International Journal of Sustainable and Integrated Studies
Volume 1, Issue 3 | ISSN: 3155-6361
DOI: https://doi.org/10.65339/ijsis.V1.I3.245

Improving Grade 8 Reading Comprehension Through Targeted Context Clue Strategies

Suzeth A. Manila
Bulangsuran Integrated School, Samboan, Cebu, Philippines

Email of Corresponding Author: suzethangana1991@gmail.com

Publication history:
Received: September 25, 2026 Accepted: October 30, 2026
Revised: October 27, 2026 Published: October 31, 2026
International Journal of Sustainable and Integrated Studies, Vol. 1, No. 3, pp. 1033–1038, October 2026.

Abstract

Reading comprehension is an essential skill that enables learners to understand texts, interpret information, and determine the meanings of unfamiliar words. However, some Grade 8 learners experience difficulties in comprehending reading materials because of limited vocabulary knowledge and difficulty identifying context clues. This study, titled Improving Grade 8 Reading Comprehension Through Targeted Context Clue Strategies, aimed to improve learners' reading comprehension by implementing targeted, structured context clue strategies. The study involved 33 Grade 8 learners and focused on five categories: definition and explanation clues, synonym and restatement clues, antonym and contrast clues, example and illustration clues, and inference and general context clues. A pretest and posttest were administered to determine changes in learners' performance following the intervention. The pretest results revealed an overall mean score of 2.48, interpreted as Low, while the posttest results showed an overall mean score of 3.60, interpreted as High. A paired-samples t-test revealed a statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores, $t(32) = -10.615$, $p < .001$. The null hypothesis was rejected, indicating that the difference between the learners' pretest and posttest performance was statistically significant. The findings suggest that targeted, structured context clue strategies may help improve learners' ability to identify contextual information, infer unfamiliar word meanings, and understand reading passages. The study recommends the continued use of context clue strategies, with additional instructional support for example and illustration clues and definition and explanation clues, to further strengthen learners' reading comprehension skills.

Keywords: Reading Comprehension; Context Clues; Vocabulary Development; Grade 8 Learners; Reading Intervention

1. Introduction

Reading comprehension is an essential literacy competency that enables learners to understand, analyze, and interpret written texts. However, Grade 8 learners often encounter difficulties understanding complex reading materials, particularly when unfamiliar vocabulary affects their comprehension. Targeted context clue strategies offer an instructional approach to addressing these challenges by developing learners' ability to determine word meanings through surrounding textual information. This study aimed to improve the reading comprehension of Grade 8 learners through structured instruction focusing on five context clue categories during School Year 2026–2027.

Reading comprehension requires learners to interpret vocabulary, recognize contextual relationships, and construct meaning from written information. At the Grade 8 level, increasingly complex texts and unfamiliar words may hinder comprehension. Results of the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) conducted among 35 Grade 8 learners revealed that 33 learners (94.29%) were classified at the frustration level, while only

two (5.71%) reached the instructional level. These findings, documented in Bulangsurang Integrated School, Bulangsuran, Samboan, Cebu file (2026), indicated substantial reading difficulties and emphasized the need for targeted vocabulary and comprehension interventions. Related evidence from Misanes and Pascual (2023) identified substantial reading difficulties among Grade 8 learners assessed using the Phil-IRI.

Context clue instruction enables learners to determine unfamiliar word meanings by examining surrounding words, sentences, and textual relationships. Aguelo and Patayon (2026) investigated the effectiveness of context clues among Grade 8 learners at Magatos Integrated School using the R.E.A.D. approach (Read, Engage, Apply, and Discuss) and reported improved reading comprehension following the intervention. Similarly, Garces et al. (2025) found that context clues, vocabulary-building activities, and example-based instruction improved reading comprehension, vocabulary skills, and reading engagement among secondary Alternative Learning System learners in Davao de Oro. These findings support explicit instruction in contextual vocabulary strategies as an approach to strengthening reading comprehension. Ilahi and Hidayat (2023) also reported improved reading comprehension following context-clue-based instruction among eighth graders. Hoyle (2024) examined contextualized clues in Grade 8 language learning, while Black and Wright (2024) reviewed vocabulary instructional strategies, including context clues. Cervetti et al. (2023) synthesized evidence on vocabulary instruction and word-learning skills.

Reading comprehension difficulties among Filipino secondary learners highlight the importance of instructional interventions addressing vocabulary limitations and contextual understanding. At Bulangsuran Integrated School in Samboan, Cebu, the high proportion of Grade 8 learners classified at the frustration level demonstrated the need for structured reading support. Philippine studies by Aguelo and Patayon (2026) and Garces et al. (2025) provide evidence supporting context clue instruction in different secondary learning environments. These findings establish the relevance of targeted reading interventions designed to address learners' specific comprehension difficulties. Mannag and Dagdag (2024) reported improvements in Grade 8 vocabulary acquisition and reading performance following a graphic-organizer intervention in the Philippines.

The study was anchored in the instructional relationship between context clue identification, vocabulary development, and reading comprehension. Targeted instruction focused on five context clue categories: definition and explanation, synonym and restatement, antonym and contrast, example and illustration, and inference and general context clues. These categories provide learners with structured opportunities to recognize contextual information, determine unfamiliar word meanings, and interpret reading passages. Through guided identification and application of these strategies, learners may develop stronger vocabulary comprehension and reading skills. Binhomran and Altalhab (2023) reviewed relationships among reading comprehension, vocabulary retention, and vocabulary size.

Although previous studies demonstrated the usefulness of context clue instruction, limited attention was given to systematically teaching learners to distinguish among specific contextual clue categories. Aguelo and Patayon (2026) emphasized the R.E.A.D. approach, while Garces et al. (2025) examined context clues alongside vocabulary-building and example-based activities. These approaches support reading comprehension development but leave a need for focused instruction on identifying definitions, synonyms, antonyms, examples, and inferences within texts. Addressing this gap, the present study aimed to improve Grade 8 learners' reading comprehension through targeted instruction and guided practice involving the five context clue categories during School Year 2026–2027.

The study aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which promotes inclusive, equitable, and quality education. Improving reading comprehension among Grade 8 learners supports the development of foundational literacy competencies essential for academic learning. By addressing vocabulary difficulties through targeted context clue instruction, the study contributes to efforts to improve educational outcomes and provide appropriate instructional support for learners experiencing reading challenges.

The study contributes to educational sustainability by examining a structured instructional approach intended to strengthen learners' reading comprehension and vocabulary development. Targeted context clue strategies may support sustainable literacy instruction by providing teachers with practical techniques that can be integrated into regular classroom reading activities. Strengthening learners' ability to interpret unfamiliar vocabulary and comprehend written texts may also support continued academic participation and independent learning. These contributions emphasize the relevance of evidence-informed reading interventions in improving instructional practices and promoting long-term educational development.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design
This study used a classroom-based action research design with a one-group pretest-posttest design. The results were statistically analyzed and interpreted through paired-sample test for its significance and descriptive statistics for reporting the differences of its mean.

2.2 Locale of the Study
The research was carried out in Bulangsuran Integrated School a small boarding public school that is located at a mountainous barangay in Samboan, Cebu. The school is located 8 kilometers away from the town proper. It provides instruction to both junior and senior high school students and is supported by 15 high school teachers. Approximately 125 learners are in the junior high school program.

2.3 Respondents of the Study
The participants of this study were the Grade 8 learners who have been formally identified through Phil-Iri assessment. The number of participants was based from the result of the Phil-Iri Assessment, there were 33 identified students who were in at frustration level and need intervention.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure
The study utilized purposive sampling in selecting the respondents. The participants were chosen based on the Phil-Iri Assessment result. Thirty-three (33) out of thirty-five (35) learners from Grade 8 were identified who were in at frustration level and need intervention.

2.5 Research Instrument
The researcher used pretest and posttest. The questions form the pretest and posttest were parallel. The test questions were validated by the English coordinator. The test question covers the 5 context clues strategy, with the total of 25 items.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure
Before conducting the study, the researcher obtained the necessary approval from the concerned offices and agencies to administer the research instrument. After receiving permission, the validated researcher-made test questionnaire was personally given to the selected respondents during their available time. The completed test questionnaires were collected using the same process. The data gathered were then organized, tabulated, analyzed, and interpreted using appropriate statistical tools based on the objectives and research questions of the study.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques
The data gathered from the pre-test and post-test were organized, tabulated, and analyzed using appropriate statistical tools. Descriptive statistics, particularly the mean, were used to compare the learners' pre-test and post-test scores and determine their changes in performance. To test whether the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores was statistically significant, the researcher used the paired-samples t-test. The results were interpreted based on the objectives and research questions of the study.

2.8 Ethical Considerations
The study followed ethical guidelines for research involving human participants. Participation was voluntary, and the respondents were informed about the purpose of the study before answering the questionnaire. The information collected was used only for academic purposes and was kept confidential. The researcher protected the identities and personal information of the respondents throughout the study. The data were analyzed and presented honestly and objectively to ensure the credibility and integrity of the research.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Pretest Result
The pretest results revealed that the 33 Grade 8 learners had an overall mean score of 2.48, interpreted as Low, indicating that they experienced difficulties in reading comprehension and identifying context clues before the intervention. Among the five categories, synonym and restatement clues obtained the highest mean of 2.91, followed by antonym and contrast clues with 2.85, both interpreted as Moderate. Definition and explanation clues received a mean of 2.39, interpreted as Low, suggesting that learners struggled to recognize explanations and definitions of unfamiliar words within texts. Inference and general context clues also obtained a Low rating, with a mean of 2.15, indicating difficulty using surrounding information to infer word meanings. Example and illustration clues recorded the lowest mean of 1.76, interpreted as Very Low, making it the learners' most challenging category. These findings suggest that learners had limited ability to use examples, contextual relationships, and textual information to understand unfamiliar vocabulary. Wongwiwattana and Watanapokakul (2021) highlighted the importance of context clue identification in inferring vocabulary meanings. The results indicate a need for targeted instruction, particularly in example and illustration clues and inference and general

context clues. Thus, the pretest findings provided a baseline for implementing structured context clue strategies to address the learners' identified difficulties and improve their reading comprehension.

3.2 Posttest Result

The posttest results revealed that the 33 Grade 8 learners achieved an overall mean score of 3.60, interpreted as High, indicating improved performance in reading comprehension and context clue identification following the implementation of the targeted, structured context clue strategies. Among the five categories, antonym and contrast clues obtained the highest mean of 3.85, followed by synonym and restatement clues with 3.76, and inference and general context clues with 3.73, all interpreted as High. Definition and explanation clues received a mean of 3.39, while example and illustration clues obtained a mean of 3.27, both interpreted as Moderate. These results suggest that the learners developed better skills in recognizing word relationships, identifying contrasting ideas, and using surrounding textual information to infer meanings. However, the moderate results in definition and explanation clues and example and illustration clues indicate that these areas still require additional instructional support. Similarly, Indriana et al. (2021) reported improved reading comprehension performance among Grade 8 learners after the use of a context clues strategy. The findings suggest that structured instruction and guided practice may help learners become more effective in understanding unfamiliar vocabulary within reading passages. Nevertheless, continued reading activities and formative assessments are needed to strengthen the competencies that remain at the Moderate level. Overall, the posttest results indicate improved learner performance following the intervention and support the continued use of targeted context clue strategies to develop reading comprehension skills.

3.3 Significant Difference of Pretest and Posttest

Table 1. *Paired Samples t-Test Results for the Pretest and Posttest Scores of the Students*

Test	Mean	Std. Deviation	T-value	p-value	Interpretation
Pretest	**12.42**	**3.00095**	**-10.615**	**0.001**	**There is a significant difference.**
Posttest	**17.97**				

The paired-samples t-test revealed a statistically significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores of the Grade 8 learners, $t(32)= -10.615$, $p<.001$. The negative t-value indicates that the posttest scores were higher than the pretest scores when the difference was calculated by subtracting the posttest scores from the pretest scores. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected. The findings indicate that the learners' reading comprehension performance improved significantly following the implementation of the targeted, structured context clue strategies.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study concluded that the implementation of targeted, structured context clue strategies was associated with a statistically significant improvement in the reading comprehension performance of 33 Grade 8 learners, as demonstrated by the paired-samples t-test results, $t(32) = -10.615$, $p < .001$. The higher posttest scores indicated improved ability to identify contextual information, determine unfamiliar word meanings, and comprehend reading passages. Among the five context clue categories, antonym and contrast clues obtained the highest posttest mean, while example and illustration clues remained an area requiring further improvement. These findings highlight the potential usefulness of targeted context clue instruction in strengthening vocabulary development and reading comprehension among Grade 8 learners.

Based on the findings, English teachers are encouraged to integrate targeted context clue strategies into regular reading instruction, emphasizing definitions, synonyms, antonyms, examples, and contextual inferences. Guided reading activities, vocabulary journals, and structured exercises should be incorporated to strengthen learners' ability to interpret unfamiliar words and understand written texts, particularly in areas requiring additional instructional support. School administrators should provide appropriate reading materials, allocate sufficient time for literacy interventions, and support regular formative assessments to monitor learners' progress. Future researchers are encouraged to examine the effectiveness of these strategies using larger samples, comparison groups, and extended intervention periods to evaluate their potential long-term benefits for reading comprehension.

The study was limited to 33 Grade 8 learners identified at the frustration reading level at Bulangsuran Integrated School, Samboan, Cebu, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other grade levels and educational settings. Its classroom-based action research design, employing a one-group pretest–posttest approach without a comparison group, demonstrated statistically significant changes in reading comprehension performance but could not establish that the improvements resulted exclusively from the intervention.

Furthermore, the use of researcher-made pretest and posttest instruments may have limited the assessment of broader reading comprehension competencies. The absence of long-term follow-up assessments also prevented the determination of whether the observed improvements were sustained over time. These methodological and contextual limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings and applying the intervention to other learning environments.

5. Compliance with ethical standards

The researchers declare that there are no conflicts of interest related to this study. The research was conducted in accordance with ethical standards for studies involving human participants. Informed consent was obtained, participation was voluntary, and participants were allowed to withdraw from the study at any time without facing any consequences. Confidentiality was maintained by ensuring that participants' identities were protected and that data were securely stored, anonymized, and reported in summarized form. Since the study involved psychological well-being, the research procedures were non-invasive, and appropriate measures were taken to minimize possible discomfort. Participants were also informed about available support services if needed. In addition, the necessary institutional permissions were secured before administering the research instruments and accessing relevant academic records.

REFERENCES

Adys, H. P., Adys, H. P., & Usman, M. (2025). Enhancing ESP reading comprehension through context clues and digital strategies. Edu Cendikia: Jurnal Ilmiah Kependidikan, 5(2), 742–752. https://doi.org/10.47709/educendikia.v5i02.6916

Aguelo, M. B. M., & Patayon, J. L. (2026). Improving reading comprehension among Grade 8 students through the use of context clues strategy with the R.E.A.D. approach (Read, Engage, Apply, Discuss). *EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research, 12*(1). https://doi.org/10.36713/epra24024

Apel, K. (2022). A different view on the Simple View of Reading. *Remedial and Special Education, 43*(6), 434–447. https://doi.org/10.1177/07419325211063487

Bante, M. A. (2023). Analyzing teaching habits and practices: Schema theory in ESL teachers' reading instruction. *European Journal of English Language Teaching, 8*(4).

Binhomran, K., & Altalhab, S. (2023). A systematic review of EFL research on the impact of reading comprehension on students' vocabulary retention, and the relation between reading and vocabulary size. International Journal of Language and Literary Studies, 5(3), 146–168. https://doi.org/10.36892/ijlls.v5i3.1395

Black, C., & Wright, K. L. (2024). What's up with words? A systematic review of designs, strategies, and theories underlying vocabulary research. Reading Psychology, 45(1), 78–103. https://doi.org/10.1080/02702711.2023.2253249

Cervetti, G. N., Fitzgerald, M. S., Hiebert, E. H., & Hebert, M. (2023). Meta-analysis examining the impact of vocabulary instruction on vocabulary knowledge and skill. Reading Psychology, 44(6), 672–709. https://doi.org/10.1080/02702711.2023.2179146

Garces, N. L., Delos Reyes, T. R., & Mascariñas, E. M. M. (2025). Improving reading comprehension of secondary Alternative Learning System (ALS) learners through the CLUES Intervention Program (Context Clues, Lexical Understanding, and Example-Based Strategies). *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science, 9*(3), 6333–6344. https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.903SEDU0461

Hoover, W. A. (2024). The simple view of reading and its broad types of reading difficulties. Reading and Writing, 37, 2277–2298. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11145-023-10471-x

Hoyle, L. H. (2024). Effect contextualized clues on the academic performance of grade eight students in language class. EPRA International Journal of Environmental Economics, Commerce and Educational Management, 11(6). https://doi.org/10.36713/epra17414

Huang, T.-F., Chou, S.-C., & Liao, A. (2024). Schema theory's immediate impact on college students' Chinese reading comprehension. International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education, 13(5), 3535–3543. https://doi.org/10.11591/ijere.v13i5.28898

Ilahi, L. K., & Hidayat, R. (2023). Context-clues-based-strategy for better reading comprehension skill. Technium Social Sciences Journal, 50(1), 257–263. https://doi.org/10.47577/tssj.v50i1.9898

Indriana, M. D., Aminah, A., & Dewi, A. K. (2021). Improving reading comprehension of the eighth grade students through context clues strategy. E-Journal of ELTS (English Language Teaching Society), 9(2), 120–129. https://doi.org/10.22487/elts.v9i2.1868

Mannag, C. M., & Dagdag, J. (2024). Effects of graphic organizers on vocabulary acquisition, reading performance, and English learning attitude of Grade 8 students. Journal of Education and Innovation, 26(3), 138–152. https://so06.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/edujournal_nu/article/view/264551

Misanes, C. H., & Pascual, E. (2023). Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) performance of Grade 8 students: Basis for a reading intervention program. Psychology and Education: A Multidisciplinary Journal, 13(3). https://ejournals.ph/article.php?id=22099

Pandita, A. (2025). Development of English reading comprehension using context clues for Grade Ten students at Minywa High School in Hmawbi, Myanmar. Journal of Asian Language Teaching and Learning, 6(2). https://so10.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/jote/article/view/2871

Rice, M., Wijekumar, K., Lambright, K., & Bristow, A. (2024). Inferencing in reading comprehension: Examining variations in definition, instruction, and assessment. Technology, Knowledge and Learning, 29, 1169–1190. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10758-023-09660-y

Stevani, M., Prayuda, M. S., Sari, D. W., Marianus, S. M., & Tarigan, K. E. (2022). Evaluation of contextual clues: EFL proficiency in reading comprehension. English Review: Journal of English Education, 10(3), 993–1002. https://doi.org/10.25134/erjee.v10i3.7076

Wongwiwattana, S., & Watanapokakul, S. (2021). Types of context clues and vocabulary meaning inference: Abilities and perceptions of English major undergraduate students. rEFLections, 28(3), 357–380. https://doi.org/10.61508/refl.v28i3.258802

Zhang, S., & Zhang, X. (2022). The relationship between vocabulary knowledge and L2 reading/listening comprehension: A meta-analysis. *Language Teaching Research, 26*(4), 696–725. https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168820913998