

# Improving Vocabulary Acquisition through Contextual Clues in English Reading Lessons

Sharliana Che Ani, Nurul Fida' Mohd Zaa'id, Nurul Imanina  
Abdul Rani, Nurul Nabihah Razali

UNITAR International University Malaysia

Email: sharliana@unitar.my

To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v15-i5/25132> DOI:10.6007/IJARBSS/v15-i5/25132

**Published Date:** 04 May 2025

## Abstract

This action research investigates the effectiveness of the contextual clue strategy in enhancing vocabulary acquisition among Form 1 students in a rural school setting. Students in these areas often encounter challenges in understanding and assimilating new and complex vocabulary within reading comprehension tasks. Consequently, the contextual clues strategy emerges as a potential solution to address this issue. The objectives of this study are twofold: to assess the effectiveness of contextual clue strategies in improving vocabulary acquisition and to explore students' perceptions regarding the use of contextual clues for inferring the meanings of unfamiliar words. The research involved a pre-test, an intervention, and a post-test to evaluate the appropriateness of the contextual clues' strategy for vocabulary acquisition among rural students. During the intervention phase, guided practice was implemented through Think-Pair-Share sessions to facilitate the application of contextual clues. The results revealed a notable improvement in student performance, with 79.2% demonstrating improvement when comparing pre-test and post-test outcomes. Additionally, students expressed a positive perception of this strategy, noting that it not only facilitated their vocabulary acquisition but also increased their confidence in reading English texts. Therefore, the findings advocate for a more extensive and focused approach that includes the integration of multimedia tools or gamified applications, which are particularly appealing to younger learners.

**Keywords:** Contextual Clue Strategy Vocabulary Acquisition Rural Students Reading Comprehension

## Introduction

Vocabulary acquisition is a cornerstone of language learning, particularly for learners of English as a second language (ESL). Without a robust vocabulary, individuals may struggle to develop their reading, speaking, and listening skills, ultimately hindering their overall language proficiency. Rafiq (2019) emphasized that a strong vocabulary foundation is crucial for effective communication and academic success. For students, especially those in rural areas with limited exposure to the English language, vocabulary acquisition poses a significant

challenge. These students often face difficulties in comprehending complex vocabulary in reading comprehension tasks, which impacts their ability to engage fully with English texts and perform well in assessments. Consequently, there is a growing need for strategies that can effectively enhance vocabulary acquisition in these contexts.

The context of rural schools is particularly critical in this regard. Rural students often experience educational disparities compared to their urban counterparts, including fewer resources such as e-materials, libraries, and exposure to English-speaking environments. This often results in lower motivation to learn English and significant struggles with acquiring vocabulary, despite traditional methods such as rote memorization. As highlighted by Feng (2023), students in rural areas typically lack the opportunities to practice and apply English in meaningful contexts, which exacerbates the challenge of vocabulary retention. Therefore, it is essential to explore alternative strategies that not only help students memorize words but also understand how and when to use them effectively in various contexts.

The COVID-19 pandemic further intensified these challenges, as education systems worldwide, particularly in rural areas, had to rapidly transition to online learning. Sukumaran et al. (2021) explored how teachers adapted their strategies to keep students engaged and motivated in online English language learning during the pandemic. They found that online learning tools and game-based learning were critical in maintaining students' interest, particularly in challenging rural settings. This highlights the need for creative teaching strategies, such as contextual clue strategies, to engage students effectively.

Similarly, in examining the effects of poor reading and writing skills on quality education in South African primary schools, Shitiba et al. (2023) identified language barriers, lack of parental involvement, and overcrowded classrooms as significant obstacles. These issues resonate globally, particularly in rural areas, where limited resources and external factors hinder students' academic performance and engagement with language learning. Their findings underscore the importance of addressing these challenges to improve literacy and vocabulary acquisition, which is a central focus of this study.

One such strategy is the use of contextual clues. Contextual clues refer to hints within a text that help readers deduce the meanings of unfamiliar words. This strategy encourages students to infer meanings based on surrounding information such as synonyms, antonyms, definitions, and examples. Graves (2006) underscores the importance of this method in improving vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension. However, while much research has been conducted on the use of contextual clues among urban students, there is a noticeable gap in studies focusing on its effectiveness in rural schools. This gap necessitates further investigation into the impact of contextual clue strategies in rural settings, particularly for students who are new to complex vocabulary and face challenges in their language learning journey.

This study aims to address this gap by examining the effectiveness of using contextual clue strategies to improve vocabulary acquisition among Form 1 students in a rural Malaysian school. The research will also explore students' perceptions of using this strategy to infer the meanings of unfamiliar words in reading comprehension tasks. By focusing on a rural setting, this study provides insights into how contextual clues can be a valuable tool for enhancing

vocabulary learning in resource-limited environments. Moreover, it emphasizes the potential for this strategy to build students' confidence in reading English texts, fostering a deeper understanding and engagement with the language.

### **Problem Statement**

Students who are upgraded from elementary to high school, specifically students in rural areas usually have a hard time acquiring new and complex vocabulary in reading comprehension. It is because of the limited resources of e-materials, libraries and their own environment that did not encourage them to use English language. Although some of the learners have a lot of vocabulary knowledge, it would be confusing if the same word is used in different contexts. For example, the word 'light' in "This bag is really **light**" refers to weight, while in "Turn on the **light** so we can see better" refers to a lamp. Although they know the meaning of 'light', there will be confusion when it is used in a sentence. This issue not only affects the students in their examination marks, but also their performance during class discussions and activities. Hence, contextual clues are one of the techniques in elevating students' vocabulary acquisition in reading skills by providing information related to unfamiliar words such as synonyms, antonyms, definitions, and example clues with illustrations. This research is important for educators to look for suitable strategies to ensure students not only memorize but also understand the unfamiliar words they learned.

Hence, this study aims to examine the effect of using contextual clues as a strategy in improving Form 1 students' vocabulary acquisition. Moreover, this study also investigates the students' perception of using contextual clues to deduce meaning of unfamiliar words in reading comprehension texts.

### *Research Objectives*

This action research aims to:

1. Examine the effectiveness of using contextual clue strategies to improve vocabulary acquisition in Form 1 English reading lessons.
2. Investigate the students' perception on using contextual clues to infer meaning of unfamiliar words in reading comprehension texts.

### *Research Questions*

This research questions:

1. Does the use of contextual clues effectively improve the vocabulary acquisition in Form 1 students in English reading lessons?
2. What are the students' perceptions on learning vocabulary through contextual clue strategies?

### **Literature Review**

Graves (2006) defines contextual clues as the information surrounding unfamiliar words or phrases within a text, which readers can utilize to infer their meanings. Various strategies for identifying contextual clues include definitions, examples, synonyms, antonyms, and inference. These strategies enable readers to comprehend or deduce the meanings of unfamiliar terms encountered during reading. By providing guidance, contextual clues improve the reading experience, facilitating a smoother flow and reducing reliance on dictionaries. Consequently, readers can engage more fully with the text. Thus, integrating this

reading strategy into instructional practices may serve as an effective means to enhance English language development, particularly in vocabulary acquisition and reading proficiency.

The primary obstacle that students face in learning a language is their comprehension of it. This challenge can be overwhelming, leading to diminished motivation to engage with the language and a decrease in confidence when attempting to use it (Farah Zulkefly & Abu Bakar Razali, 2019). These two elements can profoundly affect students' capacity to develop new language skills.

While English is a mandatory subject in Malaysian schools, many students, particularly in rural areas with limited exposure to the language, still regard it as a foreign language (EFL) rather than a second language (ESL) (Jaikrishnan & Ismail, 2021). According to Norazmidah et al. (2012), students' attitudes towards a language are influenced by their understanding of it. When students possess a strong grasp of the language, they are generally more motivated and engaged in the learning process. Consequently, the ability to infer the meanings of unfamiliar words is crucial for developing reading skills, as it enhances their overall comprehension and encourages further language acquisition.

### **Past Studies**

In 2019, Ilter conducted a study to investigate the effectiveness of teaching context clue strategies for vocabulary development in middle school students. The research aimed to assess how the use of contextual clues could improve students' vocabulary skills. The study involved a sample of 44 sixth-grade students, who were randomly divided into a control group and an experimental group. A quasi-experimental design was utilized, incorporating pre- and post-tests. The experimental group received instruction on the context clues strategy, while the control group did not receive this intervention. The results revealed that the experimental group showed significant gains in vocabulary acquisition, as evidenced by their post-test scores in vocabulary knowledge, which were higher than those of the control group. This finding underscores their improved capacity to deduce the meanings of unfamiliar words in texts by employing contextual clues.

Furthermore, Hui et al. (2020) undertook a study examining vocabulary acquisition within the framework of reading comprehension, highlighting the significance of morphemic analysis and contextual clue analysis. The research sample consisted of 34 Year 6 students, who were categorized into two separate groups. One group underwent six enrichment sessions dedicated to morphemic analysis, while the other group participated in six sessions focused on analyzing contextual clues, with each session lasting 50 minutes and held twice weekly. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were utilized to collect data. The results revealed that both instructional approaches positively influenced the students' vocabulary growth. The authors suggested that these strategies warrant further exploration with diverse learner populations and should be considered for integration into classroom practices to improve reading comprehension and vocabulary skills, tailored to the learners' preferences.

English functions as a second language in Malaysia; however, the process of acquiring vocabulary in a foreign language is complex and multifaceted. It involves not only the comprehension of individual words but also the command of various linguistic elements, such as grammar, context, and spelling (Ryan, 2006). Research by Aravind and Rajasekaran (2020)

reveals that vocabulary acquisition is often undervalued and overlooked in the language learning journey. While vocabulary learning strategies can be implemented at any point in second language education, it is especially crucial to enhance their effectiveness for younger learners (Manyak, Manyak, and Kappus, 2021). Therefore, this study seeks to investigate perceptions of contextual clue strategies in reading comprehension among secondary school students learning English as a second language, aiming to support students in improving their reading comprehension skills and vocabulary knowledge in alignment with their preferred learning strategies.

## Methodology

### *Research Design*

This research utilized an action research methodology, enabling the investigator to enhance strategies through immediate observations and data collection. A mixed-methods approach was employed, integrating both qualitative and quantitative techniques to achieve a thorough understanding of the problem. The study concentrated on two distinct data sets, which were examined and aligned in accordance with the research questions.

### *Participants*

The study involved 24 Form 1 students with varying levels of English proficiency, specifically ranging from A1 to B1. This variation allowed for a comprehensive assessment of the intervention's effectiveness across different skill levels.

## Data Collection Methods

### *Quantitative research method*

**Pre and post-test:** A pre-assessment was carried out to evaluate vocabulary knowledge prior to the intervention. This assessment included unfamiliar words that could be deciphered through contextual hints. Several intervention sessions were implemented, during which strategies for utilizing contextual clues were taught and practiced in the classroom. Following the intervention, a post-assessment was conducted to assess the vocabulary improvements and retention achieved by the participants.

### *Qualitative research methods*

**Interview:** A semi-structured interview was carried out with participants to gather open-ended responses and in-depth insights regarding the students' views on the role of contextual clues in vocabulary development and text comprehension.

### *Intervention*

The intervention spanned a duration of five weeks, comprising weekly reading lessons of 50 minutes each. Each session incorporated both guided practice and independent reading tasks that emphasized the application of contextual clue strategies.

- **Week 1:** A pre-test was administered to collect information regarding students' vocabulary proficiency before the intervention sessions. This included an introduction to strategies for understanding contextual clues, such as definitions, synonyms, antonyms, examples, and inferences.
- **Week 2-3:** Guided practice on applying contextual clues during activities was conducted in class. In a Think-Pair-Share session, students read short passages with unfamiliar words to infer meanings using context.

- **Week 4-5:** Students engaged in independent practice by reading extended texts and utilizing contextual clue strategies without the assistance of their teacher. The post-test was administered at the conclusion of the week.

#### *Procedure*

A pre-test was administered before the intervention sessions to assess the students' baseline vocabulary knowledge. Following this, students engaged in two weeks of guided practice focusing on contextual clues, followed by an additional two weeks of independent practice aimed at enhancing reading comprehension. Subsequently, post-tests were carried out to evaluate the students' performance following the intervention. Additionally, interviews were conducted to obtain a deeper understanding of how students utilize contextual clues to improve their reading skills.

#### **Data Analysis**

##### *Quantitative Data*

The results of the pre-tests and post-tests were organized and analyzed using bar charts and pie charts to evaluate the impact of contextual clue strategies on reading abilities. This analysis aimed to ascertain whether there were notable advancements in students' vocabulary enhancement and reading comprehension skills.

##### *Qualitative Data*

The qualitative data was gathered through an interview with several samples after the post-test. The questions were as follows:

- What do you understand about contextual clues?
- Do you feel more confident reading English texts after learning about contextual clues? If yes/no, why?
- What challenges do you still face when using contextual clues while reading?
- Would you use this strategy in the future? How?

##### *Thematic Analysis*

Once the qualitative data from the interviews was gathered, a thematic analysis was conducted to uncover the patterns or themes in the participants' responses.

#### **Results**

This section starts by examining the effectiveness of contextual clue strategies in enhancing vocabulary acquisition during Form 1 English reading lessons. It then proceeds to analyze interview data to verify whether the findings regarding the effectiveness of these strategies correspond with students' perceptions of learning vocabulary through them.

##### *The Effectiveness of Using Contextual Clue Strategies in Form 1 Reading Lessons*

This research acknowledges from the outset that students exhibit a range of competency levels within the classroom, spanning from inadequate to advanced proficiency. Consequently, the primary emphasis of this study is on evaluating students' performance both prior to and following the implemented interventions. The subsequent discussion will provide a detailed analysis of the students' test results, highlighting both improvements and declines.



Table 1.1 presents the classifications of students' performance levels as determined by their test scores. The specifics of these scores are outlined in the table below.

Table 1.1

*Test score category for pre-test and post-test*

Grade	Score
Poor	0 - 9
Average	10 - 14
Good	15 - 19
Excellent	20 - 25

The assessment comprises 25 questions for both the pre-test and post-test, featuring six passages that span various CEFR levels from A1 to B1. Students achieving scores below 9 are classified as demonstrating poor performance, while those obtaining more than 20 marks are regarded as exhibiting excellent performance. The accompanying table will serve as a metric to evaluate the effectiveness of employing contextual clue strategies in English reading comprehension instruction.

*Students' performance in English reading comprehension tests*

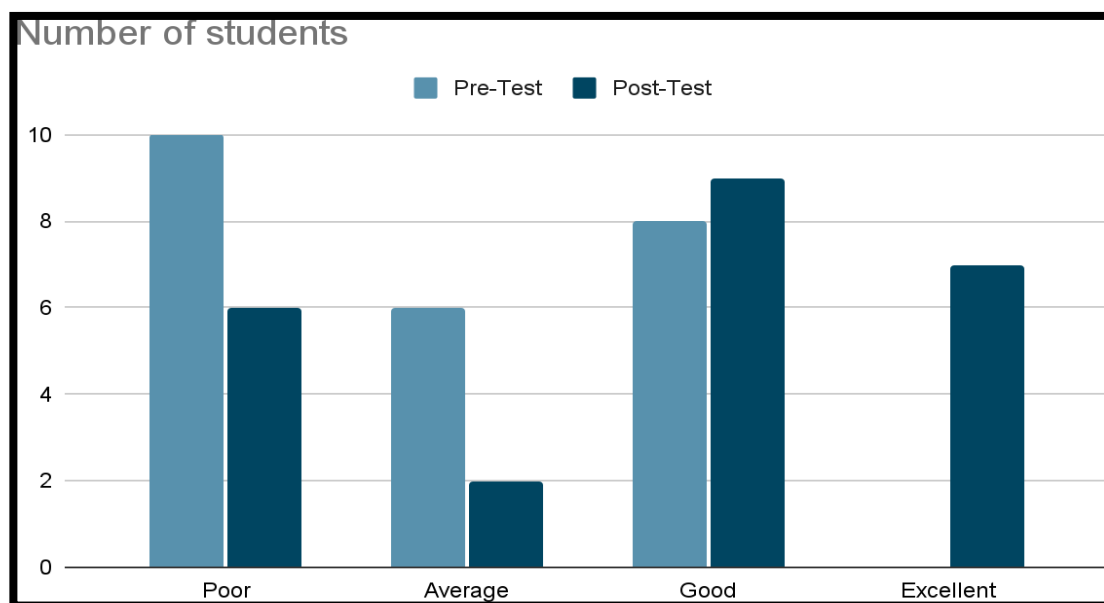


Diagram 1.1: The bar chart shows the number of students and students' performance in Pre-Test and Post-test based on grade category.

The diagram presented above illustrates the performance levels of students during both the pre-test and post-test phases. The pre-test serves as an assessment of the students' initial performance prior to their exposure to contextual clue strategies. The findings reveal that out of 24 students, 10 performed poorly, 6 achieved average scores, and 8 attained good scores, with no students reaching an excellent performance level in the pre-test.

In contrast, the post-test results indicate several notable improvements when compared to the pre-test. The most significant advancement is observed in the number of students achieving excellent performance, which increased from zero to 7 out of 24. Additionally, there was a modest rise in the number of students scoring at a good level, increasing from 8 to 9 out of 24.

Conversely, a decline is evident in the number of students who received average and poor performance scores. Both categories saw a reduction of 4 students each, resulting in only 2 students achieving average scores and a decrease from 10 to 5 students scoring poorly in the post-test. These test results underscore the development of students' vocabulary and reading comprehension skills in English lessons before and after the introduction of contextual clue strategies.

*Students' performance in English reading comprehension tests after interventions.*

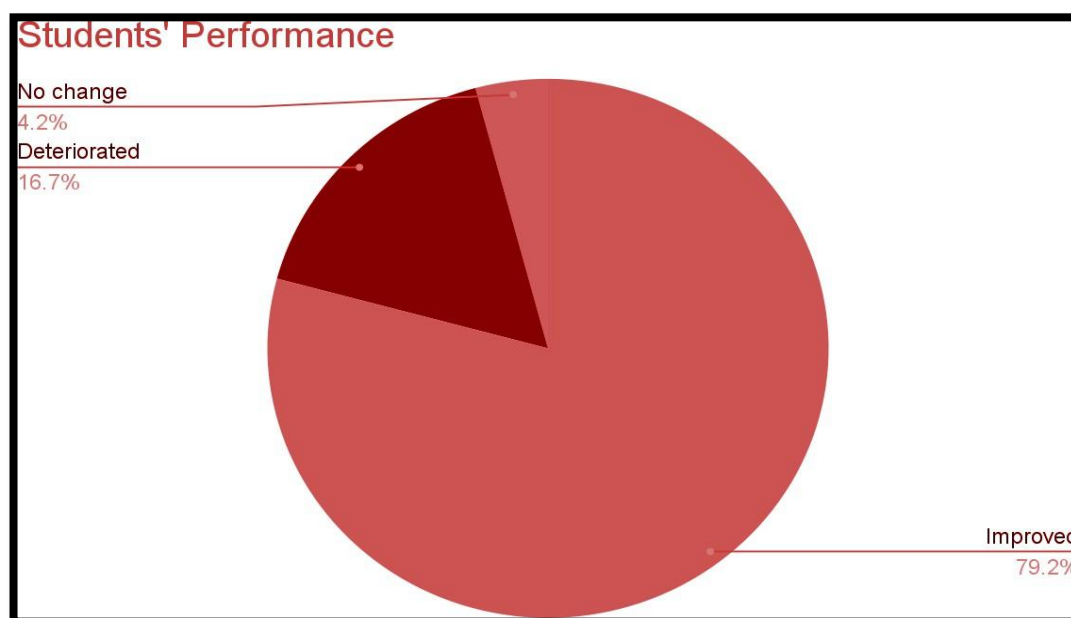


Diagram 1.2: Students' Performance

Diagram 1.2 illustrates the number and percentage of students' performance as indicated by their post-test results in relation to their pre-test outcomes. According to the diagram, 79.2% of the students, equating to 19 out of 24, demonstrated improvement in their post-test scores. Conversely, only 1 out of 24 students, representing 4.2%, exhibited no change in their results, while 16.7%, or 4 out of 24 students, experienced a decline in their performance. The students' performance levels, categorized by grade level, exhibit variability. The subsequent table provides detailed information regarding the students' grade levels before and after the interventions.



Table 1.2

*Details of Student's Grade Levels After Post-Test*

Performance	Performance Pattern	Grade Level	Research sample (n=24)	
			Number of students	Percentage (%)
<b>Improved</b>	Same grade level	Poor - Poor	4	16.7
		Good - Good	1	4.2
	One grade level higher	Poor - Good	2	8.3
		Average - Good	5	20.8
		Good - Excellent	4	16.7
	A few grade levels higher	Poor - Excellent	2	8.3
		Average-Excellent	1	4.2
<b>No change</b>	Same grade level	Good - Good	1	4.2
<b>Deteriorated</b>	Same grade level	Poor - Poor	2	8.3
	One grade level lower	Good - Average	2	8.3

Table 1.2 indicates that a significant majority of students (79.2%) demonstrated improvement in their post-test results, although the extent of this improvement varied among individuals. Some students showed only slight improvements, maintaining their previous grade level, while others advanced to one or more levels higher than their initial performance. Specifically, five students improved yet remained at the same grade level. Among the total of 24 students, 11 (42.2%) exhibited a range of improvements, transitioning from poor to good (8.3%), average to good (20.8%), and good to excellent (16.7%). Additionally, a few students made remarkable progress, advancing several grade levels beyond their initial scores. Notably, two students (8.3%) improved from a poor grade to an excellent grade, and one student (4.2%) progressed from an average grade to an excellent grade.

However, this research also recognizes that some students did not experience any change in their grade levels, and a few even experienced a decline despite the intervention. One student maintained a good grade level without any improvement or deterioration. Conversely, two students (8.3%) regressed from a good level to an average level, while another two students (8.3%) scored poorly on the initial test and performed even worse on the post-test. This data is significant as it supports the initial hypothesis of this research, although it may not be universally applicable to all students.

#### *Students' perception on using contextual clues to infer meaning of unfamiliar words in reading comprehension texts*

The data regarding students' performance can only reflect their progress in written form. To gain deeper insight into the students' perceptions of utilizing contextual clues in reading comprehension lessons, an interview was conducted following the post-test. This section presents the sample comments and direct quotations from the students, retaining their original language and any errors, which were influenced by the time constraints of this research.

The interview revealed that a majority of the students felt an increase in their confidence when reading English texts after being introduced to contextual clue strategies. Many expressed that these strategies facilitated their understanding of the underlying meanings of specific words within the text, as illustrated in Extract 1 (E1 to E3) below:

#### Extract 1

E1:	<i>"Yes, because it will be <b>easier</b> for me <b>to read English passages</b>, and I won't misread in English again."</i>
E2:	<i>"Ya, sebab mudah untuk mengetahui ayat yang tidak diketahui dalam salah satu petunjuk kontekstual"</i> <b>Translation:</b> <i>"Yes, because it is <b>easy to know</b> (understand) sentences that cannot be understood in (using) one of the contextual clues."</i>
E3:	<i>"Ya, kerana saya dapat memahami perkataan itu jadi saya yakin saya akan membaca teks bahasa Inggeris."</i> <b>Translation:</b> <i>"Yes, because I <b>can understand the sentence</b> so I am <b>confident</b> that I can read English texts."</i>

Notwithstanding the points, the students recognized that they encountered several difficulties during the intervention sessions, as illustrated in Extract 2 (E4 to E7) below. For the majority, the strategies involving contextual clues represented new information. They were initially introduced to these strategies in class, and several students admitted to experiencing challenges with the lesson at the outset (E4). One student noted the difficulty in pronouncing certain unfamiliar terms (E5). Additionally, they found it quite perplexing to identify the contextual clues within the text (E6) and expressed a need for significantly more practice to become proficient with the strategy (E7).

#### Extract 2

E4:	<i>"The challenge I get is, I <b>have to understand everything that is taught</b> so I have to stay focused so as not to miss a single point in reading or doing exercises"</i>
E5:	<i>"Sedikit susah untuk menyebut satu perkataan".</i> <b>Translation:</b> <i>"A bit <b>difficult to pronounce certain words</b>."</i>
E6:	<i>"Cabaran apabila menggunakan petunjuk kontekstual semasa latihan membaca ialah kuliru dengan sesetengah ayat dalam salah satu petunjuk kontekstual."</i> <b>Translation:</b> <i>The challenge while using contextual clues during a reading lesson is that <b>it is confusing for certain sentences</b> in one of the contextual clues."</i>
E7:	<i>Semua cabaran ini memerlukan latihan berterusan untuk meningkatkan kebolehan memahami teks melalui petunjuk kontekstual.</i> <b>Translation:</b> <i>"All of these challenges need <b>more continuous practice to enhance the ability to comprehend texts through contextual clues</b>."</i>

Furthermore, regarding future application, all students concurred that they are likely to persist in utilizing the contextual clue strategies they have acquired to enhance their text comprehension. Several students noted that they would employ these contextual clues, as they facilitate smoother reading and improve their understanding of unfamiliar vocabulary, as illustrated in Extract 3 (E8 to E10) below:

**Extract 3**

<b>E8:</b>	<i>"I will use this strategy to be able <b>to read and practice more smoothly</b>".</i>
<b>E9:</b>	<i>"Saya akan dapat meningkatkan kefahaman saya terhadap perkataan yang sukar dan menjadikan pembacaan lebih lancar dan berkesan."</i> <b>Translation:</b> <i>"I will be able to <b>enhance my comprehension of difficult words</b> and make my reading smoother and more effective."</i>
<b>E10:</b>	<i>"Ya, saya akan menggunakan strategi ini untuk mengenal pasti perkataan yang diberi melalui ayat-ayat yang diberikan."</i> <b>Translation:</b> <i>"Yes, I will <b>use this strategy to identify the given (unfamiliar) words</b> in sentences."</i>

In conclusion, the results indicate that students hold a favorable view of utilizing contextual clues during English reading comprehension lessons. This reading strategy aids students in making inferences and grasping the meanings of words through surrounding hints. Not only does this method improve the reading experience by facilitating a more fluid engagement, but it also increases their confidence when reading English texts and addressing unfamiliar vocabulary. Consequently, integrating strategies that focus on contextual clues into reading lessons can serve as an effective educational tool that encourages students to develop into proficient readers.

**Discussion***Summary of Findings*

This section provides a summary and analysis of the main research findings previously discussed, organized according to the research questions.

Research Question 1: Does the use of contextual clues effectively improve the vocabulary acquisition in Form 1 students in English reading lessons?

This study investigates the impact of contextual clue strategies on enhancing vocabulary acquisition during Form 1 English reading lessons. The findings were obtained by analyzing data from a group of Form 1 students, who completed reading comprehension assessments in the form of a pre-test and a post-test. The results indicated both improvements and declines in performance levels across the two tests. Regarding performance enhancement, a significant indicator of the effectiveness of contextual clues in boosting students' vocabulary acquisition is that 19 out of 24 students, or 72.9%, showed an increase in their test scores following the intervention sessions. Over half of the class experienced either slight improvements or substantial gains within a few weeks of the intervention, despite differences in their initial performance levels. Notably, two students made remarkable progress, advancing from a poor score to an excellent grade.

While there were many positive outcomes, the data also revealed some surprising results, particularly regarding a decline in student performance. Specifically, 4 out of 24 students, or 16.7%, experienced a drop in their test scores. However, this figure is relatively small compared to the number of students who showed improvement. One potential reason for this unexpected decline may be that the questions in the pre-tests and post-tests exceeded their CEFR level. The test results indicate that students struggle with questions above CEFR level B1. Additionally, as noted by Nation (2013), students may encounter difficulties in using contextual clues to infer the meanings of unfamiliar words, which could stem from limited

vocabulary, inadequate comprehension skills, or insufficient instruction on how to effectively use this strategy.

Hui et al. (2020) demonstrated that utilizing contextual clues as a reading strategy significantly improves reading comprehension, vocabulary development, and retention, while also encouraging more reading. The research data indicates that students can enhance their vocabulary and reading abilities by employing contextual clue strategies. This conclusion is consistent with earlier studies by Iltar (2019) and Hui et al. (2020), which also highlighted the positive effects of learning contextual clues on vocabulary acquisition among Year 6 students. Therefore, educators should consider integrating contextual clue reading strategies into their instructional methods to effectively address students' vocabulary growth and retention.

Research Question 2: What are the students' perceptions on learning vocabulary through contextual clue strategies?

This study subsequently investigates students' perceptions of vocabulary acquisition through contextual clue strategies by conducting interviews following the post-test. The responses to this inquiry were derived from the remarks provided by students during the interview.

A significant number of students reported an increase in their confidence when reading English texts after being introduced to contextual clue strategies. This observation, drawn from sample comments (Extract 1), indicates that utilizing contextual clues facilitates their comprehension of the meanings of specific words within the text. According to Farah Zulkefly and Abu Bakar Razali (2019), enhancing students' comprehension of texts and fostering their confidence in learning English is crucial, as a lack of understanding can adversely affect their language acquisition and motivation. By employing these strategies, students can address challenges related to limited resources, such as dictionaries or digital tools, thereby promoting a more inclusive learning environment and supporting vocabulary enhancement.

Despite the generally favorable perception, students acknowledged encountering several difficulties during the intervention sessions, as indicated in Extract 2 (E4 to E7). E4 noted that students initially struggled with the lessons due to their limited proficiency in English and insufficient exposure to the language outside the classroom. Lim (2021) and Jaikrishnan and Ismail (2021) suggested that by tailoring materials to the local context, educators can address the challenges posed by restricted vocabulary and language exposure. Incorporating local context may enhance the effectiveness of contextual clue strategies. To address these challenges, it is essential for students to engage in ongoing practice of this strategy, as highlighted in E7.

Regarding future application, as indicated in Extract 3, it is likely that they will continue to employ the contextual clue strategies they have acquired to enhance their text comprehension. Additionally, these contextual clues facilitate smoother reading, aiding in the understanding of unfamiliar vocabulary. Research indicates that students' attitudes toward language are influenced by their proficiency in it. Higher reading proficiency correlates with increased intrinsic motivation, leading to a greater interest in and positive attitude toward reading (Normazidah Che Musa et al., 2012). Consequently, this strategy is expected to

promote students' readiness for critical thinking and meaning deduction, ultimately improving their overall reading comprehension and vocabulary retention.

Overall, students generally hold favorable views regarding the use of contextual clues in reading lessons, as this approach enhances their learning experience and engagement with English texts. Additionally, it fosters their confidence in the English language, ultimately contributing to their development as proficient readers in the future.

### **Ethical Considerations**

This study seeks to explore the effectiveness of utilizing contextual clues in enhancing students' vocabulary acquisition, thereby improving their reading skills in English classes. Prior to data collection, it is essential to adhere to ethical guidelines to guarantee the rights, safety, and well-being of the participants. Schools and students were informed about the study's objectives, methodologies, and potential benefits to facilitate a seamless data collection process. Participation is entirely voluntary, and individuals retain the right to withdraw from study at any time. Additionally, participants are encouraged to request feedback on the research findings to aid in their future learning endeavors.

The data were gathered anonymously to ensure the confidentiality of participants' personal information and to honor their varied backgrounds. To protect participants from any potential harm, the findings derived from the collected data and classroom observations will remain confidential, thereby minimizing the risk of negative emotions or discomfort among participants. This study adhered to ethical standards by obtaining consent from all stakeholders involved in the research prior to any documentation or publication. The researchers also made a concerted effort to mitigate any personal biases that could influence the study, ensuring that the results are objective and impartial.

### **Conclusion**

In summary, this study aimed to explore how students acquire vocabulary through contextual clues during English reading lessons. The research primarily focused on two aspects: the effectiveness of contextual clue strategies in enhancing vocabulary acquisition in Form 1 English reading lessons and the students' perceptions regarding learning vocabulary through these strategies. The results indicated a beneficial effect on students' vocabulary development, demonstrating a significant improvement in their ability to deduce the meanings of unfamiliar words, which in turn enhances vocabulary retention and reading comprehension. Additionally, the study revealed that students held positive views about learning vocabulary through contextual clue strategies, which contributes to their confidence in reading English texts and is likely to facilitate their development into proficient readers in the future.

For future practice, recommendations include extending the duration of implementing contextual clue strategies and involving a larger participant pool to yield more comprehensive and focused outcomes. Additionally, integrating this research with multimedia resources or gamified applications could further enhance engagement, particularly in technology-oriented classrooms that are increasingly favored by younger generations.

In conclusion, the challenges faced by students and teachers in both rural and urban settings highlight the importance of effective teaching strategies and adequate support systems. Sukumaran et al. (2021) demonstrated that teacher motivation strategies, particularly those leveraging technology and interactive tools, played a crucial role in sustaining students' interest in English language learning during the pandemic. This aligns with the findings of this study, where the use of contextual clue strategies has shown positive effects on student engagement and vocabulary retention, emphasizing the need for innovative teaching methods in the face of evolving educational challenges. On the other hand, Shitiba et al. (2023) pointed out that external factors such as overcrowding and lack of parental support continue to impede students' ability to succeed academically, especially in rural and under-resourced settings. This is particularly relevant to the current study, which highlights the significance of providing effective strategies in rural settings where such challenges are prevalent. These findings underscore the need for systemic changes and targeted interventions to address the diverse needs of learners, not only to enhance vocabulary acquisition but also to support overall academic success.

### Acknowledgement

The authors would like to express their appreciation and gratitude to the UNITAR International University for funding this publication.

### References

- Aravind, B. R. & Rajasekaran, V. (2020). A descriptive study on ESL learners' vocabulary knowledge through cognitive and metacognitive strategies. *English Language Teaching Educational Journal*, 3(2), 142-150.
- Carter, H. & Bradford, M. (2019). "Opening the Window to a World Wider Than Our Little Classroom": The Importance of Culturally Relevant Pedagogy". *EViE: Emerging Voices in Education*, 1(1)18-32. [https://scholarworks.boisestate.edu/literacy\\_facpubs/107/](https://scholarworks.boisestate.edu/literacy_facpubs/107/)
- Zulkefly, F., & Razali, B. (2019). Malaysian Rural Secondary School Students' Attitudes towards Learning English as a Second Language. *International Journal of Instruction*, 12(1), 1141-1156. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1201367>
- Feng, Y. (2023). A study of English vocabulary learning strategies in rural junior middle schools. *Journal of Education and Educational Research*, 2(1), 93 - 97. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/369058531\\_A\\_study\\_of\\_English\\_vocabulary\\_learning\\_strategies\\_in\\_rural\\_junior\\_middle\\_schools](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/369058531_A_study_of_English_vocabulary_learning_strategies_in_rural_junior_middle_schools)
- Graves, M. F. (2006). *The Vocabulary Book*. Teachers College Press.
- Ilter, I. (2019). The Efficacy of Context Clue Strategy Instruction on Middle Grades Students' Vocabulary Development. *RMLE Online*, 42(1), 115. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19404476.2018.1554522>
- Jaikrishnan, S., & Ismail, H. H. (2021). A Review on Vocabulary Learning Strategies Used in Learning English as A Second Language. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 11(9), 297–309.
- Manyak, P. C., Manyak, A. & Kappus, E. M. (2021). Lessons from a decade of research on multifaced vocabulary instruction. *The Reading Teacher*, 75(1), 27-39. <https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.2010>.
- Nation, I. S. P. (2013). *Learning vocabulary in another language*. Cambridge University Press.

- Ryan, A. (2006). Learning the orthographical form of L2 vocabulary - A receptive and productive process. In Norbert Schmitt and Michael McCarthy (eds.), *Vocabulary: Description, acquisition and pedagogy* (pp 181 - 198). Cambridge University Press.
- Rafiq, R. (2017). The English Vocabulary Acquisition of the Students of State Junior High School 2 ParePare. *Journal of English Education and Development*, 1 (1), 18 - 35. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340162141\\_The\\_English\\_Vocabulary\\_Acquisition](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340162141_The_English_Vocabulary_Acquisition).
- Sukumaran, R. D., Nasir, F. D. M., Rahman, N. I. A., Che Ani, S., & Zuki, N. H. M. (2021). Students' motivation towards English language learning during the pandemic COVID-19 in Malaysia. *Asian Journal of Social Science Research*, 3(2), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8063215>
- Shitiba, P., Khoza, S., & Skosana, N. (2023). The effects of poor reading and writing on the attainment of quality education in Tshwane West District primary schools in Pretoria. *Asian Journal of Social Science Research*, 5(2), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10437339>