

IMPACT OF CONTEXTUAL LEARNING STRATEGIES IN ENHANCING VERBAL PROFICIENCY IN ENGLISH AMONG EDUCATION STUDENTS OF LIPA CITY COLLEGES

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Abstract

This study examined the impact of contextual learning strategies on English verbal proficiency among Education students of Lipa City Colleges. It aimed to determine how contextual learning activities influence students' fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, clarity, and confidence in speaking English. The study's foundations are Lev Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory, which emphasizes the importance of social interaction and teamwork in language development, and John Dewey's Experiential Learning Theory, which stresses learning through firsthand experience and meaningful application of knowledge. A validated survey questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data from 87 first- to third- year Education students as part of a mixed-method explanatory sequential research design. The quantitative results were then further explained and supported by qualitative interviews. A thorough grasp of how contextual learning strategies affect students' verbal proficiency in English, especially in the areas of fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, clarity, and confidence. Students said that engaging in learning activities related to real-world situations helped them better understand lessons, express themselves more confidently, and articulate ideas more clearly. The results also showed that contextual learning strategies help achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education) by encouraging inclusive, meaningful, and learner-centered experiences that improve oral communication abilities and efficient use of educational materials. Based on the results, an intervention program was created to incorporate context- and experience-based activities into English instruction to enhance the verbal proficiency of Education students further. Thus, the study's findings indicate that contextual learning strategies enable learners to become more proficient communicators in both academic and real-world settings.

Keywords – *contextual learning strategies, Experiential Learning Theory, Social Constructivism, verbal proficiency*

Introduction

Speaking plays an important role in effective communication, but teaching verbal skills is very challenging. Thus, in the study of (Harmer, 2015; Goh and Burns), before teaching students to improve their verbal skills, a teacher should create an exercise based on students' difficulties and needs. As the students speak, they engage in conflict with linguistic factors such as limited vocabulary, low confidence, low motivation, fear of making mistakes, poor pronunciation, poor mastery of grammar, mother tongue interference, and inhibition of learning the second language (Widyasworo, 2019).

In Rahayu's (2015) study in Indonesia, despite having the courage to learn a second language, many students continued to struggle to speak the language effectively because they were unable to identify errors in their grammar and pronunciation. Viewing external factors as one of the blockages towards their effective learning, the influence of their environment that hinders their progress, which is similar to the situation in the Philippines, according to Lasala (2014), Filipino college students, despite considering English as the second language, still face struggles to learn and utilize it proficiently. Reyes et al. (2021) similarly emphasized the difficulty Filipino students have in learning a second language due to limited vocabulary and a lack of confidence in conversing in that language.

Furthermore, according to the case study of Dianne Pingcas and Timothy Ibojo, as reported in their 2023 study "Challenges in learning English Language," despite English being widely spoken worldwide, a large percentage of students still struggle to speak the language, which diminishes them. Additionally, in their studies it shows that students are more fluent in speaking specialized language than the English language despite of teachers are instructed to use it as the main language to use while inside the classroom set up due to lack of motivation to achieve the goal of being fluent in speaking English language and difficulty to analyze the correct usage of words in right arrangement due to short period of time invested in teaching grammar, syntax, and other ways to learn the language.

Other than that, as the observation took place, the ongoing struggles with speaking the language were evident, and, in most cases, Contextual learning strategies were employed. It is an educational approach that uses academic content to build connections to real-life situations, helping students draw links between schoolwork and life outside. It helps the students to be more engaged. Retaining the application of the concepts to their learning (Lily Hulatt, 2024).

According to Smith (2015), as cited in Tizon (2019), English was extensively used in communication. In the Philippines, the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, also known as Republic Act No. 10533, extended basic education from 10 years to 12 years to align with the required 21st-century skills and build students' readiness for higher education, employment, or even entrepreneurship. As Separa et al. (2015), as cited in Apat et al. (2023), note, even though English was taught and part of the curriculum, many students have difficulty composing words or sentences and expressing their ideas in English when they reach college.

With that, this practice encourages deeper understanding and meaningful retention by enabling learners to connect new information to their experiences and prior knowledge. Dewey's philosophy of "learning by doing" is paramount, and students should engage in practical activities as part of their learning. According to Alqahtani (2022), using experiential learning methods may increase students' engagement and the acquisition of practical skills in language teaching, reinforcing Dewey's perspective.

Another thing, this study can also be based on the theory of social constructivism by Lev Vygotsky in 1968. According to Vygotsky, social constructivism is the idea that learning occurs through social interactions with others. In other words, students can complete any activity (regardless of its difficulty) with help from an adult or a peer. (Mohammed & Kinyo, 2020).

By examining the factors that affect the impact of contextual learning strategies on the English verbal proficiency of selected Education students at Lipa City Colleges, this study

will help the institution develop strategies that strengthen students' clarity of communication and proper use of grammar, skills necessary for their future roles as educators. The study also emphasizes that verbal proficiency should not be developed only within the classroom but must extend to real-life settings where students can apply and refine their communication skills. With adequate support and practice, Education students can become more confident, competent, and effective communicators in both their academic work and everyday interactions.

Methodology

This study employed a mixed-method explanatory sequential design to examine the *Impact of contextual learning strategies on enhancing verbal proficiency in English among students in Lipa City Colleges*. Hence, this design involved both quantitative and qualitative approaches, allowing the researchers to obtain measurable data while also exploring participants' experiences and perceptions in depth.

With this, the explanatory sequential design is a mixed-method approach in which the quantitative phase is conducted first to collect numerical data, followed by a qualitative phase to explain and elaborate on the results. Integration of the two data types occurs during interpretation, providing both measurable evidence and deeper insights. Therefore, this design is commonly used in educational research to combine objective analysis with contextual understanding (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

The study was conducted at Lipa City Colleges and involved first- to third-year students enrolled in the Education program. A total of 87 students participated, representing these year levels. Since the sample consisted only of students who were accessible and belonged to the selected year levels, the method was classified as non-probability sampling, specifically purposive sampling, because not all members of the entire Education student population had an equal chance of being selected. They were selected because they were still in the stage of developing their communication skills. At the same time, fourth-year students were excluded as they were already preparing for their On-the- Job Training and were expected to have more advanced communication competencies. Including them could have introduced variability unrelated to the study's objectives, which focused on students who were still building foundational communication skills.

In this study, data were gathered using two primary research instruments: self-made questionnaires and interviews. The survey questionnaire served as the main tool for collecting quantitative data and was designed to assess variation in students' responses. This method provided an effective and systematic way of gathering measurable information. The survey was administered in person using printed questionnaires. Interviews were conducted to complement the survey results and provide deeper insights into students' experiences and perspectives. These interviews allowed for follow-up questions, enabling a richer understanding of the information gathered.

The survey questionnaires use a Likert Scale to determine the verbal interpretation of the results. Responses were measured on a 1–5 scale, where 5 indicated “**Strongly Agree**,” 4 meant “**Agree**,” 3 indicated “**Moderately Agree**,” 2 signified “**Disagree**,” and 1 represented the lowest level, “**Strongly Disagree**.”

The researchers followed a systematic strategy to implement the research design in collecting relevant data. The questions underwent content validation to ensure they were precise, relevant,

and aligned with the study's objectives. After collecting the responses, the data processing procedure began to determine the accuracy of the information gathered. The analysis was carried out using statistical tools with the help of a statistician.

Subsequently, in the qualitative phase, the researchers interviewed Education students who volunteered to participate in the study. This phase allowed the researchers to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the students' experiences and to examine how contextual learning strategies specifically impacted their English verbal proficiency, highlighting how these strategies enhanced the students' ability to communicate effectively in a second language.

Lastly, the researchers produced significant findings, discussions, and recommendations. Based on the results, the use of contextual learning strategies proved effective in enhancing the English verbal proficiency of Education students at Lipa City Colleges, aligning with the action plan developed to improve students' communication skills in a second language.

To protect the respondents' and researchers' profiles, no personal information was disclosed. The respondents were able to freely provide their insights and preferences, which were kept confidential to protect their identities and responses. The researchers presented factual results and information based on survey findings to eliminate personal biases in the data presentation.

To ensure the privacy of the participants, the researchers committed to disposing of the collected information thirty days after data collection, in accordance with RA 10173, also known as the Data Privacy Act.

To provide answers to the specific question about the beginning of this study, the gathered data will be subjected to the following statistical statements:

Mean. This was used to determine the average scores across the data's main components and overall responses, including the impact of contextual strategies on verbal proficiency (fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, clarity, and confidence) and on the SDG objectives (oral interaction skills, technology access, and learning resources).

Percentage/Ranking. This referred to the process of transforming numerical or ordinal data by assigning ranks based on their ordered position. In this study, ranking was used to arrange the data in ascending order, with each value assigned a rank.

Frequency Distribution. This was used to present the overall distribution of scores in contextual learning strategies in enhancing verbal proficiency in English.

Kruskal Wallis/t-test. Applied to determine whether the impact of English proficiency on contextual learning strategies varied significantly across groups defined by students' profile variables.

Pearson's r. Used to determine whether a significant relationship existed between the impact of contextual learning strategies and the SDG 4 objectives related to improving verbal proficiency in English.

Finding and Discussion

As seen in Table 1.1, the age group 18 - 21 years old had the highest frequency count of 80, or 91.95%, at rank 1, while the age group 22 - 25 years old had the lowest frequency count of 2, or 2.30%, at rank 3. Younger learners often show greater openness and responsiveness to communicative and interactive learning activities. Saito, Dewaele, and Hanzawa (2017) emphasized that younger language learners typically show higher motivation and greater improvement in speaking proficiency when consistently engaged in communicative practice. Similarly, Khajavy and Ghonsooly (2017) highlighted that both male and female learners can succeed equally in communicative activities when provided with supportive, meaningful learning conditions.

In terms of the year levels of the student-respondents, the 1st year had the highest frequency count of 34, or 39.08%, ranking 1st. Meanwhile, the 2nd Year reported the lowest frequency count, 21, or 24.14%, at rank 3. The 3rd-year students ranked second, likely because they already have more experience in speaking tasks and teaching activities, which helps them feel confident and participate actively. To support these, Nguyễn Thị Bích Ngọc (2023) said, “Task-based language teaching, including role-plays and group activities, improves speaking accuracy, clarity, and overall confidence across different learner levels.

As shown in Table 1.2, the local cultural background of Tagalog had the highest frequency count of 87 (100%) at rank 1, while Hiligaynon/Ilonggo had the lowest, 2 (2.30%) at rank 4. The high number of Tagalog respondents can be attributed to the school's location in a predominantly Tagalog-speaking region and to the widespread use of Tagalog in daily life, education, and the media. In contrast, Hiligaynon/Ilonggo obtained the lowest frequency, with only two respondents reflecting that students from other regional cultures are much fewer in this population.

For the Foreign or Mixed cultural background of the respondents, Filipino Chinese and Filipino American have equal frequency counts of 2 or 2.30% at rank 1.5. In contrast, Filipino Japanese has only one frequency or 1.15% at rank 3. Although these categories represent only a few students, they still add diversity to the class, which may influence learners' exposure to different communication styles.

In terms of the primary language used, Tagalog remains the most dominant language, with 82 respondents (94.25%), indicating that it is the main medium of communication at home and in everyday interactions. Bisaya and Kapampangan share the lowest frequency, with one respondent each or 1.15%. This indicates that only a small number of students regularly use regional languages other than Tagalog.

As gleaned from Table 2 in terms of fluency, the student-respondents strongly agreed that using contextual learning strategies helps them discover words and meanings that enhance their English-speaking abilities, with the highest weighted mean of 4.41 and the highest rank of 1. However, the said group of respondents only agreed that contextualizing English learning reduces the effort they need to construct speech, with a weighted mean of 3.92 and a rank of 5. This suggests that even with contextual learning, learners still need to think carefully before speaking. The composite mean of 4.23 indicated that the student-respondents strongly agreed on the impact of contextual learning strategies on English verbal proficiency, particularly fluency.

As revealed in Table 3 in terms of pronunciation, the student-respondents strongly agreed that exposures to authentic listening materials through contextual learning (e.g., videos, conversations) improve their English pronunciation, and context-based speaking tasks (e.g., group discussions, problem-solving) help them recognize and imitate proper pronunciations, which obtained the highest equal weighted means of 4.39 and the highest ranks of 1.5. Moreover, the said group of respondents still strongly agreed that using English in meaningful situations makes them more confident in pronouncing unfamiliar words, which received the lowest weighted mean of 4.32 and the lowest rank of 5. The composite mean of 4.36 indicated that the student-respondents strongly agreed on the impact of contextual learning strategies on English pronunciation. Thus, contextual learning strategies, including role-play, authentic listening, and meaningful speaking tasks, help learners communicate clearly and accurately.

As gleaned from Table 4 in terms of vocabulary, the student-respondents strongly agreed that applying vocabulary in real-life situations makes it easier for them to understand and use new words, which showed the highest weighted mean of 4.40 and the highest rank of 1. Teng (2024) noted that vocabulary learned through real-life contexts strengthens memory and improves communicative accuracy. Furthermore, the said group of respondents again strongly agreed that exposure to contextual tasks (e.g., role-play, problem-solving) enhanced their ability to use vocabulary in conversations, which received the lowest weighted mean of 4.26 and the lowest rank of 5. The composite mean of 4.33 indicated that the student-respondents strongly agreed on the impact of contextual learning strategies on English vocabulary proficiency.

As reflected in Table 5 in terms of grammar, the student-respondents agreed that related grammar activities make it easier for them to understand and apply grammar in practice, which made the highest weighted mean of 4.11 and the highest rank of 1. In addition, the said group of respondents still agreed that they experience difficulties in learning grammar due to structural differences between English and their mother tongue, which had the lowest weighted mean of 3.86 and the lowest rank of 5. This suggests that differences often appear in grammatical and sentence structures, leading to repeated errors if not properly addressed. The composite mean of 4.02 indicated that the student-respondents strongly agreed on the impact of contextual learning strategies on English grammar proficiency. Sato and Dussuel Lam (2021) emphasized that combining contextual grammar tasks with self-monitoring and guided noticing significantly improves grammatical accuracy.

As gleaned from Table 6, the student-respondents strongly agreed that clear pronunciations of the speakers help them process and convey messages more accurately during interpretation, yielding the highest weighted mean of 4.46 and the highest rank of 1. This finding suggests that when words are articulated clearly, students can follow the flow of ideas and interpret meaning more clearly. The composite mean of 4.35 indicated that the student-respondents strongly agreed on the impact of contextual learning strategies on English verbal proficiency in terms of clarity. This is supported by Achari and Esa (2017), who highlighted that contextual and real-life communication activities strengthen learners' pronunciation awareness and help them produce clearer speech over time.

As reported in Table 7, the student-respondents strongly agreed that contextual learning strategies (e.g., role-playing, real-life scenarios) make them feel more confident to speak in English, they gain more self-confidence in speaking English when lessons are connected to real-life situations, and applying English in practical and meaningful tasks boost their confidences in verbal communications which garnered the highest equal weighted means of 4.26 and the highest ranks of 2. On the contrary, the said group of respondents only agreed that

they feel less anxious about making mistakes when using English during contextual learning activities, with the least weighted mean of 3.92 and the least rank of 5. The composite mean of 4.14 indicated that the student-respondents agreed on the impact of contextual learning strategies on English verbal proficiency in terms of confidence.

As written in Table 8, the student-respondents strongly agreed that contextual learning promotes inclusivity and equal participation in classroom discussions, supporting the goals of quality education (SDG 4) with the highest weighted mean of 4.43 and the highest rank of 1. . In a similar vein, Luo (2024) emphasized that structured contextual activities, such as group discussions and role-plays, promote inclusivity by giving each student a chance to express ideas, respond to peers, and practice language in realistic situations. Conversely, the said group of respondents only agreed that exposure to contextual tasks (e.g., role-play, problem-solving) improves their ability to use vocabulary in conversations, which reported the lowest weighted mean of 4.23 and the lowest rank of 3.

As shown in Table 9, the student-respondents strongly agreed that access to digital devices (e.g., computers, smartphones, tablets) provides them with equal opportunities to learn English, in line with SDG 4's goal of inclusive education, with the highest weighted mean of 4.40 and the highest rank of 1. Supporting this, Karim and Rahman (2020) found that technology-enhanced language learning promotes equitable access, allowing students to practice, explore, and apply English in ways that accommodate different learning needs and schedules. Conversely, the said group of respondents agreed that they have equal access to quality English learning through technological tools, regardless of their background, and that technology-supported learning activities make them feel more included in classroom participation and discussions, which received the least weighted equal means of 4.17 and the least ranks of 4.5.

As presented in Table 10, the student-respondents strongly agreed that English proficiency is essential for academic achievement, career advancement, and global communication, with the highest weighted mean of 4.41 and the highest rank of 1. Meanwhile, the said group of respondents only agreed that blended learning (combining in-person teaching with digital resources) can improve student engagement and language proficiency, which garnered the lowest weighted mean of 4.05 and the lowest rank of 5.

As shown in Table 11, These results indicate that the responses of the student-respondents regarding the impact of English proficiency on contextual learning strategies show significant differences in fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary, but no significant differences in grammar clarity or confidence, when grouped by their primary language. Learners' primary language plays a crucial role in their ability to acquire additional languages, including English. Students with strong foundations in their first language can transfer skills such as vocabulary knowledge, sentence construction, and discourse organization when learning a second language (Bularon, 2025). In Philippine classrooms, mother tongue-based instruction has been found to improve comprehension and oral participation compared to English-only approaches, highlighting that first-language use actively supports verbal development rather than being merely a background factor.

Contextual learning strategies, which emphasize real-life communication and interactive tasks, are more effective when they connect new language input to learners' existing linguistic and cultural knowledge. When students encounter activities that reflect their familiar language environments, they can more easily relate to the task and engage in meaningful oral practice (Dagalea et al., 2025). This aligns with the study's finding that fluency, pronunciation, and

vocabulary showed highly significant differences when students were grouped according to their primary language. Tagalog-speaking learners, who frequently navigate between Filipino and English in daily life, often demonstrate higher oral proficiency, aided by mixed-language exposure and code-switching practices (Del Mundo & Velasco, 2025). Conversely, learners from regional language backgrounds, such as Bisaya, Ilocano, or Kapampangan, generally exhibit strong oral skills in their mother tongue but may have limited opportunities to practice English outside the classroom. This contributes to observable differences in fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary. On the other hand, grammar, clarity, and confidence did not show significant differences, as these aspects are primarily developed through systematic classroom instruction and structured speaking tasks, providing similar learning experiences across language groups (Brown, 2014; Ellis, 2015).

As reflected in Table 12, these results indicate that the student-respondents' responses regarding the impact of contextual strategies on verbal proficiency in terms of confidence are highly significant in relation to their responses on SDG 4 objectives regarding oral interaction skills, technology access, and learning resources. The integration of technology and student-centered approaches has significantly reshaped language teaching practices. Digital tools and learner-focused strategies can create more supportive and interactive learning environments, particularly in developing students' speaking abilities. These findings underscore the need to move beyond traditional methods and offer learners authentic opportunities to communicate and participate meaningfully in class.

Nguyen and Pham (2022) highlighted the growing importance of technology in language education, noting that digital platforms and online discussions offer learners a more relaxed and flexible space to practice speaking. These virtual environments help reduce pressure and encourage students to express themselves more confidently. In addition, Bao (2020) underscored the significance of student-centered teaching in boosting learner engagement. While the study acknowledged that an enjoyable classroom setting contributes to positive learning experiences, it stressed that enjoyment alone does not guarantee active participation. Instead, students must be provided with real and purposeful chances to engage in verbal communication for meaningful learning to occur.

Conclusions

The findings revealed that contextual learning strategies influenced students' English proficiency differently based on their profiles. Age, year level, cultural background, and primary language affected fluency, pronunciation, and vocabulary, while sex had no significant impact. Grammar, clarity, and confidence were less affected by these factors. This indicates that personal experiences and language environment shape how students develop speaking skills, while guided practice supports consistent improvement in grammar and confidence. Thus, real-life activities helped students speak more naturally and communicate better, but progress varied among individuals.

Moreover, the study proposed an intervention program called "English in Action: Verbal Proficiency Program." This is to enhance the English verbal proficiency of Education students through contextual learning activities that practice real-life communication tasks, aiming to develop fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, clarity, and confidence. Continuous engagement with meaningful activities and supportive resources is likely to

improve long-term language proficiency, helping students communicate more effectively in academic and everyday situations.

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