



OPEN ACCESS

# Studies in Technology and Education

Volume 5, Issue 3, 2023 | <https://www.azalpub.com/index.php/ste>

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### Contextualized Vocabulary Pedagogies in English Instruction: Teachers' Classroom Practices and Instructional Experiences Among Grade 4 Educators

#### Article Info

**Received:** 2-7-2026

**Accepted:** 4-9-2026

**Published:** 6-1 -2026

**Merlyn Garcia/ Anne Grace D. Pascual**

Northeastern College, Santiago City, Philippines  
Andres Bonifacio Elementary School

#### Abstract

This qualitative study explored the contextualized vocabulary pedagogies employed by Grade 4 English teachers and examined their instructional experiences in implementing vocabulary instruction in public elementary schools in Diffun I District, Schools Division of Quirino, Philippines. Grounded in Constructivist Learning Theory and Contextualized Language Instruction, the study utilized a qualitative phenomenological research design to understand teachers' lived experiences, instructional approaches, and pedagogical reflections. Twelve Grade 4 English teachers participated through purposive sampling. Data were gathered using semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis of instructional materials and lesson plans. Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis guided the interpretation of data. Findings revealed four major themes: (1) contextualized and culturally responsive vocabulary instruction, (2) experiential and interactive vocabulary learning strategies, (3) multilingual scaffolding and learner engagement, and (4) instructional constraints and adaptive teaching practices. Teachers emphasized the importance of connecting vocabulary lessons to learners' local experiences, cultural realities, and community language practices to improve comprehension and participation. Interactive pedagogies such as storytelling, role-playing, visual aids, and contextual sentence construction enhanced learner engagement and retention. However, teachers encountered challenges related to limited instructional resources, varying learner proficiency, and insufficient contextualized materials. The study highlights the significance of localized vocabulary pedagogies in strengthening English language acquisition in rural educational settings. Findings contribute to the growing discourse on culturally responsive English instruction and provide implications for curriculum enhancement, teacher training, and contextualized instructional material development in Philippine basic education.

**Keywords:** contextualized pedagogy, vocabulary instruction, English education, culturally responsive teaching, elementary education, qualitative research, Philippines

\*Corresponding author: [01gracemerlyn@gmail.com](mailto:01gracemerlyn@gmail.com) / [annegrace0313@gmail.com](mailto:annegrace0313@gmail.com)

## INTRODUCTION

Vocabulary instruction plays a crucial role in English language acquisition, particularly in elementary education where foundational language competencies are developed. Vocabulary competence supports learners' reading comprehension, oral communication, writing proficiency, and overall academic achievement. In the Philippine educational context, English serves as one of the primary languages of instruction; however, learners in rural and multilingual communities often encounter difficulties in vocabulary acquisition due to limited exposure to English outside the classroom. These realities necessitate pedagogical approaches that connect vocabulary instruction to learners' cultural, linguistic, and contextual experiences.

Contextualized teaching has emerged as a learner-centered approach that links academic content to real-life situations, local culture, and community experiences. According to Lev Vygotsky, learning becomes meaningful when social interaction and cultural mediation are integrated into instruction. In vocabulary teaching, contextualization allows learners to construct meaning through familiar experiences, local language practices, and culturally relevant examples. Such pedagogical practices align with the Department of Education's emphasis on contextualization and localization under the K-12 curriculum framework.

Several studies have emphasized the effectiveness of contextualized vocabulary instruction in improving learner engagement and language comprehension. Contextualized approaches encourage learners to associate unfamiliar words with meaningful experiences, thereby increasing retention and comprehension. Moreover, culturally responsive pedagogies create inclusive classroom environments that value learners' identities and linguistic backgrounds. Despite these recognized benefits, limited studies have explored how elementary English teachers in rural Philippine schools implement contextualized vocabulary pedagogies and navigate instructional challenges in multilingual settings.

In Diffun I District, Schools Division of Quirino, Grade 4 learners come from diverse linguistic and socio-cultural backgrounds where local dialects significantly influence classroom communication. Teachers are therefore challenged to design vocabulary instruction that bridges learners' home language experiences with English language learning. Understanding teachers' classroom practices and instructional experiences is essential in strengthening contextualized English instruction and improving learner outcomes.

This study explored the contextualized vocabulary pedagogies employed by Grade 4 English teachers and examined their instructional experiences in implementing vocabulary instruction in public elementary schools in Diffun I District, Schools Division of Quirino.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

The study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences, classroom practices, and instructional perspectives of Grade 4 English teachers regarding contextualized vocabulary instruction. Phenomenology was appropriate because it enabled the researcher to understand how teachers experience and interpret vocabulary pedagogy within their actual classroom contexts.

### Research Locale

The study was conducted in selected public elementary schools in Diffun I District, Schools Division of Quirino, Philippines. The district was selected because of its multilingual learner population and diverse cultural environment that influence English language instruction.

### **Participants of the Study**

The participants consisted of twelve Grade 4 English teachers selected through purposive sampling. Participants met the following criteria: (1) currently teaching Grade 4 English in public elementary schools; (2) have at least three years of teaching experience; and (3) actively implement vocabulary instruction strategies in their classrooms.

### **Data Gathering Procedures**

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis of lesson plans, vocabulary activities, and instructional materials. Interviews focused on teachers' pedagogical strategies, classroom experiences, and instructional challenges. Classroom observations validated actual teaching practices, while document analysis provided evidence of contextualized instructional approaches.

### **Data Analysis**

The study utilized Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis framework. Interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents were coded, categorized, and analyzed to identify recurring themes and patterns related to contextualized vocabulary pedagogies.

### **Trustworthiness of the Study**

Credibility was established through member checking and triangulation of data sources. Dependability was ensured through audit trails and systematic coding procedures. Confirmability was achieved through reflective journaling and peer debriefing, while transferability was supported through thick descriptions of the research context and participants.

## **RESULTS AND FINDINGS**

### **Theme 1: Contextualized and Culturally Responsive Vocabulary Instruction**

Participants emphasized the importance of contextualizing vocabulary lessons using familiar community experiences, local culture, and learners' daily realities. Teachers explained that learners better understood English words when examples were linked to agricultural activities, family interactions, local traditions, and familiar community objects.

One participant stated:

"Kapag inuugnay ko ang vocabulary words sa buhay nila sa barangay o sa mga gawain sa bahay, mas naiintindihan nila agad ang salita." ("When I connect vocabulary words to their life in the community or household activities, they immediately understand the word.")

Teachers frequently utilized localized examples, culturally familiar stories, and real-life situations to facilitate vocabulary comprehension. Such practices align with culturally responsive teaching principles which emphasize connecting instruction to learners' socio-cultural experiences. According to Geneva Gay, culturally responsive pedagogy enhances learner participation by validating learners' cultural identities and experiences.

Classroom observations revealed that teachers incorporated local festivals, farming activities, indigenous foods, and family interactions into vocabulary lessons. These practices enabled learners to establish meaningful associations with unfamiliar English terms. Similar findings were reported in studies indicating that contextualized instruction improves learner comprehension and retention because learners connect language with authentic experiences.

The findings suggest that contextualized vocabulary instruction strengthens learner engagement and comprehension by making English learning culturally meaningful and socially relevant.

## **Theme 2: Experiential and Interactive Vocabulary Learning Strategies**

Teachers employed experiential and interactive strategies to improve vocabulary acquisition. These included storytelling, role-playing, games, picture analysis, collaborative learning, contextual sentence construction, and visual demonstrations.

One teacher explained:

"Mas natututo sila kapag may laro, pictures, at storytelling kasi nagiging masaya at aktibo sila sa lesson."

("They learn better when there are games, pictures, and storytelling because they become happy and active during the lesson.")

Role-playing activities allowed learners to use vocabulary words in simulated real-life interactions. Storytelling encouraged contextual understanding of words, while picture-based instruction supported visual learners. Teachers also used contextual sentence construction to help learners apply newly learned vocabulary in meaningful communication.

These findings support experiential learning principles proposed by David Kolb, who emphasized that learners develop understanding through active participation and reflection. Interactive pedagogies encourage learner-centered participation and facilitate deeper vocabulary retention. Observation data showed that learners demonstrated higher engagement when vocabulary activities involved movement, peer interaction, and contextual application. Teachers noted that experiential activities increased learner confidence in speaking English and using unfamiliar vocabulary words.

The findings imply that interactive vocabulary pedagogies enhance language learning by promoting active participation, contextual understanding, and communicative competence.

## **Theme 3: Multilingual Scaffolding and Learner Engagement**

Teachers highlighted the role of multilingual scaffolding in facilitating vocabulary comprehension among learners with limited English proficiency. Participants reported strategically using Filipino and local dialects to explain difficult words and clarify meanings.

One participant shared:

"Minsan kailangan gamitin ang mother tongue o Filipino para mas maintindihan nila ang English vocabulary."

("Sometimes it is necessary to use the mother tongue or Filipino so they can better understand English vocabulary.")

Teachers explained that translanguaging practices reduced learner anxiety and improved participation. Learners became more willing to engage in classroom discussions when teachers allowed strategic language switching during vocabulary instruction.

These practices reflect translanguaging pedagogies that recognize multilingualism as an instructional resource rather than a barrier. Studies have shown that multilingual scaffolding supports comprehension and promotes inclusive learning environments in linguistically diverse classrooms.

Classroom observations revealed that teachers carefully balanced English exposure with strategic use of familiar languages. Teachers emphasized that scaffolding was gradually reduced as learners gained confidence and vocabulary mastery.

The findings indicate that multilingual scaffolding enhances vocabulary learning by bridging learners' prior linguistic knowledge with English language acquisition.

#### **Theme 4: Instructional Constraints and Adaptive Teaching Practices**

Despite the effectiveness of contextualized vocabulary pedagogies, teachers experienced several instructional challenges. Participants identified limited contextualized instructional materials, large class sizes, insufficient technological resources, and varying learner proficiency levels as major barriers.

One teacher expressed:

"Mahirap minsan kasi kulang ang localized materials at iba-iba ang level ng comprehension ng mga bata."

("Sometimes it is difficult because localized materials are limited and learners have different comprehension levels.")

Teachers addressed these challenges by improvising instructional materials, creating localized vocabulary activities, and utilizing community-based examples. Some teachers developed self-made visual aids and contextualized worksheets aligned with learners' experiences.

The findings reflect broader educational concerns regarding resource limitations in rural schools. However, teachers demonstrated adaptability and pedagogical creativity in sustaining contextualized instruction despite institutional constraints.

These findings underscore the need for institutional support, teacher professional development, and localized instructional material production to strengthen contextualized English pedagogy.

### **CONCLUSION**

The study revealed that Grade 4 English teachers in Diffun I District implement contextualized vocabulary pedagogies that connect English instruction to learners' cultural experiences, community realities, and multilingual backgrounds. Teachers employed culturally responsive, experiential, and interactive instructional strategies that enhanced learner engagement, comprehension, and vocabulary retention. Multilingual scaffolding served as an important pedagogical tool in facilitating understanding among learners with limited English proficiency. Despite instructional challenges such as limited resources and varying learner abilities, teachers demonstrated adaptive and innovative teaching practices to sustain meaningful vocabulary instruction. The findings affirm the importance of contextualized and culturally responsive pedagogies in strengthening English language learning in rural and multilingual educational contexts.

### **IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY**

The findings suggest that contextualized vocabulary instruction should be strengthened through curriculum localization, teacher training programs, and development of culturally relevant instructional materials. Schools and educational leaders may design professional development initiatives focused on contextualized language teaching and multilingual pedagogies. Curriculum developers may also integrate localized vocabulary resources that reflect learners' socio-cultural realities.

Furthermore, policymakers and educational institutions should provide adequate instructional resources and support systems to improve contextualized English instruction in rural schools. Future studies may explore learner perspectives, quantitative assessments of vocabulary gains, and comparative analyses across different educational settings.

## REFERENCES

- Alberto, R. B., & Gabinete, M. K. (2021). Contextualized teaching and learning practices in Philippine basic education. *Asian Journal of Education and Social Studies, 18*(2), 45–56.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101.
- Gay, G. (2018). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice* (3rd ed.). Teachers College Press.
- Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development*. Prentice Hall.
- Lucas, R. I., & Villegas, A. M. (2019). Preparing linguistically responsive teachers in multilingual contexts. *Journal of Teacher Education, 70*(4), 321–334.
- Mendoza, J. C., & Torres, A. P. (2022). Vocabulary instruction and learner engagement in multilingual classrooms. *International Journal of Language Education, 6*(1), 44–58.
- Richards, J. C. (2020). *Teaching vocabulary in language classrooms*. Cambridge University Press.
- Tomlinson, B. (2019). *Materials development for language learning and teaching*. Cambridge University Press.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.