

## **IMPROVING STUDENTS' READING SKILLS THROUGH CONTEXT CLUES AND PUNCTUATIONS AT GRADE XII MS 4 OF SMA NEGERI PLUS OF RIAU PROVINCE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This article reports on a study intended to explain whether context clues and punctuations could better improve the students' reading skills at grade XII MS 4 of SMA Negeri Plus of Riau Province and to explain what factors that change it. This research was conducted through a classroom action research at SMA Negeri Plus of Riau Province, in 2017/2018 academic year. This classroom action research consisted of two cycles constituting 3 meetings for each cycle. Participants of the research were 25 of students of the grade XII MS 4 of SMA Negeri Plus Riau Province. The data were collected by using observation checklists, field notes, and test. Qualitative data were analyzed by data managing, reading or memoing, describing, classifying, interpreting. Quantitative data were analyzed by percentage (score of reading skills), Matrix and graph. The result of this research shows that the students' reading skills increased in each cycles. In the first cycle, the percentage of students' reading skills was 80.60%. But, the result was unsatisfactory yet. In the second cycle, the increase of students' reading skills was 90.08%. It means that there is an increase of students' reading skills in second cycles. In conclusion, the teaching of context clues and punctuations skills could increase the students' reading skills in understanding reading text. There were some factors that influence the changing of the students' reading skills by implementing context clues and punctuations, namely;(a) Time allocation in implementing of the context clues and punctuations.(b) Students' understanding in implementing the context clues and punctuations in reading skills. (c) Classroom atmosphere while the context clues and punctuations were implemented.

**Keywords :** *context clues, punctuations, reading*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Reading is one of the four language skills which plays an important role in learning a language. Through reading, the reader can obtain and transfer information, meanings, ideas, news, histories, and the content of the writers' thinking. Therefore, in reading

activities, the main purpose is to obtain and convey the information or messages stated in the reading texts.

In reading activities or a certain reading material, a student needs a good strategy in understanding reading texts. However, an observation in teaching

English indicates that 70 % of the students at the grade XII MS 4 have shown low reading skills through the reading test in daily activities. For example, In the daily test on July 18<sup>th</sup>, 2017, there were 25 students, only 25% of them got 80 and 5 % of them got 85 in their test. They found it difficult to know the meaning of the words they often encountered. If they read a reading text, only some words had they known. It means, the students cannot master the meaning of words in a sentence and nor can they communicate in English appropriately because the teaching-learning activities still focus on grammatical rules rather than on vocabulary items in their contexts. The teachers use the traditional and monotonous teaching techniques. They just ask students to read, find difficult words by looking them a dictionary, and ask them to answer the questions. They are often served with the same techniques in the learning process almost all of the time. It makes the students get bored and reluctant to be involved actively in understanding reading texts. Allen (1983:3) proposes two factors that will affect the failure of students in understanding the meaning of words. Those are: (1) they do not have any skills in comprehending the meaning of words, and (2) they do not have enough basic competencies to translate both words and sentences in a text. Therefore, to know the meaning of the words in the sentences, it is important that the students be provided with another techniques or ways for inferring the meanings of the unknown vocabularies that they have never got it. One of the techniques in learning reading skills is through context clues and punctuations.

Context clues are only one of a variety of strategies that are suggested to use by the teachers in improving

reading skills, whereas it can make them easier to find out content, messages, and details information. The context can be identified through some clue words. Brown (1994:308) holds that providing contexts is a good strategy in guessing the meaning of difficult words. He further points out that the context is the word and the sentences surrounding particular words. So, guessing a word from the context is very strategic and therefore it may be a helpful strategy for helping the students in reading texts. This idea is supported by Joffe (1997) who confirms that context clues are hints that an author gives to help define difficult or unusual words. The clue may appear within the same sentences as the word refers, or it may be in a preceding or subsequent sentences. In other words, those context clues are signs, which can help the reader to know the meaning from the unknown words in a context. Ying (2005) defines a context clues as an effective approach to increase the vocabulary and reading comprehension, because it can help students infer the meaning of a new word. Brown's idea, Joffe's idea and Ying's idea are very similar in its general outlines. They explain that context clues is a good strategy in guessing the meaning of a word and it can help the reader to know the meaning. Based on the statement above, a context clues is a way or a technique to determine the meaning of unfamiliar word, which develops students' vocabulary and reading comprehension.

McCaskill, et.al (1998:44) identifies that punctuations are placed in texts to make clear and to make reading easier. He further points out that the various punctuations marks perform four functions: (a) separate, (b)group of enclose, (c) connect and (d) impart meaning. This idea is echoed Wassman

(2000:113) defines punctuations can be guide to sentence comprehension, it means punctuations can help students in understanding a reading text.. McCaskill's idea, Baugh's idea and Wassman's idea are very similar in its general outlines. They explain that punctuations is a good strategy or technique in presenting ideas clearly and accurately and it can help the reader to read a text easily. Based on the statement above, a punctuation is a way or a technique to present ideas clearly

and accurately, which develops students' reading comprehension.

Context clues and punctuations can theoretically improve students' reading skills. Therefore, it is important to conduct this study which explained the implementation of context clues and punctuations. This study aims whether context clues and punctuations was presumed could better improve the students' reading skills at grade XII MS 4 of SMA Negeri Plus of Riau Province and to explain what factors that change it.

## **METHOD**

The method used in this research was a classroom action research focused on improving students' reading texts through context clues and punctuations. The data was collected by direct observations, field notes, and giving reading test. The participants of this study were 25 students of grade XII MS 4 of SMA Negeri of Plus of Riau Province in 2017/2018 academic year.

This action research was a cyclical process. Every cycle has four steps:

### **1. The First Cycle**

#### **a. Plans**

In this cycle, it was planned and designed the activities in which the context clues and punctuations were used to improve the students' reading skills during the first cycle. The first cycle was done for three meetings. The teaching schedule of the English teacher was one a week, on Tuesdays based on the academic calendar of the school conducted on July 25<sup>th</sup> until August 8<sup>th</sup> 2017. Finally, the researcher gave them tests.

#### **b. Actions**

After motivating and stimulating the students' prior knowledge in which the teacher asked the students about the technique that they used to know the meaning of the sentences in

understanding the reading texts. These techniques were explained carefully and slowly. Then, the teacher asked the students to apply the context clues and punctuations to overcome the problems. Finally in the post activities, the teacher concluded the lesson.

In the second meeting, In the whilst activities, she explained to the students how to use and understand the vocabularies by guessing the meaning of the words and the sentences in the context and punctuations. Finally in the post activities, the teacher concluded the lesson.

In the third meeting, the teacher did the same action as the second meeting. she asked them to guess the meaning of the words and the sentences in the reading texts by solving the context clues and punctuations. Finally in the post activities, the teacher concluded the lesson.

#### **c. Observations and Field notes**

Doing direct observation to gain the data, the collaborator used checklist to all class activities. In analyzing the result of collaborator's observations on activities which showed students' reading skills and teacher's activities and the implementing of context clues and punctuations in the class in each

cycle, the researcher used matrix table and then the field notes to write something could not write on checklist. Finally, the teacher gave a test to evaluate and analyze the development of the teaching itself.

**d. Reflections or evaluations**

In this stage, the researcher collected the data by distributing reading tests to the students to measure students' reading skills for each indicator (two items for each indicator). The results were analyzed and evaluated to know the students success in the learning process in the first cycle to create the next plan for the next cycles. If the students did not achieve what it was hoped, it continues to the next cycles.

**2. The Second Cycle**

**a. Plans**

In cycle 2, the activities were similar to those in cycle 1. The differences were stressing on the

revised plan. In the other words, in teaching learning process focused on what problem was unsolved in the revised plan cycle 1. The cycle was done for three meetings. The first meeting was done on August 15<sup>th</sup>, the second meeting was done on August 22<sup>th</sup> and the last meeting was done on 29<sup>th</sup> of August 2017. The time for each meeting was 90 minutes (2x45 minutes). This collaborative action research consist of two cycles.

The next step after data collection was analyzed with qualitative and quantitative forms. Qualitative data means that data was presented in the form of verbal. In this case, the data were collected through from observation checklist field notes, and tests. Quantitative data means the data would be presented in the form of numerical report. In quantitative form would be presented in form of percentage, matrix, graphs.

**RESULTS**

This study finds that the implementation of the context clues and punctuations could be identified from the increasing number of the students'

reading skills from cycle to cycle. The progression of each cycle could be seen in following table:

**Table 1**  
**The Progression of Students' Reading Skills Scores**

No	Cycles	Score of Students' Reading Skills
1	Before Context Clues and Punctuations	70.20 %
2	First cycle	80.60 %
3	Second cycle	90.08 %

The table shows that there was increasing of the students' reading skills on cycle 1. The increasing was about 10.40 %.. It matched with Yings' research (2005). He found that context clues is effective approach to increase

reading comprehension, because it can help students infer the meaning of a new words. While McCaskill, et.al (1998:44) found that punctuations are placed in texts to make clear and to make reading easier.

Although there was increasing of students' reading skills at cycle I but it was not satisfied yet. There were still problems faced by the students. Firstly, the students still found difficulty to figure out the meaning of words and the sentences because they have limited vocabulary mastery. The problems were caused by some factors namely; (a) difficulties in understanding the instruction or command given because this was the first time for them to know and apply the technique. (b) limited time allocation in implementing the context clues and punctuations. (c) classroom atmosphere and some of still confused in applying this technique. There were 36 % of students

still categorized in low score. It means the second cycle needed to be continued.

In the second cycle it was focused on the solving on figure out the meaning of words to overcome the problems. This case it was emphasized the implementation of contrasts, definitions and examples. It was redesigned some teaching activities and focused on how to guess the meaning of the words and the sentences in understanding the reading texts. The result showed that 90.08 % or 22 students got good score. It means the second cycle successfully increased the students' reading skills.

## DISCUSSIONS

This study found that the implementation of the context clues and punctuations could be identified from the increasing number of the students' reading skills from cycle to cycle. It was supported by her collaborator's field notes. He noted that most of students could answer the questions easily because they could guess the meaning of the words and the sentences by using context clues and punctuations without looking a dictionary. It means

that they could improve their reading skills.

In other words , the implementation of context clues and punctuations gave positive effect toward the students' reading skills. There were 90.08. % or 22 students were categorized good score. In other words, the context clues and punctuations can better increase or improve students' reading skills. It could be drawn as follows:

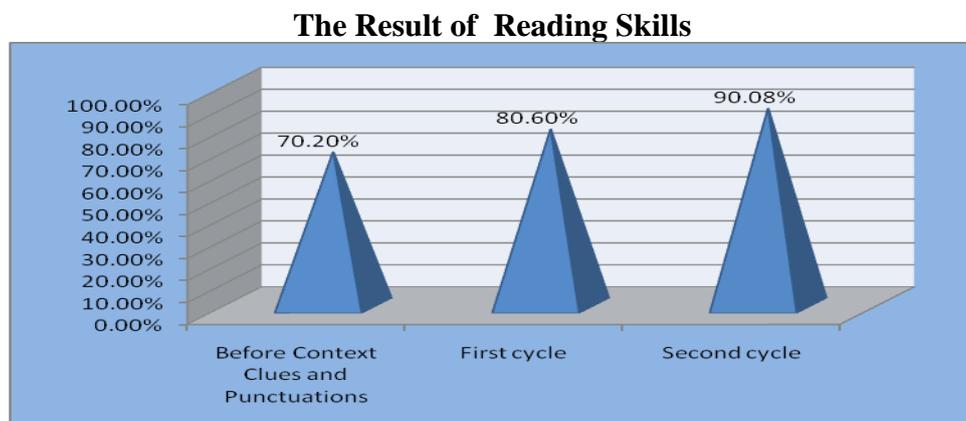


Figure:1

In implementing the context clues and the punctuations, the researcher could identify some factors that influenced it. In the first cycle the factors are; first, Time allocation in implementing context clues and punctuations. Second, students' understanding in implementing context

clues and punctuations. Third, classroom atmosphere. In the second cycle are; first, Students' understanding in implementing context clues and punctuations. Second, Classroom atmosphere while the context clues and punctuations were implemented.

### CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Based on the previous description and discussion, several conclusions are drawn as follows. First, Context clues and punctuations better improve the students' reading skills at grade XII MS 4 of SMA Negeri Plus of Riau Province. It means it can stimulate and increase the students' reading skills. Second, There were some factors that influence the changing of the students' reading skills by implementing context clues and punctuations, namely;(a)Time allocation in implementing of the context clues and punctuations.(b)Students' understanding in implementing the context clues and punctuations in reading skills. (c)Classroom atmosphere while the context clues and punctuations were implemented.

Based on the previous conclusions, some suggestions are proposed as follows. First, the researcher as an English teacher should include this technique as his/her repertoire of teaching technique. Second, it is suggested for the researcher as an English teacher to apply context clues and punctuations in improving students' reading skills and to minimize the use of dictionary in understanding reading texts. Third, it is suggested to other English teachers to investigate the use of context clues and punctuations for other skills and levels of education. Finally, it is suggested to other researchers to investigate other strategies in helping students to increase reading skills. Because most of science and knowledge are obtained through reading skills.

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