United International Journal for Research & Technology
Volume 07, Issue 01, 2025 | Open Access | ISSN: 2582-6832

English Language Learners' Experiences of Using Science Research Associate (SRA) Reading Materials

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***Abstract*—** This study explored the experiences of English language learners in using the Science Research Associate (SRA) Reading Program to improve their reading comprehension. The research aimed to determine how SRA activities influence students' reading experiences. A descriptive phenomenological design was employed to capture the lived experiences of selected Grade 10 learners who actively participated in SRA activities. Data were collected through written interviews and classroom observations and were analyzed thematically to identify emerging patterns and insights. Findings revealed that the SRA program helped enhance learners' vocabulary, reading fluency, and understanding of texts through self-paced and level-based reading materials. Participants expressed that the colorful cards, comprehension questions, and immediate feedback encouraged independent learning and reading engagement. However, challenges such as limited time and difficulty in higher-level cards were also noted. . In conclusion, this study posits that the reading program serves as an effective supplementary tool in developing English reading comprehension among learners. The results suggest that integrating structured, interactive reading activities like SRA can promote autonomy, motivation, and literacy growth in the classroom.

***Keywords*—** SRA Reading Program, reading comprehension, English language learners, phenomenological study, reading improvement.

I. INTRODUCTION

English Language Learners (ELLs) often encounter difficulties in developing reading comprehension skills due to limited vocabulary, unfamiliar grammatical structures, and lack of exposure to authentic English texts. These challenges highlight the importance of structured reading programs that provide leveled materials and individualized pacing to support skill development (San Cristobal & Tamban, 2024). The Science Research Associates (SRA) is one such program designed to help learners improve reading comprehension through self-paced, leveled exercises that promote independent learning (Tantarangsee, 2024).

International studies have shown that the SRA Reading Laboratory can positively influence students' reading proficiency and motivation. For instance, Tantarangsee (2024) found that learners who used SRA materials demonstrated measurable improvements in reading performance and reported high satisfaction with self-paced reading activities. These findings suggest that the SRA program fosters autonomy and engagement, key components in language learning success. However, such research has primarily been conducted in non-Philippine contexts, where educational systems and learner profiles differ from those of Filipino students.

In the Philippines, recent reading-related studies have concentrated on improving comprehension and fluency through localized materials and teacher-mediated interventions rather than self-guided programs like SRA (Galang et al., 2025; San Cristobal & Tamban, 2024). Historical evidence shows that SRA materials were once introduced in the Philippines (Mongey, 1969), but no substantial contemporary research has explored their effectiveness or relevance for modern ELLs. Moreover, most available studies focus on quantitative outcomes such as test scores, leaving learners' personal experiences and perceptions underexplored.

Understanding how Filipino ELLs engage with SRA materials can provide insights into their reading behaviors, motivations, and challenges. Exploring their experiences can also determine whether SRA's self-paced and leveled approach remains effective in the present multilingual and technology-driven educational context (Daily Tribune, 2024). Therefore, this study aims to investigate English Language Learners' experiences in using SRA reading materials, addressing the gap in local literature and contributing to the development of evidence-based reading interventions in the Philippines.

Existing research often emphasizes quantitative outcomes such as proficiency test scores or comprehension assessments but less often investigates

the qualitative dimensions of learners' motivation, engagement, and perceived challenges when using structured reading programs (Marcelo & Santillan, 2020; Lin & Chen, 2021). Previous studies show that reading engagement among English Language Learners (ELLs) is influenced not only by instructional strategies but also by affective and contextual factors, such as interest and self-efficacy (Protacio, 2013). Understanding these experiences is crucial, especially for ELLs who navigate linguistic and cognitive challenges in learning English as a second language (Albiladi, 2019; Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013).

Hence, this study addresses the gap in recent, context-specific, and experience-based research by investigating how English Language Learners in the Philippines perceive and engage with SRA reading materials. It aims to provide insights into how such materials influence their reading comprehension, motivation, and self-directed learning—filling the absence of updated local literature and contributing to both theory and classroom practice in English language education.

II. METHODS

This qualitative study employed a phenomenological design to explore the lived experiences of Grade 10 learners who participated in Science Reading Associate (SRA) activities. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative research aims to understand the meanings individuals ascribe to their experiences in a natural setting. The phenomenological approach, as described by Moustakas (1994), seeks to capture and describe how individuals perceive and make sense of a particular phenomenon. In this case, the learners' engagement with SRA reading materials. This design was chosen because it allows an in-depth understanding of students' perspectives, emotions, and reflections on how SRA activities influenced their reading comprehension and learning motivation in science. Interviews are commonly used to collect narratives, but other qualitative data collecting methods, such as observations and documents, may also be employed (Butina, 2015).

This study employed a descriptive phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of English language learners who participated in the Science Research Associate (SRA) Reading Program. The design was appropriate because it allowed the researcher to understand participants' personal experiences, perceptions, and reflections regarding how SRA activities improved their reading comprehension.

The participants of the study were selected Grade 10 English language learners who had used the SRA Reading Program during their English classes. A total of 5 learners were purposively chosen based on their active engagement with SRA activities and their willingness to share their experiences.

Data were gathered using a written interview guide composed of open-ended questions designed to elicit detailed responses about learners' experiences, challenges, and improvements in reading comprehension. The questions focused on areas such as interest, reading habits, motivation, and comprehension progress. The instrument was validated by language experts to ensure clarity and relevance.

Participants were asked to answer the written interview questions during their free period. Responses were collected and analyzed confidentially. The researcher followed ethical research protocols, ensuring voluntary participation and confidentiality. The data collection lasted for one week.

Data analysis followed Colaizzi's (1978) method of phenomenological analysis, which involves a systematic process of extracting meaning from participants' lived experiences.

To ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the findings, several strategies were employed. Triangulation was used by gathering data through multiple sources such as interviews, classroom observations, and document reviews. This approach allowed the researcher to compare and cross-verify information, ensuring a more comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences. Member checking was also conducted by returning the transcribed interviews and summarized themes to the participants to confirm accuracy and clarify interpretations. Furthermore, peer debriefing was sought from experts in language education and qualitative research to review the data analysis process and provide feedback on the emerging themes. To strengthen dependability and confirmability, an audit trail was maintained, documenting the research procedures, coding process, and analytical decisions made throughout the study. Additionally, thick descriptions of the context, participants, and SRA activities were provided to enhance the transferability of the findings to similar educational settings.

The consent of participants was obtained in adherence to ethical research standards. Prior to data collection,

formal approval was secured from the school administration and the institutional ethics committee. The participants, who were English Language Learners engaged in SRA activities, were provided with a clear and detailed participant information sheet explaining the purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits of the study. The researcher emphasized that participation was entirely voluntary, and that respondents had the right to decline or withdraw at any time without penalty. For participants under 18 years old, parental consent and student assent were obtained to ensure ethical compliance. All participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and pseudonyms were used in the reporting of findings to protect their identities. Audio recordings, interview transcripts, and other data were securely stored in password-protected files accessible only to the researcher.

Through these validation and consent procedures, the study upheld both the credibility of its findings and the ethical integrity of its conduct. By ensuring that participants' voices were accurately represented and their rights fully respected, the research aimed to present an authentic understanding of how SRA activities support English Language Learners in improving their reading comprehension.

Table 1. *Demographic Profile of Participants*

Participants	Age	Sex	Grade Level	Enrolled S.Y 2025-2026
1	15	Male	Grade 10	✓
2	15	Male	Grade 10	✓
3	15	Female	Grade 10	✓
4	15	Female	Grade 10	✓
5	15	Female	Grade 10	✓

III. RESULTS

The findings of this study were based on the written interview responses of ten (10) Grade 10 English language learners who participated in the Science Research Associate (SRA) Reading Program. After analyzing the data through thematic analysis, four major themes emerged: (1) improvement in reading comprehension, (2) development of independent learning, (3) increased motivation and reading interest, and (4) challenges in reading higher-level materials.

Improvement in Reading Comprehension

Learners reported that constant exposure to different reading passages enhanced their vocabulary and understanding of various topics. The comprehension questions after each passage encouraged them to think critically and look for clues within the text. As one respondent mentioned, "It helped me understand words I didn't know before, and I learned how to find the meaning by reading carefully."

Development of Independent Learning

The SRA activities promoted independence and self-paced learning. Participants appreciated being able to choose reading materials according to their level and interest. This autonomy increased their motivation to read and learn. A student explained, "I like that I can read on my own and check my answers. It makes me feel responsible for my learning."

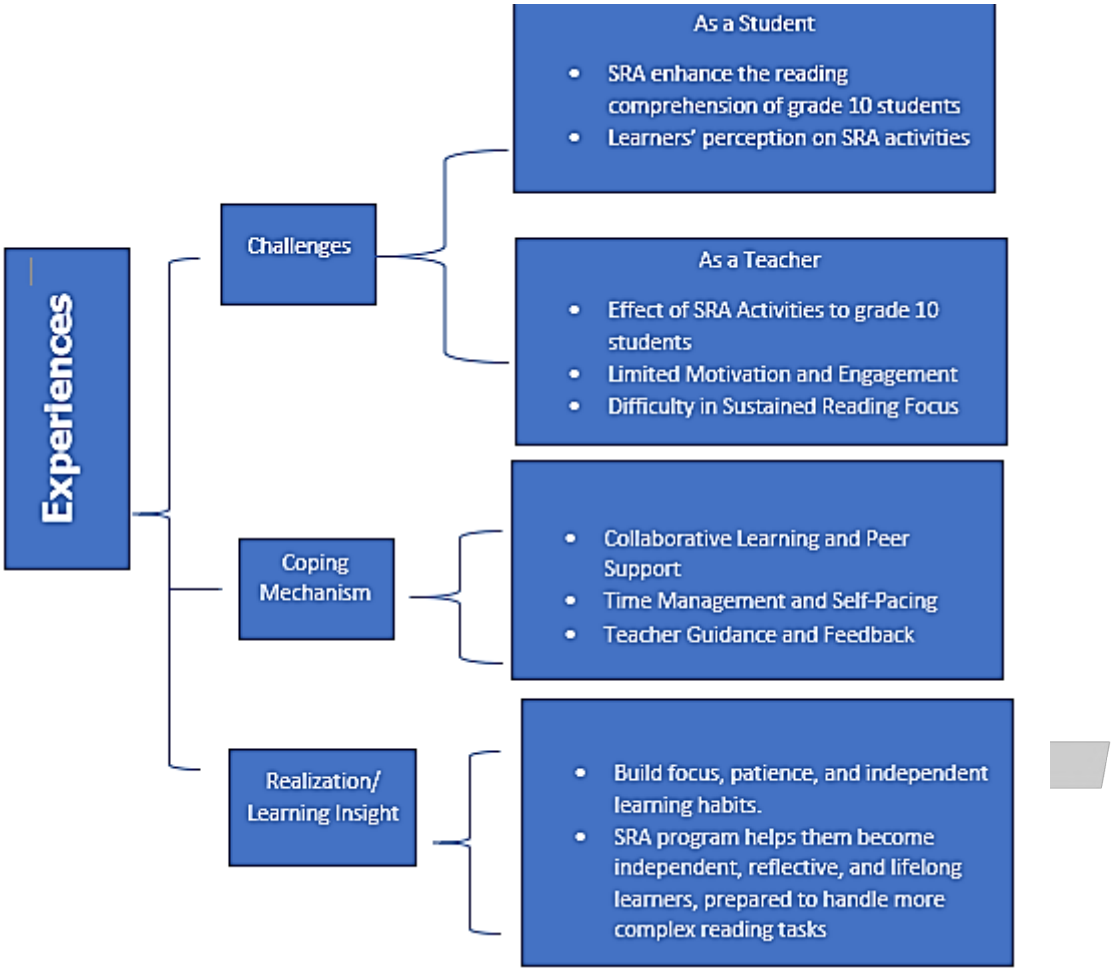
Increased Motivation and Reading Interest

Participants expressed that SRA activities helped them gain confidence in reading English texts. The leveled reading cards allowed them to start with easier passages and gradually progress to more complex ones. This structured approach gave them a sense of accomplishment as they completed each level. One participant shared, "I was nervous at first, but after finishing the first few cards, I felt more confident to read even longer stories."

Challenges in Reading Higher-Level Materials

Despite the benefits, participants faced difficulties with unfamiliar vocabulary and complex sentence structures. Some expressed frustration when encountering passages that were above their current reading level. One learner admitted, "Sometimes it's hard because there are many difficult words. I have to read it again and again to understand." This study explored the lived experiences of English Language Learners (ELLs) who engaged in Science Research Associate (SRA) activities to enhance their reading comprehension. Using Colaizzi's (1978) descriptive phenomenological method, five major themes emerged from the analysis. Each theme is presented with direct statements from participants to support the findings and highlight the essence of their experiences.

English Language Learners' Experiences of Science Research Associate (SRA) Activities to Improve Reading Comprehension.



The diagram presents the lived experiences associated with the Science Research Associates (SRA) activities, which can be categorized into three central areas: challenges, coping mechanisms, and realizations.

Learners reported facing various challenges, including meeting academic deadlines, maintaining the quality of their work, and managing social and academic responsibilities simultaneously. Similarly, teachers encountered difficulties related to preparing instructional modules, sustaining student engagement, and assessing learners' performance effectively (Nalla, 2022). These findings are consistent with previous research highlighting that both students and teachers in language programs often experience workload pressures and performance anxiety that affect learning quality (Valdellon & Lovitos, 2022).

To address these difficulties, participants developed coping mechanisms centered on maintaining a positive mindset, applying effective time management strategies, and nurturing self-discipline. Such adaptive behaviors align with findings that emotional regulation, optimism, and time management serve as critical strategies for overcoming academic stress (Regis, 2023).

Through their involvement in SRA activities, participants also gained significant realizations and insights, including the development of resilience, autonomy, and improved academic competence. This reflects previous phenomenological studies suggesting that challenges and coping strategies contribute to personal growth, skill enhancement, and independent learning among students (Valdellon & Lovitos, 2022; Regis, 2023).

Overall, the SRA experience underscores how learners not only overcome challenges but also acquire essential life skills that promote independence, adaptability, and sustained engagement in learning.

IV. DISCUSSION

The primary aim of this study was to examine the lived experiences of Grade 10 learners in utilizing the Science Research Associate (SRA) program as an instructional tool to strengthen their reading comprehension in science-related texts. By employing written interviews, the researcher sought to gain meaningful insights into how the SRA activities influenced students' reading habits, levels of motivation, and comprehension strategies. Consistent with prior qualitative investigations on reading programs, the findings highlighted four central themes: enhancement of reading comprehension, development of autonomous learning, increased motivation and engagement, and challenges encountered throughout SRA tasks (Protacio, 2013; Marcelo & Santillan, 2020; Lin & Chen, 2021).

The findings revealed that the SRA Reading Program significantly contributed to improving the reading comprehension of English language learners. Students expressed that SRA activities helped them understand texts more effectively, develop vocabulary, and enhance reading fluency. They appreciated the self-paced nature of the program, which allowed them to read according to their level and progress at their own speed. This aligns with the findings of Vacca and Vacca (2008), who emphasized that individualized reading programs foster independent learning and sustained engagement.

Moreover, the learners found the color-coded cards, comprehension exercises, and immediate feedback motivating. They stated that these features encouraged them to challenge themselves and monitor their progress, which improved their confidence in reading English materials. This result supports Krashen's (1982) Input Hypothesis, which suggests that learners acquire language more effectively when exposed to comprehensible and level-appropriate input.

However, some participants reported challenges, such as limited time for reading and difficulty in understanding higher-level texts. Despite these challenges, most students maintained positive attitudes and were willing to continue using SRA as a supplementary reading tool. The study emphasizes that interactive, structured programs like SRA can promote reading autonomy, improve comprehension, and enhance learners' motivation toward English literacy.

In summary, the discussion underscores that the Science Reading Associate (SRA) program served as an effective tool in enhancing Grade 10 learners' reading comprehension, independent learning, and motivation toward reading scientific texts. Although some challenges such as vocabulary difficulty and time constraints were noted, these were outweighed by the program's positive cognitive and affective outcomes. The findings align with Krashen's (1982) Input Hypothesis and Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory, both of which emphasize learner-centered, reflective, and interactive engagement as essential for meaningful learning.

The SRA Reading Laboratory 2B is a leveled reading program designed to support personalized learning and accommodate diverse reading abilities, typically among students with reading ages between 15 and 16 years. Its structured design, featuring color-coded levels and Power Builders, promotes progressive skill development in comprehension, vocabulary, and overall reading fluency (Science Research Associates, 1973).

Each Power Builder includes fiction and nonfiction selections followed by comprehension and vocabulary exercises. Students begin with a placement test to identify their appropriate color level, select readings, and assess their understanding using self-checking key cards. As they demonstrate improvement, learners advance to higher levels, reinforcing both autonomy and mastery of reading skills. This self-paced progression reflects constructivist principles, allowing students to take ownership of their learning, build self-confidence, and develop a sustained interest in reading (Bruner, 1996; Krashen, 1982).

V. CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the Science Research Associates (SRA) reading materials play a vital role in enhancing students' reading comprehension, particularly among English language learners (ELLs). By offering differentiated, leveled, and self-directed reading activities, the SRA program allows learners to progress at their own pace, build vocabulary, strengthen comprehension skills, and develop independent learning habits. The results affirm that exposure to SRA reading tasks can significantly improve learners' engagement with complex scientific texts, leading to better academic performance and more positive attitudes toward reading.

In summary, the SRA reading program remains a valuable and effective educational tool in modern

classrooms. When implemented thoughtfully—with attention to learner diversity, engagement, and teacher facilitation—it has the potential to enhance reading comprehension, foster independence, and nurture a culture of lifelong reading. The insights drawn from this study contribute to improving reading interventions, ensuring that every learner, regardless of language proficiency, gains equitable access to meaningful literacy development.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We, the researchers, would like to express our sincere gratitude to the school and the participants for allowing us to conduct our research using the Science Research Associates (SRA) kits. We express our deepest gratitude to our participants who voluntarily involved themselves in our study and provided us with the necessary data needed for this research.

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