



Towards Integrating and Utilising Contextual Clues in Strategizing Development of Students Vocabulary Preferences in Nigerian Universities

Diala Edwin Lionel^{1*}, Ubah Florence Ebere², Uwadiegwu Chinedozi Iheoma³

^{1,2}Alvan Ikoku Federal College of Education, Owerri

³Imo State University, Owerri

Corresponding Author: Diala Edwin Lionel policynews004@gmail.com

ARTICLE INFO

Keywords: Vocabulary Learning, Contextual Clues, Word Meaning, Language Learners

Received : 19, March

Revised : 20, April

Accepted: 30, May

©2025 Lionel, Ebere, Iheoma:

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).



ABSTRACT

There are several approaches towards vocabulary learning and creating extra active and independent language learners. Integrating and utilizing appropriate contextual clues strategies is very important in enhancing language learners with required skills to realize and figure out word meanings accurately, moving away from too much reliance on the use of dictionary in enhancing academic capability and experience. The objective of this study is to determine forms of contextual clues and extent of learners' skill to acquire precise and accurate word meaning through contextual deduction. The participants were learners from various programmed taught contextual clues strategies and tested using class work sheets to examine and interpret the integration and utilization of the strategies. Results of findings show that most participants relied on different contextual clues approaches, especially cognitive strategies. The participants were as well observed to be independent in presuming word meaning through creating conscious decisions, as well as showing least reference to teachers while trying to apply the strategies taught. Further results show ineffective and fruitless correct opinions by some participants regardless of comparable strategy selection. The conclusions show a level of benefit to language learners. It is recommended that more emphasis be put on teaching and learning use of appropriate contextual clues in the improvement learner's skill.

INTRODUCTION

Learning of English vocabulary involves constant process that takes a lot of time and practice. In acknowledging that the acquisition of Vocabulary needs constant repetition in order for efficient and valuable vocabulary learning, Mukoroli (2011) notes that uninterrupted reinforcement on enhancing vocabulary skills is significant to students. This requires adequate teachers' knowledge to complement and improve student's requirements. Mukoroli highlights that vocabulary is not only related to the meaning of words but also involves how its use in language is structured: how people use and store words and how they learn words with the relationship that connects words, phrases, categories of words and phrases. The scholar also affirms that vocabulary teaching and learning involves regular attention in the English language classroom.

Learning English vocabulary is a crucial task for English learners. Lack of knowledge of words particular to the domain may result to failure. In learning English language, the basic control of word meanings and how it should be used in context is important. Language learners need to possess substantial vocabulary learning skills to learn word meaning more accurately.

Vocabulary learning skills are very important to learners. It helps learner's ability to improve their experiences in language learning more systematically. Mart (2012) demonstrates vocabulary as "indispensable part of language" and stresses that learning through context is meaningful for vocabulary building. Vocabulary could be learnt through learning methods which are appropriate systematic positioning of vocabulary. Diala and Onwumere (2024) citing Reardon (2011) posit that English vocabulary cover teaching language skills by the application of and understanding of English words which enhances skills. Mart (2012) notes that the value of learning vocabulary through context is important.

The language learners with limited vocabulary knowledge make great attempt to master reading for academic awareness. They rely entirely on the dictionary and ignorant of the intended meaning in text. They subsequently create incorrect choice of word meaning. Diala and Onwumere (2024) stress that the dictionary lacks adequate words and ways words change its meaning due to context. The scholars reinforce the competence of learning word meaning more efficiently and independently through context.

Alternatively, Awwad Osman (2013) explains that the learning circumstances confronting language learners are complex as a result of difficult words which most likely may not be retained notwithstanding checking their meanings in dictionaries numerous times. Several learners do not have specific vocabulary techniques to attain and retain information on new words. In the Nigerian context, students vocabulary preferences in Nigerian Universities often show invariable concern to enhance their language learning experience. This entails further studies on Nigerian language learners' tendency and skill on the use of contextual clues strategies.

Earlier studies in the likely application of contextual strategy carried out in other countries are vital in creating additional interest. Strategic vocabulary

learning using contextual clues strategies achieves and specifies that learners are extra free and dynamic when they employ strategic learning. Research questions on this study examinee classroom learning and teaching of contextual clues. It exposes how knowledgeable the learners could approximate correct word meaning through intelligent deduction. The results could signify the manner learners self-regulate their learning when selecting the contextual clues strategies.

Objectives of the Study

This study was carried out to determine the degree of applying context clue by Nigerian university students

Specifically, the study seeks to determine

1. extent context cue teaching improves learners' skill to deduce meanings of word from context.
2. learners' awareness towards deducing meanings of word from context

Research Questions

The study attempts to determine the answers to the following questions:

1. To what extent does context cue teaching enhances learners' skill to deduce meanings of word from context?
2. What is learners' level of awareness towards deducing meanings of word from context?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Context Cues

The wish to teach and learn contextual clues come is as a result of making extra vital and independent language learners through self-regulated vocabulary learning. Learning according to Oguamanam and Diala (2023) observe that learner's are the ones who do the learning part. Successful language learners have the ability to utilize vocabulary learning strategies and do it autonomously. They scholars note that vocabulary learning strategies are "The Best Tool" adjacent to education and its skill to function in various socio-economic environments. Utilising contextual clues strategies is related to thriving and unsuccessful language learners' usage of language. Oguamanam and Diala (2023) citing Sternberg and Powell (1983) classify context cues as ,suggestions included in a passage which make easy the decoding of the meaning of an unfamiliar word. In the same vein, The scholars posit that context cues are the surrounding words from which individuals select cues to understand the meaning of word.

Comprehending these cues assist s understanding the meaning of word. Context cues are found in several types of texts. Learners require awareness of these forms of cues to find out meanings of words. context cues has these forms: definition or synonyms, concrete examples, contrast cues, words or phrases that modify an unfamiliar word, conjunctions that join relationships and ideas, the repetition of an unfamiliar word, and unstated or implied meanings. Five cues that assist in finding word meanings are: punctuation cues, definition cues, contrast cues, comparison cues and example cues.

Context Cue Teaching: Clarke and Nation's Guessing Strategy (1980)

In making learners fully utilize of context cues existing in texts, Clarke and Nation (1980) suggest a guessing strategy through five steps:

1. To establish part of speech of the unfamiliar words;
2. To observe immediate grammar;
3. To learning wider context particularly conjunction relationships;
4. To guess word; and
5. To check guess.

Commenting further, the scholars state that it is necessary to make learners aware of the unsurprising conjunction relationships in contextual guessing because they will help learners recognize the context cue types more with ease.

Benefits of Context Cue Instruction

Concept of Vocabulary

Vocabulary is a vital element of language. It makes vocabulary possible in communication. Teaching vocabulary is very significant in language. Vocabulary is a variety of words that students must to be familiar with so as to read more progressively. Beck, Mckeown and Kucan (2013) accept that good vocabulary increases reading comprehension.

The efficient process of vocabulary learning through context according to Oguamanam and Diala (2023) involve five-step suggestion:

- a. Understanding part of speech of any unfamiliar word,
- b. Paying attention to direct context of unfamiliar word,
- c. Simplifying unfamiliar word if need be,
- d. Observing bigger context, and
- e. Deducing unfamiliar words meaning and ending it through checking whether it is accurate guess.

Using context primarily to decide the part of speech of the unknown word can be followed through looking at collocates of the unfamiliar words. Accordingly look at better context, look at word form, guess the meaning and finally keep on reading the text extra to confirm the meaning. Vocabulary learning strategies create several benefits in the acquisition of proper and up to standard word meaning through the support of context. Oguamanam and Diala (2023) further cite Hirai, Borrego, Garza and Kloock (2010) highlight that contextual practice permits learners to achieve a "depth of knowledge of words" which allows them tin understanding and relating words in ways which are considerable.

The benefits of contextual learning include:

- i. Learners predict the intention of evaluating word meaning in context.
- ii. Contextual meaning illustrates what desires to be communicated,
- iii. It expresses manner words are used.
- iv. It permits learners to observe the manner learnt words function grammatically.
- v. Words learnt in context assist learners understanding of word's collocations and grammatical structures
- vi. It generates encouraging impact on pre-text learning, oral and writing interaction and inferring meaning of words.

Vocabulary Teaching

Vocabulary teaching maintains students development of both receptive and expressive vocabularies. Shakouri, Mahdavi, Mousavi and Pourteghali (2014) state that vocabulary teaching is a major component of language, which assists learners in comprehending languages and conveying meanings. It is a primary provider to comprehension, fluency, realization and accomplishment. Lestari (2015) observes vocabulary as major feature of English and written communication skills such as listening, speaking, reading, and writing, which depends exclusively on quality of vocabulary the student possesses.

METHODOLOGY

The present study is descriptive survey. The participants consist of students from tertiary institutions studying English Language. All participants were undergraduate students. These participants were a representation of a total population of students in English department in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The participants were selected through random samplings. Data collected were from materials used in the classroom forms contextual clues strategies in actual teaching. Worksheets comprising a set of items examine the participants' level of understanding the use of contextual clues.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study demonstrated that clear instruction of context cues was proficient in enhancing learners' ability to presume meaning of unfamiliar words. Furthermore, the results made clear that learners improved their vocabulary understanding through the use of context, as well as demonstrate transmitting of context to new words that they were unable to see during teaching activity. Deduction is crucial to understanding from text and word meaning acquisition from context.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The result of the findings demonstrates that contextual cue strategy helps learners to gain advantage in the process of acquiring new words and their meanings. The result of findings highlights vital recommendations for educational actions through creation of learners' awareness in deducing meaning of unfamiliar words in context. Context cue strategy extensively helps learners with knowledge variety of context cues and their meaning.

As a result of the findings, the following recommendations were made.

1. English language teachers should use vocabulary teaching strategy in teaching reading comprehension.
2. teachers should focus interest on a good number of sight words in enhancing learners' reading comprehension to avoid the practice of requesting the learners to read and answer the questions that follow comprehension passages
3. Students should understand significance of vocabulary learning through context clues.

4. Learners should make ensure that the synonyms of the unidentified words are identified to make clear the meaning of words within the sentence.
5. Vocabulary teaching through context cue strategy should be integrated into English language curriculum.

FURTHER STUDY

This research still has limitations so further research is still needed on this topic.

REFERENCES

- Ahmed, A. O. A. (2013). Lexis development: the importance of contextual clues. *European Scientific Journal*.
- Alqahtani, M. (2015). The importance of vocabulary in language learning and how to be taught. *International Journal of Teaching and Education*, 3(3), 21-34.
- Alsaawi, A. (2013). To what extent guessing the meaning, from the context, is helpful in teaching vocabulary. *Arecls*, 10, 130-146.
- Beck, I., Mckeown, M., & Kucan, L. (2013). *Bringing Words to Life: Robust Vocabulary Instruction*. New York: Guilford Press. 100
- Celce- Murcia, M., Brinton, D. M., & Ann, S. M. (Eds.). (2014). *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language*. National Geographic Learning: Boston.
- Çetinavci, B. M. (2013). Contextual factors in guessing word meaning from context in a foreign language. *Procedia-Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 116(2014), 2670-2674.
- Cetinavci, B. M. (2013). Contextual factors in word meaning from context in a foreign language. *Procedia-Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 116.
- Dwaik, R. A. & Shehadeh, A. M. (2013). Guessing patterns of Palestinian college students. *The Reading Matrix*, 13(1), 14-26.
- Dwaik, R. A., & Shehadeh, A. M. (2013). Guessing patterns of Palestinian college students. *The Reading Matrix*, 13(1).
- Ebrahimi, S. S. (2012). Reading strategies of Iranian postgraduate English students living at ESL context in the First and Second Language. Paper presented at the 2012 International Conference on Education and Management Innovation, Singapore.
- Gafournia, N. (2014). Language learning strategy uses and reading achievement. *English Language Teaching*, 7(4).

- Ibrahim, E.H.E., Sarudin, I. & Mohamad, A. J. (2016). Relationship between vocabulary size and reading comprehension of ESL learners. *English Language Teaching*, 9(2), 116- 123.
- Iduma, A.O. (2016). Overcoming Reading Failures by reading: some successful suggestions. *Literacy and reading in Nigeria*, 16(1), 144-151.
- Kolahi, S. H., Azam, A., & Kehtari, M. (2013). The Comparative Effect of Types of Contextual Clues on Iranian EFL Learners' Prediction of the Meaning of Unknown Vocabularies. Science and Education Publishing.
- Lestari, W. L. (2015). The Teaching of Critical Reading in an EFL Classroom. *People: International Journal of Social Sciences*, 1(2), 519-530.
- Oakhill, J. V., Berenhaus, M. S. & Cain, K. (2015). Children's reading comprehension and comprehension difficulties. In A. Pollatsek & R. Treiman (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of reading* (pp. 344-360). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Oxford, R., & Crookall, D. (1990). Vocabulary learning: A critical analysis of techniques. *TESL Canada Journal*, 7(2), 9-30.
- Reardon, K. T. (2011). To what degree will learning to use context clues impact students' reading comprehension scores. University of Wisconsin, River Falls
- Reftari, S., Sharifabad, E. D., & Vosoughi, M. (2013). Reading research strategy in Iran. *Elixir Social Studies*, 55.
- Rokni, S. J. A., & Niknaqsh, H. R. (2013). The effect of context clues on EFL learners' reading comprehension. *ELT Voices-India*.
- Samiyan, L. V. & Khorasani, S. R. (2014). The comparison between contextual guessing strategies vs. memorizing a list of isolated words in vocabulary learning regarding long term memory. *International Journal of Science Culture and Sport*, 2(1), 12-18.
- Shakouri, A., Mahdavi, M., Mousavi, Y., & Pourteghali, A. A. (2014). The effect of explicit and implicit vocabulary instruction on the reading comprehension of University Students via Online Classroom. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary and Current Research*, 2, 522-528.
- Sharifahabad, E. D., & Vosoughi, M. (2013). Reading strategy research in Iran. *Elixir Social Studies*, 55.

- Tian, H., (2015). The application of contextual expressions to improve effectiveness of learning in ESP classroom. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 6(6),
- Tsiga, I.A. (2017). Reading as the foundation for learning: The Nigerian Centre for Reading Research and Development (NCRRD) Opens. *BUK Today*, 3(10),7-9.
- Wanzek, K. (2014). Building word knowledge: opportunity for direct vocabulary instruction in general education for students with reading difficulties. *Reading and Writing Quarterly*, 30 (2), 139-164.