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**BEST PRACTICES IN TEACHING ENGLISH IN JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW**

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**ABSTRACT**

The study focused on the systematic literature review of the best practices in teaching English in Junior High School. This research used the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method to identify, select, and appraise the best practices for teaching English in a Junior High School. The State of the Art Through Systematic Review (StART) tool was utilized specifically to facilitate the systematic review process. To choose the primary research studies, the researcher followed the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic and Meta-Analyses) guidelines proposed by Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, Altman, and the PRISMA Group in 2009. This involved adhering to the four key stages of identification, screening, data extraction, and the final selection of studies.

During identification, 1, 440 records were found from Elsevier Scopus, ScienceDirect, Springer Link, JSTOR, ERIC, and Google Scholar. The second phase in the SLR was the screening which involved imploring an exclusion and inclusion criteria for the literature review. After the screening, only 114 records for the review were determined. However, 77 additional articles were excluded from the review for diverse reasons, including duplication of meta-analyses, protocols, or reviews on different skills, lacking coverage of all four reciprocal teaching strategies, and providing unclear information about text types. This analysis led to identifying 20 eligible articles, which were included as a sample for this study. A review of 20 studies reveals varied global best practices in junior high school English teaching, the literature review highlights five common practices in teaching English: technology integration,

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gamification, student-centered approaches, differentiated instruction, and innovative strategies which reflects a global shift in English language instruction.

**Keywords:** *best practices, teaching English, Junior High School*

## Introduction

English language teaching plays a vital role in equipping learners with the necessary language skills and intercultural competencies to navigate the globalized world. Teachers may design meaningful learning experiences that inspire students to become skilled English language users by embracing essential ideas and using effective methods. Educators must use optimal practices that promote efficient language acquisition as long as English remains the most widely spoken language in the world. However, given the wide variety of techniques and methods for teaching that are accessible, it is essential to recognize and comprehend the best ways to teach English at the Junior High School.

However, in the past of English language teaching, learning strategy has been a significant subject among instructors, scholars, and syllabus designers. English language acquisition and learning strategies play a major part in EFL teaching and learning (Khansir, Dehkordi, & Mirzaei, 2021). Moreover, according to Faez and Karas (2021), classroom observations have long been used in language teacher education programs to understand professional development and classroom practices. To address decontextualized teaching, many programs offer "borderless expertise" that can work across all contexts. Five best practices include engaging and meaningful activities, direct vocabulary teaching, deliberate teaching, appropriate instructional language, timely feedback, encouraging student talk time, citing information, and maintaining a good lesson flow. These best practices align with popular TESOL doctrine and have ample support in the literature.

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In addition, Bernard (2010) as cited by Talido and Liu (2020), there has been a systematic and consistent recording of the learning challenges that students have when learning a foreign language using the English language as the medium of teaching. Talido and Liu (2020), who noted that Filipino students have trouble familiarizing themselves with the English language, further support this. As issues arise, teachers must be exceptionally inventive in coming up with solutions to make sure that English is not a difficult subject and that it instead allows students to easily engage in a new culture through language, stories, arts, plays, and history.

The report showed that in reading comprehension, which includes English proficiency, the Philippines placed 78th out of 79 participating nations in the 2018 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) (OECD, 2019). However, the lack of English proficiency among Filipino students has been a long-standing issue. According to the 2017 report by the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), several factors led to the low level of English proficiency of the students including insufficient language learning opportunities, unsatisfactory teaching, and limited exposure to language teaching and learning. Moreover, Tagle and Macalalag (2017) in a study revealed that the students' poor English performance was attributed to lack of motivation, inadequate exposure, and poor teaching quality. This signifies that there is a need for reforms as to the best practices in teaching the English language among students.

The education sector encourages teachers to use digital instructional materials, but Filipino teachers face limited access to technology and infrastructure, making it difficult to effectively integrate these materials (Alegria & Flores, 2021). Guevara and Tagudin (2021) emphasized that Filipino teachers lack the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively integrate digitalized instructional materials. It implies the teachers need to devise a repertoire of teaching strategies to reinforce the learning gaps of the students.

Although it has been noted that the mean percentage score for English 9 has been consistently low for the last three years, there is a lack of study on the precise cases that could be the reason for this trend. Due to the abrupt change in the learning mode in 2020, it

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was found that the mean percentage score for English 9 was 48.39, which is viewed as not learned. The mean percentage score (MPS) of the English 9 students dropped to 49.25 in 2021, according to the data. The mean percentage score of the students in English 9 in 2022, during the implementation of complete face-to-face lessons, was 50.45, which is also translated as not mastered. This means that there is a need for reforms in the teaching strategies, methodologies, and instructional materials that the teachers need to utilize to solve this existing problem.

With the abovementioned deficiencies, the educational system in the Philippines may reinforce sustainable development in the teaching-learning process to improve poor academic performance and devise best practices in teaching English among students. The main purpose of this study is to determine the best practices for teaching English in junior high school.

## Review of Literature and Studies

This section presents the literature and studies that are relevant to the present study.

Effective teaching strategies such as using evidence-based practices, high-leverage practices, and proper scaffolding will help ensure that my students are obtaining a quality education in learning the English language (Lampe, 2022). A variety of factors are essential to the teaching and learning process.

Meanwhile, Kosar and Dolapçolu (2021), teachers' use of interactive exercises and pair and group work may help students learn English more quickly. As a result, it is a process that a teacher must intentionally learn. Teachers must therefore be knowledgeable about both the subject matter and how students interpret and comprehend language. Additionally, education is sophisticated and complex; it involves several actions in applying appropriate and effective language teaching strategies.

Many outstanding scholars have focused on learning techniques throughout the history of English language education and learning to expand the understanding of English language instructors and students worldwide. According to Khansir et al. (2021), Wong and Nunan conducted one of their language studies in 2011. They looked at the distinctions between

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more and less successful learners of English as a foreign language in terms of learning styles, learning methodologies, and language usage patterns.

According to Glisan and Donato (2017), language comprehensibility refers to how foreign language teachers can make a language understandable to students, create situations that encourage foreign language comprehensibility, and involve students in understandable interactions. According to Glisan and Donato (2017), students need to use the target language in real-world situations to advance their proficiency. Teachers should implement best practices in teaching English to activate learning gaps in the English language

Alzubi et al. (2023) in a study aimed to identify tertiary EFL teachers' practices for teaching language comprehensibility in an EFL context. A closed-item questionnaire was administered to 65 teachers in Najran University, Saudi Arabia, from 2021-2022. Results showed that teachers taught language comprehensibility skillfully, with no significant differences in gender or years of experience. However, there were differences in responses towards methods based on years of experience. The study suggested integrating language comprehensibility practices in EFL contexts.

Faradella (2022), in a study, looked into the best practices to teach higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) to students taking online English courses. The study involved two senior high school teachers from Pekalongan, Central Java, Indonesia. Data were gathered by document analysis, semi-structured interviews, and classroom observation. The research showed that while teachers should appropriately include all HOTS criteria in their lesson plans, lesson plans may not be enough to help students develop their skills.

In research by Talenti (2022), teachers claimed that helping ELLs succeed academically was mostly due to the development of good connections with them. English language learners were better served by teachers who took the time to get to know them, comprehend their cultural backgrounds, and offer specialized help. Similarly, ELLs were more successfully engaged in learning when teachers employed culturally responsive teaching techniques, such as incorporating students' cultural backgrounds into the curriculum (Freeman & Freeman, 2017).

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A key component of teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Iran is learning strategy. The purpose of this study article was to examine the learning methods used by twenty Iranian post-graduate English language students at Persian Gulf University, Bushehr. A background questionnaire and a learning techniques questionnaire were also completed. The investigation showed that for EFL students to learn English, effective learning practices are essential (Khansir et al., 2021).

Gupta (2019), to prepare competent instructors working with English Language Learners (ELLs) or students speaking English as a Second Language (ESL), emphasized how crucial bilingual education is for the cognitive growth and self-esteem of ELLs. The article recommended that teachers adapt their teaching strategies to better meet the requirements of ELLs while outlining best practices for ESL students. The topic is relevant to TEFL settings in schools and other learning facilities.

The innovative teaching method known as English for Scientific Purposes (EScP) integrates language study with science knowledge. The emphasis of the course at the University of Ioannina in Greece is on encouraging self-action, student initiative, and creativity in English language learning. Events like Science Tea Parties, quick talks, online interviews, and creative writing exercises are among the activities. These exercises develop engagement, initiative, and communication while building a positive and imaginative environment in the classroom. The advantages of encouraging dialogue, initiative, and engagement in English learning are shown by the surveys used to evaluate the course (Andreou et al., 2018).

Ganesh and Pranesha (2018) acknowledged in the realm of education that improving learning outcomes through best practices in teaching and learning English. The goal of the project is to remove psychological obstacles from students' thoughts during introductory engineering courses by showing parental love and being amiable. With this method, the class average score rises by 24%, and 75% of the students receive grades A or B, signifying strong performance on the final examinations of the semester. Technology has the potential to significantly improve educational results. According to Hwang et al. (2017), technology can improve attitudes toward learning and increase student accomplishment in English Language.

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## Framework

The study was anchored on the Theory of Constructivism of Piaget (1973) which states that learners learn new things by combining their thoughts and experiences. Due to his belief that the individual is at the center of the process of knowledge generation and acquisition, his conception of constructivism serves as the inspiration for radical constructivism. The great bulk of Piaget's beliefs were developed via his study with children, and he frequently disputed the notion that kids thought less than adults do. His research shows that children do not have less cognitive abilities than adults. By putting up a hypothesis including cognitive phases, he established that children grow in diverse ways.

Active learning is emphasized by constructivism, which is consistent with language learning. Learners are urged to actively interact with the language through meaningful activities rather than relying merely on rote recollection or passive intake of information. Role-playing, dialogues, and group projects are interactive approaches that teachers may utilize to provide their pupils the chance to actively use and develop their English language abilities (Zilberman, 2017).

The importance of social connection in learning is acknowledged by constructivism. Being a communicative language, English benefits greatly from human interactions. Collaborative exercises, pair work, and language games that encourage genuine conversation can be included in constructivist teaching techniques. Students develop their language abilities in real-world settings by learning to negotiate meaning, articulate their ideas, and comprehend various viewpoints.

In addition, constructivism emphasizes how knowledge is created and how new information is integrated with existing knowledge. By utilizing students' past knowledge and experiences to speed up language acquisition, English teachers may make use of this idea. They can help learners draw connections between what they already know and the new language content by relating new vocabulary words or grammatical rules to what they already understand. This strategy encourages critical thinking and metacognition while improving understanding and retention (Behrens, 2021).

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Constructivism also emphasizes the value of metacognitive thought and reflection. Students can reflect on their language usage, assess their strengths and areas for development, and create language learning objectives as part of reflective exercises that English instructors might use. Reflective exercises that allow learners to track their language growth and take charge of their learning process include journaling and self-evaluations.

Moreover, constructivism theory provides helpful advice and recommendations for successfully teaching English. Teachers may provide learner-centered, interactive, and genuine learning environments that support active language acquisition, facilitate social engagement, link new information to past understanding, and promote reflective thinking by putting constructivist concepts into practice. These best practices for teaching English provide students with the tools they need to speak fluently and with confidence in English while also empowering them to take an active role in their language learning process.

The conceptual framework of the study is anchored on the research study of Blanco (2022), which follows the stages of the systematic literature review using the PRISMA method. The initial stage is scoping, which plays a pivotal role in guiding the review and encompasses three primary sub-steps: (1) formulation of a review framework involving specific research queries and study design; (2) selection of a limited number of pertinent studies for a preliminary review; and (3) a comprehensive review of existing systematic reviews on the same topic.

Following this, the planning phase comes into play, involving the strategic selection of primary keywords and Boolean operators to construct an effective search string, and making decisions about how the search will be executed. This phase further breaks down into two sub-steps: (1) creation of a search strategy, incorporating Boolean-operated search queries; and (2) identification of pertinent digital libraries or reputable sources for qualified studies.

The subsequent step involves the actual execution of the search, referred to as identification, wherein the pre-defined search strategy is employed. This step encompasses actions such as utilizing the established search strategy, analyzing the retrieved articles,

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adjusting the search strategy if necessary, conducting supplementary searches, seeking additional sources for relevant articles, and manually selecting extra studies.

The fourth stage is the screening process, focusing on the management of the articles generated as a result of the search. This stage comprises actions like exporting citations from the search results, importing them into a citation management tool like EndNote, Mendeley, Zotero, and Google Scholar eliminating duplicate records, updating article details, and carefully reviewing and selecting the articles to be included.

Subsequently, the fifth step is eligibility assessment, which includes setting inclusion and exclusion criteria, defining the strategy for the strength of evidence, evaluating articles based on their strength of evidence, identifying potential biases (selection, performance, measurement, or exclusion bias), and thoroughly reading the full text of the articles that have been chosen.

Lastly, the final step entails summarizing the systematic review findings, studying the heterogeneity among the included studies, presenting and interpreting the findings, discussing their generalizability, acknowledging the review's limitations, and suggesting avenues for future research. This structured process adheres to research standards, ensuring methodological rigor and transparency in the systematic review process.

## Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are (a) to identify the existing literature on the best practices in teaching English, (b) to identify the most effective teaching method and instructional strategies in English, and (c) to propose a plan of action on the best practices in English teaching.

## Methodology

This study used the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method to identify, select, and appraise the best practices for teaching English in Junior High School settings. Given the complexity and diversity of literature on teaching English in Junior High School, the systematic

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approach offered by SLR was deemed appropriate for ensuring the thoroughness and reliability of the study's findings. Through this design, the study aimed to contribute valuable insights and recommendations to enhance the quality of English Language teaching in Junior High School contexts.

The State of the Art Through Systematic Review (StART) tool was utilized specifically to facilitate the systematic review process. This tool played a pivotal role in ensuring the replicability and audibility of the entire review process, both in practical insights and rigorous research designs for teaching English studies. Retrieving articles was both thorough and transparent by adhering to pre-defined search terms, along with specific criteria for including and excluding articles (Shaffril et al., 2020).

To choose the primary research studies, the researcher followed the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic and Meta-Analyses) guidelines proposed by Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, Altman, and the PRISMA Group in 2009. This involved adhering to the four key stages of identification, screening, data extraction, and the final selection of studies.

## Results and Discussion

Following the problem statements, the following findings were obtained:

1. From 2018 and 2023, a review of 20 studies reveals varied global best practices in junior high school English teaching, the literature review highlights five common practices in teaching English: technology integration, gamification, student-centered approaches, differentiated instruction, and innovative strategies which reflects a global shift in English language instruction.

2. Nine studies highlight gamification and technology integration as effective tools for improving English language education, particularly during the pandemic, as mobile-assisted learning enhances vocabulary retention and motivation.

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3. The synthesis of the study highlights strengths like practical insights and rigorous research designs in teaching English studies, but weaknesses include limited sample sizes, regional specificity, and methodological shortcomings.

4. Based on the results of the study, an action plan, and activity proposal in crafting the 4As lesson plan will be the end-product of the study as a plan of action to improve the quality of instruction among teachers on the current trends on the best practices in teaching English. This together with the evaluation tool on the classroom observation for teachers was used to measure the teaching ability in the applicability of the best practices in teaching English. Moreover, the teacher should participate in the SLAC to be oriented and updated on the current trends.

## Conclusions

In light of the findings presented it is evident that the landscape of junior high school English teaching has undergone a transformative shift towards embracing innovative practices reflective of global trends. The emphasis on technology integration and gamification as effective tools for enhancing English language education, particularly amidst the challenges posed by the pandemic, underscores the importance of adapting instructional methods to meet the evolving needs of learners.

These findings resonate strongly with Jean Piaget's Theory of Constructivism, which emphasizes the active role of learners in constructing their understanding of the world through experience and reflection. The integration of technology, gamification, student-centered approaches, differentiated instruction, and other innovative strategies aligns closely with Piaget's notion that learning is an active process shaped by individual experiences and interactions with the environment. It emphasizes the importance of providing opportunities for active engagement and exploration, and these findings highlight how technology and gamification can facilitate such experiences, leading to improved motivation and retention among students.

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However, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations identified within the identified studies, such as limited sample sizes, regional specificity, and methodological shortcomings. These limitations underscore the need for future research to adopt stronger methodologies and broader sampling strategies to ensure the generalizability of findings across diverse contexts.

Further, the action plan proposed, focusing on crafting 4As lesson plans, and implementing evaluation tools for classroom observation emphasizes the importance of active participation and reflection in the learning process. By engaging teachers in ongoing professional development activities, such as SLAC participation, educators can remain informed and equipped with the latest pedagogical approaches, fostering a dynamic and responsive learning environment.

In conclusion, the findings of this study put emphasis on the significance of aligning instructional practices with contemporary educational trends while also remaining grounded in the theoretical framework. Therefore, educators can empower students to actively construct their knowledge and skills through experience by embracing innovative strategies and creating a culture of continuous improvement, ultimately enhancing the quality of English language instruction in junior high schools in the Philippines.

## Recommendations

Considering the findings and conclusions shown above the following recommendations are highly suggested:

**DepEd Administrators.** May use the results of the study for updating the teachers on the current trends on the best practices in teaching English in Junior High School to be integrated in division wide seminars.

**School Principal.** May establish ongoing professional development initiatives for teachers, including regular participation in School Learning Action Cells (SLAC). These sessions should focus on orienting and updating educators on current trends and advancements in English language teaching.

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**Teachers.** They may attend training and seminars on the best practices and pedagogical strategies in teaching English language that may help to boost their technical and instructional skills in teaching.

**Future Researchers.** They may also use the results of the study and consider the gaps presented in the review. Particularly on the best practices in teaching English in Junior High School.

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