

Original Research Article

## Learning Process, Reading Strategies, and Comprehension in Culture-based Texts

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### ABSTRACT

This study seeks to determine the learning process and reading strategies employed by grade 8 students in identifying their comprehension level by reading culture-based literary texts. The researchers made use of descriptive survey to describe the learning process and reading strategies of the respondents while correlational design was used to determine the relationship of learning process and reading strategies with reading comprehension of the respondents. The findings of the study revealed that grade 8 students are sometimes engaged in the learning process and sometimes employed different reading strategies while reading culture-based literary texts. Based on the comprehension test results, most of the respondents could hardly comprehend culture-based literary texts. Though there is no correlation that exists between learning processes and reading comprehension, students' reading strategies have a significant relationship to their reading comprehension. Language teachers should provide appropriate literary texts and acquaint students on the use of different reading strategies to improve their critical thinking skills.

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### Introduction

Teaching reading skills to learners of second language requires process in acquiring these skills to enhance comprehension. By engaging students in their own learning, they become motivated which fosters student achievement in meaningful and lasting ways. Most importantly, when teachers adapt to the learning needs then reading to learn becomes the springboard towards reading proficiency. With the present educational system, the Department of Education is doing its part to implement some educational changes influenced by technology and societal norms. In this connection, educational guidelines were put into implementation through the contextualization and indigenization of learning materials to be used by teachers and students. As a consequence, it has become a crucial point for students to understand their own learning style to enable them to benefit from the language learning process well.

Culturally familiar texts or what we call as localized materials contain content, setting, characters, situations and historical events that are familiar with the learners. Culturally -familiar texts elicit the interest of the students to read. On the other hand, teachers need students to be exposed with this kind of localized materials to impart the concepts of a particular subject and ensure that all students are able to use and retain what they understand. These are the vital reasons that pave the way for the researcher to conduct an analysis on the learning process, reading strategies and comprehension of grade 8 students in reading culture-based literary texts. Through this study, their learning process and the reading strategies they employed in reading as well as their reading comprehension will be assessed and then properly addressed and enriched, respectively, by the researcher and the school administrators.

This research focused on the learning process, reading strategies and comprehension in culture-based literary texts among grade 8 students. Since there are external factors that help students comprehend better a reading selection, it seemed

beneficial to integrate culture-based literary texts suitable to their learning styles. These local instructional materials contribute to learner's familiarity of content and may influence their perception and responses towards things or issues in life.

This study aimed to examine the learning process, reading strategies and comprehension in reading culture-based literary texts of grade 8 students. Specifically, it aimed to find out the learning processes, the most evident reading strategies employed by the students in reading culture – based literary texts, their reading comprehension level and if there is a significant relationship between learning process and reading strategies and students' reading comprehension.

## **Literature Review**

### **Learning Process**

Individuals learn or understand information in reading based from their preferred way of learning. Students must be engaged in the learning process to address challenges such as trying to deal with lack of student motivation, students being uninterested in content material and social and behavioral disruptions (Klem, 2004). Students are smart in different ways and have different learning approaches (Hudson, 2009). However, Klein (2003) added that learners' minds as complex systems with heterogeneous natures help us better understand the constructivist perspectives of learning, implement a student-centered model of instruction and appreciate differentiated curriculum, instruction and assessment paradigms.

In addition, Li (2010) compared the present learning situation to the past, where abilities and skills are aligned with those intelligences, including both traditionally important ones and emerging ones, which have been more clearly delineated in the curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. Learning styles of students influence their ability to acquire information and respond to the learning environment. This can "assist the students to enhance and take advantage of their natural skills and inclinations as students' motivation will be sustained and they can progress well in the language learning process" (Azlinda, 2006). In addition, Sloan (2008) pointed out that finding out students' prior knowledge as well as previous experiences about the subject of the study could be useful to a new knowledge and could lead to a more lasting learning.

### **Reading Strategies**

Reading strategies which teachers can employ help improve students understanding, motivation, and behavior towards reading. Theroux (2004) used words such as collaborative learning, problem-based learning, project-based learning, self-directed learning, and engaged learning which are sometimes used almost synonymously because there are similarities in the ways these philosophies are put into practice. While Temur, et.al. (2010) defined reading as a fundamental skill to acquire information, for it is a process that aids in meaningful construction. Meanwhile, Pretorius (2002) defined reading as a powerful learning tool, a means of constructing meaning and acquiring new knowledge. Moreover, reading is the cornerstone of instruction for all learners regardless of their ability level because it sets the foundation for future progress and success in virtually all other facets of life (Luckner and Handley, 2008).

According to Kirmizi (2010), a reading strategy is a systematic plan that readers adopt to facilitate reading comprehension. These strategies include previewing, self-questioning, making connections, visualizing, knowing how words work, monitoring, summarizing, evaluating, and the like. Researchers like McLaughlin and Allen (2002) believed that using such strategies helps students become metacognitive readers. Anderson (2003) revealed that setting a purpose is an important reading strategy, for a reader's purpose affects everything about reading such as determining what is important in the text, what is to be remembered, and what comprehension strategy is to be used to draw meaning.

Alfassi (2004) said that those strategic readers must become cognizant of their performance limitations, intentionally weigh their options and willfully execute compensatory procedures. Thus, reading strategies instruction is directed towards teaching learners a repertoire of reading strategies that will allow them to develop a sense of conscious control of their cognitive processes.

Furthermore, Singhal (2001) stated that reading strategies "indicate how readers conceive a task", help them to understand and guide them to comprehend. Consequently, to increase students' awareness of reading strategies, is not an easy task and not the learners' responsibilities solely. As highlighted by Sheory and Mokhtari (2001), for students "to be strategic and constructively responsive readers" it is strongly recommended to introduce skillful academic reading. In addition, Short, et.al.

(2000) found that rereading can help students familiarize themselves with the texts. More so, Millis and King (2001) and Brown (2003) added that rereading strategically enhanced the reading comprehension skills of students.

Pookcharoen (2009) also found out that the most frequently used support reading strategies of the respondents are: thinking about information in both English and the mother tongue and translating from English into the native language. Researchers have found that teaching reading strategies is a key element in developing student comprehension.

Researchers such as Gläser and Laudel (2013), Miller and Schwanenflugel (2006) and Yeh (2012) suggested that readers with low abilities can comprehend orally presented texts better than silent reading. Further, the poor reader performs much better on inferential questions than on literal ones especially in cases when inferential questions incorporate items examining the main ideas, detecting cause-effect relations, and extracting covert, implicit meanings. They further noted that an average reader comprehends better during silent reading than during oral reading by tackling these two types of questions as efficiently as he/she can. However, a good reader is better than the poor and average reader in both oral reading and silent reading on various measures of comprehension, indicating superior skills of elaboration. Finally, they found that reading for details or elaboration is a significant indicator of competence when it comes to literal comprehension.

### **Comprehension**

The literature has revealed that awareness and monitoring of one's comprehension processes are important aspects of skilled readers as stated by Makhtari and Reichard (2002). The same authors further point out that such awareness and monitoring processes are often referred to in the literature as metacognition, which can be thought of as the knowledge of the reader's cognition about reading and the self-control mechanisms they exercise when monitoring and regulating text comprehension. One of the objectives of the current study is to explore whether reading strategies awareness is a better predictor of reading comprehension. The results of a similar study conducted by Ilustre (2011) in the Philippines showed that among the three subscales of metacognitive reading strategies, only problem solving strategies correlated positively with text comprehension. Pajares (2003) said that reading has always been a tedious task for a number of individuals especially for young learners who are exposed to different factors in their environment that may affect their attitude and their level of comprehension or understanding a reading text.

Carrel and Grabe (2002) explained that when reading, a reader engages in processing at the phonological, morphological, syntactic, semantic, and discourse levels, as well as engages in goal setting, text-summary building, interpretative elaborating from knowledge resources, monitoring and assessment of good achievement, making various adjustments to enhance comprehension, and making repairs to comprehension processing as needed. Fagan (2003) stated that ESL learners need the keyword strategy as a scaffold during the reading process.

Faust and Glenzer (2000) opined that rereading strategy enables one to obtain meaning of his favorite reading sections and make meaning with texts. In recent years, there has been an increased focus on reading instruction in primary, secondary and higher education (Lei, 2010). The literature has shown that comprehension strategy instruction, including multiple reading strategies, have been justified in being beneficial to helping learners become strategic readers and improve their reading comprehension (Medina, 2012; Fan, 2010; Antoniou and Souvignier, 2007). Kose (2006) stated that when reading something, the purpose is to understand the author's intention.

According to Block and Israel (2005), teachers can help improve student comprehension through instruction of reading strategies. Duke and Pearson (2005) further discussed that it is important to teach the strategies by naming the strategy and how it should be used, modelling through the think-aloud process, group practice, and independent use of the strategy. McKeown, Beck and Blake (2009) point out that recent research on comprehension has certainly provided increased understanding of the comprehension process and broad and general knowledge of what makes for effective instructional practice. According to Antoniou and Souvignier (2007), the main aims of strategy training are monitoring understanding, enhancing understanding, acquiring and actively using knowledge, and developing insights. In addition, Cubukcu (2007) pointed out that to be effective, students must have a wide array of reading strategies at their disposal and know where, when and how to use these strategies.

### **Culture-based Literary Texts**

In recent years, culture has become a much discussed topic in English language teaching discourse. The PCEP was conceived on August 11, 2001 in response to the promulgation of Republic Act 9155, otherwise known as "An Act Instituting a

Framework of Governance for Basic Education, Establishing Authority and Accountability, Renaming the Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS) into Department of Education (DepEd) and for other Purposes". Formulated through an NCCA Board Resolution in 2011 and operationalized by a Task Force in 2002, the PCEP envisions a nation of culturally-literate and empowered Filipinos by ensuring that culture is the core and foundation of education, governance, and sustainable development. PCEP had formulated three strategic goals which include the establishment of an index of knowledge on Philippine culture, development of culture-based instructional materials based on minimum learning competencies and standards on culture, and the implementation of cultural education programs to reach various beneficiaries through formal, non-formal and informal structures. The Department of Education which is the key implementer of R.A. 10533 otherwise known as the Implementing Rules and Regulation of the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 encourages the educators to adapt education programs, projects, and initiatives to learners need pursuant to R.A. 9155. The implementation of these laws in education leads the educators in the school setting to contextualize, localize, and indigenize their lessons suited for the learners' need. Culturally responsive/relevant education recognizes cultural gaps between home and school as part of the achievement gap and calls for increased cultural relevance in education to engage, support, and empower learners as described by Castagno and Braybo (2008).

Cognitive theory by Demmert and Towner (2003) described reasons that students learn more readily when prior knowledge is activated and connected to new information they are learning, hence supporting the importance of cultural relevance. Finally, Roth and Lee (2007) also described cultural-historical-activity theory, or CHAT, more specifically emphasizes connectedness to community and culture as the foundation for teaching and learning. Based on the study *Culture-Based Education and its Relationship to Student Outcomes* conducted by Shawn (1999), culture-based education is positively related to student socioemotional well-being (e.g., identity, self-efficacy, social relationships) and it enhanced socioemotional well-being, where it is also linked with math and reading scores. He also added that the analyses drawn from his study indicate a statistically significant relationship between culture-based education use and math and reading test scores. For reading outcomes, the impact of average culture-based education used in the school has a large, statistically significant positive relationship in addition to a smaller, positive relationship of teacher CBE use.

Culture-based education as described by Shawn (1999) is the grounding of instruction and student learning in these ways, including the values, norms knowledge, beliefs, practices, experiences, and language that are the foundation of an indigenous culture. As it is stated, "for education to be effective and result-oriented, it has to be culture-based, and it must take into account the cognitive, emotional and spiritual needs of the student". It is further stated that "knowledge of culture plays a prominent role in democratic thinking: a democratic citizen is known for his ability to shift truth from false and he/she is more receptive to new ideas" (The Center for Cultural Resources and Training, India, 2010).

Apu Palamguwan Cultural Education Center (2012) defined culture-based education in their research study as an educational approach which responds to the need for a system that promotes authentic learning and cultural integrity for indigenous communities and recognizes that this is done with the objective of achieving sustainable community development. Despite some differences in approach and emphasis, all of these theories consider the degree of continuity and congruence between home and school. This study suggested that education is both an individual and a collective experience, where engagement and success can be enhanced and enriched via strengths-based approaches which integrate the culture and community of learners.

Demmert and Towner (2003) defined the term culture-based education (CBE) which represents a holistic and comprehensive application of culturally-relevant education and refers to educational approaches that are grounded in a particular cultural worldview. Garcia, et.al. (2005) and McCarty (2003) noted that a growing body of research sustains that CBE is an approach to teaching and learning that facilitates critical consciousness, engenders respect for diversity and acknowledges the importance of relationships, while honoring, building on, and drawing from the culture, knowledge, and language of students, teachers, and local community.

Gay (2010) suggested that teachers should make authentic knowledge about different ethnic groups accessible to students, including increased concentration on academic learning tasks; insightful thinking, more caring, concerned, and humane interpersonal skills; better understanding of interconnections among individual, local, national, ethnic, global, and human identities; and acceptance of knowledge as something to be continuously shared, critiqued, revised, and renewed.

Different findings and researches conducted abroad have been reviewed to the enrichment of this research. Studies in using short stories is a supreme resource for observing not only language but life itself.

In the study of Arioğul (2001), he asserted that the inclusion of short fiction in the ESL / EFL curriculum has the following benefits: a) makes the students' reading task easier due to being simple and short when compared with the other literary genres; b) enlarges the advanced level readers' worldviews about different cultures and different groups of people; c) provides more creative, encrypt, challenging texts that require personal exploration supported with prior knowledge for advanced level readers; d) motivates learners to read due to being an authentic material; e) offers a world of wonders and a world of mystery, f) gives students the chance to use their creativity, g) promotes critical thinking skills; h) facilitates teaching a foreign culture (i.e. serves as a valuable instrument in attaining cultural knowledge of the selected community; i) makes students feel themselves comfortable and free; j) helps students coming from various backgrounds communicate with each other because of its universal language; k) helps students to go beyond the surface meaning and dive into underlying meanings; and l) acts as a perfect vehicle to help students understand the positions of themselves as well as the others by transferring these gained knowledge to their own world. In brief, the use of a short story seems to be a very helpful technique in today's foreign language classes. As it is short, it makes the students' reading task and the teacher's coverage easier. An important feature of short fiction is its being universal. To put it differently, students all over the world have experienced stories and can relate to them.

### Methodology

Descriptive survey was utilized to describe the learning process and reading strategies of the students. On the other hand, the correlational design was used to determine the relationship among the variables such as students' learning styles, reading strategies and reading comprehension. To be able to identify the learning process of students as well as the evident reading strategies employed in reading culture-based literary texts, reading selections were derived from the curriculum guide of grade 8. Students will read the culture-based literary texts and answer comprehension test afterwards. In addition, a checklist was also used to identify the different learning process and strategies employed by the students while reading the said literary texts. The answers were analyzed through the use of statistical tools- weighted mean, Pearson r and t-test for r. The t-Test for r was also used to identify the correlation between the learning process, reading strategies and students' reading comprehension.

### Results and Discussion

Reading culture-based texts makes learners familiar with details of the story and they can easily identify the steps in achieving the objectives of the activity essential to their own pacing and learning style.

**Table 1.** Learning process of students in reading culture-based literary texts

Statements	Mean	Description
I ask my teacher to clarify vague ideas.	3.63	Often
I feel distracted while reading when my classmates are noisy.	3.58	Often
I use my prior knowledge in analyzing the text.	3.53	Often
I follow the rules set by the teacher before, during and after reading the text.	3.53	Often
I prefer reading the selections orally rather than in a silent way.	3.49	Often
I imagine myself as one of the characters in the text.	3.45	Often
I need to read the text two to three or more times to gain full understanding.	3.41	Often
It is difficult to understand a culture-based literary text.	3.36	Sometimes
I relate my personal experiences to fully understand the text.	3.26	Sometimes
I stop from time to time to think about what I'm reading.	3.23	Sometimes
I try to understand the text while reading.	3.18	Sometimes
The length of the text affects my mood in reading.	3.05	Sometimes

I express my ideas using my own words.	3.04	Sometimes
I feel good to read and understand culture-based literary texts because it provides insights to readers about the works of Filipino authors.	2.94	Sometimes
I discuss what I read with a classmate to check my understanding.	2.85	Sometimes
Mean	3.30	Sometimes

Table 1 shows the students’ learning process in reading culture-based literary texts. Oftentimes, students process information by asking their teacher to clarify vague ideas (3.63), feeling distracted when their classmates are noisy while reading (3.58), using prior knowledge in analyzing (3.53), and following the rules set by the teacher during the duration of the reading-learning process. Though these practices contribute to effective learning there are students who sometimes discuss what they read with a classmate to check their own understanding. It implies that students depend on their teacher’s instruction when it comes to their own learning. The different ways students undergo are sometimes practiced during the whole learning process.

**Table 2.** Reading strategies employed by students in reading culture-based literary texts in terms of comprehension monitoring

Statements	Mean	Description
I adjust my speed of reading depending on the type of text to be read.	4.03	Often
I slowly read the text to understand what I am reading.	3.88	Often
I stop from time to time when I don’t understand what I am reading.	3.83	Often
I go back on previous parts of the text when I lose concentration.	3.35	Sometimes
I take down notes while reading to help me understand the text.	3.26	Sometimes
Mean	3.67	Often

Table 2 presents the list of reading strategies on comprehension monitoring. The grade 8 students often used strategies in reading culture-based literary texts as manifested by its weighted mean of 3.67. Based on the data, most of the grade 8 students adjust their speed when reading depending on the type of text (4.03) while they sometimes take down notes during reading to help them understand the text (3.26). It can be said that students look for possible means to understand these literary texts, for instance, if the reading material is difficult they tend to spend more time in digesting what they read or if the material is easy to read then they spend less time in looking for information.

**Table 3.** Reading strategies employed by students in reading culture-based literary texts in terms of text-based instruction

Statements	Mean	Description
When the text becomes difficult to understand, I re-read to have a clear understanding.	3.65	Often
I summarize what I read to reflect on important information from the text.	3.36	Sometimes
I use reference materials such as dictionaries to help me understand difficult words used.	3.13	Sometimes
I underline or circle information in the text to help me remember it.	3.06	Sometimes
I paraphrase using my own words to better understand the text I am reading.	3.01	Sometimes
Mean	3.24	Sometimes

Table 3 presents the reading strategies on text-based instruction describes that grade 8 students often re-read to have a clear understanding when text becomes difficult (3.65) and they sometimes summarize what they read to reflect on important information from the text.

The overall weighted mean of 3.24 implies that using text-based instruction strategies would require students to exert effort and have enough time in understanding the literary texts read.

**Table 4.** Reading strategies employed by students in reading culture-based literary texts in terms of critical thinking

Statements	Mean	Description
I visualize or picture the information to help me understand what I am reading.	4.18	Often
I preview the text before reading it.	4.01	Often
I try to check if my guesses about the text are right or wrong.	3.25	Sometimes
I try to guess and connect my prior knowledge before I read.	3.01	Sometimes
I critically analyze the information presented in the text I am reading.	2.79	Sometimes
Mean	3.45	Often

As presented in table 4, students often visualize or picture the information to help them understand the text (4.18) and they sometimes critically analyze the information presented in the text (2.79). The overall weighted mean of 3.45, implies that these reading strategies are useful for Grade 8 students to critically analyze culture-based literary texts.

**Table 5.** Summary of reading strategies

Reading Strategies	Weighted Mean	Mean Description	Rank
Comprehension Monitoring	3.67	Often	1
Critical Thinking	3.45	Often	2
Text-based Instruction	3.24	Sometimes	3
Overall Mean	3.30	Sometimes	

The table presents the different reading strategies, weighted mean, description and rank. It is clearly shown in the table that reading strategies on comprehension monitoring with a weighted mean of 3.67 it means that among the strategies, it is the most widely employed reading strategy by the students.

In addition, among the different levels of reading strategies, it is clearly presented in the table that reading strategies on comprehension monitoring are essential strategies which students used in reading since they are easy to apply. Through the use of these strategies, students' creative thinking and imagination help them to critically analyze the text read.

In contrast, students sometimes used the strategies on text-based level which implies that students could find difficulty to apply such strategies as it focused on the concentration of students on the literary texts being read. The overall mean of the different reading strategies is 3.30 which means that although grade 8 students employed different reading strategies, sometimes they are not aware that such reading strategy was employed while reading literary texts. Hence, grade 8 students must know the reading strategies either on comprehension monitoring, text-based instruction and critical thinking, which help them analyze culture-based literary texts. Students must know the proper use of these reading strategies through careful assistance of English teachers when reading literary texts.

**Table 6.** Reading comprehension level of grade 8 students based on their reading comprehension test results

Score	Frequency	Percent	Description
43 – 50	0	0	Outstanding
36 – 42	10	12.4	Very Satisfactory
29 – 35	27	33.8	Satisfactory
22 – 28	35	43.8	Poor
21 and below	8	10	Needs Improvement
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100</b>	

The table presents the distribution of scores of grade 8 students in a 50 item comprehension test. It merely presents that out of 80 respondents or 43.8% of the respondents have scores ranging from 22 to 28 which implies that these students are poor readers. There are also 8 or 10% of the students whose scores range from 21 and below, which means that these students need improvement in reading.

Although most of the students find difficulty in reading, it is found out that based from the overall mean of their comprehension test results which is 28.66, the grade 8 students are satisfactory readers of culture-based literary texts. Some of the reasons that might affect their reading comprehension skills is the length of the literary texts read, which could affect the mood of students during the reading process, and the awareness of students on the appropriate use of reading strategies.

In addition, teachers should monitor students’ reading comprehension by assisting them in reading the text and helping them identify the appropriate reading strategies in reading. Another reason which could affect students reading comprehension is the learning process that occurs during the reading process where it involves different learning styles of students.

**Table 7.** Correlation of learning process and reading strategies with students’ reading comprehension

Variable	Pearson r	Description	df	t Computed Value	Tabular Value ( $\alpha = 5\%$ )	Decision	Interpretation
Learning Process and Reading Comprehension	0.13	Negligible positive correlation	78	1.16	1.99	Accept Ho	Not significant
Reading Strategy and Reading Comprehension	0.41	Moderate positive correlation	78	3.97	1.99	Reject Ho	Significant

Table 7 shows the relationship between learning process and reading comprehension as well as reading strategies and reading comprehension test results of students in reading culture-based literary texts. With Person correlation value of 0.13, the researcher found out that learning process and students’ reading comprehension test result have negligible positive correlation. The t-computed value of 1.16 as well as a tabular value of 1.99 at 0.05 level of significance imply that there is no significant relationship between the learning process of students and their reading comprehension test result. Moreover, the reading strategies employed by the grade 8 students in reading culture-based texts and their reading comprehension test results had a Pearson correlation value of 0.41 which means that there is moderate positive correlation between these variables with t-computed value of 3.97 and tabular value of 1.99 at 0.05 level of significance. Hence, those variables are found to have significant relationship.

**Conclusion**

The researchers came up with this study to find out the learning processes and reading strategies employed by grade 8 students in reading culture-based literary texts. Apparently, both teachers and students used different reading strategies in teaching and learning culture-based literary texts. With regard to the learning process employed, reading culture-based literary texts does not affect the students’ comprehension while reading strategies employed can influence the level of comprehension of the learners. Low performance in the comprehension test implies that learners have difficulty understanding reading materials written in English. To address this dilemma, teachers should employ teaching techniques and strategies suited to the needs of the learners, give proper guidance to students on the use of the different reading strategies, motivate students to engage themselves reading in English, and a follow-up research must be conducted in order to monitor students’ performance in reading to achieve long-term results.

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