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The Effects of Instructional Practices on Vocabulary Development Among Elementary Learners

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Abstract: This study aims to determine the effects of instructional practices on vocabulary development among elementary learners in the public elementary schools of Santiago District during School Year 2025–2026. Specifically, it seeks to identify the instructional practices commonly employed by teachers in vocabulary instruction, determine the learners' level of vocabulary proficiency in terms of vocabulary test scores, retention of learned words, and application in reading comprehension, examine the significant difference between learners exposed to traditional methods and innovative instructional strategies, and establish the relationship between instructional practices and vocabulary proficiency. The study employs a quantitative research approach using descriptive, causal-comparative, and correlational research designs. The participants will be selected elementary learners from the public elementary schools of Santiago District through stratified random sampling. Two research instruments will be utilized: a teacher questionnaire to identify commonly employed vocabulary instructional practices and a researcher-made vocabulary test to assess learners' vocabulary knowledge, word retention, and application in reading comprehension. The gathered data will be analyzed using frequency and percentage, mean and standard deviation, independent samples t-test, and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation, with a 0.05 level of significance. The study is expected to provide relevant insights into how traditional and innovative instructional practices contribute to vocabulary development among elementary learners. Its findings may serve as a basis for improving classroom instruction, strengthening literacy programs, and developing appropriate teaching strategies that promote vocabulary acquisition, retention, and reading comprehension.

Keywords: *Instructional Practices, Vocabulary Development, Vocabulary Proficiency, Traditional Methods, Innovative Strategies, Elementary Learners, Reading Comprehension.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

➢ *Background of the Study*

Vocabulary is one of the most important foundations of learning. It helps students understand texts, express ideas, and participate actively in classroom activities. However, many elementary learners continue to struggle with vocabulary growth, which affects their reading comprehension and overall academic performance.

In schools, vocabulary is often taught through traditional methods such as memorization and drills. While these practices are familiar and easy to implement, they may not always lead to lasting learning. Learners may recall words temporarily but fail to use them meaningfully in reading and communication. This situation creates a gap in literacy development that can affect students as they progress to higher grade levels.

At the same time, international assessments such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) highlight the importance of strong vocabulary skills. Reading literacy, which depends heavily on vocabulary, is a major domain in PISA. The Philippines has faced challenges in this area, making it necessary to explore more effective ways of teaching vocabulary to improve student outcomes.

Given this context, the study is proposed to examine the relationship between instructional practices and vocabulary proficiency among elementary learners. By focusing on measurable outcomes, the research aims to

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provide evidence that can guide teachers and schools in improving strategies for vocabulary instruction.

➢ *Theoretical Framework*

This study is guided by four main learning theories that explain how vocabulary is learned and how teaching practices affect student outcomes:

- Behaviorist Theory – Learning happens through repetition and reinforcement. This explains why traditional methods like memorization and drills are commonly used in teaching vocabulary.
- Constructivist Theory – Learners build knowledge by connecting new ideas to what they already know. Vocabulary instruction becomes more effective when words are taught in meaningful contexts.
- Sociocultural Theory – Learning is supported by social interaction and guidance. Activities such as group work, peer discussions, and teacher scaffolding help students acquire vocabulary more effectively.
- Information Processing Theory – Learning involves storing and retrieving information. Teaching practices that encourage meaningful use of words improve memory and long-term retention.

These theories provide the foundation for the study. They explain why traditional practices may lead only to temporary recall, why innovative strategies foster deeper understanding, and how interactive or technology-based approaches can support lasting vocabulary growth.

➢ *Conceptual Framework*

The paradigm below illustrate the conceptual framework of the study.

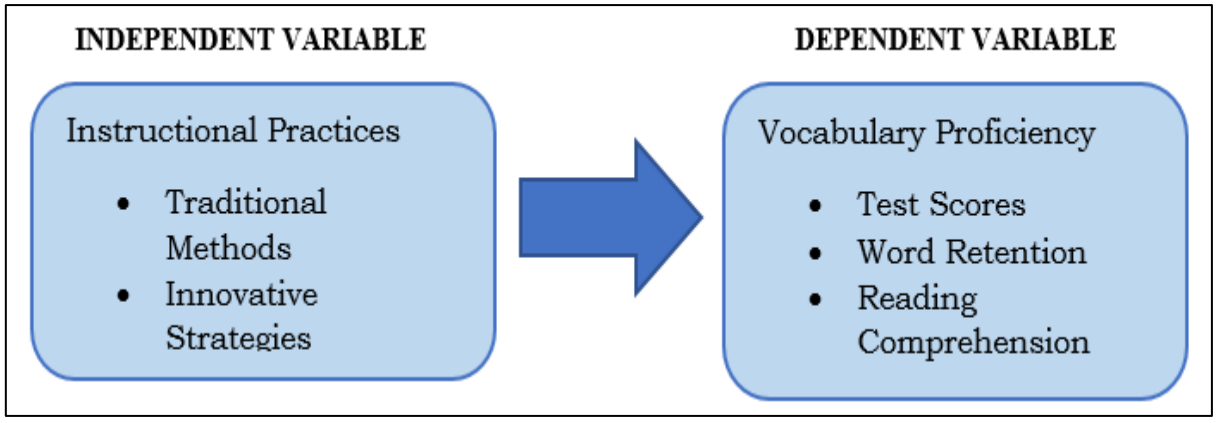


Fig 1 The Research Paradigm

This paradigm shows the relationship between Instructional Practices (Independent Variable) and Vocabulary Proficiency (Dependent Variable). The framework is designed to show how different teaching strategies directly influence learners' ability to acquire, retain, and apply vocabulary.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

➢ *Instructional Practices in Vocabulary Teaching*

Instructional practices refer to the strategies, methods, and techniques employed by teachers to facilitate learning and improve learner outcomes. In elementary education, effective instructional practices are essential in helping learners acquire vocabulary knowledge, develop language proficiency, and enhance reading comprehension. Research has consistently demonstrated that the quality of instruction significantly influences vocabulary acquisition and overall literacy development.

Explicit vocabulary instruction to build fair access for all learners emphasized that vocabulary learning becomes more effective when teachers explicitly teach word meanings, encourage repeated exposure to vocabulary, and provide opportunities for learners to use newly acquired words in meaningful contexts. Explicit instruction enables learners to make connections between words and their uses, thereby strengthening vocabulary retention and application. Furthermore, systematic vocabulary instruction supports diverse learners and contributes to equitable access to literacy learning.

Similarly, Habiba (2024), in a systematic review of vocabulary instruction practices among primary school learners, found that effective vocabulary instruction involved multimodal teaching approaches, contextualized learning experiences, and application-based activities. The review revealed that combining visual aids, oral discussions, collaborative activities, and authentic language experiences enhanced vocabulary learning more effectively than isolated word memorization.

The effectiveness of explicit instruction was further demonstrated by Bauer and Tang (2022), who examined the impact of explicit vocabulary instruction on fifth-grade learners. Their findings showed that structured vocabulary instruction significantly improved learners' vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension. Likewise, Bauer (2022) reported that carefully planned vocabulary lessons enhanced learners' understanding and use of academic vocabulary, indicating the importance of intentional instructional practices in vocabulary development.

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Recent studies have also explored innovative instructional approaches. Ciğerci, Bozan, and Gürel Cennetkuşu (2025) highlighted the effectiveness of gamification in vocabulary instruction. Their systematic review found that game-based learning environments increased learner engagement, motivation, and vocabulary acquisition. The use of digital games, rewards, challenges, and interactive activities encouraged active participation and deeper learning.

Technology-enhanced vocabulary instruction has likewise received considerable attention. Albaqami and colleagues (2026) examined ChatGPT-assisted vocabulary instruction and reported improvements in vocabulary learning among learners exposed to technology-supported practices. Their findings suggested that artificial intelligence tools can provide personalised language learning experiences and reinforce vocabulary acquisition.

According to Sedita (2024), effective vocabulary instruction should incorporate direct teaching, contextual analysis, morphology instruction, and repeated exposure to academic words. Learners develop deeper word knowledge when vocabulary is taught systematically and integrated across content areas. These findings were consistent with those of Zeng and colleagues (2025), whose systematic review concluded that instructional practices grounded in constructivist, sociocultural, and psycholinguistic theories positively influenced vocabulary development.

In the Philippine context, Handig, San Gabriel, Garcia, and Domingo (2023) identified several effective vocabulary teaching practices, including the use of graphic organizers, word games, visual supports, repetition, collaborative learning activities, and contextualized instruction. The researchers noted that interactive approaches enhanced learners' motivation and vocabulary acquisition.

Likewise, Remo and Velasco (2022) found that game-based learning strategies contributed significantly to vocabulary development among Grade Five pupils. Their findings suggested that learners exposed to interactive vocabulary activities demonstrated better word recognition and retention than those exposed solely to traditional approaches.

Collectively, these studies demonstrated that instructional practices characterized by explicit teaching, active engagement, contextualized learning, technology integration, and collaborative experiences contribute significantly to vocabulary growth among elementary learners.

- *Vocabulary Development Among Elementary Learners*

Vocabulary development is a fundamental component of language acquisition and academic success. It refers to the continuous expansion of learners' word knowledge, including understanding word meanings, retention of learned vocabulary, and the ability to use words effectively in communication and comprehension tasks.

Research has consistently established the relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension. Learners with strong vocabularies are better able to understand texts, infer meanings, and communicate effectively. Vocabulary growth is therefore considered a critical predictor of literacy achievement throughout elementary education.

Li, Ringstaff, Tripathy, Flynn, and Thomas (2019) demonstrated that learners who participated in a Word Learning Strategies Program achieved significantly higher vocabulary gains and reading comprehension scores than learners receiving conventional instruction. The study underscored the importance of equipping students with strategies for independently learning and understanding new words.

Academic vocabulary instruction was also emphasized by Fishtrom (2025), whose systematic review showed that academic vocabulary interventions positively affected vocabulary knowledge and language performance. The review highlighted the importance of sustained vocabulary instruction in improving learners' literacy skills and academic achievement.

The relationship between vocabulary and bilingual language development was investigated by Tan de Ramos (2023), who examined the vocabulary development of Filipino-English bilingual children. The findings showed that exposure to multiple language environments influenced vocabulary acquisition and contributed to language proficiency development.

In another local study, Macabenta and Niala (2024) found that word games significantly improved both vocabulary development and reading comprehension among Grade 4 learners. Through repeated exposure to vocabulary in meaningful contexts, learners demonstrated stronger word retention and understanding.

Similarly, Frando (2022) reported that digital learning platforms such as WordWall enhanced reading comprehension among Grade 5 pupils. The interactive nature of digital vocabulary activities provided learners with opportunities to engage actively with words and concepts.

Magdale and colleagues (2024) investigated the effects of pre-teaching vocabulary and repeated reading on Grade 4 learners. Their findings indicated that learners showed improvements in reading comprehension when essential vocabulary was introduced before reading activities. This suggests that vocabulary knowledge serves as an essential foundation for text understanding.

Studies also revealed the consequences of limited vocabulary proficiency. Heraña and Azarias (2024) identified vocabulary deficiencies as one of the contributing factors to reading difficulties among Grade Three learners. Their study recommended the development of instructional interventions to address vocabulary gaps and strengthen literacy skills.

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Likewise, Dela Rosa and Paragas (2024) reported that comprehension skills among elementary learners were significantly associated with vocabulary knowledge. Learners with stronger vocabularies exhibited higher comprehension performance and greater confidence in engaging with reading materials.

Furthermore, Corpuz and colleagues (2024) found a positive relationship between vocabulary skills and reading comprehension. Learners who demonstrated extensive vocabulary knowledge were better able to analyse texts and comprehend complex information.

In a related Philippine study, Pua (2021) established that word reading ability, reading comprehension, and English performance were significantly related. The findings suggested that vocabulary development plays a vital role in learners' language achievement and academic success.

These studies collectively suggested that vocabulary proficiency supports reading comprehension, language development, and academic performance among elementary learners.

- *Studies on Instructional Practices and Vocabulary Development*

A substantial body of research has examined the relationship between instructional practices and vocabulary development. The literature consistently indicated that learners exposed to effective instructional practices demonstrated stronger vocabulary acquisition, retention, and application.

Zeng and colleagues (2025) concluded that instructional approaches grounded in established learning theories promoted meaningful vocabulary growth. Their review emphasized the importance of learner-centered instruction, contextualized learning, and systematic vocabulary teaching.

Similarly, Habiba (2024) reported that multimodal instruction, explicit teaching, and contextual learning environments positively affected vocabulary acquisition. Learners benefited most when instruction incorporated multiple modes of learning and provided opportunities for active engagement.

Studies conducted by Bauer (2022) and Bauer and Tang (2022) showed that explicit vocabulary instruction significantly improved vocabulary performance and reading comprehension outcomes among elementary learners. These studies supported the effectiveness of direct instructional approaches.

Research conducted by Handig and colleagues (2023), Remo and Velasco (2022), and Macabenta and Niala (2024) likewise demonstrated that interactive and learner-centered instructional practices contributed positively to vocabulary learning. Their findings suggested that vocabulary acquisition is enhanced when learners actively interact with language through meaningful experiences.

The cumulative evidence from foreign and local studies confirmed that instructional practices serve as a significant factor influencing vocabulary development among elementary learners. Effective instructional strategies not only improve vocabulary knowledge but also strengthen learners' reading comprehension and overall literacy achievement.

- *Synthesis and Research Gap*

The reviewed literature established that instructional practices significantly influence vocabulary development among elementary learners. Foreign and local studies consistently demonstrated the effectiveness of explicit vocabulary instruction, game-based learning, technology-assisted teaching, multimodal instruction, collaborative learning activities, and contextualized approaches in enhancing vocabulary acquisition, retention, and application.

Moreover, previous studies showed that vocabulary proficiency contributes substantially to reading comprehension and overall academic achievement. Learners who possess broader vocabularies demonstrated stronger literacy skills and improved educational outcomes.

Despite the growing body of literature, several gaps remain. Many studies focused on specific interventions such as gamification, WordWall, vocabulary programs, or digital tools rather than examining the general instructional practices employed by elementary teachers in everyday classroom instruction. Furthermore, while many studies explored vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension, fewer investigations examined vocabulary proficiency in terms of vocabulary test scores, retention of learned words, and application in reading comprehension simultaneously. Local studies also remain limited in directly investigating the relationship between instructional practices and vocabulary proficiency among elementary learners.

In the Philippine context, the significance of this inquiry is further underscored by the country's performance in international assessments such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). Vocabulary knowledge serves as a foundational component of reading literacy, enabling learners to comprehend texts, make inferences, analyse information, and engage in higher-order thinking tasks. Learners with limited vocabulary proficiency often encounter difficulties in understanding complex texts and applying critical thinking skills necessary for academic success.

By linking international evidence on effective vocabulary instruction with the current literacy challenges faced by Filipino learners, this study aims to contribute data-driven insights that may inform classroom instruction, curriculum enhancement, teacher professional development, and educational policy initiatives designed to strengthen vocabulary learning and literacy outcomes in Philippine elementary education.

Therefore, this study seeks to address these gaps by determining the effects of instructional practices on the

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vocabulary proficiency of elementary learners, specifically focusing on vocabulary test scores, retention of learned words, and the application of vocabulary in reading comprehension. The findings may provide empirical evidence that can guide teachers in selecting and implementing instructional practices that effectively support vocabulary development in elementary education.

➢ *Statement of the Problem*

This study aims to determine the effectiveness of different instructional practices in improving the vocabulary proficiency of elementary learners, with the goal of identifying strategies that lead to better vocabulary growth and application in reading comprehension.

Specifically, it seeks to answer the following:

- What instructional practices are commonly used by teachers in teaching vocabulary to elementary learners?
- What is the level of vocabulary proficiency of elementary learners in terms of test scores, retention of words, and application in reading comprehension?
- Is there a significant difference in learners' vocabulary proficiency when taught through traditional methods compared to innovative strategies? and,
- Is there a significant relationship between instructional practices and the vocabulary proficiency of elementary learners?

➢ *Hypothesis*

In this study, the following hypotheses were formulated:

- There is no significant difference in the vocabulary proficiency of elementary learners when taught through traditional methods compared to innovative strategies; and
- There is no significant relationship between instructional practices and the vocabulary proficiency of elementary learners.

These hypotheses will be tested using appropriate statistical tools to determine whether differences or relationships exist between the variables identified in the conceptual framework.

➢ *Importance of the Study*

The results of the study will be of great benefit to the following:

- *Teachers*

They can refine their teaching strategies and adopt methods that better support vocabulary growth and reading comprehension.

- *Students*

They will benefit by developing stronger vocabulary skills, which will help them understand lessons more effectively, participate actively in class, and improve their overall academic performance.

- *Parents*

They will also benefit, as the study can guide them in supporting their children's vocabulary development at home through awareness of effective practices.

- *School Administrators and Policymakers*

They may use the results to inform curriculum planning, teacher training, and literacy programs aimed at strengthening basic education.

➢ *Future Researchers*

They will find this study valuable as it adds to the existing literature and can serve as a basis for further investigations on vocabulary instruction and learning outcomes.

➢ *Definition of Terms*

The following terms are operationally defined to establish an effective understanding of the study.

- Instructional Practices is the teaching methods and strategies used by teachers to help learners acquire vocabulary. In this study, instructional practices are classified into traditional methods and innovative strategies.
- Innovative Strategies are the instructional approaches that promote active engagement and meaningful use of words, such as contextual learning, collaborative activities, and scaffolding.
- Reading Comprehension is the ability of learners to understand and interpret written texts. Operationally, it is measured by how well students apply acquired vocabulary to comprehend passages and answer comprehension questions.
- Retention of Words is the ability of learners to remember and use vocabulary over time. Operationally, this is measured through recall tests and application in classroom tasks.
- Traditional Methods are the teaching approaches that emphasize repetition and memorization, such as drills and word lists. Operationally, these are measured by the frequency of their use in classroom instruction.
- Vocabulary Proficiency refers to the measurable ability of learners to acquire, retain, and apply vocabulary. Operationally, it is assessed through test scores, retention checks, and performance in reading comprehension activities.
- Vocabulary Test Scores refers to the quantitative measures of learners' ability to recall and recognize vocabulary items during assessments.

III. METHODOLOGY

This chapter will present the methods and procedures that will be used in conducting the study. It will discuss the research design, locale and population of the study, research instruments, data gathering procedures, data categorization, statistical treatment of data, and ethical considerations. These will serve as the basis for gathering and analyzing the data needed to determine the effect of instructional practices

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on the vocabulary development of elementary learners in the public elementary schools of Santiago District.

➢ *Research Design*

This study will use a quantitative research method employing a descriptive-correlational and causal-comparative research design.

The descriptive design will be used to identify the instructional practices commonly used by teachers and to determine the level of vocabulary development of elementary learners in terms of vocabulary test scores, retention of words, and application in reading comprehension.

The causal-comparative design will be used to determine whether there is a significant difference in the vocabulary development of learners taught using traditional instructional practices and those taught using innovative instructional practices.

The correlational design will be used to determine whether there is a significant relationship between instructional practices and the vocabulary development of elementary learners.

These research designs are appropriate because they will help answer the objectives of the study. The descriptive design will provide information about existing instructional practices and learners' vocabulary development, while the causal-comparative and correlational designs will determine differences and relationships between the variables.

According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), descriptive and correlational research designs are suitable for studies that describe existing conditions and examine relationships among variables. Fraenkel et al. (2019) stated that causal-comparative research is appropriate for comparing groups to determine possible differences between them.

One limitation of this study is that it will not establish a direct cause-and-effect relationship because the researcher will not manipulate the variables. In addition, the findings will be limited to the elementary schools in Santiago included in the study; therefore, the results may not be generalizable to learners in other schools or locations.

➢ *Locale and Population of the Study*

This study will be conducted in the public elementary schools of Santiago District. The area was chosen because it is accessible to the researcher and has the learners needed for the study.

The participants will be elementary learners enrolled in the public elementary schools of Santiago District during the School Year 2025-2026.

The sample size will be determined using Slovin's Formula with a 5% margin of error. To ensure that every learner has an equal chance of being selected, stratified random sampling will be used. The learners will be grouped according to their grade level, and participants will be randomly selected from each group.

This sampling method is appropriate because it ensures that learners from different grade levels are represented in the study and helps produce reliable results.

➢ *Research Instrument*

The study will use two instruments: a teacher questionnaire and a vocabulary test.

The teacher questionnaire will be used to identify the instructional practices commonly used in teaching vocabulary. It will be administered to elementary teachers in the selected schools. The questionnaire will consist of items related to vocabulary teaching strategies and classroom practices.

A researcher-made vocabulary test will be used to measure the vocabulary development of the learners in terms of vocabulary knowledge, word retention, and application in reading comprehension. The test will be administered to the selected elementary learners.

To ensure the quality of the instruments, the questionnaire and vocabulary test will be submitted to experts in education and research for validation. Their comments and suggestions will be considered in revising the instruments. After validation, a pilot test will be conducted to determine the reliability of the instruments. The reliability will be measured using an appropriate statistical test before the actual conduct of the study.

The validated and reliable instruments will be used to gather the data needed to answer the research questions.

➢ *Data Gathering Procedures*

Before conducting the study, the researcher will secure permission from the school heads of the selected public elementary schools in Santiago District. After approval is granted, the researcher will coordinate with the teachers regarding the schedule for data collection.

The questionnaire will be administered to the teachers to determine the instructional practices they use in teaching vocabulary. The vocabulary test will then be given to the selected elementary learners to assess their vocabulary development.

After all questionnaires and tests have been completed, the researcher will collect, organize, and tabulate the data. The gathered data will then be analyzed using appropriate statistical tools to answer the research questions of the study.

➢ *Statistical Treatment of Data*

The data gathered in this study will be analyzed using SPSS Version 26. A 0.05 level of significance will be used in testing the hypotheses.

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- Problem 1: What instructional practices are commonly used by teachers in teaching vocabulary to elementary learners?

✓ Frequency and Percentage will be used to determine the instructional practices commonly used by teachers.

- Problem 2: What is the level of vocabulary development of elementary learners in terms of test scores, retention of words, and application in reading comprehension?

✓ Mean and Standard Deviation will be used to determine the level of vocabulary development of the learners.

- Problem 3: Is there a significant difference in the vocabulary development of learners taught through traditional methods and innovative strategies?

✓ Independent Samples t-test will be used to determine if there is a significant difference between the two groups of learners.

- Problem 4: Is there a significant relationship between instructional practices and the vocabulary development of elementary learners?

✓ Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (Pearson r) will be used to determine the relationship between instructional practices and vocabulary development.

The statistical tools are appropriate because they will help describe the data, compare groups, and determine relationships among the variables in the study. The hypotheses will be tested at the 0.05 level of significance using SPSS Version 26.

➢ *Data Categorization*

The data gathered from the questionnaire will be categorized using the following scale:

Table 1 The Categorization of Questionnaire

Scale	Range	Description
5	4.21 – 5.00	Always
4	3.41 – 4.20	Often
3	2.61 – 3.40	Sometimes
2	1.81 – 2.60	Rarely
1	1.00 – 1.80	Never

The vocabulary test scores of the learners will be categorized as follows:

Table 2 The Vocabulary Test Scores

Percentage Score	Description
90–100%	Very High
80–89%	High
70–79%	Moderate
60–69%	Low
Below 60%	Very Low

The categorization scheme for the questionnaire is researcher-made and is based on the five-point Likert Scale. The categorization of vocabulary test scores is adapted from the standard interpretation commonly used in educational assessment and classroom evaluation.

➢ *Ethical Considerations*

The researcher will observe ethical standards throughout the conduct of the study. Permission will first be secured from the school heads of the selected public elementary schools in Santiago District before gathering data.

The participants will be informed about the purpose of the study, and their participation will be voluntary. For learner-participants, parental consent and school approval will be obtained. The participants will have the right to refuse or withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences.

The confidentiality of the participants will be protected by keeping their identities and responses private. The information gathered will be used solely for research purposes.

The researcher will ensure that all sources and references are properly acknowledged. Honesty and academic integrity will be observed in gathering, analysing, and reporting the data. Plagiarism will be avoided through proper citation of all borrowed ideas and information.

To minimise researcher bias, the researcher will use validated research instruments and follow standard procedures in collecting and analysing the data. The findings will be presented objectively based on the results of the study.

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IV. CONCLUSION

Vocabulary development plays a fundamental role in the academic growth and literacy achievement of elementary learners. Based on the reviewed literature and theoretical foundations of the study, effective vocabulary instruction requires more than memorization and repetitive drills. It involves meaningful learning experiences, explicit teaching, contextualized activities, collaborative engagement, and appropriate instructional strategies that encourage learners to understand, retain, and apply newly acquired words.

The study emphasizes the importance of examining both traditional instructional methods and innovative strategies in developing learners' vocabulary proficiency. Through the assessment of vocabulary test scores, retention of learned words, and application in reading comprehension, the research seeks to provide a clearer understanding of how different instructional practices are associated with learners' vocabulary development.

Furthermore, determining the relationship between instructional practices and vocabulary proficiency may provide valuable information for teachers in selecting appropriate teaching approaches that respond to the learning needs and abilities of elementary learners. The integration of meaningful, interactive, and learner-centered activities may also create more opportunities for learners to actively engage with vocabulary and strengthen their reading comprehension skills.

Ultimately, this study highlights the importance of effective and purposeful vocabulary instruction in improving literacy outcomes among elementary learners. The evidence generated from the actual conduct of the research may serve as a basis for enhancing teaching practices, strengthening school-based literacy programs, and developing instructional interventions that support vocabulary acquisition, word retention, and reading comprehension.

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