



International Journal of Education, Literacies, and Curriculum Studies

ISSN: 3116-2991

Volume 2 Issue 2- 2026

<https://ijelcs.minduraresearch.com/journal/index>

Teachers' Perspectives on English Language Instruction and Literacy Development in Public Elementary Schools in the City of Ilagan, Isabela

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Publication Date: 06-05-2026

ABSTRACT

This qualitative phenomenological study explored teachers' perspectives on English language instruction and literacy development in public elementary schools in the City of Ilagan, Isabela. The study examined teachers' instructional experiences, literacy-related challenges, learner responses, and pedagogical practices utilized in promoting English literacy skills among elementary learners. Data were gathered through semi-structured in-depth interviews with twelve purposively selected English teachers from public elementary schools. Thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's framework was employed in analyzing the data. Findings revealed that teachers encountered challenges related to learners' limited vocabulary, reading comprehension difficulties, low oral communication skills, and minimal exposure to English outside the classroom. Participants also described difficulties in sustaining learner engagement and developing literacy skills among struggling readers. Despite these challenges, teachers demonstrated pedagogical adaptability through contextualized instruction, phonics-based strategies, reading interventions, collaborative learning activities, multimedia integration, and differentiated instruction. Teachers further emphasized the importance of patience, consistent reading practice, and learner-centered approaches in strengthening literacy development. The findings underscore the importance of responsive and contextualized pedagogical practices in improving English language instruction and literacy acquisition in elementary education. The study highlights the need for strengthened literacy intervention programs, instructional resource enhancement, and continuous professional development initiatives for English teachers.

Keywords: English language instruction, literacy development, elementary education, instructional challenges, pedagogical practices, qualitative research, reading comprehension

Received: 03-02-2026

Revised: 03-23-2026

Accepted: 05-30- 2026

Published: 06-05-2026

ISSN:3116-2991





Introduction

English language instruction plays a crucial role in developing learners' literacy, communication competence, reading comprehension, and academic achievement in elementary education. In the Philippine educational system, English serves both as a subject area and as a medium of instruction in several academic disciplines. Consequently, English teachers are expected to facilitate meaningful language learning experiences that strengthen learners' reading, writing, speaking, and comprehension skills.

However, English literacy development remains a major instructional concern in many public elementary schools due to learners' limited vocabulary, weak reading comprehension, low oral communication confidence, and insufficient language exposure. Multilingual classroom environments and varying literacy levels further complicate language instruction, particularly among elementary learners who are still developing foundational literacy competencies. Teachers are therefore challenged to implement adaptive pedagogical strategies that promote engagement, comprehension, and language acquisition despite diverse classroom realities.

In response to these challenges, English teachers increasingly utilize contextualized instruction, phonics-based approaches, reading interventions, collaborative learning, multimedia integration, and differentiated pedagogies to improve literacy outcomes. These innovative instructional practices aim to make language learning more accessible, meaningful, and learner-centered within multilingual educational contexts.

Although several studies examine literacy achievement and language performance quantitatively, limited qualitative studies explore teachers' lived instructional experiences and perspectives regarding literacy development in localized public school settings. Understanding teachers' experiences is essential in identifying instructional realities, classroom challenges, and effective pedagogical responses in English language education.

This study explored teachers' perspectives on English language instruction and literacy development in public elementary schools in the City of Ilagan, Isabela. Specifically, it examined teachers' instructional challenges, learners' literacy-related difficulties, and innovative pedagogical practices utilized in promoting English literacy development.

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to:

1. Explore teachers' experiences and challenges in English language instruction;
2. Examine learners' literacy-related difficulties and classroom responses; and
3. Identify pedagogical practices utilized in promoting literacy development among elementary learners.

Review of Related Literature

English literacy development is influenced by learners' vocabulary acquisition, reading comprehension, oral communication competence, and exposure to meaningful language experiences. According to Snow, Burns, and Griffin (2019), early literacy development is essential in shaping learners' academic success and



International Journal of Education, Literacies, and Curriculum Studies

ISSN: 3116-2991

Volume 2 Issue 2- 2026

<https://ijelcs.minduraresearch.com/journal/index>

communicative competence. Learners with weak literacy foundations often experience difficulty in comprehension, classroom participation, and language production.

In multilingual educational settings, teachers encounter instructional difficulties related to language diversity, learner confidence, and varying literacy levels. Cummins (2000) emphasized that language proficiency significantly affects learners' academic understanding and classroom engagement. Consequently, contextualized and scaffolded instruction becomes necessary in promoting literacy development among multilingual learners.

Research by Graves and Graves (2020) further highlighted the importance of differentiated instruction, phonics-based teaching, collaborative learning, and multimedia integration in strengthening literacy acquisition and learner engagement. These learner-centered pedagogies promote meaningful language interaction and improve comprehension skills among elementary learners.

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory (1978), which emphasizes the importance of social interaction, scaffolding, and collaborative learning in language development. The study also utilized Cummins' Theory of Language Proficiency (2000), which explains the relationship between language competence and academic learning in multilingual educational settings.

These theories guided the exploration of instructional challenges, literacy difficulties, and pedagogical practices in English language instruction.

Methodology

This study utilized a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore teachers' lived experiences and perspectives regarding English language instruction and literacy development. The study was conducted in selected public elementary schools in the City of Ilagan, Isabela. Participants consisted of twelve English teachers selected through purposive sampling based on their teaching experience and involvement in literacy instruction.

Data were gathered through semi-structured in-depth interviews focusing on instructional experiences, literacy-related challenges, learner participation, and innovative teaching practices. Ethical considerations such as informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation were strictly observed throughout the conduct of the study.

The gathered data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework. Interview transcripts were coded and categorized to identify recurring themes and patterns related to literacy instruction and pedagogical practices. Trustworthiness was established through member checking, triangulation, audit trails, and thick description.

Results and Findings

Theme 1: Addressing Learners' Limited Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension Difficulties

Participants consistently identified learners' limited vocabulary and poor reading comprehension as major



instructional concerns in English language instruction. Teachers observed that many learners struggled to understand reading passages, follow written instructions, and express ideas in English during classroom discussions.

One participant shared:

“Marami sa mga learners ang hirap umintindi ng English passages dahil kulang ang vocabulary nila.”

Another teacher stated:

“Kapag reading comprehension activities, kailangan pang isa-isahin ang explanation para maintindihan nila.”

Participants also emphasized that learners with weak literacy skills often became hesitant to participate in oral reading and classroom interaction.

A participant explained:

“May mga bata na nahihiya magbasa o magsalita sa English dahil natatakot magkamali.”

The findings suggest that vocabulary limitations and weak comprehension skills significantly affect learner participation and literacy development. These findings support Cummins (2000), who emphasized the relationship between language proficiency and academic learning.

Theme 2: Utilizing Contextualized and Phonics-Based Strategies to Strengthen Literacy Skills

Teachers emphasized the importance of contextualized instruction and phonics-based strategies in improving learners' literacy competencies. Participants explained that connecting lessons to familiar experiences and using repetitive phonics activities helped learners improve pronunciation, decoding, and comprehension skills.

One participant explained:

“Kapag inuugnay sa familiar experiences ang lesson, mas naiintindihan ng learners.”

Another teacher remarked:

“Malaking tulong ang phonics at repetitive reading activities para ma-develop ang reading skills nila.”

Participants also described using localized examples, storytelling, and guided reading sessions to improve literacy engagement and learner confidence.

The findings indicate that contextualized and scaffolded literacy instruction strengthens learner comprehension and reading development. These findings align with Graves and Graves (2020), who emphasized the effectiveness of differentiated and phonics-based instruction in literacy education.

Theme 3: Promoting Learner Engagement Through Interactive and Multimedia-Assisted Instruction

Participants described utilizing games, collaborative learning activities, visual aids, videos, and multimedia presentations to sustain learner interest and participation during English instruction. Teachers observed that interactive and technology-assisted strategies improved learners' confidence and classroom engagement.

One participant shared:

“Mas active ang learners kapag may games at videos sa lesson.”

Another teacher stated:

“Kapag collaborative activities, mas nagiging confident silang magsalita sa English.”



Teachers explained that multimedia resources simplified lesson concepts and encouraged learners to participate more actively during discussions and reading activities.

The findings highlight the effectiveness of learner-centered and multimedia-assisted pedagogies in promoting literacy engagement and classroom participation.

Theme 4: Demonstrating Instructional Patience and Learner-Centered Adaptability

Participants emphasized that patience, instructional flexibility, and continuous adaptation were essential in addressing learners' varying literacy needs. Teachers described modifying lessons, simplifying instructions, and providing additional scaffolding to support struggling readers.

One participant remarked:

“Kailangan talagang maging patient lalo na sa learners na mabagal magbasa.”

Another teacher explained:

“Bilang teacher, kailangan mong i-adjust ang strategies depende sa literacy level ng learners.”

Participants viewed literacy instruction as both an instructional and emotional process requiring encouragement, empathy, and consistent learner support.

The findings suggest that learner-centered and adaptive teaching practices strengthen literacy development and classroom confidence among elementary learners.

Discussion

The findings revealed that English language instruction in public elementary schools is significantly influenced by learners' limited vocabulary, weak reading comprehension, low communication confidence, and varying literacy levels. These instructional challenges affect learner participation, engagement, and literacy acquisition in English classrooms.

Despite these challenges, teachers demonstrated pedagogical adaptability through contextualized instruction, phonics-based strategies, collaborative learning, multimedia integration, and differentiated literacy interventions. These learner-centered pedagogical practices enabled teachers to create more meaningful and supportive literacy learning environments.

The study further highlights the importance of responsive teaching practices, instructional flexibility, and sustained literacy support in strengthening English language instruction and literacy development among elementary learners.

Conclusion

The study concluded that English teachers in public elementary schools in the City of Ilagan encounter instructional challenges related to learners' vocabulary limitations, reading comprehension difficulties, communication anxiety, and diverse literacy levels. These challenges significantly affect literacy instruction and classroom participation.

Despite these instructional realities, teachers demonstrated resilience and pedagogical innovation through contextualized teaching, phonics-based instruction, multimedia-assisted learning, collaborative activities, and differentiated literacy strategies. These adaptive practices strengthened learner engagement, confidence, and literacy development.



International Journal of Education, Literacies, and Curriculum Studies

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Volume 2 Issue 2- 2026

<https://ijelcs.minduraresearch.com/journal/index>

The findings underscore the importance of learner-centered and context-responsive literacy instruction in improving English language learning outcomes. Strengthening literacy intervention programs, instructional resources, and teacher professional development initiatives may further enhance literacy acquisition and instructional effectiveness in elementary English education.

Implications of the Study

The findings may guide educational leaders, curriculum developers, and policymakers in strengthening literacy intervention initiatives, instructional resource provision, and professional development programs related to English language instruction. Schools may also enhance reading support programs and collaborative teacher-learning communities that promote responsive literacy pedagogies.

Future studies may further examine the long-term effects of contextualized and differentiated literacy instruction on learners' reading achievement and communication competence across diverse educational settings.

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International Journal of Education, Literacies, and Curriculum Studies

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International Journal of Education, Literacies, and Curriculum Studies

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