

Utilization of Sagada Local Literature in Enhancing Vocabulary and Developing Reading Comprehension

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Article Details:

Received: 25 March 2026

Revised: 30 March 2026

Accepted: 9 April 2026

Published: 19 July 2026

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Recommended Citation:

Baldo, A. S. Y. (2026). Utilization of Sagada Local Literature in Enhancing Vocabulary and Developing Reading Comprehension. *The International Review of Multidisciplinary Research*. 1 (9), 197-205.

<https://doi.org/10.67167/vertex.631>

Index Terms:

Sagada local literature, vocabulary development, reading comprehension, contextualized teaching, student engagement

Abstract. This study investigates the utilization of Sagada local literature as a pedagogical tool to enhance students' vocabulary and reading comprehension. Rooted in the principle that culturally relevant materials foster deeper engagement, the research examines how indigenous stories, oral narratives, and locally produced texts can be integrated into reading instruction to support language development. Employing a descriptive quantitative research design, the study involved Grade 7 learners who were exposed to literary materials which is based on the Sagada context over a defined period. Data collection was conducted through survey questionnaires and open-ended interviews, allowing both quantitative and qualitative insights into student learning. Findings revealed that students exhibited significant improvement in vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension after exposure to local literature. The cultural familiarity of the texts—through context, setting, and language—enabled learners to better understand and retain new words, while also encouraging more profound interpretation of literary passages. Moreover, the integration of local literature increased student motivation and engagement, reducing classroom anxiety and promoting active participation. The study highlights that contextualized and culture-responsive materials not only improve literacy outcomes but also strengthen cultural identity and awareness among learners. By validating indigenous knowledge systems and traditions, Sagada literature serves as both an educational resource and a medium for cultural preservation. The research concludes that incorporating localized texts into the curriculum is an effective strategy for enhancing language skills while promoting inclusivity and cultural pride. It recommends that educators adopt culturally responsive approaches to teaching, ensuring that learning becomes both meaningful and transformative.

Introduction

Local literature can significantly enhance vocabulary and reading comprehension by using culturally relevant and familiar stories that increase student engagement, leading to deeper understanding and improved literacy skills. Studies show that using localized reading materials, such as short stories set in local environments, is an effective way to improve reading comprehension, especially for students who struggle with traditional texts. This approach builds confidence and can improve reading attitude because the material is more relatable and interesting, which is a strong foundation for developing vocabulary in context.

In relation, using local culture texts in teaching means that the texts, resources, and materials learned by the students are the part of students' life. In order to make English learning a holistic experience, it is important that culture and local context are integrated so that learners would have a more comprehensive grasp of the language.

With the implementation of K to 12 which demands localizing the curriculum, the implementation of Indigenous People's Education (IPED) Program in the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) was seen in convergence with K to 12. Given the call of the K to 12 curriculum for a contextualized culture-sensitive and culture-responsive education, and with the context of CAR that honors indigenous communities' ancestral domain, knowledge, systems, and practices (IKSPs), Department of

Education-Cordillera Administrative Region (DepEd CAR) found it appropriate to declare that the expression on K to 12 in CAR is IP Education. Thus, IP Education in the Cordillera Region is not merely a program but a regional thrust and direction.

Due to the difficulty of mastering academic writing, many students face a great challenge in acquiring reading and comprehension skills and consequently failed to obtain a passing grade (Al Mubarak, 2017; Fadhel, 2019). These difficulties may occur because of different factors such as grammar, vocabulary, organization, punctuation, lack of motivation or interest and lack of background knowledge.

This study aims to utilize Local Literature in Enhancing Vocabulary and Developing Reading Comprehension among Grade 7 students of the Public Schools of Sagada, Mountain Province in studying literature especially in dealing with poetry and narratives.

The researcher has been teaching for ten (10) years, and yet, she observed that Strategic Intervention Materials (SIM) were rarely used by teachers in their actual classroom practices. Most often, they utilize worksheets, board and chalk, power point presentations, modules and learning activity sheets as the more frequently used teaching modalities. It's essentially a tool used in remediation, focusing on developing the least mastered competencies identified by the teacher, according to the Philippine Department of Education (DepEd). SIMs are often used in conjunction with pre-tests and post-tests to assess student learning before and after the intervention. However, few teachers utilize Strategic Intervention Materials (SIM), albeit limited. Such instructional material is not new to teachers but it is quite novel for learners. For teachers to maximize the potentials of SIM and become more effective in motivating learners to learn content, they should be developed by teachers using localized information. Localized information means data or information that is present within the local context or environment that they could access. These sets of information are also explicitly utilized within teaching materials as either a springboard or content of the lessons.

In relation, using local culture texts in teaching means that the texts, resources, and materials learned by the students are the part of students' life. In order to make English learning a holistic experience, it is important that culture and local context are integrated so that learners would have a more comprehensive grasp of the language.

Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Practices (IKSPs) is composed of facts, information, methods, skills theories and values which can be taught to children. It is very important as a way of reviving the practices and cultures of cultural communities to develop and preserve their own identities. To realize this and to preserve the value of IKSPs not only within the realm of education but also in real-life situations, there is a need to integrate IKSPs in the K-12 curriculum, including those of higher education.

Integrating local songs into reading comprehension lessons for Grade 7 students can significantly enhance their understanding and engagement with the material. By incorporating familiar and culturally relevant music, students can connect with the content on a deeper level, making learning more enjoyable and effective. This approach can also boost their vocabulary, improve language skills, and foster a sense of pride in their heritage.

The study's importance lies in the pursuit for the promotion of culture-based education. The study becomes an instrument for learners to be critically aware of the richness of their culture and its relevance to their lives and those of the local community while becoming educated.

Research Questions

This study aimed to improve and regain the interest of Grades 7 students of the Public Schools of Sagada, Mountain Province in studying literature. With the use of songs, and other local texts, the researcher look into the possibility of enhancing comprehension in reading poetry and narratives of students in Grade 7 during the Academic Year 2025 – 2026.

Specifically, it will have sought to provide answers to the following questions:

1. What local literature do teachers integrate to enhance vocabulary and reading?
2. What are the perceived benefits of using Sagada local literature in vocabulary and reading comprehension of JHS in Sagada?
3. What strategies are used by teachers to integrate local literature in vocabulary and reading comprehension of JHS in Sagada?

Assumptions of the Study

This research presumed that Grade 7 students in Sagada public schools are willing to learn by using the local literature and songs and that the teachers have access to and are capable of incorporating such materials into their lessons. It further supposes that the cultural relevance of Sagada texts will improve the interest, vocabulary and understanding of the

students, and that the academic year will be normal without any serious disturbances. Moreover, it assumes that students should already have some basic literacy skills to be able to use the intervention and the school stakeholders should support the introduction of local literature into the classroom practice.

Methodology

The research design employed was a descriptive quantitative research design based on survey questionnaires (Appendix A) to investigate the perceptions of vocabulary learning using Sagada literature by the students. Data were collected with Likert-scale items and analyzed using frequency, percentage, and weighted mean, with follow-up interviews and focus group discussions offering qualitative data. Local texts including comprehension exercises were used and the interviews were conducted face-to-face or online and the responses were recorded and thematically analyzed so as to identify recurring ideas. Both the teacher and student survey tools were designed in four parts. To achieve credibility, member checking, peer debriefing and reflexive journaling were used. Qualitative themes were used to complement quantitative results to provide a deeper insight into the experiences of students. Informed consent, confidentiality, and respect towards the participants were ethical standards that were maintained.

Results and Discussion

Type of Local Literature	SD (1)	D (2)	N (3)	A (4)	SA (5)	Total (f)	Weighted Mean	SD	Rank	Qualitative Interpretation
Folktales	0	0	0	15	15	30	9	7.35	3	Agree.
Myths/ Legends	0	0	0	25	25	50	15	12.25	1	Strongly Agree
Local Poetry	0	0	0	10	0	10	2.67	4	4	Neutral
Local Songs	0	0	10	15	10	35	9.33	6	2	Agree

Table 1. Local literatures integrated by teachers to enhance vocabulary and reading

The high use of myths and legends, which was 40%, suggests that teachers prefer narrative forms that are culturally embedded and cognitively accessible to learners.

The survey results reveal a significant student preference for Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP), specifically through the integration of oral traditions and local media. Leading the preferences, 40% of respondents favored the inclusion of myths and legends in their lessons, citing an increased enjoyment in vocabulary acquisition. This aligns with Schema Theory, which suggests that learners acquire new information more effectively when it is anchored to existing cultural knowledge. By using familiar narratives, the cognitive load required to decode new terms is reduced, allowing students to focus on linguistic nuances within a context they already understand.

Furthermore, 28% of respondents strongly agreed that local songs should be integrated into the curriculum. While ranking second to narrative storytelling, this remains a substantial portion of the cohort. The preference for music suggests an appreciation for the Affective Filter—a concept by Stephen Krashen—whereby culturally resonant music lowers classroom anxiety and increases emotional engagement. Together, these findings indicate that 68% of the students' interest is concentrated on "heritage-based" learning tools, suggesting that a shift away from generic, Western-centric materials toward localized content could significantly boost both motivation and lexical retention. In Krashen's terms, using these local materials lowers the Affective Filter because students feel a sense of cultural belonging and comfort. When the filter is low, their "acquisition" of vocabulary becomes much more efficient.

The data show that 90% of students reported increased enjoyment when local literature was used suggesting that culturally familiar materials enhance engagement. This finding supports Bernardo (2010), who argued that contextualized texts improved student motivation and comprehension.

Area of Benefit	SD (1)	D (2)	N (3)	A (4)	SA (5)	Total (f)	Weighted Mean	SD	Rank	Qualitative Interpretation
Vocabulary Development	0	0	5	40	25	70	20	15.93	3.5	Agree
Reading Comprehension	0	0	30	40	20	90	23.33	16	1.5	Agree

Engagement & Motivation	0	0	10	30	50	90	26.66	19.39	1.5	Strongly Agree
Educational Value	0	0	0	50	20	70	20	19.59	3.5	Agree

Table 2. Perceived benefits of using Sagada local literature in vocabulary and reading comprehension

The analysis conducted in this paper indicated that both teachers and students had significant ideas regarding the use of Sagada local literature, and these ideas were complementary to each other. Their views on local texts were found to be significant and complementary, and they demonstrated that the combination of Sagada literature helped to achieve common objectives in improving vocabulary and reading comprehension.

A. Teacher Perception

Local stories were very powerful tools used by teachers due to their familiarity, which kept students engaged and enabled them to master difficult skills like analysis and critical thinking much easier, and also taught them to take pride in their own culture. The four teachers were active in incorporating the Sagada local literature in the classroom and perceived that the use of this literature made a great difference in the classroom. The recognition and applicability of the literature that the students read in their community sparked interest and excitement in learning. This strategy not only contributed to academic achievements but also enabled students to appreciate their culture and history. The teachers also agreed that Sagada texts have to be gathered and maintained with the help of the community so that they can continue using them in the classroom.

B. Student Perception

The local literature was perceived primarily through the lens of relatability, enjoyment, and ease of learning by the students. All respondents agreed that the vocabulary lessons were more interesting when stories were used, which were based on their own community and made the vocabulary learning more meaningful. They believed that the local texts were easier to comprehend because the cultural context and tradition were not new, and they caused less confusion and enabled quicker learning. Outside of academics, these stories made them feel proud of their hometown, and connected them more to their past. The survey results indicated that 100% of students enjoyed the lessons more when they had local themes and 94% of the students believed that lessons mattered to them. Nevertheless, they had difficulties in translating local ideas into English, which points to a translation gap. Both teachers and students were in favor of widening the curriculum to include more local material in order to move out of a Western-centric approach and to increase motivation, understanding and recall of vocabulary.

Indicator	SD (1)	D (2)	N (3)	A (4)	SA (5)	Total (f)	Weighted Mean	SD	Rank	Qualitative Interpretation
Students learn new words when their teacher uses local texts.	0	0	0	20	25	45	9	11.14	5	Agree
Learners can understand vocabulary easier.	0	0	0	30	40	70	14	17.4	2	Strongly Agree
Learners remember new words better.	0	0	0	28	37	65	13	16.17	3	Strongly Agree
Learners enjoy vocabulary lessons more.	0	0	0	50	40	90	18	22.27	1	Agree
Learners prefer using their native language than English when expressing their thoughts.	0	0	0	5	50	55	11	19.60	4	Strongly Agree

Table 3. Vocabulary Learning through Sagada Literature

The survey indicated that half of the students feel that they learn new words better when their teacher uses local texts. The study showed that Sagada literature is a good way of enhancing vocabulary. Approximately 78 percent of the learners were good at acquiring new vocabulary, which shows the significance of intensive instruction in the learning of new vocabulary.

The techniques employed by the researchers were effective as 72 percent of the students responded positively to the techniques used by the researchers. The high demand of culturally relevant texts indicates that they are able to draw the attention of students. The research concluded that 61% of the learners would prefer to use their native language rather than English in sharing their views because they have to be comfortable with the communication process first.

Indicator	SD (1)	D (2)	N (3)	A (4)	SA (5)	Total (f)	Weighted Mean	SD	Rank	Qualitative Interpretation
Learners understand stories better when their teachers use Sagada Literature	0	0	8	35	7	50	13.27	12.95	3.5	Agree
Learners can relate to the lessons more when they read texts from their own culture	0	0	10	30	45	85	25	17.78	1	Strongly Agree
Sagada local texts help the learners answer comprehension questions more easily.	0	15	10	15	0	40	8	6.78	5	Agree
Learners are motivated to read when local literature is used in class.	5	8	5	20	12	50	11.73	5.62	3.5	Agree.
Reading Sagada texts help learners think more deeply about the meaning of the material.	5	10	15	20	5	55	11.67	5.83	2	Agree

Table 4. Reading Comprehension through Sagada Literature

The results of the survey indicated that students were able to understand stories better when their teachers read Sagada literature and 56% of the students were able to demonstrate better understanding. Students liked to share their thoughts in their native language as this way they could better understand the content. In addition, 94 percent of the students that read culturally relevant texts demonstrated a better understanding and retention of the information and believed that localization helped them to learn better. Sagada local texts assisted learners to respond to comprehension questions with ease though many of them had difficulty speaking English. Also, 55% of students reporting more interest in local literature also actively read these texts, and 61% reported that Sagada materials enhanced their higher-order thinking skills, and they demonstrated advanced analytical and critical skills.

Active Incorporation and Variety of Sagada Literature

The results indicated that all four teachers involved in the study and whose teaching experience ranged between 7 and more than 11 years actively included Sagada local literature in their language classes. Their approaches, perceptions, and recommendations highlighted the pedagogical value of indigenous texts in fostering language skills and cultural understanding. They realized that Sagada literature had a cultural relevance and could be used to enhance vocabulary and understanding and this was achieved by employing various strategies that would make the most out of this. Everyone was in agreement that local narratives made lessons more interesting and relatable, and the most common benefits were that local narratives made lessons more interesting and relatable.

As a team, the teachers stressed the significance of using culturally familiar texts and associating them to larger linguistic units. They also had the same opinion that the integration of indigenous stories, legends and songs was important in language education. Teacher 1 is age 42, has 10 years of experience, and demonstrated the comprehensive approach, using a wide variety of genres and applying such strategies as predicting and summarizing. Teacher 2, 43 years, was devoted to legends and songs and he was a supporter of collecting folk tales and indigenous terms. Age: 38, experience: more than 11 years, used folk tales, historical narratives, focused on guided reading and cultural affiliations. A more neutral approach was maintained by Teacher 4, who had approximately 10 years of experience, acknowledging the relevance of local texts, but with an emphasis on comprehension activities, and recommending that a repository of Sagada texts be established.

Although they had differences in focus, all four teachers shared the same opinion on the positive effects of Sagada literature in improving engagement, vocabulary and comprehension. Their shared views reinforced the cruciality of systematic gathering, preservation, and contextualization of Sagada texts so that they can be properly integrated into curricula. Their flexibility and adaptability, manifested through their diversity in their approach, could be leveraged to create culturally responsive teaching materials, which could not only lead to academic success but also cultural pride.

On Students' Perspectives

The group of Grade 7 students (aged between 12 and 13) who participated in the study were mostly female with the age range being 12 to 13. They all recognized its positive role in learning vocabulary, reading comprehension and in their knowledge of the history of their hometown. Some students noted that Sagada literature helped them learn more about where and what they lived in, as historical accounts like the one published in the journal *Ankileng* During the Spanish Regime helped them better understand cultural context. Local texts were used which improved their capacity to relate to stories, which in turn led to improved comprehension, motivation and engagement.

The results indicated that among these learners, there was a strong inclination towards narrative-based content: 40% of them preferred myths, 28% preferred local songs, and 8 per cent preferred poetry. This demonstrated that the most agreeable English input occurred when it was presented through familiar, rhythmic, and story-telling media like the on-gon-on or traditional chants. Sharp pedagogy, then, entailed a deliberate sequence--beginning with the ancestral legends, to build a low-anxiety vocabulary base before moving on to more abstract forms such as poetry. This localized approach confirmed the theory by Krashen (1982) on emotional preparedness and the arguments of Bernardo (2010) on cognitive familiarity, showing that the cultural identity of Sagada was a strong bridge to becoming an English proficient.

Learning Vocabulary using Sagada Literature

Students strongly agreed/ agreed that Sagada stories, poems, and songs helped them learn new words effectively, specifically noting the titles of *A Walk to Remember*, *Respect*, *The Legend of Biag*, *The Woman Who Married a Deer* and *The Old Man in a Hut*. People found it easier to comprehend and recall vocabulary based on familiar local texts and tended to use their native language instead of English when formulating ideas. Some of them stated that the Sagada literature enabled them to remember new words better and that vocabulary lessons were more fun when using local texts.

Sagada Literature Comprehension through reading

The majority of students strongly agreed or agreed that reading Sagada stories helped them to better understand and make lessons more relevant to their own culture, to find it easier to answer questions. They claimed that they felt more inspired to read and think more when they added local literature. One of the students explained that reading Sagada texts helped her think more deeply about the story, and another shared that reading such texts helped understand the story better, as they were familiar and interesting. *Respect*, *The Legend of Biag*, *The Woman Who Married a Deer*, and other stories about Sagada life were often quoted as helpful in helping to understand. In general, students said they wished to see more Sagada literature in their classrooms, as they tend to read it with ease, they feel connected to it (they said that reading it makes them feel like they belong in Spain). They always stressed that local texts enhanced both vocabulary and understanding due to familiarity, cultural affiliation, and engagement.

Preferences for Language Use

Majority of students preferred to use their mother tongue more than English in the classroom activity by citing that they feel more comfortable and understand better when speaking their mother tongue. The evidence indicated that local literature was more effective in vocabulary learning especially when students were conversant with the texts. The familiarity with the Sagada literature assisted them to remember new vocabulary with ease and made vocabulary lessons to be enjoyable. Therefore, higher retention, enhanced understanding and increased cultural pride were achieved through the use of local language and culturally relevant narratives.

Strategy	SD (1)	D (2)	N (3)	A (4)	SA (5)	Total (f)	Weighted Mean	SD	Rank	Qualitative Interpretation
Cultural Semantic Mapping/ Word Clustering	0	0	0	4	0	4	4	0	5	Agree
Guided Reading	0	0	0	0	4	4	4	0	2.5	Strongly Agree
Group Discussions	0	0	0	0	4	4	4	0	2.5	Strongly Agree
Interactive reading activities	0	0	0	0	4	4	4	0	2.5	Strongly Agree
Asking Comprehension Questions	0	0	0	0	4	4	4	0	2.5	Strongly Agree

Table 5. Strategies used by teachers to integrate local literature in vocabulary and reading comprehension of JHS in Sagada

All of these Grade 7 English teachers are engaging in Culturally Responsive Pedagogy in the sense that in the cohesion aspect, there is high professional alignment among Sagada JHS teachers. The members of the group keep their opinion that in order to study local literature, the multi-modal framework is to be used. According to Schema Theory, we learn by attaching new information to "folders" already in our brains. The teacher uses Cultural Semantic Mapping to teach Inayan which enables students to access their existing knowledge of the word. The student does not have to learn a completely new phenomenon, but has to learn one new term; that is taboo or prohibited. This process decreases cognitive demands which enables the brain to concentrate on language study instead of conceptual understanding. The Scaffolded Approach, begins with Mapping (vocabulary) and ends with Discussion (critical thinking) to help teachers need students to go beyond reading words to actually comprehending ideas. The model of the Zone of Proximal Development created by Lev Vygotsky demonstrates that the students can get the best learning outcomes when faced with the challenges which can be overcome when the students are provided with relevant assistance. The so-called Guided Reading method along with the so-called ASK questions serves as the safety net of a house.

The support is given by the teacher and the student in some way constructs his or her knowledge. The teacher will progressively reduce his or her support to the student who becomes confident in reading the local text until the student has developed independent reading skills. Their support falls on social Constructivism. To learn, social interaction is necessary. The system of culture within Sagada is the Dap-ay system, which forms a system of community. Group Discussions are combined with Interactive Activities to bring the students together in creating a shared understanding through the use of local language (nuances) that the students both comprehend. The program improves success rates through "Affective Filter" increase. Stephen Krashen who worked as a linguist proposed that students who experience boredom or anxiety or lack motivation will keep their "filter" active which prevents them from learning. The use of Local Literature enables students to lower their filter. The students perceive themselves as "experts" because the stories present their mountains and ancestors and caves. The high motivation level leads to decreased "filter" which helps students learn vocabulary and grammar at a deeper level. The implementation of these strategies helps to preserve Sagada's oral traditions as more than "old stories." They are the key elements that underpin modern scholastic success as well as reaffirm their cultural identity.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study identified a generalized dedication of the educators to make the oral and literary practices of Sagada potent instructional instruments. When teachers moved past the rote memorisation to the actual discovery, they were guided by the framework of Indigenous Peoples Education (IPed), as well as the Culturally Responsive Teaching, by Geneva Gay. The classroom in Sagada was a kind of a living archive that taught literacy and cultural survival as inseparable.

Incorporating Sagada local literature into language classes proved of great benefit to junior high school students in the form of vocabulary, reading comprehension, and knowledge of the history and culture of their native hometown. Cultural relevance of Sagada texts helped to create greater connections to the stories, enhancing motivation and engagement. Students indicated that they greatly preferred more Sagada literature in their curriculum because they believed it had a positive effect on their vocabulary, comprehension skills and general interest in learning. The results indicated that local literature not just enhanced the language skills, but also assisted in building cultural awareness and pride.

The vocabulary growth and reading comprehension were supported by teachers at Sagada JHS by using a number of strategies. They taught important vocabulary prior to reading, promoted students to make inferences, and supported group discussions. They would explain the backgrounds of the words and relate them to the day-to-day lives of the students. To

understand, they helped learners to locate the main ideas, summarize texts, and discuss questions. Nevertheless, the scarcity of the local literature resources limited student knowledge about the local customs and traditions, and this impacted comprehension. The teachers thus required to have access to local books, teaching guides and professional training on effective literature teaching. The cooperation with the community members was also highlighted to learn more about the culture and to find teaching materials.

Acknowledgement

The authors wish to take this opportunity to offer a heartfelt thanks to colleagues, mentors, and institutions that offered invaluable guidance, constructive feedback, and unwavering support during the conduction of this research and preparation of this manuscript. The faculty members and administrators that provided insights into the integration of indigenous literature in education are specially appreciated as well as the students and members of the community that provided their input and perspectives to enhance the study. The authors also recognize their peer reviewers and academic peers who contributed towards making the work clearer and rigorous. Any other errors or omissions are the single authors responsibility.

Funding

No external funding of this research was provided by external agencies, including public, commercial, and not-for-profit agencies. No organization was financially involved in the manner in which the study was conducted, the manner in which the manuscript was prepared, or even how the manuscript was published. The research was conducted on its own, all resources and efforts were only done by the researcher.

Competing Interests Statement

The authors asserted that they had no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the work reported in this article. This declaration emphasized the autonomy and impartiality of the research process, ensuring that the findings and conclusions were derived solely from scholarly investigation without external influence.

Data Availability Statement

This study could not be subject to data sharing because no new datasets were created and no new dataset was analyzed. All data relied on in the study was based solely on the earlier published materials which are given in the reference list in full.

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Appendices

No appendices are attached to this study.