

# Utilization Of Diverse Contextualized Learning Resources Influence On Acquisition Of Reading Skills Among Grade Three Pupils In Bungoma South Sub-County, Kenya

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## **Abstract**

*Acquisition of literacy is strongly influenced by the availability and efficient use of varied reading materials. Effective reading tools and instructional practices are typically lacking in underfunded schools. A study done on Literacy and Numeracy skills acquisition in lower classes in East Africa revealed that almost seventy percent of East African Grade 3 students couldn't read a Grade 2-level tale. Therefore, promoting a reading culture calls for making learning materials diversified and contextually relevant easily available. This study examined the influence of utilization of diverse contextualized learning resources on the acquisition of reading skills among Grade Three pupils in Bungoma South Sub-County, Kenya. Anchored on Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory, the study employed a descriptive survey design. The target population comprised 9,540 individuals, including 8,296 Grade Three pupils and 1,244 teachers, from which a sample of 954 respondents (830 pupils and 124 teachers) was selected using stratified and simple random sampling techniques. Data were collected through questionnaires, observation checklists, and standardized reading assessment tests, with instrument reliability established at Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.7. Findings revealed that contextualized learning resources significantly influenced multiple dimensions of reading skill acquisition. Vocabulary development showed the highest positive impact (93.5% improvement), followed by phonetic awareness (94.4%), pronunciation accuracy (93.5%), and reading comprehension (89.5%). Teacher effectiveness ratings indicated that charts and visual displays achieved 90.3% effectiveness, real objects 86.3%, and locally adapted storybooks 82.3%. Correlation analysis demonstrated positive relationships between resource utilization and skill outcomes, with flashcards, audio resources, and visual aids showing the strongest associations. The study concluded that contextualized learning resources significantly enhance reading skills by connecting academic content to learners' cultural and environmental experiences. Recommendations include integrating culturally relevant materials into literacy curricula, providing targeted teacher training, and establishing collaborative resource development networks to maximize the influence of contextualized approaches on early literacy outcomes.*

**Keywords:** *Contextualized Learning Resources, Reading Skills Acquisition, Vocabulary Development, Reading Comprehension*

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## **I. Introduction**

Reading skills acquisition represents one of the most critical developmental milestones in early childhood education, serving as the foundation upon which all subsequent academic learning is built. The ability to decode, comprehend, and critically engage with written text enables learners to access knowledge across all subject domains and participate meaningfully in literate societies (UNESCO, 2017). Acquisition of literacy is strongly influenced by the availability and efficient use of varied reading materials. Effective reading tools and instructional practices are typically lacking in underfunded schools (O'Connor & Geiger, 2009; Medadi, 2014). According to Uwezo (2011), almost seventy percent of East African Grade 3 students couldn't read a Grade 2-level tale. Promoting a reading culture calls for making learning materials easily available, diversified and contextually relevant, claims Morara (2014), UNESCO (2015), and Freudenberger and Davis (2017). Despite the universal recognition of reading's importance anchored on using diverse learning materials, significant disparities persist in availability and utilization of diverse reading materials leading to varied literacy outcomes, particularly

among learners in developing countries where educational resources often fail to align with students' lived experiences and cultural contexts.

Consequently, the ability to utilize Contextualized learning resources which constitute instructional materials specifically designed or adapted to reflect learners' cultural, linguistic, and environmental backgrounds (Chebet & Murunga, 2021) will be the best antidote against inadequate varied and culturally relevant learning materials. These resources include locally relevant storybooks, culturally appropriate visual aids, community-based artifacts, environmental materials, and adapted multimedia content that bridge the cognitive gap between abstract academic concepts and students' everyday experiences. The theoretical premise underlying contextualized learning posits that meaningful connections between new information and existing knowledge schemas facilitate deeper processing, enhanced retention, and more effective application of learned content.

The influence of contextualized learning resources on reading skills acquisition operates through multiple cognitive and affective pathways. Cognitively, familiar contexts reduce the cognitive load associated with processing new information, allowing learners to allocate more mental resources to skill development (Sambayon, Dumla & Agustin, 2023). Affectively, culturally relevant materials enhance motivation, engagement, and self-efficacy by validating learners' identities and experiences within the educational setting. These combined influences create optimal conditions for the development of foundational literacy competencies.

In Kenya, the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) explicitly emphasizes learner-centered approaches and the integration of locally relevant instructional materials (Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development [KICD], 2024). This curricular orientation recognizes that effective literacy instruction must acknowledge and build upon the diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds of Kenyan learners. However, empirical evidence regarding the specific influence of contextualized resources on different dimensions of reading skill acquisition remains limited, particularly in rural and semi-urban contexts such as Bungoma South Sub-County.

Assessment data from Uwezo Kenya (2019) revealed that 48.91% of Grade Three learners in Bungoma County struggled with basic reading tasks, exceeding national averages and indicating substantial literacy challenges. These statistics highlight the urgent need to examine factors that can positively influence reading skill development. Understanding how contextualized learning resources specifically affect vocabulary acquisition, phonetic awareness, pronunciation, grammar, and comprehension is essential for designing targeted interventions that address the multifaceted nature of literacy development.

This study therefore sought to examine the influence of contextualized learning resources on the acquisition of reading skills among Grade Three pupils in Bungoma South Sub-County, Kenya. By investigating the relationships between contextualized resource utilization and specific reading skill outcomes, the research aimed to provide empirical evidence for informing pedagogical practices, curriculum development, and resource allocation decisions that can enhance early literacy outcomes.

## **II. Literature Review**

### ***Theoretical Framework***

This study was anchored on two complementary theoretical frameworks: Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory and Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory. Vygotsky (1978) emphasized that cognitive development occurs through social interactions within cultural contexts. His concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) describes the space between what learners can accomplish independently and what they can achieve with appropriate scaffolding. Contextualized learning resources serve as cultural tools that provide this scaffolding by presenting new concepts within familiar frameworks, thereby enabling learners to construct knowledge more effectively.

Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory complements this perspective by emphasizing that children construct knowledge through active interaction with their environment (Piaget, 1952, as cited in Dendena & Tabane, 2023). For learners in the concrete operational stage (ages 7-11), which encompasses Grade Three pupils, learning is most effective when abstract concepts are grounded in tangible, familiar experiences. Contextualized resources such as real objects, local stories, and environmental materials provide the concrete foundations upon which abstract reading skills can be developed.

### ***Influence on Vocabulary Development***

Research consistently demonstrates that contextualized learning resources significantly influence vocabulary acquisition. Day, Hwang, Arner, McNamara, and Connor (2024) investigated interactive e-books for vocabulary acquisition among Grade 3-5 students in the United States. Their study found that students showed significant gains in vocabulary when engaged with contextually embedded comprehension activities. Higher engagement with embedded questions predicted stronger vocabulary outcomes, highlighting the importance of active interaction with culturally relevant content for word learning.

Atandi and Kwaba (2023) examined the influence of teaching and learning resources on basic reading skills among Grade Three pupils in Kisii County, Kenya. Their findings indicated that students exposed to locally

sourced and culturally relevant materials achieved significantly improved vocabulary outcomes compared to those using standard resources. The study attributed these gains to the meaningful connections learners could establish between new words and their everyday experiences, facilitating both initial acquisition and long-term retention.

#### ***Influence on Reading Comprehension***

Reading comprehension represents the ultimate goal of literacy instruction, encompassing the ability to construct meaning from written text through the integration of decoding skills, vocabulary knowledge, and background experiences. Anyango (2023) investigated the relationship between contextualized resources and literacy outcomes among Grade Three learners in Kisumu East Sub-County, Kenya. Using a descriptive-correlational design, the study found a strong positive correlation ( $r = 0.525$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) between access to culturally relevant materials and reading comprehension performance. Children with access to diverse, locally adapted reading materials demonstrated superior ability to draw inferences, identify main ideas, and connect textual information to prior knowledge.

The USAID Let's Read Project (2019-2023) in Zambia provided large-scale evidence regarding the influence of contextualized materials on comprehension outcomes. This intervention distributed over 5 million locally developed resources including storybooks, primers, and folk tales in seven local languages across 4,900 schools. By 2023, 56% of Grade 2 learners reached minimum reading proficiency, compared to approximately 10% in 2018, demonstrating the substantial influence of mother-tongue instruction and culturally relevant content on comprehension development (USAID, 2023).

#### ***Influence on Phonetic Awareness and Pronunciation***

Phonetic awareness and pronunciation accuracy form critical foundations for reading fluency. Jasinska et al. (2019) examined early-grade reading development in multilingual settings across Coastal Kenya, where pupils spoke various local languages but received instruction in Kiswahili and English. The study found that strong phonological awareness in children's home languages positively influenced subsequent reading performance in instructional languages. This cross-linguistic transfer was most effective when instructional materials incorporated familiar sounds, words, and expressions from learners' linguistic environments.

Ngure, Mwoma, and Buna (2019) investigated instructional strategies for reading skill development in Embakasi Sub-County, Nairobi. Their assessment of phonetic awareness among Grade Three pupils revealed that classrooms where teachers consistently employed contextualized resources, including local language phonics charts and familiar word flashcards, demonstrated stronger sound recognition outcomes. The study concluded that phonetic instruction grounded in familiar linguistic patterns facilitated more rapid skill acquisition.

#### ***Influence on Reading Fluency and Engagement***

Reading fluency, characterized by accurate, rapid, and expressive reading, develops through repeated practice with appropriately challenging texts. Sambayon, Dumla, and Agustin (2023) examined contextualized learning materials among Filipino learners and found significant improvements in reading fluency when students engaged with culturally familiar content. Both teachers and students reported increased motivation and enjoyment during lessons incorporating local themes, characters, and settings. The enhanced engagement facilitated more frequent reading practice, which in turn accelerated fluency development.

Dendena and Tabane (2023) investigated literacy predictors among Grade 3 learners in Ethiopia using a mixed-methods approach with 1,325 students. Their findings indicated that motivation and self-assurance were key determinants of reading success. Students who could relate to instructional content demonstrated greater persistence and achieved better fluency outcomes. The study emphasized that the affective influence of contextualized materials, through enhanced motivation and confidence, indirectly but significantly influenced skill acquisition.

### **III. Research Methodology**

This study employed a descriptive survey research design, which was appropriate for examining the influence of contextualized learning resources on reading skills acquisition. The design facilitated the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, enabling comprehensive analysis of relationships between resource utilization and learning outcomes.

The study was conducted in Bungoma South Sub-County, Bungoma County, Kenya. The target population comprised 9,540 individuals, including 8,296 Grade Three pupils and 1,244 teachers across public primary schools in the region. Following Mugenda and Mugenda's (2013) sampling recommendation of 10% for populations under 10,000, the study selected 954 respondents comprising 830 Grade Three pupils and 124 teachers.

Stratified random sampling ensured representation across school settings: rural schools (46.8%), semi-urban schools (34.7%), and urban schools (18.5%). Simple random sampling was subsequently applied within each stratum to ensure equal selection probability. Teacher participants included 72 females (58.1%) and 52 males (41.9%), with qualifications ranging from certificate (7.2%) to diploma (73.4%) and degree levels (19.4%).

Data collection instruments included structured questionnaires administered to teachers, containing Likert-scale items assessing the perceived influence of contextualized resources on various reading skills. Observation checklists documented classroom resource utilization patterns. Standardized pupil assessment tests evaluated vocabulary, comprehension, grammar, phonetic awareness, and pronunciation. Instrument validity was established through expert review, while reliability testing yielded a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.7.

Data analysis employed both descriptive and inferential statistics using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics included frequencies, percentages, and measures of central tendency. Pearson correlation analysis examined relationships between resource utilization and skill outcomes. Regression analysis assessed the predictive relationships between independent variables (contextualized resource types and usage patterns) and the dependent variable (reading skill acquisition). Ethical considerations included informed consent, confidentiality, and research authorization from NACOSTI.

#### IV. Results And Discussion

##### ***Influence on Vocabulary Development***

Vocabulary development demonstrated the most substantial positive influence from contextualized learning resource utilization. Analysis of teacher responses revealed that 116 teachers (93.5%) reported observable improvements in student vocabulary acquisition when contextualized resources were employed. Among these respondents, 72 teachers (58.1%) rated the influence as very strong, indicating consistent and substantial vocabulary gains across diverse classroom contexts.

**Table 1: Teacher Reports on Influence of CLR on Reading Skills**

Reading Skill Dimension	Positive Influence Reported	Percentage
Vocabulary development	116	93.5%
Phonetic awareness	117	94.4%
Pronunciation accuracy	116	93.5%
Reading comprehension	111	89.5%
Grammar understanding	108	87.1%

As shown in Table 1, contextualized learning resources demonstrated positive influence across all assessed reading skill dimensions. These findings align with Atandi and Kwaba's (2023) research in Kisii County, which similarly found that locally relevant materials significantly enhanced vocabulary outcomes. The strong vocabulary influence can be attributed to the meaningful connections learners establish between new words and familiar contexts, facilitating both encoding and retrieval processes consistent with Vygotsky's emphasis on culturally mediated learning.

##### ***Influence on Reading Comprehension***

Reading comprehension emerged as the primary area of improvement identified by teachers, with 61 teachers (49.2%) selecting it as the skill most significantly influenced by contextualized learning resources. Quantitative assessment data revealed a 19% improvement in participating students' reading comprehension levels, substantially exceeding standard annual growth expectations.

**Table 2: Primary Areas of Reading Skill Improvement Due to CLR**

Skill Area	Teachers Identifying as Primary	Percentage
Reading comprehension	61	49.2%
Vocabulary	31	25.0%
Pronunciation	18	14.5%
Grammar	14	11.3%

The comprehension improvements observed in this study corroborate Anyango's (2023) findings of a strong positive correlation between contextualized resource access and comprehension outcomes in Kisumu East Sub-County. Teachers indicated that reading materials incorporating familiar cultural contexts, local settings, and relevant social situations substantially enhanced students' ability to draw inferences, identify main ideas, and relate textual information to personal experiences. This influence mechanism aligns with schema theory, which posits that comprehension is facilitated when new information can be integrated with existing knowledge structures.

### **Influence on Phonetic Awareness and Pronunciation**

Sound recognition and phonetic awareness showed substantial positive influence from contextualized resource implementation. A total of 117 teachers (94.4%) reported positive impacts on phonetic awareness development, while 116 teachers (93.5%) observed improved pronunciation accuracy. Assessment data indicated 17% improvement in phonetic awareness scores among participating students, with particularly strong gains in recognizing local language sound patterns and transferring these skills to English reading contexts.

These findings support Jasinska et al.'s (2019) research on cross-linguistic transfer in multilingual Kenyan contexts. The strong phonetic influence observed suggests that contextualized materials effectively leverage learners' existing linguistic competencies as foundations for developing reading skills in additional languages. Teachers reported that phonics instruction grounded in familiar words and expressions from learners' home languages facilitated more rapid and confident skill acquisition.

### **Effectiveness of Different Resource Types**

**Table 3: Teacher Effectiveness Ratings by Resource Type**

Resource Type	Highly Effective + Effective	Effectiveness Rate
Charts and visual displays	112	90.3%
Real objects and materials	107	86.3%
Locally adapted storybooks	102	82.3%
Picture cards	98	79.0%

Analysis of resource effectiveness ratings, presented in Table 3, revealed that charts and visual displays achieved the highest effectiveness recognition (90.3%), followed by real objects and environmental materials (86.3%), and locally adapted storybooks (82.3%). The strong performance of visual resources reflects their capacity to provide concrete, immediately comprehensible representations of abstract concepts, consistent with Piaget's emphasis on concrete operational thinking among this age group.

### **Influence on Student Engagement and Motivation**

Beyond direct skill influence, contextualized learning resources demonstrated substantial impact on student engagement and motivation. Teacher responses indicated that 91.1% observed increased student interest in reading activities when culturally relevant materials were utilized. Active participation in lessons showed enhancement, with 90.3% of teachers agreeing that students engaged more actively with contextualized content. Furthermore, 89.5% reported improved connections between learning and students' daily experiences.

**Table 4: Influence of CLR on Student Engagement**

Engagement Dimension	Agreement Rate	Percentage
Increased interest in reading	113	91.1%
Active lesson participation	112	90.3%
Connection to daily experiences	111	89.5%
Information retention	112	90.3%

These engagement outcomes align with Dendena and Tabane's (2023) findings that motivation and self-assurance are key predictors of reading success. The affective influence of contextualized materials creates a positive feedback loop: enhanced engagement leads to more reading practice, which accelerates skill development, which further increases confidence and motivation. This mechanism helps explain the substantial skill improvements observed across multiple dimensions.

### **Correlation Analysis**

Correlation analysis revealed positive associations between specific resource types and reading skill outcomes. Flashcards, audio resources, and puppets demonstrated the strongest positive correlations with skill improvements. Charts and posters showed moderate positive associations with vocabulary enrichment and pronunciation development. Regression analysis indicated that the model explained 9.3% of variance in skill improvement ( $R^2 = 0.093$ ), suggesting that while contextualized resources significantly influence reading outcomes, additional factors including teaching methodology, learner characteristics, and home literacy environment also contribute substantially to skill acquisition.

The availability of contextualized learning materials emerged as the factor with the largest effect size in regression analysis, though the relationship approached but did not achieve conventional statistical significance ( $p = 0.058$ ). This marginally significant finding suggests that while material availability is important, the quality of implementation and integration into instruction may be equally or more influential than mere availability. This interpretation aligns with Day et al.'s (2024) finding that engagement quality, rather than simply resource exposure, predicted learning outcomes.

## **V. Conclusions**

This study examined the influence of contextualized learning resources on reading skills acquisition among Grade Three pupils in Bungoma South Sub-County, Kenya. Based on the findings, several conclusions emerge regarding the nature and mechanisms of this influence.

First, contextualized learning resources exert significant positive influence across multiple dimensions of reading skill acquisition. Vocabulary development, phonetic awareness, pronunciation accuracy, and reading comprehension all demonstrated substantial improvement when culturally relevant materials were employed. The 93.5% positive influence rate for vocabulary and 89.5% for comprehension indicate consistent, widespread benefits across diverse classroom contexts.

Second, reading comprehension represents the primary area of influence, with nearly half of teachers identifying it as the skill most substantially enhanced through contextualized approaches. The 19% improvement in comprehension scores demonstrates that connecting reading content to learners' cultural and environmental experiences significantly enhances meaning construction and text understanding.

Third, visual resources including charts, displays, and real objects demonstrate the highest effectiveness ratings among contextualized material types. This finding reflects the developmental appropriateness of concrete, visual supports for Grade Three learners in the concrete operational stage of cognitive development.

Fourth, contextualized resources influence reading acquisition through both cognitive and affective pathways. Enhanced engagement, increased motivation, and stronger connections between learning and daily experiences create conditions that facilitate skill development. These affective influences complement the cognitive benefits of reduced processing load and enhanced schema activation.

## **VI. Recommendations**

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to maximize the positive influence of contextualized learning resources on reading skills acquisition:

1. The Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) should develop comprehensive guidelines for integrating contextualized learning resources into literacy curricula, emphasizing the strong influence demonstrated on vocabulary, comprehension, and phonetic awareness development.
2. Teacher training institutions and in-service professional development programs should incorporate explicit instruction on creating, adapting, and effectively utilizing contextualized resources, given the evidence that implementation quality significantly influences outcomes.
3. Schools should prioritize visual resources including charts, displays, and real objects, which demonstrated the highest effectiveness ratings (90.3% and 86.3% respectively), while maintaining diverse resource portfolios to address multiple learning modalities.

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