

Teaching Styles, Learning Styles, and Reading Comprehension Levels: Bases for a Reading Awareness Guide

Rhea Belle P. Casas

Master of Arts in Education-English Teaching, Cebu Technological University -Danao Campus, Sabang, Danao City, Cebu, Philippines

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Email of Corresponding Author: rheabelleccasas07@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examined the relationship among teaching styles, learning styles, and reading comprehension levels of Grade 7 learners in selected schools in Carmen and Sogod, Cebu, as bases for developing a Reading Awareness Guide. Anchored on Sociocultural Theory, the VARK Learning Style Model, and the Every Child a Reader Program, the study employed a mixed-methods design involving 175 respondents composed of Grade 7 learners and English teachers. Data were gathered using demographic questionnaires, the VARK Learning Styles Questionnaire, the VARK Teaching Styles Questionnaire, the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory, and semi-structured learner interviews. Findings revealed that auditory learning was the most dominant learning style among learners, and most learners were unimodal. Teachers demonstrated varied VARK-based teaching styles, with three teachers' styles aligned with most learners' preferences and one showing misalignment. Despite this partial alignment, learners generally showed low to moderate reading comprehension, with critical comprehension identified as the weakest area. The study also found that vocabulary difficulty, text complexity, smartphone distractions, family support, reading environment, and learner interest affected reading comprehension. The study concludes that teaching-learning style alignment may support engagement but is not sufficient alone to improve comprehension. It recommends differentiated instruction, vocabulary support, critical reading activities, learner self-awareness, family involvement, and school-based reading awareness initiatives. The study supports SDG 4 – Quality Education by promoting literacy development, inclusive instruction, and learner-centered reading support. Its sustainability impact lies in strengthening educational and institutional practices through evidence-based reading interventions and adaptive teaching strategies.

Keywords: Teaching Styles, Learning Styles, Reading Comprehension Levels, Philippine Informal Reading Inventory, Reading Awareness Guide, Reading Comprehension, VARK Model

1. Introduction

Reading comprehension remains a fundamental literacy skill that enables learners to construct meaning from texts, connect new information with prior knowledge, and participate more effectively in academic and cultural contexts. In contemporary classrooms, learners comprehend and process information in varied ways; thus, teachers are expected to use flexible strategies that respond to diverse learning preferences and strengthen learner engagement (Awang et al., 2017). This study focuses on the relationship among teaching styles, learning styles, and reading comprehension levels of Grade 7 learners in selected schools in Carmen and Sogod, Cebu. It aims to provide a basis for developing a Reading Awareness Guide that may help improve reading performance and promote greater awareness of teaching and learning styles.

Reading comprehension is essential to academic success because it allows learners to interpret, analyze, and respond meaningfully to written texts. However, learners differ in the ways they receive, process, and retain information. These differences require teachers to recognize learner diversity and use appropriate instructional approaches that support comprehension. Previous studies have shown that the use of varied teaching styles may enhance learner achievement, engagement, and motivation. Yana et al. (2021) found that implementing various teaching styles directly enhances learner achievement. Derakhshan and Shakki (2018) also revealed significant relationships between learners' learning styles and English proficiency levels, recommending that teachers identify both to select appropriate teaching methods and strategies better. The relationship between learning styles, study habits, and academic performance has also been emphasized in the Philippine context. Magulod (2019) observed a strong relationship among academic achievement, study habits, and learning styles among students at a Philippine university. Motivation further strengthens learning engagement, especially when teachers use innovative approaches. Wiangga and Febriyanto (2024) identified that learning motivation significantly increases when teachers use innovative methods, including visual aids, audio media, and technology-based strategies.

The literature suggests that teaching styles and learning styles may influence learner engagement, comprehension, and academic performance, although findings are not always consistent. Some studies support the alignment of teaching strategies with learners' preferences. Pratiwi et al. (2024) reviewed multiple studies and reported that some literature supports the efficacy of aligning teaching strategies with learners' preferences in EFL classrooms. However, the empirical evidence for this approach remains limited, and findings are inconsistent regarding whether such alignment improves language proficiency. Other studies show that mismatch between teaching and learning styles may affect learner responsiveness. Alhourani (2021) found that at Khalid bin Alwlad School, only half of the learners responded well to the teacher's approach, while the other half preferred alternative methods. This suggests that the teacher should further enhanced student engagement by incorporating various teaching approaches that address students' diverse learning preferences. In contrast, Mehari & Kassahun (2025) indicated that learning styles have little effect on the relationship between teaching practices and achievement, suggesting that psychosocial and instructional factors may have greater influence. Similarly, Chetty et al. (2019) examined teaching and learning styles and academic achievement and found that learners may align or misalign their learning styles with teachers' teaching styles, but the study did not deeply examine learners' perspectives or the effect of such alignment on academic performance. These findings show that teaching-learning style alignment remains a relevant but unsettled issue. While alignment may support engagement and comprehension, other variables such as motivation, teaching quality, learner attitude, and classroom environment must also be considered.

Globally, reading comprehension is recognized as a central educational competency because learners must understand, interpret, and evaluate texts across subject areas. In the Philippine basic education context, reading proficiency remains a major concern, and national programs have been established to address learners' reading needs. DepEd Order No. 70, s. 2011, also known as the Every Child a Reader Program (ECARP), is an initiative established by the Department of Education (DepEd, 2011). This program aims to strengthen reading proficiency among public school learners and promote independent and lifelong learning. The Department of Education has also implemented the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI), an assessment tool designed to measure the reading abilities of public school learners in both English and Filipino (DepEd, 2018). Phil-IRI data help teachers implement targeted reading strategies and develop school-level reading programs that respond to learners' needs (Lariosa & Quezada, 2023). In this study, the local context focuses on Grade 7 learners and English teachers from selected schools in Carmen and Sogod, Cebu, where differences in school size, location, and learner environment may influence learning styles and reading comprehension.

This study is anchored on Sociocultural Theory by Vygotsky (1978), the VARK Learning Style Model by Fleming (1987), and DepEd Order 70, s—2011. Vygotsky's theory emphasizes the Zone of Proximal Development, where learners develop cognitively through guidance from more knowledgeable individuals such as teachers and peers. According to Barnett (2019), this concept explains how learners improve through scaffolding, social interaction, and guided participation. This theory supports the need for interactive, learner-centered, and differentiated instruction. Teachers are expected to provide scaffolding, collaborative learning opportunities, and strategies that respond to learners' current abilities. As Barnett (2019) states, "An effective teacher is an effective learner" (p. 2), emphasizing that teachers must also adjust to learners' evolving needs. The study is also guided by the VARK Learning Style Model by Fleming (1987). Tadayonifar and Entezari (2020) explained that the VARK learning style model, introduced by Neil D. Fleming in 1987, categorizes learners into four modalities: Visual (V), Aural (A), Read/Write (R), and Kinesthetic (K). The VARK model uses a questionnaire to determine individuals' preferred sensory modalities (Fleming, 2001, as cited in Tadayonifar and Entezari, 2020). However, Tadayonifar and Entezari (2020) also noted that the model has been criticized for its narrow focus on how information is presented and for assuming that learning styles are stable. These limitations suggest that teachers should not treat learning preferences as fixed but should use them as guides for flexible and responsive instruction. The legal and programmatic basis of the study is DepEd Order No. 70, s. 2011, or ECARP, which emphasizes grade-level reading competency, reading recovery interventions, remedial instruction, and enrichment activities. Together, Sociocultural Theory, the VARK model, and ECARP support the study's conceptual direction: teaching styles and learning styles influence reading comprehension levels and may serve as bases for a Reading Awareness Guide.

Although existing studies have examined teaching styles, learning styles, and learner achievement, there remains a gap in understanding how the alignment between teaching and learning styles affects reading comprehension, particularly in local Grade 7 classrooms. Many studies focus on general academic achievement, English proficiency, or language learning rather than literal, inferential, and critical reading comprehension. Findings are also mixed, with some studies supporting alignment and others suggesting that motivation, teaching quality, and other instructional factors may have stronger effects. This study addresses the gap by focusing on Grade 7 learners and English teachers in selected schools in Carmen and Sogod, Cebu. It examines learners' dominant learning styles, teachers' dominant teaching styles, learners' reading comprehension levels, the match or mismatch between teaching and learning styles, and the factors affecting reading comprehension. Natsir and Anisati (2016) stressed that both teachers and learners are vital to successful reading comprehension, as teachers must prepare lessons thoughtfully and learners' attitudes also matter in the learning process. Therefore, this study is justified by the need to generate local evidence that can inform reading instruction and support the development of a Reading Awareness Guide.

This study is most directly aligned with SDG 4 – Quality Education because it focuses on improving reading comprehension, strengthening learner-centered instruction, and supporting literacy development among Grade 7 learners. By examining teaching styles, learning styles, and comprehension levels, the study contributes to the improvement of classroom practices and reading interventions that may help learners achieve better educational outcomes. The study also supports the inclusive dimension of education by recognizing that learners have different learning preferences and comprehension needs. Through the proposed Reading Awareness Guide, the study promotes differentiated and responsive teaching practices that may help teachers address varied learner needs. Its emphasis on school-based reading support, teacher awareness, and learner self-awareness contributes to educational sustainability by encouraging instructional practices that are adaptive, evidence-based, and learner-centered.

The study contributes to educational sustainability by providing evidence that may guide teachers, school administrators, and curriculum developers in designing reading interventions that respond to learner diversity. For learners, the study may strengthen self-awareness, motivation, and confidence by helping them recognize their learning styles and apply strategies to improve reading comprehension. For English teachers, the findings may guide the refinement of teaching approaches and the diversification of classroom strategies. For school administrators, the study may support the development of literacy programs, professional development activities, and resource allocation for reading interventions. For curriculum developers, the findings may inform the design of materials that promote literal, inferential, and critical comprehension. The study also has institutional sustainability value because it supports evidence-based decision-making in schools. By identifying reading comprehension needs and the possible role of teaching-learning style alignment, the research may help schools strengthen literacy programs and create more inclusive learning environments. Overall, the study positions reading comprehension not only as an English language concern but also as a broader educational issue connected to learner development, instructional quality, curriculum improvement, and sustainable school-based literacy support.

This study explores the teaching styles, learning styles, and reading comprehension levels of Grade 7 learners in selected schools in Carmen and Sogod, Cebu. Specifically, it examines learners' sex and dominant learning styles based on VARK, teachers' years of teaching experience, highest educational attainment, and dominant teaching style based on VARK, learners' reading comprehension levels in terms of literal, inferential, and critical comprehension, the match between teachers' teaching styles and learners' learning styles, and the factors affecting learners' reading comprehension level. Based on the findings, the study aims to develop a Reading Awareness Guide that may help bridge gaps between teaching strategies and learner preferences while supporting improved reading comprehension.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

This study employed a mixed-methods approach to determine the prevailing teaching and learning styles and reading comprehension levels among Grade 7 classrooms in selected schools in Carmen and Sogod, Cebu. According to Taherdoost (2022), mixed-method research integrates qualitative and quantitative approaches, enabling researchers to align methodologies with objectives and questions. The quantitative phase identified the demographic profiles of Grade 7 learners and English teachers, their learning and teaching styles, and learners' reading comprehension levels. The qualitative phase used learner interviews to clarify the quantitative findings and support the development of the reading awareness guide.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in two public secondary schools in Carmen and Sogod, Cebu. School A is located in Barangay Cogon West, Carmen, a central and accessible area, and serves as the municipality's largest secondary school with 2,675 junior high school learners. It operates a Day Class system and offers junior and senior high school programs. School B is located in Barangay Bagatayam, Sogod, approximately one kilometer from the town center and less than 200 meters south of the Bagatayam River. It was originally an extension of Calumboyan National High School before becoming an independent institution in 2020. It occupies 6,436 square meters and serves 485 learners from Grades 7 to 10. The inclusion of these two schools allowed the study to consider learners from both a larger and more populated school setting and a smaller school environment.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The respondents were Grade 7 learners and English teachers from selected schools in Carmen and Sogod, Cebu. Grade 7 learners were included because they are in the transition stage from elementary to secondary education, where reading comprehension becomes essential to academic success. Their participation provided data on learning styles and reading comprehension levels. English 7 teachers were included because they directly teach reading and language skills under the MATATAG Curriculum. Their teaching styles, years of teaching experience, and highest educational attainment were considered relevant factors that may influence learners' reading comprehension outcomes.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The study involved 175 respondents from the two selected schools. School A had 80 respondents, representing 46% of the total, while School B had 95 respondents, representing 54%. The original manuscript identifies the respondents as Grade 7 learners and English teachers from selected schools in Carmen and Sogod, Cebu, but it does not state a separate named sampling technique. The selection of respondents was based on their direct relevance to the research objectives, particularly their roles in teaching, learning, and reading comprehension development.

2.5 Research Instrument

The study used several instruments aligned with the research questions. A demographic profile questionnaire gathered background information from learners, specifically sex, and from teachers, specifically years of teaching experience and highest educational attainment. The VARK Learning Styles Questionnaire (Fleming & Bonwell, 2019) was administered to identify learners' dominant learning styles in terms of Visual, Auditory, Read/Write, and Kinesthetic preferences. The adapted VARK survey for teachers by Hunsinger (2019) was used to determine teachers' primary teaching styles and to compare them with learners' learning styles. The Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI), developed by the Department of Education (DepEd, 2018), was used to assess the reading comprehension performance of Grade 7 learners. The assessment focused on learners' comprehension abilities and provided the basis for identifying reading strengths and areas needing improvement. A semi-structured learner interview guide was also used to gather deeper insights into the factors affecting reading comprehension, learners' awareness of their learning styles, and their perceptions of teachers' teaching approaches. The interview guide was reviewed by three experts: a Master Teacher in English at Sogod National High School, the School Head of Servillano Aranco National High School, and the English Coordinator of Lubo Integrated School.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

Data were collected through both quantitative and qualitative procedures. Before data collection, formal permission was obtained from the DepEd Cebu Province Public Schools Division Superintendent, and permissions were also secured from the school heads and principals of the selected schools in Carmen and Sogod, Cebu. Informed consent was obtained from teachers and parents. The first phase involved the administration of demographic and VARK questionnaires to learners and teachers. Learners answered Fleming and Bonwell's (2019) learning style questionnaire to identify their dominant learning styles, while teachers answered Hunsinger's (2019) questionnaire to determine their teaching styles across VARK modalities. The second phase involved the administration of standard Phil-IRI passages and comprehension questions composed of 10 items that measured the reading comprehension levels of Grade 7 learners. The third phase involved semi-structured interviews with selected Grade 7 learners using five questions. The interviews were audio-recorded, translated verbatim, and used to obtain deeper information on learners' reading difficulties, classroom experiences, and factors affecting comprehension. After the data were collected and processed, learners' learning styles and reading comprehension results were compared with teachers' dominant teaching styles to determine whether alignment or misalignment existed. The combined quantitative and qualitative findings were then used as the basis for designing a reading awareness guide.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

The data were analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, and thematic analysis. Frequency counts were used to determine the number of respondents in each category, including learners' sex, teachers' length of service, teachers' highest educational degree, and learners' Phil-IRI reading comprehension performance. Percentages were used to describe the distribution of respondents and to identify dominant teaching and learning styles using the VARK questionnaire, as well as the proportions of learners across literal, inferential, and critical reading comprehension levels. Thematic analysis was used to examine the qualitative data from guided, open-ended interviews. According to Boyatzis (1998), as cited by Nowell et al. (2017), thematic analysis serves as a bridge between qualitative and quantitative approaches. Interview responses were transcribed and organized into themes that reflected factors influencing reading comprehension. The frequency of each theme was also recorded to identify the most common issues reported by the respondents and to determine the key factors affecting learners' reading abilities.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Respondent Profile and VARK-Based Learning and Teaching Styles

3.1.1 Sex of Learners

The learner-respondents were almost equally distributed by sex, with 84 males or 49.12% and 87 females or 50.88%, for a total of 171 learners. This nearly balanced distribution provided a fair basis for examining reading comprehension outcomes without strong sex-based imbalance. The findings also showed that many female learners achieved higher Phil-IRI scores, particularly within the 14–20 score range. This result suggests that sex may influence reading performance in some contexts, although findings from previous studies remain mixed. Van Steensel et al. (2019) found that age and gender did not significantly affect reading comprehension, although older learners and boys showed lower reading engagement. In

contrast, Smith and Reimer (2024) found that girls aged 10 to 12 read more frequently than boys outside school hours. The present findings are also consistent with Smith and Reimer (2024), which demonstrated that girls outperformed boys in reading comprehension.

3.1.2 Learners' VARK Learning Styles

The most common learning style among learners was Auditory, with 64 learners or 37.43%. This was followed by Read/Write with 60 learners or 35.09%, Kinesthetic with 59 learners or 34.50%, and Visual with 26 learners or 15.20%. Most learners were unimodal, representing 80.70%, while 19.30% were multimodal, including bimodal, trimodal, and quadmodal learners. This indicates that most learners preferred one dominant mode of learning, although a smaller group benefited from varied learning modalities. These findings are consistent with Akhlaghi et al. (2018), who found auditory learning to be the most prevalent style, followed by kinesthetic and read/write, with visual as the least preferred. However, Malacapay (2019) argued that no specific learning style directly determines academic achievement, although auditory learners in that study achieved very satisfactory performance. Niebres and Cabansag (2024) further emphasized that language-learning strategies are important in improving academic performance, suggesting that learning style awareness should be supported by effective strategies.

3.1.3 Teachers' Years of Teaching Experience

The teacher-respondents showed varied teaching experience. Two teachers or 50.00% had one to three years of teaching experience, one teacher or 25.00% had less than one year, and one teacher or 25.00% had seven years or more. No teacher belonged to the four-to-six-year range. This shows that the teacher group was composed mostly of early-career teachers, with one more experienced teacher included. Teaching experience is relevant because it may affect instructional effectiveness and learners' literacy development. Ambussaidi and Yang (2019) identified a positive correlation between greater teaching experience and improved academic performance in Taiwan. Shaiegy et al. (2021) also found that teaching experience is important in implementing English language curricula, particularly in applying curriculum standards, selecting teaching materials, and using evidence-based strategies.

3.1.4 Teachers' Educational Attainment

Three teachers or 75.00% had earned units toward a master's degree, while one teacher or 25.00% held a baccalaureate degree. None of the teachers had completed a full master's degree. This indicates that most teacher-respondents had pursued graduate-level education, reflecting professional development and continuing academic preparation. The findings suggest that advanced academic preparation may support teaching effectiveness and reading instruction. Salva and Labitad (2024) indicated that teachers with higher academic qualifications demonstrate stronger subject expertise and teaching proficiency, which positively affect student achievement and classroom management. The result therefore reinforces the importance of continuous professional learning for improving teaching quality and learner performance.

3.1.5 Teachers' VARK Teaching Styles

The teachers were evenly distributed across the four VARK teaching styles: Visual, Auditory, Read/Write, and Kinesthetic, with one teacher or 25.00% for each style. In School A, one teacher used a Kinesthetic teaching style that aligned with learners' dominant preference, while another used an Auditory style that also matched learners' needs. In School B, one teacher used a Read/Write style that matched the learners' main preference, while another used a Visual style despite most learners preferring Auditory learning. Thus, three teachers showed alignment with most learners, while one showed misalignment. The findings indicate that teaching-learning style alignment may support classroom interaction, but teachers still need to diversify instruction. Ridwan et al. (2019) observed that teachers often use unimodal teaching styles and emphasized the need to diversify teaching approaches to accommodate varied learning preferences. Studies also suggest that teachers should adapt to learners' preferences and proficiency levels to address individual learning needs (Ridwan et al., 2019; Alhourani, 2021). Wiangga and Febriyanto (2024) further emphasized that teachers serve not only as content deliverers but also as motivators who foster engagement and participation. Alhourani (2021) likewise highlighted the need to align teaching approaches with individual learning preferences to optimize academic performance.

3.2 Reading Comprehension Levels of Learners

3.2.1 Overall Phil-IRI Reading Comprehension

The overall Phil-IRI results showed that 59 learners or 34.50% scored within the 0–6 range, 96 learners or 56.14% scored within the 7–13 range, and only 16 learners or 9.36% scored within the 14–20 range. This indicates that most learners demonstrated developing or average comprehension, while only a small group showed high reading comprehension. Many learners therefore still experienced difficulty understanding written texts, especially when higher-order comprehension was required. The findings confirm that reading comprehension remains a major concern despite existing reading programs. Alindayu et al. (2025) found similar results among Grade 10 learners, who were at the instructional reading level and demonstrated moderate comprehension. De Ocampo (2024) also concluded that reading comprehension difficulties may be linked to weak foundational instruction in lower grades, insufficient teaching materials, and greater emphasis on low-

achieving learners. Braga and Queroda (2026) developed intervention manuals for Grades 4 to 10 aligned with the K–12 curriculum and the Phil-IRI framework to help learners progress from frustration to independent reading.

3.2.2 Literal Reading Comprehension

In literal comprehension, 27 learners or 15.79% scored within the 0–1 range, 55 learners or 32.16% scored within 2–3, 52 learners or 30.41% scored within 4–5, and 37 learners or 21.64% scored within 6–7. The largest group was in the 2–3 range, showing that many learners remained in the developing stage of literal comprehension. Almost half of the learners scored from 0–3, indicating difficulty in identifying and recalling explicitly stated information. Although numerous studies reported satisfactory learner performance at the literal comprehension level (Marcelo & Santillan, 2020; Luzano, 2021; Saquido & Velasco, 2024), the present study showed that many learners still struggled even with basic reading comprehension. The findings align with Cabural and Infantado (2023), who reported moderate comprehension among Grade 10 learners. Contextualization and localization may help address this concern, as Saquido and Velasco (2024) found that Aligned Local Reading Materials improved Grade 7 learners' literal, inferential, critical, and vocabulary skills. Luzano's (2021) and Saquido and Velasco's (2024) studies further showed that relatable and localized materials can enhance comprehension while supporting local culture.

3.2.3 Inferential Reading Comprehension

For inferential comprehension, 28 learners or 16.37% scored within the 0–1 range, 88 learners or 51.46% scored within 2–3, 34 learners or 19.88% scored within 4–5, 18 learners or 10.53% scored within 6–7, and only 3 learners or 1.75% scored within 8–9. The majority scored in the lower 2–3 range, showing that many learners had difficulty making inferences, predicting outcomes, and interpreting implied meanings. These results are consistent with Billao's (2026) study, which found that Grade 6 learners at Loo Elementary School scored low in inferential comprehension during pretests. Billao's (2026) findings support the use of explicit reading comprehension strategies such as predicting, questioning, clarifying, summarizing, and using graphic organizers. Royeras and Sumayo (2024) also found that stronger vocabulary proficiency supports better inferential comprehension, while weaker vocabulary is linked to greater difficulty in making inferences.

3.2.4 Critical Reading Comprehension

For critical reading comprehension, 93 learners or 54.39% scored within the 0–1 range, 67 learners or 39.18% scored within 2–3, and only 11 learners or 6.43% scored within 4–5. More than half of the learners performed at the foundational level, while only a small group demonstrated advanced critical comprehension. This shows that critical reading was the weakest area among the comprehension levels. The findings indicate that learners struggled with higher-order tasks requiring analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of ideas. This is supported by previous studies showing that many learners perform poorly on critical-level reading tasks and higher-order thinking activities (Marcelo & Santillan, 2020; Cabural & Infantado, 2023; Perry et al., 2025; Billao, 2026). Tan (2023) also reported that incoming Grade 10 learners had poor reading skills, limited vocabulary, and difficulty comprehending texts. Tan (2024) emphasized that strengthening critical reading skills can improve comprehension and highlighted the importance of books, functional libraries, and remedial facilities.

3.3 Alignment Between Teaching Styles and Learning Styles

3.3.1 Alignment of Teaching Approaches with Learner Needs

Among the 22 interviewed learners, 14 reported that their teacher's teaching style matched their preferred learning style. This alignment was commonly observed among learners who preferred auditory tasks, reading, and writing strategies. Learners reported that visual aids, discussions, vocabulary explanations, written summaries, analyses, and group work helped them understand lessons more clearly. This result suggests that alignment between teaching strategies and learner preferences can create a more engaging and supportive learning experience. Awang (2017) emphasized that teachers should understand learners' learning styles rather than expecting learners to adjust entirely to the teacher's approach. Awang (2017) also noted that enjoyable learning can improve academic achievement. However, Gilakjani (2012) stressed that matching teaching and learning styles alone does not guarantee better achievement because factors such as age, educational level, and motivation also influence outcomes.

3.3.2 Partial Alignment on Learner Engagement and Understanding

Seven learners reported only partial alignment between their learning preferences and the teacher's teaching methods. Some strategies helped them understand lessons, but they still preferred additional activities such as writing tasks, answering exercises, and more varied classroom activities. This shows that some learners benefited from existing approaches but still experienced gaps when instruction relied too heavily on limited strategies. These findings suggest that teachers need more varied and differentiated teaching methods. Chetty et al. (2019) found that insufficient variety in teaching strategies can create mismatches between teaching and learning styles, affecting learners' attitude, motivation, and performance. Teferra (2024) argued that differentiated instruction increases participation, motivation, and achievement while fostering a supportive classroom environment. Thus, teachers should adjust their strategies to support learners with diverse preferences.

3.3.3 Misalignment on Student Learning and Engagement

One learner reported a clear mismatch between the teacher's teaching style and the learner's learning preference. The learner stated that when teaching and learning styles did not match, learners had to adjust their study habits. This shows that misalignment may create barriers to understanding and may require learners to compensate through independent adjustment. The finding is consistent with Alhourani (2021), who reported a mismatch between a teacher's teaching style and learners' learning preferences in secondary schools in Saudi Arabia. Devaki (2025) explained that learners require varying levels of support, challenge, and scaffolding, which highlights the importance of teaching adaptability. Gilakjani (2012) also noted that while teachers should adapt strategies to learners' needs, learners may also need to develop flexible learning strategies because one teacher cannot fully address every learning preference in a diverse classroom.

3.4 Factors Affecting Reading Comprehension Skills

3.4.1 Vocabulary Clarity and Text Complexity

Learners identified vocabulary difficulty and text length as barriers to comprehension. Difficult or unfamiliar words made texts harder to understand, while simple words made reading easier. Lengthy texts without sufficient explanation also caused confusion among learners. These findings show that vocabulary clarity and manageable text complexity are important in supporting Grade 7 learners' comprehension. The importance of vocabulary is supported by Quines (2023), who found that vocabulary affects both reading and writing among senior high school learners. Aballe et al. (2024) also demonstrated a strong correlation between vocabulary and reading comprehension among Grade 6 learners in the Philippines. The findings also support Aydın and Kaya (2021), who concluded that learners prefer concise texts and that longer texts may reduce engagement and motivation. Therefore, vocabulary development and appropriate text length should be considered in reading instruction.

3.4.2 External Distractions and Smartphone Use

Learners reported that cellphone use, social media, and other distractions negatively affected their focus and comprehension. Some learners stated that cellphone distractions caused them to lose concentration, especially while studying at home. This indicates that digital distractions are a significant factor affecting reading comprehension. The findings show that smartphones may both support and hinder learning. Ortiz et al. (2023) observed that learners in secondary education perceived mobile phones as useful academic tools because they provided access to educational materials, social media platforms, and learning applications. Yusuf et al. (2024) also noted that while some learners used technology for non-academic purposes during lectures, many still considered technology important to classroom understanding and success. However, Eriş et al. (2021) found that increased mobile phone addiction is associated with decreased academic success, supporting the need to balance educational technology use with rules that reduce distraction.

3.4.3 Family Support

Learners identified family support as an important factor in reading comprehension. They reported that family encouragement motivated them to study, read, and stay engaged. This shows that home support contributes to learners' reading motivation and comprehension development. The findings align with Maagad and Occo (2025), who found that parental involvement influences learners' reading, particularly in minority and low-income communities. Their study showed that parental engagement improves academic motivation and attitudes toward school. Lapuhapu and Oco (2024) also found a moderate positive correlation between parental engagement at home and school and improved reading performance. These findings suggest that family support remains important even as learners move into higher grade levels.

3.4.4 Learning Environment

Learners reported that a quiet, comfortable, and conducive reading space helped them focus and understand texts. In contrast, noisy home environments made it difficult for some learners to concentrate. These findings show that the physical and emotional conditions of the reading environment affect comprehension. The role of the environment is supported by Dong et al. (2020), who emphasized the importance of the Home Literacy Environment in developing reading proficiency. Rance et al. (2023) also found that background noise and multiple simultaneous activities can slow academic development, particularly among learners with weaker attention or speech-in-noise perception. Nite (2025) further emphasized that an optimal reading environment with reduced disturbance, comfort, and sufficient lighting improves concentration.

3.4.5 Interest and Motivation

Learners also identified interest in the topic as an important factor in comprehension. They reported that when the reading material was interesting, they could focus better, understand more easily, and feel more motivated to read. When the topic was not engaging, comprehension became more difficult. This finding is supported by Kurniati et al.'s (2023) study, which found a positive correlation between reading interest and reading comprehension. The study showed that higher reading interest is associated with higher reading comprehension. This suggests that relevant and engaging reading materials may improve focus, retention, and active participation in reading activities.

3.5 Overall Interpretation of Findings

Overall, the results show that most Grade 7 learners preferred auditory, read/write, and kinesthetic learning modes, while teachers used varied but mostly unimodal teaching styles. Most teacher styles aligned with learners' preferences, although one case of misalignment and several cases of partial alignment were reported. Despite this alignment, learners still showed generally low to moderate Phil-IRI performance, with the weakest results in critical comprehension. The findings indicate that teaching-learning style alignment may support engagement, but it is not sufficient by itself to improve reading comprehension. Learners' comprehension was also affected by vocabulary difficulty, text complexity, smartphone distractions, family support, reading environment, and interest in the reading material. These results support the need for a Reading Awareness Guide that promotes differentiated instruction, vocabulary development, critical reading support, controlled technology use, family involvement, and more engaging reading environments.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study concludes that aligning teaching styles with learners' learning preferences is important in supporting the reading comprehension of Grade 7 learners in selected schools in Carmen and Sogod, Cebu. The findings showed that auditory learning was the most dominant preference, most learners were unimodal, teachers used varied VARK-based teaching styles, and three teachers' styles matched most learners' preferences while one was misaligned. Despite this, most learners still showed low Phil-IRI performance, with developing literal and inferential comprehension but weak critical comprehension. The study further found that vocabulary, text complexity, smartphone use, family support, reading environment, and interest affected comprehension; therefore, reading improvement requires differentiated instruction, teacher-learner collaboration, family involvement, and a positive learning environment.

It is recommended that teachers align their instructional approaches with learners' preferences through differentiated strategies, visual aids, interactive discussions, vocabulary support, step-by-step explanation of complex texts, and activities that develop critical comprehension. Learners should identify their learning styles, use suitable study techniques, and set reading goals, while parents should establish reading routines, discuss stories with children, and model regular reading at home. Schools should create engaging reading areas, strengthen family collaboration through workshops and reading resources, and ensure that administrators conduct workshops and Learning Action Cell sessions focused on adapting teaching styles, sustaining reading development strategies, and maintaining a school-wide reading awareness program using locally relevant materials.

The study was limited to Grade 7 learners and English teachers from selected schools in Carmen and Sogod, Cebu; therefore, the findings may not fully apply to other grade levels or educational settings. It also relied on Fleming's (1987) VARK learning preference framework and the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI), created by the Department of Education (2018), and focused only on literal, inferential, and critical reading comprehension, excluding other literacy components such as vocabulary development, writing proficiency, and broader critical thinking skills.

Compliance with ethical standards

The study was conducted in accordance with institutional ethical standards and required administrative permissions from the DepEd Cebu Province Public Schools Division Superintendent and the concerned school authorities. Participation of Grade 7 learners and English teachers was voluntary, with informed consent secured from teachers and parents before data gathering. The confidentiality and privacy of respondents were observed, and the collected data were used solely for academic and research purposes. Interview recordings and responses were handled responsibly and reported without identifying individual participants. The author affirms responsibility for the accuracy and integrity of the research, properly acknowledges all contributions, declares no conflict of interest, and retains copyright ownership of the work unless otherwise transferred under publication requirements.

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