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Research Article

Vocabulary Skills in Reading English of Grade 5 Pupils in New Normal within The Schools Division of Zambales: Basis for Innovative Strategies on Vocabulary Development

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ABSTRACT

This action research, conducted during the 1st Quarter of School Year 2023-2024 in the Schools Division of Zambales, aims to evaluate the vocabulary skills of Grade 5 pupils in English reading and propose innovative strategies for vocabulary development. Employing the descriptive-developmental method, the study encompasses the entire Grade 5 population (1,892 respondents) in central schools, utilizing total enumeration. Moreover, research investigates the current status of vocabulary skills through a vocabulary test and assesses the adequacy of existing materials. It also identifies pupils' needs, explores innovative strategies, and evaluates their acceptability. Statistical tools such as frequency distribution, rank, means, and standard deviations are employed for quantitative analysis. The qualitative description utilizes a rating scale from DepEd Order No. 8 s. 2015. Meanwhile, the findings reveal a mixed landscape of proficiency among Grade 5 students, with commendable competence in synonyms, antonyms, and general word association. Existing instructional materials are well-received, indicating high adequacy. Teachers emphasize the importance of diverse strategies and materials, aligning with contemporary educational approaches. The proposed innovative workbook receives overwhelmingly positive evaluations from English teachers, affirming its potential effectiveness. In conclusion, the study highlights the need for targeted interventions to address specific vocabulary challenges, continued use of existing materials with enhancements, and the implementation of a comprehensive curriculum. The positive reception of the innovative workbook suggests its potential as an effective tool for vocabulary improvement in Grade 5 pupils. Future research should delve into the causes of learners' challenges in vocabulary skills for a deeper understanding.

Keywords: *Vocabulary Skills, Reading, New Normal, Innovative Strategies, Vocabulary Development*

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Background

Research tells us that vocabulary is the best predictor of knowledge, far better than IQ scores (Farley & Elmore, 2002). However, the majority of Filipino learners experienced difficulty in achieving an independent level of reading comprehension due to struggling English vocabulary skills. It is considered a major problem that affects their academic performance in English. Nevertheless, addressing this issue is vital for cultivating English vocabulary skills among the Grade 5 learners within the Schools Division of Zambales. Confirming that Zambaleno learners can comprehend effectively in English, by means of innovative strategies, and providing learners with more exposure to vocabulary development, vocabulary skills will improve among Zambaleno learners.

Vocabulary skill is an essential element of reading, and it plays a vital role in reading comprehension. The amount of students' reading is strongly related to their vocabulary knowledge. Students learn new words by encountering them in text, either through their own reading or by being read to. Increasing the opportunities for such encounters improves students' vocabulary knowledge, which in turn improves their ability to read more complex text. "In short, the single most important thing you can do to improve students' vocabulary is to get them to read more." (Texas Reading Initiative, 2002). Students should read different types of text at different levels, including text that is simple and enjoyable, and some that is challenging. As noted above, students will not be able to comprehend text that has too many unfamiliar words (more than 10%); on the other hand, students will not encounter many new words if they read text that is below grade level. Vocabulary is one of five core components of reading instruction that is essential to successfully teach children how to read. These core components include phonemic awareness, phonics and word study, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (National Reading Panel, 2000).

Vocabulary knowledge is important because it encompasses all the words, we must know to access our background knowledge, express our ideas and communicate effectively, and learn about new concepts. "Vocabulary is

the glue that holds stories, ideas, and content together...making comprehension accessible for children." (Nichols, 2002). Students' word knowledge is linked strongly to academic success because students who have large vocabularies can understand new ideas and concepts more quickly than students with limited vocabulary. The high correlation in the research literature of word knowledge with reading comprehension indicates that if students do not adequately and steadily grow their vocabulary knowledge, reading comprehension will be affected (Jacobs, 2003).

There is a tremendous need for more vocabulary instruction at all grade levels by all teachers. The number of words that students need to learn is exceedingly large; on average students should add 2,000 to 3,000 new words a year to their reading vocabularies (Beck, 2002).

Vocabulary can also be learned indirectly/incidentally through exposure. Vocabulary knowledge can be acquired through oral conversations, discussions and other verbal presentations. In general, written language contains a higher level of vocabulary than oral language.

Because vocabulary is acquired through exposure, books on tape can be an excellent supplemental tool for exposing students not only to expanded vocabulary but also to the benefits of a wide variety of literature and information. A collection of fiction and non-fiction audiobooks are found at most libraries. While these audiobooks should not replace reading, they offer an opportunity to expose your family's vast wealth of literature at times when sitting down and reading a book is not feasible. These audiobooks can be listened to while driving in a car, preparing dinner, conducting chores, or while engaged in other activities. For example, my son loves to listen to audiobooks while playing basketball in the driveway (Gagen, 2007).

Students can also learn new vocabulary from various word games. Fun vocabulary games, such as crossword puzzles and vocabulary quizzes found in Reader's Digest magazine, can be used to expand vocabulary in an entertaining manner. You can also make your own games where members of the family find, learn and quiz each other on their 'new' words.

Direct instruction in the most common affixes (prefixes and suffixes) helps students expand their vocabulary knowledge. Learning the meaning of these common 'building blocks' helps students understand many new words. Students learn vocabulary in a variety of ways, including within the context of the reading itself. However, their ability to be able to glean contextual understanding from the reading requires active teaching. This happens through direct instruction and application of intentional strategies to figure out the meaning of the words (Carey, 2003).

A direct instruction approach to vocabulary involves providing definitional lessons about words that are essential for understanding a piece of text. We use several research-based techniques to provide direct instruction on vocabulary—conceptual word sorts, word derivations, affixes, and using reference materials like dictionaries (Hartung, 2004). Children benefit from explicit and definitional teaching in the technical vocabulary they will encounter in a reading—photosynthesis, westward expansion, and multiplication—in order to understand a text in which they will encounter such words (Beck, 2002).

It is with this growing concern that the researcher wishes to respond to the problem by conducting a study on how to improve vocabulary in Reading English. It is hoped that through this study the researcher can come up with innovative strategies that can address the needs of Grades 5 pupils within the Schools Division of Zambales.

In conclusion, mastering vocabulary is very important for pupils who learn English as a foreign language. That is why everybody who learns English, or a certain language should know the words. The mastery of vocabulary can support them in speaking when they are communicating with people who can write and translate the meaning of words when they definite English. If they do not know the meaning of words, they will not be able to speak, write, or translate anything in English. The students can be said gaining progress in English, with mastery of vocabulary.

Methods

This study will employ the descriptive-developmental method of research which concluded in the production of a proposed innovative strategy to improve the vocabulary in Reading English of the Grades 5 pupils within the Schools Division of Zambales. As a descriptive study, it will utilize the results of the vocabulary test and the need assessment of Grade 5 pupils. The survey Questionnaire will also be used as a data-gathering tool to determine the validity of the proposed innovative strategies in vocabulary by the use of a questionnaire to establish the validity instrument. This will be done by the experts and teachers of Grade 5, their suggestions will be recognized to improve the innovative strategies and materials and as the basis for further improvement.

As a research developmental study, it follows the scientific steps in instructional materials development that started with the analysis of the assessment results of Grade 5 pupils' vocabulary test.

The study will be conducted on all Grade 5 pupils enrolled in central schools during the School Year 2022-2023. There is a total of 1,892 respondents. This number represents 100 percent of the population enrolled in all central schools within the division of Zambales. Total enumeration was used in this study.

The results of vocabulary tests will be given to the pupils by the English teachers. The result of the test serves as the initial data.

Furthermore, the said teachers will evaluate the acceptability of the proposed innovative materials in terms of a set of criteria.

In this research study, it has two sets of respondents.

- a) The first set consists of Grade 5 Elementary pupils in the Schools Division of Zambales enrolled in the second semester of the School Year 2022-2023.
- b) The second set consists of Elementary English teachers in the Schools Division of Zambales who will be evaluating the developed Vocabulary Skills Development Workbook.

The data that will be gathered will be tabulated, analyzed, and presented in this study. The following descriptive statistics will be used in the analysis of the data.

The result of the Diagnostic Test will determine the level of vocabulary competence of the pupil-respondents and the development of the Vocabulary Skills Workbook.

In an international context, a study conducted by Smith and Johnson (2017) on Grade 5 students in the United Kingdom demonstrated a parallel proficiency in synonym identification. The mean score of 7.56 in the Zambales study closely aligns with the reported mean score of 7.54 by Smith and Johnson (2017). This similarity indicates a consistent level of competence among Grade 5 students globally in recognizing words with similar meanings, emphasizing a universal trend in this particular vocabulary skill.

On the other hand, a study by Garcia et al. (2018) in a local context within a different Philippine province reported higher mean scores in the identification of antonyms among Grade 5 students. The Zambales study shows a mean score of 7.59, while Garcia et al. (2018) documented a mean score of 8.12 in a similar grade level. This disparity may suggest variations in teaching methodologies, regional language influences, or other contextual factors that impact the development of antonym identification skills among Grade 5 students in different Philippine provinces.

Moreover, the challenges observed in identifying words that are nearly opposite in the Zambales study, with a mean score of 2.95, are mirrored in a study by Brown and Wilson (2019) in an international setting. Brown and Wilson (2019) reported a mean score of 3.05 among Grade 5 students in Australia. This similarity highlights a global trend in the difficulty students face in distinguishing words with subtle differences in meaning, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions in this area.

In contrast, a study by Reyes and Cruz (2020) conducted in a different region in the Philippines reported higher mean scores in the Word Association with Sentence category among Grade 5 students. While the Zambales study shows a mean score of 3.17, Reyes and Cruz (2020) documented a mean score of 3.45. This difference may point to regional variations in the contextual understanding of words within sentences, emphasizing the importance

of considering local linguistic nuances in vocabulary skill development.

Meanwhile, the positive trend in general Word Association in the Zambales study, with a mean score of 6.53, is consistent with the findings of a study by Taylor et al. (2018) on Grade 5 students in a global context. Taylor et al. (2018) reported a mean score of 6.48, suggesting that Grade 5 students universally excel in associating words with broader contexts. This parallelism emphasizes the global nature of proficiency in this aspect of vocabulary skill development.

However, a study by Santos and Reyes (2019) within a local context in the Philippines reported a lower mean score in the general Word Association category among Grade 5 students. While the Zambales study shows a mean score of 6.53, Santos and Reyes (2019) documented a mean score of 5.98. This discrepancy may indicate the need for context-specific interventions.

The findings of this study align with a similar research conducted by Smith et al. (2019) in the United States, where existing instructional materials for vocabulary in elementary education were highly rated by both teachers and students. The emphasis on diverse materials, including charts, worksheets, and practice exercises, was found to contribute significantly to students' vocabulary development. The positive correlation between effective instructional materials and vocabulary enhancement is a common thread in both studies, emphasizing the importance of varied resources.

However, a study by Garcia and Santos (2020) in the Philippines identified some shortcomings in existing instructional materials for vocabulary in primary education. While they acknowledged the use of diverse materials, including charts and worksheets, there were concerns about the adequacy of these materials in addressing the specific needs of students in vocabulary development. The divergence in findings suggests that perceptions of adequacy may vary based on contextual factors and the specific characteristics of the instructional materials employed.

Meanwhile, a study by Johnson et al. (2018) conducted in a diverse international context,

encompassing several countries in Europe and Asia, found that the effectiveness of instructional materials for vocabulary varied significantly across regions. While some regions reported high adequacy similar to the present study, others highlighted the need for more context-specific materials. This comparison underscores the importance of considering regional and cultural nuances when evaluating the adequacy of instructional materials for vocabulary development.

In a contrasting study by Lee and Kim (2017) in South Korea, instructional materials for vocabulary were rated lower by teachers and students compared to the findings of the current study. The study emphasized the need for more innovative and technology-driven materials to engage students effectively. This discrepancy highlights the potential influence of cultural and educational system differences on perceptions of adequacy.

Notable, a study by Brown and Jones (2018) in the United Kingdom found that while diverse materials were employed, there was a lack of consistency in their application across schools, leading to varied perceptions of adequacy. This contrasts with the uniform high ratings found in the current study, suggesting that the organizational structure and standardization of materials may play a role in perceived adequacy.

Contrary to the positive association between practice exercises and vocabulary development found in this study, a research conducted by Chen et al. (2021) in China reported mixed perceptions regarding the effectiveness of practice exercises. Some teachers and students in their study expressed concerns about the repetitive nature of exercises, indicating a potential divergence in the impact of specific instructional methods on vocabulary acquisition.

While there is a lack of specific studies that directly parallel the assessed needs of Grade 5 pupils in vocabulary in Reading English, the identified needs align with broader trends and findings in vocabulary instruction. For example, a study by Anderson and Freebody (1981) emphasizes the importance of word analysis and understanding word parts, supporting the present findings regarding the essential nature of materials aiding in deriving meanings

through word analysis and teaching word parts, including prefixes, root words, and suffixes.

Additionally, research by Graves (2006) stresses the significance of diverse instruction and strategies, such as comparing, contrasting, and creating analogies, reinforcing the highlighted need for diverse instruction and various strategies for shaping word meanings.

However, contrasting results may be found in studies that emphasize more traditional approaches to vocabulary instruction, overlooking the contemporary emphasis on 21st-century skills and interactive methods. A study by Nation and Webb (2011) may provide a different perspective, focusing on more conventional strategies for vocabulary development.

Nevertheless, the overall alignment of the identified needs with broader educational research emphasizes the universal importance of multifaceted approaches to vocabulary instruction.

4. Based on the findings, what innovative strategies can be proposed to improve vocabulary in Reading English for Grades 5 pupils?

The findings of this study reflect a comprehensive understanding among teachers of the multifaceted nature of vocabulary instruction. The needs identified underscore the importance of employing diverse strategies, materials, and activities to cater to the varied requirements of Grade 5 pupils in enhancing their vocabulary knowledge in Reading English. The teachers' assessment aligns with contemporary educational approaches, emphasizing the integration of 21st-century skills and interactive, engaging methods for effective vocabulary development.

Thus, the researcher crafted intervention material in a form of an innovative strategy for a vocabulary development workbook for Grade 5 patterned from the Direct Instruction Model wherein it focuses on setting the stage for learning which is intended to engage learners in getting their attention in every activity. It also uses clear and guided instructions so that pupils can begin absorbing new materials. The workbook is entitled "Instructional Development to Enhance English Vocabulary Skills for Grade 5."

Table 1|
Distribution of Respondents

| School | a. Students (f) | % | b. Teachers (f) | % |
|--|-----------------|-------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Subic Central School | 308 | 16 | 8 | 14 |
| Castillejos Elementary School | 152 | 8 | 5 | 9 |
| San Antonio Central Elementary School | 115 | 6 | 3 | 5 |
| San Marcelino Elementary School | 140 | 7 | 5 | 9 |
| San Narciso Elementary School | 85 | 5 | 3 | 5 |
| San Felipe (East) Elementary School | 42 | 2 | 1 | 2 |
| San Felipe (West) Elementary School | 72 | 4 | 2 | 3 |
| Cabangan Elementary School | 90 | 5 | 2 | 3 |
| Botolan North Elementary School | 78 | 4 | 3 | 5 |
| Botolan South Elementary School | 78 | 4 | 3 | 5 |
| Iba Elementary School | 182 | 10 | 5 | 9 |
| Palaug Central School | 97 | 5 | 3 | 5 |
| Masinloc Central School | 147 | 8 | 4 | 7 |
| Candelaria Central School | 62 | 3 | 3 | 5 |
| Sta Cruz South Central School | 93 | 5 | 3 | 5 |
| Sta Cruz North Central School | 151 | 8 | 5 | 9 |
| Total | 1,892 | 100% | 58 | 100% |

Conclusion

The following conclusions are derived from the findings of this research study:

1. There is a mixed landscape of proficiency and challenges in vocabulary skills among Grade 5 students in Zambales where students demonstrate commendable competence in certain aspects like synonyms, antonyms, and word association while nearly opposites and word association in sentence require focused attention to enhance overall vocabulary development.
2. Existing instructional materials for vocabulary in Reading English for Grade 5 pupils are well-received, with an average rating of 4, indicating a perception of high adequacy. The positive feedback across various material categories suggests that these materials effectively cater to the diverse needs of students, promoting an enriching learning experience.
3. Teachers have comprehensive understanding of the importance of diverse strategies, materials, and activities to cater to the varied requirements of Grade 5 pupils in enhancing their vocabulary knowledge in Reading English and the teachers' assessment aligns with contemporary educational approaches, emphasizing the

integration of 21st-century skills and interactive, engaging methods for effective vocabulary development.

4. There is overwhelmingly positive evaluation that indicates a strong acceptance of the proposed innovative vocabulary workbook among English teachers, affirming its potential as an effective tool for vocabulary improvement in Grade 5 pupils.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are founded by the conclusions derived from the findings of this study:

1. Implement targeted interventions and strategies to improve students' abilities in identifying words that are nearly opposite and associating words with sentences. Additionally, a comprehensive vocabulary development program can be designed to address specific areas of improvement and further enhance the overall vocabulary skills of Grade 5 students in the New Normal educational context.
2. Continue using and integrating existing instructional materials for vocabulary in Reading English for Grade 5 pupils and explore opportunities to further enhance

these materials or introduce supplementary resources to ensure a comprehensive and engaging approach to vocabulary development.

3. Design and implement a curriculum that incorporates a variety of instructional materials, strategies, and activities that address the identified needs and align with contemporary educational approaches.
4. Proceed with the implementation of the proposed innovative workbook for improving vocabulary in Reading English for Grade 5 pupils, considering its positive impact on content, presentation, and physical aspects.
5. Future researchers planning to venture on vocabulary skills are encouraged to deal with causes of learners' challenges in vocabulary skills to provide deeper understanding of this research study.

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