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IMPROVING THE STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH CONTEXT CLUES STRATEGY

ENY DWI MARCELA¹, DESTIA HERLISYA², PURNA WIRATNO³

STKIP PGRI BANDAR LAMPUNG¹²³

misadestia@gmail.com²

Abstract: This study aims to enhance students' reading comprehension through the use of context clues. This research focused on first semester English Education major students at STKIP PGRI Bandar Lampung. It comprised of 20 students. This study employed Classroom Action Research (CAR) in two cycles. The researchers collected data using both tests and non-tests. This study employed both formative and summative tests. During non-testing, researchers used observation sheets and field notes. The researchers analysed the data using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The study found that using context clues effectively improves students' learning and reading comprehension. In cycle 1, 8 students passed the exam with a percentage of 40%, while 12 students failed with a percentage of 60%. It improves in cycle two, with 16 students passing (80%) and 4 failing (16%). It may be concluded that using the context clues approach delivers positive learning effects. The mean score of total score in cycle 1 was 6.34 while in cycle 2 the mean score was 7.68. The improvement of students' learning activity from cycle 1 to cycle 2 was 0.58. The context clues strategy successfully improved the learning activity and reading comprehension of first semester English education students at STKIP PGRI Bandar Lampung in 2023/2024.

Keywords: Context Clues, Reading, Classroom Action Research

INTRODUCTION

English has four skills which needs to be mastered by the students. The skills are speaking, writing, reading

and listening. Those skills are matters because affect the communication. A person can be said to be capable of a foreign language if he is able to

communicate using that language both in spoken and written form. This is one of the reason why mastering English skills is a must. Among the four skills that students learn while attending school, reading is one of the skills that has its own uniqueness. Reading involves many important elements such as pronunciation, vocabulary, and also carries information for readers. In learning English, reading needs more concern. Reading becomes vital because 60-70% activity in class is through reading. Based on Howard (2006, p.61) states that reading is a course as communicative as any other form of language. It means that there is an interaction between the writer and the readers through the text in reading. Therefore, reading is a vital skill in learning English. This statement does not mean to underestimate the other three skills, but reading is the activity most often carried out in the classroom. for example, before we do an assignment, we will definitely be asked to read the instructions first, or when we are asked to answer a question from a text, we will look for it by reading the

text. The statement above is in line with the opinions of other experts. According to Putri, Ohoiwutun & Wahyudin (2015), "Reading is the most urgent activity in any language class, not only as a source of information and pleasurable activity, but also as a means of combining widening one's knowledge of the language".

Reading is an important skill which is not easy to master (Kautsara, Jaya, & Herlisya, 2022). Reading becomes difficult to master because before mastering reading, students are required to have a rich vocabulary. Apart from that, comprehension is also difficult. Based on Herlisya, Marcela, Anum and Wiratno (2022) Comprehension is always hard. College students maybe understand words separately but link them together to get meaning often does not work as it should because it hasn't developed yet proper comprehension skills. Scanlon et al. (2010) explain that comprehension is a dynamic, collaborative activity in which what is immediately stated in the text and the reader's prior knowledge of the topic

affect the reader's understanding of the text. In tune with Zainal et al., (2022) stated that reading comprehension requires considerable reading skills, such as word recognition, fluency, vocabulary, and prior knowledge, to be applied rapidly so that the reader can acquire knowledge from the passage. Therefore, based on the pre-study results, problems were found with the fact that students in the first semester of English language education majors at STKIP PGRI Bandar Lampung do not yet know what strategies they can use to sharpen their understanding. Most students said they had difficulty understand words they do not know, even though they majored in English, their vocabulary and grammar skills are still relatively weak. They couldn't explain further information from the text and they can barely answer the question. These students honestly said that they usually took longer to find the main idea and were unable to answer comprehension questions about the text, some of them also do not know where information or answers come from. With these problems arising, the researchers tried to find solutions by using appropriate strategies to be

implemented in the classroom. The strategy chosen is context clues strategy. Using context clues is an explicitly taught reading strategy that students use to figure out the meaning of an unknown word (Flemming, 2014). When coming across an unknown word, a student uses other words in the text that are usually in the same sentence or nearby sentences that provide clues to the meaning of the unfamiliar word. These clues may include synonyms, antonyms, definitions or examples. Students can also use clues from meaningful word parts such as the base word, prefixes or suffixes. Based on Al-Jawi (2010), the context clues strategy is employed to determine the unknown word to be comprehended easily. In order to understand the text, one must be familiar with the meaning of each word in the text. In the text there are so many unfamiliar words, we sometimes do not realize that they are important to gain the complete information. If the students ignore those unknown words, the students will not get the text's whole meaning. Other explanations about context clues came from Hiebert and Kamil (2005); context clues contain linguistic information such as words,

phrases, and sentences, as well as non linguistic information, such as images and typographic elements surrounding an unfamiliar word. They can be used to infer the word's meaning. The strategy is excellent for students with low vocabularies. To help them learn foreign words, utilise context clues instead of a dictionary. This requires extra effort to translate the term or phrase into their own language. Four-step process used to guide students' use of context clues (Jennings, Caldwell and Lerner, 2014):

1. Ask the students to look at the unfamiliar word - then read the sentence before and after the word
2. Ask the students to connect what they know with the text
3. Ask the students to predict a meaning
4. Ask the students to confirm or revise their prediction. Reread the sentence using their prediction. Are they satisfied with their prediction or do they need to read further back or forward in the text to see if the author provides more clues? Do they need to use a resource beyond

the text? If so, ask the students to try a dictionary or ask someone.

Based on the problems that occurred and have been described above, the researchers concluded that the students experienced various problems, namely:

- 1) The students faced difficulties to find main idea of the text given.
- 2) The students had difficulties to find the whole information from the text.
- 3) The students faced difficulty to answer comprehension question of text, especially if the information is stated implicitly.
- 4) The students had low level of vocabulary used.
- 5) The students had low motivation in reading due to a lack of fun strategies.

Because of these problems, the researchers agreed to conduct the research which focused on improving students' reading comprehension using context clues strategy. The researchers also presented the formulation of the problems, first, can Context clues strategy improve students' reading

comprehension? Second, can Context clue strategy improve students' activities in learning reading?

This research has two objectives of the research. First, to know and to describe whether using Context clues strategy improve students' reading comprehension. The last, to know and to describe whether using Context clues strategy improve students' activities in learning reading.

METHOD

This research used classroom action research to improve students' reading comprehension through Context Clues Strategy. The subject of the research was the English education students at the first semester of STKIP PGRI Bandar Lampung in 2023/2024. It consists of 20 students. Classroom action research is used to improve the learning process in the classroom. The ultimate goal of implementing classroom action research is to produce an improvement in the learning process (see Herlisya & Wiratno, 2022; Nissa et al., 2021; Nurchurifiani et al., 2021; Sagita, 2021). According to Kautsara, Jaya & Herlisya (2022) Classroom Action Research conducted by a teacher

itself through self-reflection, with the purpose of improving students' performance as a teacher so that students learning outcomes increase. The research was done by two cycles, in cycle 1 there are four meetings, as well as cycle 2. The procedures are planning, action, observation and reflection (Taggart, 2013). In planning, the researchers arranged for doing something, like identified students' problem in reading comprehension, then arranged steps of teaching plan and prepared for it. In action, it was a process when the plan was being done. In this step, researchers did the teaching and learning process by using Context Clues Strategy (see Septia et al., 2022; Subarino, 2022). The purpose of observation was to gather action-related information. Using an observation sheet and field notes, the researchers tracked the progress of students in their reading comprehension learning activities. Reflection was the feedback mechanism for all of the activities. The study tools include a formative test, a summative test, an observation sheet, and a field note for each cycle. Quantitative data analysis is used to examine results from

instrument tests. The outcome of data analysis is a type of quantitative data that is defined in descriptive terms by measuring individual and classical completeness. To calculate the score of pupils' learning completeness, the writer utilised the formula:

$$\bar{x} = \frac{\sum x}{n}$$

In which:

\bar{x} : Mean of test score of students.

$\sum x$: Sum of the test score of all students.

n : Total number of students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Result of the data from cycle 1 and cycle 2 of the students' learning can be seen in the table below:

Table 1
Students' Learning Result for Cycle 1 and Cycle 2

| Cycle 1 | | Cycle 2 | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| Num ber of stude nts | Complete ness (%) | Num ber of stude nts | Complete ness (%) |
| 8 | 40 % | 16 | 80 % |
| 12 | 60 % | 4 | 16 % |

According to the data above, in cycle 1, 8 students passed the exam with a percentage of 40%, whereas 12 students failed the test with a percentage of 60%. It improves in cycle 2, with 16 students passing the test (80%) and 4 students failing the test (16%). It may be concluded that applying the context clues technique produces favourable learning outcomes.

Table 2
Students' Learning Activities for Cycle 1 and Cycle 2

| Cycle 1 | Cycle 2 | Improvement |
|------------------|------------------|-------------|
| Average score | Average score | 0.58 |
| 6.34 | 7.68 | |

Based on the table above, it can be seen that the mean score of total score in cycle 1 was 6.34 while in cycle 2 the mean score was 7.68. The improvement of students' learning activity from cycle 1 to cycle 2 was 0.58. Therefore, it can be concluded that the students' learning activity in the class improved from cycle 1 to cycle 2.

Discussion

As a crucial demands, reading becomes a vital skill for students in any major. Students should practice more often to sharpen their reading comprehension, as said by Nunan (2003) that reading is a fluid process in which readers blend information from a book with what they already know to generate meaning. So, to create a whole meaning of the text, someone needs to combine the two kinds of information. Based on the observation in this research, the context clues strategy brings a happy mood in learning English reading for the students. This strategy also causes an increasement in students learning activities. This can be seen from the data that had obtained

from the test and observation sheet, the researchers found a positive in learning process especially writing. In cycle 1, the students who passed the test were 8 students with the percentage of 40%. It improves in cycle 2, the students who passed the test were 16 with the percentage of 80%. Speaking about the mean score, in cycle 1 was 6.34 while in cycle 2 the mean score was 7.68. The improvement of students' learning activity from cycle 1 to cycle 2 was 0.58. Therefore, it can be concluded that the students' learning activity in the class improved from cycle 1 to cycle 2. The context clues strategy could help students to catch the unfamiliar words. It helps them to gain the whole information from the text. When they got the whole information, it is easier for them to define the main idea and the specific information.

CONCLUSIONS

Using the Context Clues Strategy to teach reading comprehension is an excellent start. This is an effective method for improving students' reading comprehension. This is supported by the findings of the hypothesis, which suggests that the

Context Clues technique can boost students' reading comprehension and learning activity. As a result, students are able to understand the whole text, to find main ideas and make summaries that review the material, students can also enrich vocabulary. Besides, this strategy also has a positive influence in growing motivation and interest in the process of learning reading because students interact with each other. Therefore, it can be concluded that the use of context clues strategy is effective in teaching English reading to develop students' reading comprehension. This strategy also successfully enhances the students' knowledge. Here are some recommendations for implementing the context clues technique for teaching reading. First, Remind students to use context hint visual aids, like as posters and bookmarks, along with a checklist of tactics. This might make the classroom atmosphere more enjoyable and energetic. Give the students plenty of opportunity to practise this method with genuine texts appropriate for their independent reading level. For students

who need more practice, use shorter bits of text on task cards or worksheets.

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