysis and phenomenology with a non-experimental approach. According to the explanation provided by Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), qualitative data serve to expound upon or build upon the initial quantitative results, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the research phenomena.

Additionally, phenomenology was used as the approach of choice in the qualitative phase because of its basis in the idea that personal perceptions influence actions and reactions. Forris (2015) asserts that phenomenology seeks to shed light on particular phenomena by investigating how the individuals involved perceive them. This entails obtaining detailed data using qualitative techniques like participant observation, interviews, and discussions and presenting it from the viewpoint of the research participants. According to Creswell (2009), phenomenology is a research approach that identifies the essence of human experiences connected to a phenomenon based on participant descriptions.

### Population and Sample

In the quantitative phase, the participants of the study were the 300 first-year English major students enrolled in the different State Universities and Colleges in Region XI. Also, stratified random sampling technique was used in calculating the samples in each population per HEI. For the qualitative strand of the study, 10 first-year BSED-English major students were invited for the in-depth interview and seven participants for the focus group discussion. Their standpoints on the quantitative data were considered and were dealt with accordingly. In the selection of the participants, the researcher employed a purposive random technique. They were selected based on who can best address the research questions and enhance understanding to give vision of the phenomenon under study.

### Research Instrument

In this section, the instruments that were used to collect quantitative and qualitative data from the participants of this study were discussed.

In the quantitative strand of the study, three sets of questionnaires were drawn from diverse authors which underwent validation by experts in questionnaire construction. For the learning style preference, it was adapted from Male (2019), the questionnaire for lexical inferencing strategies was adapted from Ngoc Yen (2023) and for reading comprehension, was from Bilbao et al. (2016). Further, in the qualitative aspect, interviews were conducted with the relevant participants using a set of guided questions. An interview protocol and a guide for focus group



discussions (FGD) were developed and validated by a panel of experts.

**Data Analysis**

The quantitative data analysis involved descriptive statistics such as mean which determined the level of learning style preference, lexical inferencing strategies, and reading comprehension, Pearson-r assessed the significant relationship between learning style preference and lexical inferencing strategies on the reading comprehension of first-year English major students, standard deviation measured the dispersion of respondents and regression analysis measured the relationship between the two independent variables on the dependent variables. In the qualitative phase, the notes taken from the focus groups and in-depth interviews were subjected to a series of thematic analyses. This approach focuses on finding, analyzing, and recording themes or patterns in the data.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Level of Learning Style Preference, Lexical Inferencing Strategies and Reading Comprehension**

Shown in Table 1 are the levels of the study's observed variables: Learning Style Preference, Lexical Inferencing Strategies and Reading Comprehension of first year English-major students in Region 11.

The first independent variable, *learning style preference* gathered an overall mean of 3.69 with a level description of "high." This mean score indicates that the LSP of the students is practiced most of the time. In this variable, all the indicators acquired a level description of "high". Furthermore, the second independent variable, *lexical inferencing strategies*, gathered an overall mean of 3.95 with a level description of "high." This mean score indicates that the first-year students' LIS is practiced most of the time. In this variable, all the indicators also acquired a level description of "high". Lastly, the dependent variable, *reading comprehension*, gathered an overall mean of 2.72 with a level description of "moderate." This mean score indicates that the said variable is sometimes practiced. In this variable, all of the indicators acquired a level description of "moderate" except for the creative level with low descriptive level.

These results align with the findings of Raju and Madhuri (2022), who similarly discovered a high level of learning style preference among secondary school students in their study. The result also resonates with Foomani's (2015) study, which also identified a high level of lexical inferencing strategies among proficient college listeners. Also, this outcome echoes Yusoff et al.'s (2016) findings, which similarly indicated a moderate level of reading comprehension among students, highlighting the necessity for effective guidance in text comprehension.

**Table 1**

*Status of Learning Style Preference, Lexical Inferencing Strategies, and Reading Comprehension among BSED-English Students in the Different State Universities and Colleges in Region XI*

Latent Variables / Observed Variables	Standard Deviation	Mean	Descriptive Level
<b>Learning Style Preference</b>	<b>0.41</b>	<b>3.69</b>	<b>High</b>
Visual Learning Style Preference	0.46	4.06	High
Auditory Learning Style Preference	0.53	3.62	High
Kinesthetic Learning Style Preference	0.61	3.40	High
<b>Lexical Inferencing Strategies</b>	<b>0.54</b>	<b>3.95</b>	<b>High</b>
Intralingual Strategies	0.59	3.91	High
Contextual Strategies	0.60	3.99	High
<b>Reading Comprehension</b>	<b>0.50</b>	<b>2.72</b>	<b>Moderate</b>
Literal Level	0.87	2.60	Moderate
Interpretive Level	0.72	2.84	Moderate
Evaluation Level	0.77	2.97	Moderate
Creative Level	0.68	2.47	Low



### Relationship and Influence of Learning Style Preference and Lexical Inferencing Strategies on the Reading Comprehension of Education Students

Table 2 shows the relationship between learning style preference and lexical inferencing strategies on reading comprehension. Before the influence of the learning style preference and lexical inferencing strategies to reading comprehension was determined, the relationship between each other was first established.

The table shows that there is no significant relationship between learning style preference and reading comprehension of the students. This correlates to the assertions of Pratiwi (2022) which

states that there is no significant relationship between learning style preferences and reading comprehension, as indicated by the research they conducted on the twelfth graders. On the other hand, in terms of the relationship between lexical inferencing strategies and reading comprehension it was revealed that the null hypothesis is being rejected in this context. This conforms to the claim of Hassanzadeh et al. (2020) study, which found a significant relationship between lexical inferencing strategy and the development of reading comprehension among Iranian EFL learners, showing improved comprehension through the utilization of this strategy.

**Table 2**  
**Relationship between Variables**

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	r-value	p-value
Learning Style Preference	Reading Comprehension	.013	.828
Lexical Inferencing Strategies		.155	.007*

\* $p < 0.05$  significant

Table 3 provides the regression analysis results examining how learning style inferencing and lexical inferencing strategies influence the reading comprehension of first year English-major students. The results revealed that the learning style preference on its singular capacity cannot significantly influence reading comprehension ( $p > .05$ ). This conforms the claim of Mutiara (2022) who found that students' learning style preference did not significantly influence reading comprehension achievement among eleventh graders, according to the correlational analysis conducted in the study

Likewise, the lexical inferencing strategies on its singular capacity can significantly influence the reading comprehension ( $p < .05$ ). Between the two independent variables, lexical inferencing strategies indicates a significant influence to reading comprehension over learning style preference. This is in accordance to the claim of Shen (2016) which adds depth to this connection by suggesting that reading comprehension can, in turn, influence lexical inferencing.

**Table 3**

### Combined and Singular Influence of Learning Style Preference and Lexical Inferencing Strategies on Reading Comprehension

Independent Variables		Reading Comprehension			
		B	B	T	Sig.
Constant		2.439		9.269	.000
Learning Style Preference		-.145	-.121	-1.717	.087
Lexical Inferencing Strategies		.207	.227	3.202	.002
R	.183				
R <sup>2</sup>	.034				
ΔR	.027				
F	5.152				
P	.006				

### Standpoints of the Participants on the Quantitative Results Regarding the Level of the two Independent Variables and the Dependent Variable

Table 5 shows the standpoints of the participants on the qualitative results regarding the level of Learning Style Preference, Lexical Inferencing Strategies, and Reading Comprehension. The essential themes generated are as follows: the confirmed high rating of Learning Style Preference, Lexical Inferencing Strategies, and confirmed moderate rating of Reading

Comprehension. Through these confirmations, it can be stated that the results run parallel to the perspectives presented by Nikmah (2022) which posits that using context clues strategy significantly improves reading comprehension in first-year students. Cohen (2006) also bolstered this viewpoint, asserting that in today's digitally mediated era, an overreliance on the internet can indeed impede reading comprehension. These insights underscore the pressing need to address the influence of



technology on RC and to foster balanced literacy practices among students.

**Table 5**  
**Standpoints of the Participants on the Quantitative Results**

Areas of Concern	Essential Theme	Core Ideas
High Rating of Learning Style Preference (LSP)	<b>Confirmed High Rating of LSP</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students utilize an approach that is applicable and effective which allows them to learn easier.</li> <li>Students understanding and learning improved because of their learning style.</li> <li>Students' LSPs allow them to cope and comprehend during discussions.</li> <li>Students gather information easily when using their preferred learning style.</li> <li>Students have enhanced understanding.</li> <li>Student solve problems using their LSP.</li> </ul>
High Rating of Lexical Inferencing Strategies (LIS)	<b>Confirmed High Rating of LIS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students employ strategies in learning new words.</li> <li>Students understand unfamiliar words with the use of LIS.</li> <li>Students utilize strategies to guess the meaning of words.</li> <li>Students make use of tools to figure out the meaning of words.</li> <li>Students use different methods to decipher the meaning.</li> </ul>
Moderate Rating of Reading Comprehension (RC)	<b>Confirmed Moderate Rating of RC</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited access to reading materials provides students difficulty to comprehend.</li> <li>Students become too dependent and rely much on technology.</li> <li>Students are exposed to curated and instant information from the internet.</li> <li>Students are not very proficient in reading.</li> <li>Students do not have conducive reading environments.</li> <li>Students lack interest in reading.</li> <li>Students struggle with questions that require deeper understand of the text.</li> </ul>
No Significant Relationship and Influence of LSP on RC	<b>Confirmed No Relationship and Influence of LSP on RC</b>	<p><i>Reasons of Participants on their Confirmation on the No Significant Relationship &amp; Influence of LSP on their RC:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Other factors like the levels of development affects the RC than LSP.</li> <li>The preferred LSP is not suited for the reading activities.</li> <li>Various external factors affect RC.</li> </ul>
	<b>Disconfirmation on the No Relationship and Influence of LSP on RC</b>	<p><i>Reasons of Participants on their Disconfirmation on the No Significant Relationship &amp; Influence of LSP on their RC:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LSP is a strong factor of RC.</li> <li>LSP helps students to excel in class.</li> <li>LSP enhanced RC of students.</li> <li>LSP foster deeper engagement in learning.</li> <li>Despite LSP of students, they still have difficulty to comprehend.</li> </ul>





Significant Relationship and Influence of LIS on RC	<p align="center"><b>Confirmed Relationship and Dominant Influence of LIS on RC</b></p>	<p><i>Reasons of Participants on their Confirmation on the Significant Relationship &amp; Influence of LIS on their RC:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The increase of LIS will lead to the increase of students' RC.</li> <li>● LIS leads to better understanding of the text.</li> <li>● LIS develops students' ability to analyze and evaluate text.</li> <li>● Strong belief that LIS can really affect RC.</li> <li>● Being familiar with the LIS allows learners to employ various strategies that enhances RC.</li> </ul>
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**Standpoints of the Participants on the Relationship and Influence of Learning Style Preference and Lexical Inferencing Strategies on Reading Comprehension**

As part of the inquiry, the participants shared their perspectives on the relationship and influence of Learning Style Preference and Lexical Inferencing Strategies on Reading Comprehension. Their views were analyzed and revealed into three essential themes: *confirmed the significant relationship and influence of LSP and RC, disconfirmed the significant relationship and influence of LSP on RC and confirmed relationship and dominant influence of LIS on RC.* The participants believed that there are other factors like the levels of development that will really affect the RC than LSP. This is also in accordance to the claim of Xiaoling (2016) who added that individual factors like motivation, age, sex, and personality, along with situational factors, influence reading comprehension beyond learning style preferences.

The findings from both in-depth interviews and focus group discussions overwhelmingly supported the notion that there is no relationship and influence between Learning Style Preferences (LSP) and Reading Comprehension (RC). According to the majority of informants, factors such as developmental levels have a more pronounced impact on reading comprehension compared to learning style preference. This consensus resonates with Kaplan's 2013 research, which highlighted the significant impact

of developmental levels on reading comprehension compared to learning style preference.

In the qualitative interview the students confirmed the relationship and influence of LIS on RC. This indicates that the students agreed that LIS has a significant relationship and a dominant influence on the RC of the first year English-major students. This assertion aligns with findings from Shafiq's study in 2018, which highlighted how lexical inferencing, a component of LIS, aids students in deciphering unfamiliar words within texts.

**Data Integration of Salient Quantitative and Qualitative Findings**

This paper employed a mixed methods design specifically utilizing an explanatory sequential approach. In Table 6, the joint display of the quantitative and the qualitative results is based on the data collated which revealed that there are two nature of integration: Connecting-confirmation and connecting-expansion. This finding resonates with the study conducted by Kinjari and Gopal in 2020, which emphasized how adolescent school students, with preferred learning styles such as Kinesthetic, Visual, and Auditory, can enhance their learning effectiveness both within and outside the classroom, thereby facilitating self-directed learning. Lastly, the findings are in harmony with the research of Yang, et al. (2023), which both underscore the significance of lexical inferencing strategies in bolstering reading comprehension.

**Table 6  
 Joint Display of Quantitative and Qualitative Results**

Research Area	Quantitative Results	Qualitative Results	Nature of Integration
<p><b>1. Status of Learning Style Preference (LSP), Lexical Inferencing Strategies (LIS) &amp; Reading Comprehension (RC)</b></p> <p>1.1. Status of LSP</p>	<p>Means of three indicators of LSP ranged from 3.40 to 4.06 with an overall mean of 3.69 or high level which indicates the</p>	<p>Informants/Participants showed positive experiences on the three indicators considered as a priori themes: <i>Visual Learning Style Preference (VLSP), Auditory Learning Style Preference (ALSP), and Kinesthetic Learning Style</i></p>	<p>Connecting-Confirmation</p>



	respondents evaluate LSP as oftentimes manifested.	<i>Preference (KLSP)</i> . Reasons for their confirmation are reflected in their qualitative standpoints.	
1.2. Status of LIS	Means of two indicators of LIS are 3.91 (IS) and 3.99 (CS) with an overall mean of 3.95 or high level which indicates the respondents evaluate LIS as oftentimes manifested.	Informants/Participants confirmed the high rating on the two indicators of LIS: <i>Intralingual Strategies and Contextual Strategies</i> in the quantitative phase thru IDI & FGD.	Connecting-Confirmation
1.3. Status of RC	Evaluation Level got the highest mean (2.97) and the lowest is the Creative Level (2.47) with an overall mean of 2.72 or moderate level which indicates the respondents evaluate RC as occasionally manifested.	Informants/Participants showed positive experiences on the five indicators considered as <i>a priori</i> themes: <i>Literal, Interpretative, Evaluation and Creative Levels</i> with the rating of moderate in the quantitative results. Reasons for confirmation are reflected in their qualitative standpoints.	Connecting-Confirmation
2.1 Relationship and Influence of LSP on RC.	LSP has no significant relationship ( $p>0.05$ ) and influence ( $B= -.145$ ) on RC basing on the combined influence of all its domains	Majority of the participants/informants were affirmative on the non influence of LSP on their RC.	Connecting-Confirmation
		A few of the participants rejected the results of the quantitative data. They verbalized the importance of the variable in the development of their RC as can be gleaned from their qualitative standpoints on the topic bearing out the theme significant relationship and influence of LSP on RC	Connecting-Expansion
2.2 Relationship and Influence of LIS on RC.	LIS has significant relationship and influence ( $p<0.05$ ) on RC basing on the	The participants/informants were affirmative on the influence of LIS on their RC. They verbalized	Connecting-Confirmation



	combined influence (R square =.034; $p<.05$ )	the importance of the variable in the development of their RC as can be gleaned from their qualitative standpoints on the topic bearing out the theme confirmed significant relationship and influence of LIS on RC	
3. Lexical Inferencing Strategies as the dominant influencer of Reading Comprehension	Between LSP and LIS, Lexical Inferencing Strategies ( $B=0.207$ ; $p<0.05$ ) indicated significant influence on RC. Although LSP has no significant influence on RC but its contribution is needed by LIS to come up with the combined significant influence on RC as demonstrated by the significant R square (.034; $p<0.05$ )	Participants acknowledged that the LIS significantly influence RC. They verbalized the crucial role of LIS on RC and confirms that LIS' dominant influence on RC compared to LSP as reflected in their qualitative standpoints on the topic.	Connecting- Confirmation

## CONCLUSION

After carefully examining the study's results and findings, conclusions are formulated in this section.

1. The respondents of the quantitative phase exhibited a high level of learning style preference. Learning style preference gained a high rating which means that it is oftentimes practiced. Further, the high level of students' lexical inferencing strategies expressed that the second independent variable is practiced by the students most of the time. Also, reading comprehension geared a moderate rating of which means that it is sometimes practiced.
2. In terms of the significant relationship and influence of the first independent variable and the dependent variable, the results of the study revealed that there is no significant relationship and influence between learning style preference and reading comprehension. On the other hand, results revealed that there is a significant relationship between lexical inferencing strategies and reading comprehension.
3. On the standpoint of the participants on the quantitative result of the study, there were various themes that were being generated: confirmed high level of learning style preference, confirmed high level of lexical inferencing strategies, confirmed moderate level of reading comprehension, confirmed no significant relation and

influence of learning style preference and reading comprehension, disconfirmation on the relationship and influence of learning style preference and reading comprehension, and confirmed relationship and influence of lexical inferencing strategies and reading comprehension.

4. It is also affirmed that the integration of quantitative and qualitative findings had demonstrated a connecting-confirmation nature in all elements except for the significant relationship and influence of learning style preference and reading comprehension with a connecting-expansion nature.

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