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## Reading Comprehension of General Academic Strand Senior High School Students

Mary Kris Maranga<sup>1</sup>, Novie Jane Maranga<sup>2</sup>, Charlene Mae Tautu-an<sup>3</sup>, Jovenil Bacatan<sup>4\*</sup>

<sup>1,2,3,4</sup> Department of Teacher Education, UM Peñaplata College, Island Garden City of Samal, Davao del Norte, Philippines, 8119

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\*Corresponding author: Jovenil Bacatan

Department of Teacher Education, UM Peñaplata College, Island Garden City of Samal, Davao del Norte, Philippines, 8119

### Abstract

Reading comprehension is one of the pillars of reading. Students nowadays do not read for pleasure, but they read if they are required to do so. The main focus of this study is to identify students' reading comprehension level and to determine if there is a significant difference in the level of reading comprehension of students when categorized according to gender. The respondents of this study are the 51 students of Grade 12 GAS, composed of 29 males and 22 females from Samal Senior High School. This study utilized total population sampling and a descriptive-comparative research design. In collecting the data, the researchers used multiple choice question tests based on the five levels of reading comprehension: literal, interpretive, critical evaluation, integrative, and critical, which are adopted from the published book of Castigador (2012). The result of this study showed that the student's reading comprehension level is at a moderate level. The result also shows no significant difference between males and females in their reading comprehension level because the resulting *p*-value was greater than the 0.05 significance level; thus, the null hypothesis was accepted. It was recommended in this study to develop a remedial reading program and conduct similar research in a new setting and location to expand the study. Future researchers may also use other research designs, increase the number of respondents, and include other factors not mentioned in this study.

**Keywords:** reading comprehension, senior high school, general academic strand, gender

### INTRODUCTION

Students these days do not read for pleasure (ETX Studio, 2021). Reading for them is not done out of an inherent desire to read but because they are required to do so. They can draw the information from written text and interpret this information appropriately.

During this pandemic time, the students can continue their learning without having an interaction with their teachers face to face. According to a trusted teacher in Samal Senior High School, some students, mainly the Grade 12 General Academic Strand (GAS) students, did not proceed in the second semester of the last school year, 2020-2021. It is a big possibility that it is due to the new

learning mode, where the students had difficulties understanding their lessons (Olila, 2021; Barrot et al., 2021). In this situation, the researchers chose to grab this opportunity to know the students' reading comprehension level. This study also determined the students' reading comprehension level in terms of their gender. This study is supported by Oda and Abdul-Kadhim (2017), as their study aims to determine the relationship between male and female students by comparing the achievement of the two groups of gender on each level of reading comprehension.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Reading

Reading is the process of looking at a series of written symbols and getting meaning from them. It means the process of constructing meaning through a dynamic interaction among the reader's existing knowledge, the information suggested by the written language, and the context of written situation (Patterson, 2016).

Reading is being defined as a process (Nuttall, 2000; cited in Ganie & Rangkuti, 2019; Hunt, 2004). Reading is combined with the communication process and it means eliminating messages from the text as much as possible. In other words, code creators have something to share with others in the process. To do this, the authors translate their ideas into words as text. The reader plays the role of a decoder who can crack the code or construct the meaning of the text before the message penetrates the reader's head and communication is finally achieved. Reading means perceiving a written text to understand its content, this can be done in silence. They added that reading is a special way in which the reader understands texts, passages, paragraphs, and even books. They also explain that it is a way where the reader can understand and know the information presented in the form of written text (Richard et al., 2002).

Reading is the comprehension of written texts. It was mentioned that reading is made up of two related processes: word recognition and word comprehension. Word recognition is defined as the process of how written symbols correspond to spoken language while comprehension is the process of determining the meaning of words, sentences, and related text (Pang et al., 2003). Moreover, reading is the activity of understanding printed material, the purpose of reading being to understand what the author is trying to express through printed material (Murniasih, 2012).

### Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is one of the pillars of reading. In addition, reading comprehension reflects the degree of understanding of a text or message. This understanding stems from the interaction between written words and how they trigger knowledge outside the text or message. Therefore, reading comprehension is vital for any individual or student, as it is a complex process that only develops with practice. Without comprehension, reading simply means following words from left to the right on a page and pronouncing them as you go. In other words, the words on the page have no meaning.

Reading comprehension is the ability to understand written words. It adds meaning to what is read and it occurs when words on a page are not just mere words but thoughts and ideas. It makes reading enjoyable, fun, and informative. Reading comprehension is needed to succeed in school, work, and life in general (Brandon, 2021). Readers comprehend a text when they are able to communicate with the text. They are able to draw the information from written text and interpret the information appropriately. In short, reading comprehension is a kind of interaction between the readers and the text through written symbol in order to grasp the information from written text (Ayunisa, 2016).

Reading comprehension can be defined as a thought process in which the reader becomes aware of an idea, understands the background of their experience, and interprets it for their own needs and goals. It is the process of combining information in a passage with prior knowledge to construct meaning. Moreover, reading comprehension can be defined as a thought process

The study of Anantasa (2016) shows that gender differences affect reading comprehension. Different characteristics of the family and society influence the reading performance of students. It was found that 25% of boys score high on the reading comprehension test and 33% of girls on the reading comprehension test, and these differences are caused by different literary characteristics in their families and societies. The study also analyzes gender-specific differences in the production of factual texts. Boys use such discussions in the post-reading strategy, while girls use writing activities in the post-reading strategy. Girls have a great ability to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words, while boys have a great ability to find specific information in the text.

An international study of Grade 10 students by Chaka (2015) used three reading measures, a memory task, a summary, and a comprehension test based on three English excerpts to assess the participants' reading comprehension. Their study shows that the participants had a low average on the reminder and summary tasks. Their studies imply that half of the participants did not comprehend the items well. These participants performed below their maturation reading level. Dewi and Rakhmawati (2021) mentioned that most of the students are in the poor category because most of the tenth grade had poor achievement in reading comprehension.

Moreover, in the Philippines, a study entitled Reading comprehension skills and performance in science by Imam et al. (2014) reveals that the students nearly mastered two reading skills: the main idea and making inferences. It also shows that the students performed low in the four reading skills, understanding the vocabulary in context, noting details, predicting outcomes, and drawing conclusions. Hence, the overall performance of the students in reading comprehension was indexed at a low mastery level. Additionally, Manuel (2022) cited that Grade 11 Senior High School students did not excel in integration and evaluation levels of reading comprehension.

Furthermore, a study was conducted by Cabardo (2015) in one of the performing high schools in Davao City to determine the reading proficiency level of Year 1 to Year 3 students as the basis for reading the intervention program. Materials from the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil IRI) were used to assess students' reading level in years 1-3. The results showed that most of the students belonged to the level of frustration in reading proficiency in silent reading, while in the classroom level of oral reading, the majority of male students were less proficient in reading both silent and oral reading than the women. Luciano and San Pedro (2019); Oclarit and Casinillo (2021) have mentioned that the identified problems in any school is the poor reading comprehension of the students using Phil-IRI.

From these previous studies, the researcher found out that the results of their study show that students are on below average level in terms of their reading comprehension; thus, the researchers gained inspiration to do the research based on this topic. The researchers conduct this study to determine the level of reading comprehension of Grade 12 GAS students and determine if gender is a factor of students' comprehension level in Samal Senior High School. The said students are the fit respondents of this study since they are taking the General Academic Strand; these students are undecided on what course they would take on. This study would greatly help them in choosing their future courses. With this study, the researcher will determine the student's comprehension level based on their responses. The outcome of this study will help future researchers and educators improve how students are taught.

through which the reader realizes an idea, understands it in terms of their background or experience, and interprets it in terms of their own needs and purposes (Khoiriyah, 2010; cited in Faza, 2020). Reading comprehension is one of the most complex cognitive activities in which human engage, making it difficult to teach measure and research (Elleman & Oslund, 2019).

### **Levels of Reading Comprehension**

Reading comprehension is the ability to process information we have read and understand its meaning. Reading is an active interaction between the reader and the text. The reader not only understands the text but goes beyond agreeing or disagreeing, reacting to the text, drawing conclusions, and synthesizing or creating something new from what he has read. It was pointed out that reading involves four steps: perceiving, proceeding to interpret, applying or using, and creating something out of the information that was read (Castigador, 2012, Murray, 2016).

### **Literal Comprehension**

Literal level of comprehension is defined as the basic understanding of a reading material manifested by knowledge of details directly stated in the text, such as the character, the plot, the date of the story, the setting, the author, and other essential details (Castigador, 2012; Tavarez DaCosta & Herrera Gutierrez, 2020). At the literal level, the basic facts are understood (Westwood, 2001). It commonly uses questions like what, when, where, and who (Barry, 2005). The questions at the literal level can be answered by reading the text at a glance because it is usually directly stated in the text. This level can be considered as the first and most basic level of comprehension level.

It was revealed in a study that clientele under ALS was good in literal reading comprehension. This means that they could locate the answer from the given text. It also showed that the respondents performed poorly in inferential, applicative, and creative levels of comprehension. The poor performance of the respondents in the inference dimension is because only trained readers and efficient readers can easily read the logical conclusions of the text (Labarrate, 2019).

A stunning level of reading comprehension among the Grade 12 ABM students by Sumipo (2019) found that the respondents in oral and silent reading comprehension levels were generally on frustration level. The conclusion is that the Grade 12 ABM students are deficient in all aspects of reading comprehension. This shows that many students could not analyze the passage correctly. It also shows that the students have the poorest score in vocabulary. The student's weakness in vocabulary greatly affected their reading comprehension, yet the aspect of getting the main idea has the highest score; it points out that it is the easiest area among the other aspects.

### **Interpretive Comprehension**

This is a process of perceiving ideas and information implied by the text, such as data that can be acquired by reading between the lines, i.e., understanding the connotation or emotional meaning of words, knowing the meaning of figures of speech as used in a sentence Castigador (2012). Interpretive means what is implied or meant rather than what is stated. It is attaching new learning to old information and reading between the lines to determine what is meant by what is stated (Cuesta College, 2021).

At the interpretive level, students can canon the literal words on the page and find understanding. They use an essential skill called inferring. When students infer, they think beyond the text to find

meaning. The information they understand is not found in the text, which requires them to imagine what a character is feeling or what the author means by words or actions (Kamagi, 2021; Attaprechakul, 2013).

At this level, the students go beyond what has been said and read in search of deeper meanings (Alyousef, 2006; Miller, 2023). They can read critically and carefully analyze what they have read. Students can see the relationships between ideas, for example, how ideas fit together, and they must also understand the implicit meaning of those ideas. It is also clear that the students do this before they need to understand the ideas being expressed. This level also includes thought processes such as drawing conclusions, generalizing, and predicting results (Martínez-Gómez & Aizawa, 2014).

The study of Duru and Koklu (2011) showed that students had difficulty translating mathematical texts into algebraic equations using symbols. It also reveals that these students had much more difficulties translating symbolic representations into mathematical texts because of weak reading comprehension. The study assumed that several factors had an influence, such as the inability of the students to organize their previous knowledge and their ignorance of the meanings of the symbols, characters, and words used. The study shows that vocabulary is an integral part of that trading helps with comprehension.

### **Critical Evaluation**

This level of comprehension involves determining truths and untruths and noting inconsistencies and fallacies or errors in reasoning reading material. At this level of comprehension, a reader can judge whether the reading material he is reading is valid or not (Castigador, 2012).

According to Cifci (2006), critical reading is the key to productive thinking and the most important part of reading education. Critical reading begins with the interpretation of the subject based on the individual's own life, accumulation of knowledge, / observations, and/or views (Orhan, 2007). It is to think about the subject, moving beyond what the text concluded to how the author reached that conclusion and the degree to which that conclusion is accurate (Wheeler, 2007).

Critical Comprehension is more than evaluating the quality of the text or expressing an opinion about it. It is like a critical inquiring, questioning, researching, and giving the consciousness of becoming intellectuals (Pirozzi, 2003). Critical comprehension requires the reader to make a judgment about what has been read based on an evaluation of various factors based on the text, such as the quality of what is written, the determination that it is not an opinion, the objectivity of the author and if the text is credible (Huggins, 2009).

The study of Sari (2016) results that only a small number of students successfully answered all questions on an interpretive and critical level. This is because students had difficulty finding the main ideas and drawing the conclusion that was assessed indirectly. However, the majority of students were able to answer the questions literally and creatively. It is because the ease of text and information is also given directly.

Statistical analysis also supported the result, which showed that the literal mean score was (93.33). This means that the literal level was in a very good category. The mean value of the interpretation level was (53.33). This means that the level of interpretation was in the

lower category. The mean critical level was (36.67). This means that the critical level was the failure category. The mean score for the creative level was (72.00). This means that the creative level was in the moderate category. It was concluded that the students are more complete when faced with texts in English based on the literal and creative levels than on the interpretive and critical levels.

### **Integrative Comprehension**

Castigador (2012) defined integrative comprehension is the ability to draw insights and conclusions and to apply lessons to real-life acquired by the reader in this level of comprehension. Integrative comprehension is the interaction of processes and products (Rapp et al., 2005). Readers with good integrative comprehension construct a coherent and holistic model of what they have read and the facts gained from text-level processes.

Hence, they add that Integrative comprehension refers to integrating two interrelated cognitive processes. One process that occurs during reading is text-level processing, which involves understanding the story structure. These include settings, actions, characters, major events, cause-and-effect relationships, and the logical sequence of events (Rapp et al., 2005).

### **Creative Comprehension**

The type of comprehension involves using imagination and creativity to do something relevant to but not necessarily limited by the material. This includes formulating oral or written reactions extending, altering, or continuing a story, arguing a point, composing a poem or a song, and inventing something from what one has read (Castigador, 2012). It is the reader's "emotional" response to the content of the textbook material read.

Barry (2005) points out that at the creative level, the reader can take information or ideas from what has been read and develop new ideas. The creative level stimulates the reader to be new and original thinking. This level of comprehension also includes creating new ideas from what was learned in school and by the students (Welker, 2014).

The study by Bilbao et al. (2018) shows that the creative level is the very best level of reading comprehension for education students with a descriptive degree of High. However, it also shows that the interpretative level is the lowest reading comprehension level among college students. This method of using and reading cognitive procedures of the scholars to compute thoughts or meanings within the choice is not that high.

Moreover, the overall reading comprehension of the education students in terms of literal, interpretative, evaluative, and creative levels is moderate. This illustrates that there is still a need to provide a reading program for the education students to reach the maximum reading comprehension level (Bilbao et al., 2018). The Iloilo State College Fisheries study shows that the student's reading comprehension was on a frustration level with 58%, only 34% of the students belonged to instructional and 12% to independent.

### **Gender and Reading Comprehension**

Not all students are "good readers," but all students have the potential to become "good readers" with proper teaching and learning. According to Duke and Pearson (2002), good readers make predictions, read actively and selectively, draw on prior knowledge and question and evaluate the text and the author. Furthermore, Konza (2011) found that good readers understand the text's purpose, monitor their comprehension, and adjust their

reading strategies. They also look for literal and inferential meaning in the texts they read.

Some research has shown that gender plays a role in reading performance. For example, girls showed greater interest in reading than boys and tended to be more motivated. Also, girls prefer to read more books than boys. In general, girls had better reading comprehension, read more frequently, and had more positive attitudes towards reading (Logan & Johnston, 2009). Previous studies also found significant differences in favor of women on reading comprehension tests (Lynch, 2002). Chiu and McBride Chang (2006) conducted a large-scale cross-cultural study and concluded significant gender differences in reading comprehension; Girls' average reading scores outperformed boys in 43 countries. However, some studies (Fahim & Barjesteh, 2012; Sotoudehnama & Asadian, 2011) also show no significant difference between male and female reading comprehension.

The result of the study by Lin (2010) indicated no significant difference between male and female groups on the pre-test. However, there was a significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups on the post-test. It reveals that the female group achieved significantly higher scores than the male group on the post-test. This finding is in line with previous reading research on gender differences in which females showed better reading comprehension (Logan & Johnston, 2009). Females understand texts better than males. Females had fewer problems understanding content than males and performed better in reading.

The study by Bilbao et al. (2018) found that the reading comprehension of education students is generally satisfactory, with a descriptive level of moderate. Students can understand difficult reading texts at the literal, interpretive, evaluative, and creative levels with less supervision. As a result, the annual level of respondents shows a significant difference when grouped accordingly. However, grouped by gender, the results showed no significant differences.

Reading was the true backbone of most learning. Everything starts with the written word — whether it is math, science, or even home economics, etc. As students go up the educational ladder, more reading is usually required as subjects become denser and more challenging (PhilStar Global, 2010).

The present study was about determining the students' reading comprehension level. In doing so, the study focuses on five comprehension levels: literal comprehension, interpretative comprehension, critical evaluation, integrative comprehension, and creative comprehension.

## **METHOD**

The descriptive - comparative research design was used in this study. The design was adopted from the study of Cantrell (2011). The researcher considered two variables that were not manipulated, the male and female students, and established a formal procedure to conclude that one is better than the other.

The researchers chose the appropriate instrument to determine their level of reading comprehension in this new normal learning modality. The participants surveyed in this study were the 51 Grade 12 GAS students of Samal Senior High School. Moreover, the researchers used the total population sampling, where the whole population of interest is studied (Lavrakas, 2008). Total population sampling is a type of purposive sampling technique that

involves examining the entire population with particular characteristics.

The source of multiple choice questions was the book entitled "Wholistic Reading: A Module for College Students by Castigador (2012). The researchers crafted the tool for identifying students reading comprehension through its five levels of comprehension. A five-point Likert scale was used to interpret the level of reading comprehension of the respondents. The instrument was validated by a panel of experts in the language education area.

The response to all research items in the questionnaire was filed, tallied, and interpreted in light of the purpose of the research. The gathered data was then analyzed using the appropriate statistical treatment. The statistical tools used in this study were the Mean and t-test for Independent Samples.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Reading Comprehension Level of the Students

To answer the question of the student's reading comprehension level in literal, interpretive, critical evaluation, integrative, and creative, the researchers obtained the mean and standard deviation to answer the question.

Table 1 below shows the five levels of reading comprehension: literal, interpretive, critical, integrative, and creative of the 51 Grade 12 GAS students. The table above revealed that integrative comprehension was the highest reading comprehension level ( $M=3.59$ ,  $SD=1.12$ ), with a high descriptive level. This implies that students could answer four out of five questions correctly. This means that students' critical process in identifying appropriate insights and choosing the best real-life situation is high. Thus, the students apply their understanding through their experience.

**Table 1**

*Level of Reading Comprehension*

Indicators	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Descriptive Level
Literal Comprehension	3.35	1.17	Moderate
Interpretive Comprehension	2.24	1.03	Low
Critical Evaluation Comprehension	3.53	1.27	High
Integrative Comprehension	3.59	1.12	High
Creative Comprehension	1.84	1.14	Low
<b>Overall Mean</b>	<b>2.95</b>	<b>.65</b>	<b>Moderate</b>

*Note:* N = 51, M = Mean, SD = Standard Deviation

The result also showed that creative comprehension was the lowest reading comprehension level ( $M=1.84$ ,  $SD=1.14$ ), with a low description level. This implies that students answer two out of five questions correctly. This result is supported by the study of Thelma (2017). It was found that Grade 5 pupils performed poorly in their evaluative and creative abilities. Creative ability ranked first in their study as the lowest level of ability.

The overall result shows that the student's reading comprehension level is moderate ( $M=2.95$ ,  $SD=.65$ ); it implies that students answered three out of five questions correctly. The study of Bilbao et al. (2016) supported the result as it reveals that one of the

Catholic universities in Davao City has a moderate reading comprehension level ( $M=58.46$ ).

### Significant Difference in Level of Reading Comprehension of Students According to Gender

To respond to the question of whether there is a significant difference between male and female respondents' reading comprehension: literal, interpretive, critical, integrative, and creative; t-tests were conducted to compare the scores of the reading comprehension test.

Table 2 presents the mean score (*M*) and standard deviation (*SD*) for reading comprehension tests for male and female groups. The null hypothesis is accepted in reading comprehension's literal, interpretive, critical, and creative levels. On the other hand, the null hypothesis is rejected at the integrative level of reading comprehension.

The table showed that the overall mean score of the male group was 2.86 ( $SD=.70$ ). The overall mean score of the female group was 3.07 ( $SD=.57$ ). The p-value is .241, which is greater than 0.05 as the alpha level; thus the null hypothesis is accepted. It showed that even if females have a high reading comprehension level, there was no significant difference between males and females in the reading comprehension level of Grade 12 GAS students. This illustrates that there is still a need to provide a reading program for the students to reach the maximum reading comprehension level since the overall mean only achieved a moderate level

**Table 2**

*Significant Difference in the Level of Reading Comprehension among the Students when grouped according to Gender*

Indicators	Male		Female		<i>t</i> (49)	<i>p</i>	Decision on Ho
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>			
Literal Comprehension	3.48	1.24	3.63	1.09	.460	.648	Accept
Interpretive Comprehension	2.28	1.13	2.18	.91	.320	.751	Accept
Critical Evaluation Comprehension	3.41	1.38	3.68	1.13	.743	.461	Accept
Integrative Comprehension	3.28	1.16	4.00	.93	2.400	.020	Reject
Creative Comprehension	1.83	1.26	1.86	.99	.111	.912	Accept
<b>Overall</b>	<b>2.86</b>	<b>.70</b>	<b>3.07</b>	<b>.57</b>	<b>1.187</b>	<b>.241</b>	<b>Accept</b>

The result of this study is supported by the study of Canono et al. (2013) showed in which study showed that the weighted mean of males and females has a difference of 1.25, having a p-value of 0.092, which is greater than 0.05. This illustrates that there is no significant difference in the reading comprehension of the second-year engineering students when grouped according to sex.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Based on the findings of the study, the following were the conclusions:**

This research uncovered the reading comprehension level of the Grade 12 GAS students in the five-level of reading comprehension. Integrative comprehension has the highest mean score among the reading comprehension levels. On the other side, creative comprehension has the lowest mean score. This means that the students' critical processes in identifying the proper actions and

determining the appropriate appeal were below average. The overall result from the test showed that the students have a moderate reading comprehension level. Generally, students can understand difficult reading texts at the literal, interpretive, critical, integrative, and creative levels with less supervision.

The result of the study shows that the female students have a higher mean score than the male students, however, was not enough to make a significant difference. Hence, there is no significant difference between males and females when grouped according to gender. This means that gender does not affect the student's comprehension level.

**With the mentioned findings and conclusions, the researchers developed the following recommendations:**

The school may enhance the development of a remedial reading program to acquire the maximum level of reading comprehension fully. The enhancement of the reading comprehension level, particularly in interpretive and creative comprehension, needs to be done. The school is also recommended to conduct an assessment more often of students with low mastery of reading comprehension to monitor the student's reading comprehension level status.

The teachers are recommended to evaluate their teaching method's effectiveness to fully enhance students' reading comprehension, especially in areas where students get low results in reading comprehension. Teachers should also strengthen their delivery of instruction and conduct remedial teaching whenever the students have not fully mastered the lessons, especially in introducing the reading comprehension level.

The students are encouraged to evaluate their reading comprehension level and to improve their way of comprehension by giving attention to the area in which they got low results.

To future researchers, they are encouraged to conduct similar study in a new setting and location to expand the study. They may also use other research designs, increase the number of respondents, and include other factors not mentioned in this study.

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