

## Difficulties encountered by Grade 9 students and level of understanding Anglo-American literature: Basis for learning module

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### Abstract

**Aim:** This study aimed to determine the difficulties encountered and the level of understanding of Anglo-American literature among Grade 9 students in selected secondary schools in the Municipality of Pinamalayan. It further sought to provide a basis for the development of a learning module to enhance teaching strategies and improve students' comprehension and higher-order thinking skills in literature.

**Methodology:** The study employed a descriptive–correlational and comparative research design. A total of 324 Grade 9 students were selected using proportional stratified random sampling. Data were collected using a validated questionnaire to assess difficulties in terms of author's work and purpose, literary devices, sensory images, and vocabulary, and a teacher-made test to measure levels of understanding across cognitive domains.

**Results:** Findings revealed that students experienced notable difficulties across all indicators, with significant differences observed particularly in sensory images. Vocabulary emerged as a key factor significantly associated with students' levels of understanding, including remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating.

**Conclusion:** The study concludes that students' difficulties—particularly in vocabulary—significantly affect their comprehension of Anglo-American literature. The findings highlight the need for enhanced instructional strategies, including vocabulary development, scaffolded reading activities, and varied classroom exercises. The proposed learning module provides a pedagogical intervention aimed at improving students' literary understanding and higher-order thinking skills.

**Keywords:** *Anglo-American literature, reading comprehension, vocabulary development, literary analysis, pedagogy, learning module*

### INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension, particularly in the context of Anglo-American literature, remains a significant area of concern in global education. Across different countries, students continue to encounter challenges in interpreting complex literary texts, especially those written in a second language (Del Rosario, 2024). These challenges are often influenced by cognitive, emotional, linguistic, and environmental factors that affect learners' ability to construct meaning from texts and engage in higher-order thinking processes (Aizawa et al., 2023).

Globally, recent studies have reported a decline in reading comprehension performance, particularly following the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (Kuhfeld et al., 2023). Students' abilities to infer, analyze, and synthesize information significantly decreased, highlighting the need for targeted instructional interventions. These findings suggest that learners entering literature classes may lack the foundational skills required to process complex literary texts effectively.

In addition to cognitive challenges, affective factors such as anxiety and motivation also play a crucial role in reading comprehension. Dawang et al. (2025) emphasized that reading anxiety, especially when encountering unfamiliar vocabulary and complex narratives, can reduce students' engagement and persistence. Similarly, Sümer Dodur and Ceylan (2025) found that students with low academic self-concept tend to avoid reading tasks, further

limiting their comprehension development. These findings underscore the importance of addressing both cognitive and emotional dimensions in literature instruction.

In the Philippine context, several studies have identified persistent difficulties among students in understanding literary texts written in English. Structured instructional approaches, including vocabulary support and guided reading, significantly improved comprehension among Grade 7 learners. Likewise, Tabanera and Barrios (2024) highlighted that students struggle with activating prior knowledge and making inferences when reading foreign texts, suggesting the need for contextualized and learner-centered instructional strategies. Traditional teacher-centered approaches often fail to develop students' critical thinking skills, which are essential for analyzing literary works.

At the local level, similar challenges are observed among secondary school students who encounter difficulties in interpreting Anglo-American literature. These difficulties are often associated with limited vocabulary, lack of familiarity with literary devices, and challenges in visualizing sensory imagery. Such limitations hinder students' ability to perform higher-order cognitive tasks such as analysis, evaluation, and creation, as described in Bloom's Taxonomy.

Despite the growing body of literature on reading comprehension and literature instruction, limited studies have specifically examined the relationship between students' difficulties (in terms of author's work and purpose, literary devices, sensory images, and vocabulary) and their levels of understanding across cognitive domains among Grade 9 learners. Furthermore, there is a lack of research that translates these findings into the development of an instructional module tailored to address identified learning gaps in Anglo-American literature.

Hence, this study aims to determine the difficulties encountered and the level of understanding of Anglo-American literature among Grade 9 students in selected secondary schools in the Municipality of Pinamalayan. The findings of this study will serve as a basis for the development of a learning module designed to enhance students' comprehension and higher-order thinking skills. This research contributes to the improvement of teaching-learning processes, supports curriculum development, and provides practical instructional strategies for English teachers, curriculum developers, and educational stakeholders.

## Review of Related Literature and Studies

Recent literature highlights that reading comprehension is a multifaceted process influenced by cognitive, linguistic, and instructional factors. Studies have consistently shown that vocabulary knowledge plays a crucial role in students' ability to understand literary texts. Integrating vocabulary support and context-building activities significantly improved students' comprehension and engagement with literature. Similarly, de Oliveira et al. (2023) emphasized that reading fluency and inference skills are strong predictors of comprehension, particularly when dealing with complex texts.

In terms of instructional strategies, research supports the effectiveness of scaffolding, guided reading, and collaborative learning in enhancing students' understanding of literature. Structured questioning techniques and collaborative discussions enabled students to analyze literary elements more effectively. These strategies promote active engagement and deeper processing of texts, which are essential for developing higher-order thinking skills.

Moreover, contextualization has been identified as a key factor in improving comprehension of foreign literary texts. Tabanera and Barrios (2024) highlighted that the use of localized and culturally relevant materials helps bridge the gap between students' prior knowledge and unfamiliar content. Dialogic Literary Gatherings (DLGs) foster deeper understanding by encouraging students to engage in meaningful dialogue and relate texts to personal experiences.

Technological innovations have also contributed to improving literature instruction. Fan et al. (2025) introduced LitLinker, an artificial intelligence (AI)-based tool that connects literary themes to real-world contexts, making texts more accessible to learners. Similarly, Gelal et al. (2025) developed T-TEXTS, a knowledge graph-based system that assists teachers in selecting appropriate literary materials based on students' needs. These tools reduce cognitive load and enhance students' engagement with literature.

In addition to instructional and technological factors, emotional and environmental influences also affect reading comprehension. Dawang et al. (2025) found that anxiety can negatively impact students' engagement with texts, while Sümer Dodur and Ceylan (2025) emphasized the role of motivation and self-concept in reading performance. Furthermore, socioeconomic factors, such as limited access to reading materials, as barriers to comprehension.

Overall, the reviewed literature indicates that students' difficulties in understanding literature are influenced by multiple interacting factors, including vocabulary limitations, instructional approaches, emotional conditions, and

contextual relevance. However, there remains a gap in examining how these difficulties specifically relate to students' cognitive levels of understanding in Anglo-American literature and how such findings can inform the development of targeted instructional materials. This study addresses this gap by investigating the relationship between identified difficulties and levels of understanding among Grade 9 students and by proposing a learning module to enhance literature instruction.

## Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on three major learning theories: Vygotsky's Cognitive Development Theory, Bloom's Taxonomy of Cognitive Domains, and Bandura's Social Learning Theory.

Vygotsky's Cognitive Development Theory emphasizes the role of social interaction and language in learning. According to Vygotsky, learners construct knowledge through interaction with others and through the use of language as a cognitive tool. In the context of this study, students' understanding of Anglo-American literature is influenced by their ability to process language, interpret meaning, and engage in guided learning experiences. The concept of scaffolding is particularly relevant, as it supports students in overcoming difficulties related to vocabulary, literary devices, and textual interpretation.

Bloom's Taxonomy provides a hierarchical framework for categorizing cognitive skills, ranging from lower-order thinking skills (remembering and understanding) to higher-order thinking skills (analyzing, evaluating, and creating). This framework is used in the study to assess students' levels of understanding of Anglo-American literature. It highlights the importance of developing higher-order thinking skills, which are often hindered by students' difficulties in comprehension.

Bandura's Social Learning Theory explains that learning occurs through observation, imitation, and interaction within a social context. Students learn not only from direct instruction but also from observing peers and engaging in collaborative activities. This theory supports the use of interactive teaching strategies that enhance students' engagement and comprehension of literary texts.

Together, these theories provide a comprehensive foundation for understanding how cognitive, linguistic, and social factors influence students' difficulties and levels of understanding in Anglo-American literature. They guide the design, analysis, and interpretation of the study by linking instructional practices to student learning outcomes.

## Conceptual Framework

This study is guided by a conceptual framework that illustrates the relationship between students' difficulties encountered in understanding Anglo-American literature and their levels of understanding across cognitive domains.

The independent variables of the study consist of the difficulties encountered by students, specifically in terms of: (1) author's work and purpose, (2) literary devices, (3) sensory images, and (4) vocabulary. These variables represent the key areas that may hinder students' comprehension of literary texts.

The dependent variables refer to the levels of understanding of Anglo-American literature, categorized according to Bloom's Taxonomy: remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating. These cognitive domains reflect the progression of students' comprehension from basic recall to higher-order thinking skills.

The framework assumes that the difficulties encountered by students significantly influence their level of understanding. A single-headed arrow illustrates the relationship between the independent and dependent variables, indicating that students' difficulties affect their comprehension outcomes. Additionally, line segments inside each box represent the differences among the variables, highlighting the comparative aspect of the study. The results of this relationship serve as the basis for the development of a learning module aimed at addressing identified difficulties and improving students' comprehension of Anglo-American literature. This framework provides a clear guide for analyzing how specific learning challenges impact cognitive performance and how instructional interventions can be designed to enhance learning outcomes.

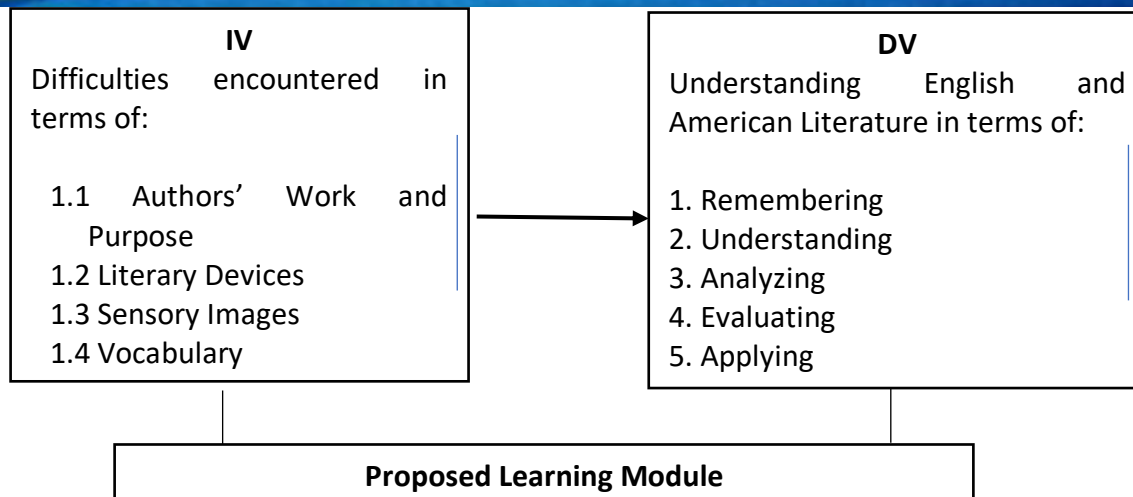


Figure 1. Hypothesized Relationship and Differences Between and Among Variables of the Study

### Statement of the Problem

The teaching of Anglo-American literature in secondary education presents significant challenges for learners, particularly in developing comprehension and higher-order thinking skills. Despite the integration of literature into the English curriculum, many students struggle to interpret literary texts due to difficulties related to vocabulary, understanding of literary devices, interpretation of sensory imagery, and recognition of the author's purpose. These challenges limit students' ability to engage in critical analysis, evaluation, and creative interpretation, which are essential competencies in literature learning.

Moreover, existing instructional strategies may not sufficiently address the diverse cognitive and linguistic needs of students, resulting in gaps in comprehension and performance. While previous studies have examined reading comprehension and instructional interventions, there remains limited empirical evidence on how specific difficulties encountered by learners influence their levels of understanding across cognitive domains in Anglo-American literature, particularly among Grade 9 students.

Given these concerns, there is a need to systematically investigate the difficulties encountered by students and their corresponding levels of understanding in literature. Furthermore, there is a need to develop an instructional intervention, such as a learning module, that addresses these identified challenges and enhances students' comprehension and higher-order thinking skills.

Thus, this study sought to examine the relationship between students' difficulties and their levels of understanding of Anglo-American literature as a basis for the development of an effective learning module.

### Research Objectives

#### General Objective

To determine the difficulties encountered and the level of understanding of Anglo-American literature among Grade 9 students in selected secondary schools in the Municipality of Pinamalayan as a basis for the development of a learning module.

#### Specific Objectives

1. To determine the level of difficulties encountered by Grade 9 students in understanding Anglo-American literature in terms of:
  - author's work and purpose
  - literary devices
  - sensory images
  - vocabulary
2. To assess the level of understanding of Anglo-American literature among Grade 9 students in terms of:
  - remembering

- understanding
  - applying
  - analyzing
  - evaluating
  - creating
3. To determine whether there is a significant difference in the level of difficulties encountered across indicators.
  4. To determine whether there is a significant difference in the level of understanding across cognitive domains.
  5. To examine the significant relationship between the difficulties encountered and the level of understanding of Anglo-American literature.
  6. To develop a learning module based on the identified difficulties encountered by Grade 9 students.

### Research Questions

This study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of difficulties encountered by Grade 9 students in understanding Anglo-American literature in terms of:
  - 1.1 author's work and purpose;
  - 1.2 literary devices;
  - 1.3 sensory images; and
  - 1.4 vocabulary?
2. What is the level of understanding of Anglo-American literature among Grade 9 students in terms of:
  - 2.1 remembering;
  - 2.2 understanding;
  - 2.3 applying;
  - 2.4 analyzing;
  - 2.5 evaluating; and
  - 2.6 creating?
3. Is there a significant difference in the level of difficulties encountered across the identified indicators?
4. Is there a significant difference in the level of understanding across the cognitive domains?
5. Is there a significant relationship between the difficulties encountered and the level of understanding of Anglo-American literature?
6. What learning module can be developed based on the identified difficulties encountered by the students?

### Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance:

- **H<sub>0</sub>1:** There is no significant difference in the level of difficulties encountered by Grade 9 students in terms of author's work and purpose, literary devices, sensory images, and vocabulary.
- **H<sub>0</sub>2:** There is no significant difference in the level of understanding of Anglo-American literature in terms of remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating.
- **H<sub>0</sub>3:** There is no significant relationship between the difficulties encountered and the level of understanding of Anglo-American literature.

### METHODS

#### Research Design

This study employed a descriptive–correlational and comparative research design. The descriptive method was used to determine the level of difficulties encountered and the level of understanding of Anglo-American literature among Grade 9 students. The correlational approach was utilized to examine the relationship between students' difficulties and their levels of understanding, while the comparative method was used to determine significant differences across variables.

This design was appropriate for the study as it allowed the researcher to analyze existing conditions, identify relationships among variables, and compare differences without manipulating any variables.

### Research Locale

The study was conducted in four public secondary schools in the Municipality of Pinamalayan, Oriental Mindoro, Philippines, namely: Quinabigan National High School, Nabuslot National High School, Pambisan National High School, and Pili National High School. These schools were selected because they are classified as large schools offering secondary and senior high school education.

### Population and Sampling

The population of the study consisted of 807 Grade 9 students enrolled in the selected schools. A total of 324 students were selected as respondents using proportional stratified random sampling to ensure adequate representation from each school.

The sample size was determined using G\*Power analysis with a power of 0.95 and an alpha level of 0.05.

### Research Instruments

The study utilized researcher-developed instruments, which included:

1. Descriptive Questionnaire – designed to measure the difficulties encountered by students in terms of:
  - author's work and purpose
  - literary devices
  - sensory images
  - vocabulary
2. Achievement Test – developed to assess students' level of understanding of Anglo-American literature across the following cognitive domains:
  - remembering
  - understanding
  - applying
  - analyzing
  - evaluating
  - creating

### Validation of Instruments

The instruments were subjected to content validation by experts, including a head teacher and a master teacher in English from the Division of Oriental Mindoro. Their feedback and recommendations were incorporated to improve clarity, relevance, and content accuracy.

#### Reliability of Instruments

The reliability of the questionnaire was established using the test-retest method with ten non-participant students. Cronbach's alpha coefficients indicated acceptable to excellent internal consistency:

- Author's work and purpose: 0.86 (Good)
- Literary devices: 0.81 (Good)
- Sensory images: 0.75 (Acceptable)
- Vocabulary: 0.93 (Excellent)

### Data Collection Procedure

Prior to data collection, permission was obtained from the Schools Division Superintendent and the respective school heads. After approval, the researcher coordinated with school administrators for the administration of the instruments.

The questionnaires and tests were administered personally to the respondents during scheduled sessions. Instructions were clearly explained to ensure accurate responses. The data collection was conducted within the academic year 2025–2026.

After administration, all instruments were retrieved, checked for completeness, and prepared for statistical analysis.

### Treatment of Data

The collected data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics:

- Frequency, Percentage, and Rank – used to describe the level of difficulties encountered

- Weighted Mean – used to determine the level of difficulties and understanding
- Pearson Product-Moment Correlation ( $r$ ) – used to determine the relationship between variables
- Coefficient of Determination ( $R^2$ ) – used to measure the extent of influence between variables
- One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) – used to test differences among variables
- Scheffé's Test – used as a post hoc analysis to identify specific group differences

### Ethical Considerations

Ethical standards were strictly observed throughout the conduct of the study. Permission to conduct the research was obtained from the appropriate educational authorities and school administrators. Participation of the respondents was voluntary, and informed consent was secured prior to data collection.

The respondents were assured that their responses would be treated with strict confidentiality and used solely for research purposes. No personal identifiers were collected, and anonymity was maintained throughout the study. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

### RESULTS and DISCUSSION

#### 1. Level of Difficulties Encountered by Students

The findings revealed that Grade 9 students experienced moderate to high levels of difficulty in understanding Anglo-American literature, particularly in vocabulary, literary devices, sensory images, and author's work and purpose. Among these, vocabulary emerged as the most challenging area, indicating that students struggle with unfamiliar words and language structures commonly found in literary texts.

Vocabulary limitations significantly hinder students' comprehension of literature. Similarly, de Oliveira et al. (2023) highlighted that vocabulary knowledge is a strong predictor of reading comprehension, particularly in complex texts.

From a pedagogical perspective, this suggests that English teachers may need to incorporate explicit vocabulary instruction and contextualized learning strategies to support students' understanding of literary texts. Curriculum developers may also consider integrating vocabulary development components into literature modules.

#### 2. Level of Understanding of Anglo-American Literature

The results showed that students demonstrated average to low mastery in higher-order cognitive skills, particularly in analyzing, evaluating, and creating, while relatively better performance was observed in remembering and understanding.

This pattern indicates that students are able to recall and comprehend basic information but struggle with deeper interpretation and critical analysis of literary texts. Students often face difficulty in tasks requiring inference and interpretation.

The implication for teaching practice is clear: instructional strategies may need to shift from knowledge transmission to higher-order thinking development, such as through guided questioning, discussion-based learning, and analytical tasks.

#### 3. Differences in Difficulties Encountered

The analysis revealed significant differences in the level of difficulties encountered across the identified indicators, particularly highlighting that sensory images differ significantly from other variables.

This finding suggests that students process different literary elements in varying ways, with some aspects requiring more cognitive effort than others. This supports the study of Tabanera and Barrios (2024), which emphasized that unfamiliar literary elements increase comprehension difficulty.

For educators, this implies the need for differentiated instruction, where specific literary components are taught using targeted strategies.

#### 4. Differences in Level of Understanding

The results indicated significant differences across cognitive domains, with higher-order thinking skills consistently showing lower levels of mastery.

This finding reinforces Bloom's Taxonomy framework, which posits that higher-order skills require deeper cognitive engagement. The results suggest that current instructional practices may not sufficiently develop these skills.

Teacher education programs may consider strengthening training on higher-order questioning techniques and critical thinking instruction.

### 5. Relationship Between Difficulties and Understanding

The study found a significant relationship between students' difficulties and their level of understanding, particularly highlighting that vocabulary significantly influences all cognitive domains.

This finding confirms the role of vocabulary as a foundational component of comprehension, as supported by Dawang et al. (2025), who emphasized that unfamiliar language increases cognitive load and reduces engagement.

This has strong implications for:

- teachers → focus on vocabulary scaffolding
- curriculum developers → integrate vocabulary-rich activities
- school leaders → support literacy programs

### 6. Implications for Instruction and Module Development

Based on the findings, the proposed learning module addresses identified difficulties through:

- vocabulary development activities
- guided literary analysis
- higher-order thinking exercises

The effectiveness of structured instructional interventions in improving comprehension

### Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Grade 9 students experience significant difficulties in understanding Anglo-American literature, particularly in vocabulary, literary devices, sensory images, and author's purpose, which affect their overall comprehension.
2. Students demonstrate lower levels of mastery in higher-order thinking skills such as analyzing, evaluating, and creating, indicating a need for improved instructional strategies.
3. Vocabulary plays a critical role in students' comprehension and significantly influences their ability to perform across all cognitive domains.
4. Significant differences exist across both difficulties encountered and levels of understanding, suggesting the need for differentiated and targeted instructional approaches.
5. The relationship between difficulties and understanding highlights the importance of addressing foundational language skills to improve learning outcomes.
6. The developed learning module provides a structured pedagogical intervention that supports vocabulary development and higher-order thinking in literature instruction.

### Recommendations

1. English teachers may incorporate varied vocabulary development activities and contextualized exercises to enhance students' comprehension of literary texts.
2. Teachers may participate in professional development programs focused on higher-order questioning techniques and critical thinking instruction.
3. Schools and school leaders may support the implementation of innovative teaching strategies and provide resources that enhance literature instruction.
4. Curriculum developers may integrate structured learning modules that address vocabulary and higher-order thinking skills in literature.
5. Teacher education institutions may strengthen training programs that emphasize effective literature teaching strategies and cognitive skill development.
6. Future researchers may explore additional instructional interventions and strategies that further improve students' understanding of literature.

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