

## AN ANALYSIS OF THE THIRD YEAR STUDENTS OF UNP ENGLISH DEPARTMENT ABILITY IN USING CONTEXT CLUES

Ferdy Annelando<sup>1</sup>, Zainuddin Amir<sup>2</sup>, Fitriwati<sup>3</sup>  
Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris  
FBS Universitas Negeri Padang  
E-mail: FAnnelando@gmail.com

### Abstrak

Tujuan penelitian ini adalah (1) mendeskripsikan kemampuan penggunaan *context clues* mahasiswa Jurusan Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris UNP dalam membaca teks bahasa Inggris, (2) mengetahui masalah-masalah yang dihadapi oleh mahasiswa Jurusan Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris UNP dalam menggunakan *context clues* saat membaca teks berbahasa Inggris. Penelitian ini adalah penelitian deskriptif. Populasi penelitian ini adalah mahasiswa tingkat III Jurusan Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris tahun masuk 2011 Fakultas Bahasa dan Seni, Universitas Negeri Padang. Sampel penelitian ini berjumlah 20 orang yang dipilih menggunakan teknik *cluster sampling*. Data dikumpulkan melalui dua instrumen yaitu tes *context clues* dan wawancara. Dalam tes *context clues*, mahasiswa diberikan tes yang berisikan 50 pertanyaan terkait 7 jenis *context clues*; *definition & synonym*, *example/illustration*, *contrast*, *logic of passage*, *cause & effect*, *modifier*, & *sentence/paragraph clues* dalam bentuk pilihan ganda dan isian dalam waktu 60 menit. Selain itu, di dalam wawancara ditanyakan beberapa pertanyaan yang digunakan untuk mengetahui permasalahan mahasiswa dalam menggunakan *context clues*. Data penelitian ini berupa interpretasi dari hasil tes mahasiswa dan wawancara terhadap mahasiswa. Dari penelitian ini ditemukan bahwa persentase kemampuan penggunaan *context clues* mahasiswa secara keseluruhan adalah 66.9% dengan interpretasi *good* atau baik. Masalah-masalah yang dihadapi oleh mahasiswa dalam menggunakan *context clues* adalah beberapa kosakata yang seharusnya menjadi petunjuk tapi malah tidak diketahui, keraguan dalam menentukan jenis *context clues*, teks yang terlalu panjang dan susah dipahami, kecenderungan untuk menggunakan kamus dengan alasan lebih efektif, dan tidak menguasai konsep dasar dari jenis-jenis *context clues*.

Kata kunci: *Context clues*, *reading text*.

### A. Introduction

English is an international language which is used to communicate among the people around the world. As an international language, English has been used as a primary language in many fields such as in education, economics, politics, and also culture. In education, many books and sources are written in English.

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<sup>1</sup> Student of English Language Teaching Program of FBS UNP graduated on September 2014

<sup>2</sup> Advisor, Lecturer in Faculty of Languages and Arts, State University of Padang

<sup>3</sup> Co-Advisor, Lecturer in Faculty of Languages and Arts, State University of Padang

Many colleges require their students who want to continue their study to master degree to have good English skills. A lot of job vacancies require passive or active English for the job seeker whether the job is connected with English or not. Hence, to get success in academic and future career, students should master English.

English has four fundamental skills, they are; listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Bailey (2005) classifies the four skills into receptive and productive skills. Both reading and listening belong to receptive skills, while speaking and writing belong to productive skills. Those four fundamental skills can also be classified into input and output skill. Listening and reading belong to input skills. Moreover, speaking and writing belong to output skills of English. There are also grammar and vocabulary.

In reading, vocabulary is one of five components of reading instruction that are essential to successful reading. Those components include phonemic awareness, phonics and word study, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (National Reading Panel, 2000). Vocabulary helps the students to understand and comprehend what they read. The other function of vocabulary is to help the students to access their background knowledge during the reading process. The high correlation of vocabulary with reading comprehension indicates that if students do not adequately and steadily grow their vocabulary, reading comprehension will be affected (Chall & Jacobs, 2003). Knowing a lot of words also helps students grasp the full meaning of the texts.

Unfortunately, in the reality English Department's students still have problems in vocabulary during their study. Ideally, as an English Department's students, they should have sufficient vocabularies due to a number of subjects that they have learned. They have learned listening, reading, writing, speaking and pronunciation, grammar, etc. Therefore, they might have enough vocabularies.

In reading, students are usually troubled of some problems. First, most students don't really know what they are reading. Usually, they just read their reading but it is probably difficult for them to understand the reading. Second, students often miss some critical points or important information of what they are reading. They can't get all of the information from their reading as a whole part. Sometimes it is hard for the students to classify which the important point is and which the less important point of their reading is. They just focus on the point which is not so important and ignore the most important point.

There are some reasons why these problems happened. First, the students use inappropriate vocabulary. Students have difficulty in finding the correct word to replace another word. Next, it is difficult for the students to guess a meaning of a word that they don't know. Students are not used to guessing the meaning of the unknown or unfamiliar words which they found. Another reason is that the students are common to use a monolingual dictionary to look for the meaning of unknown words. The use of monolingual dictionary makes the students do an extra work to translate the unknown word definition into their target language which takes longer time.

Actually, this problem would not occur because there are some strategies to overcome this problem. There is one strategy which is also being taught In

Reading 1 class of UNP's English Department; this reading strategy is called "Context Clues". This strategy of reading allows students to get the meaning of unknown words easily rather than the conventional strategy by consulting the dictionary.

Many researches have been done by the researcher related to context clues strategy where each research has different findings. Kusumarasdyati (1996) done a research at the English Department of IKIP (UM) Malang which investigate the type of context clues used in UM final examination. Differently, Saropa (2009) done a research about context clues which analyzed the type of context clues found in "Barron's TOEFL IBT" book. Considering the two of previous research, the writer is interested in a research related to the students' anility in using context clues. This research will be different with the previous researches since it will analyze the third year UNP's English Department students' ability in using context clues, while the previous researches were done to find the type of context clues used in final examination and the type of context clues used in "Baron's TOEFL IBT" book.

## **B. Research Methods**

This research was conducted by using quantitative descriptive study since the writer would like to describe the ability of third year of English Department students in using Context Clue in finding a meaning of a word. Thus, in this research, descriptive research was done to find out and analyze the ability of 2011 academic year of UNP's English Department students in using Context Clue in finding the meaning of a word.

In this research, the population was the third year students of education class in UNP's English Department. The samples of this research were taken by using cluster sampling technique. The data of the research were collected through two research instruments. The first instrument was context clues test. It was done by asking the students to answer 50 questions. In conducting the context clues test, there were 50 questions which asked about the 7 types of context clues. The students were given 60 minutes to do the test. The item of the test was arranged based on seven types of context clues. The second instrument was interview. The interview was done at BB4 classroom; two days after the students took the context clues test. The researcher interviewed 6 students which had selected randomly based on their level in the context clues test. Two students were from each high, middle and low level. The interview was done in around 5 minutes for each student.

## **C. Findings and Discussion**

### **1. Students' Ability in Using Context Clues in Reading Text**

In this section, the findings of students' ability in using context clues in reading text are represented by the following table:

**Table 1. The Overall Students' Ability in Using Context Clues in Reading Text.**

Students' Ability in Using Definition & Synonym Clue	<b>EXCELLENT</b>	Students' Ability in Using Context Clues in Reading Text	<b>GOOD</b>
Students' Ability in Using Example/Illustration Clue	<b>AVERAGE</b>		
Students' Ability in Using Contrast Clue	<b>GOOD</b>		
Students' Ability in Using Clues in the Logic of a Passage	<b>AVERAGE</b>		
Students' Ability in Using Cause & Effect Clue	<b>AVERAGE</b>		
Students' Ability in Using Modifier	<b>AVERAGE</b>		
Students' Ability in Using Sentence/Paragraph Clue	<b>AVERAGE</b>		

## 2. Students' Problems in Applying the Context Clues Strategy in Reading Text

In this section the finding of UNP's English Department students' problems in applying the context clues strategy in reading text can be shown in the following table:

**Table 2. The Overall of Students' Problem in Using Context Clues**

<b>NO</b>	<b>PROBLEMS</b>	<b>FREQUENCY</b>
1.	There are some vocabulary which is unrecognized, where actually those words are the clue for the questioned unknown word.	4
2.	Doubtfulness in determining the types of context clues.	3
3.	The text was too long to read and difficult to be understood.	4
4.	Tend to use dictionary with the reason of affectivity.	2
5.	Not mastering the basic knowledge of context clues types.	1

This research found that the UNP's English Department students' ability in applying context clues was in *good* level. The percentage of the context clues test based on Arikunto's ability scale was 66, 9% which interpreted as *good*. This finding meant that students' ability in applying context clues strategy still need to be improved because of the relation to vocabulary mastery which affect students' reading comprehension. There are several likely reasons for this relationship (Nagy, 2005). First, vocabulary may reflect a reader's background knowledge. Word knowledge and world knowledge develop simultaneously and together influence comprehension. Secondly, the extent of a reader's vocabulary may reflect his or her aptitude for learning and using language. Finally, depth and breadth of word knowledge may enable readers to construct meaning quickly and easily as they read. Of course, there is a reciprocal relationship between vocabulary and comprehension: being a good reader contributes to having a larger vocabulary. This may be because good readers tend to do more reading. Not surprisingly, research indicates that individuals who read extensively generally have larger vocabularies and a greater fund of general knowledge (Stanovich et al., 1998). Avid readers encounter more words, receive more practice at using context to infer and refine meanings, and over time grow cognitively and linguistically "richer" (Stanovich, 1986). Good word reading skills, of course, facilitate the learning of new words from text.

The research also found that there were problems faced by the students in applying context clues strategy in reading text. The problems were; there are some vocabulary which is unrecognized, where actually those words are the clue for the questioned unknown word; Doubtfulness in determining the types of context clues; The text was too long to read and difficult to be understood; Tend to use dictionary with the reason of effectivity; and not mastering the basic knowledge of context clues types. This finding proved that the learning of context clues need to be improved. The college English teachers need to maximize the learning of context clues during the study. This is similar with the research finding proposed by Karbalaie, Azimi & Mehdi (2012). Their research found that the explicit teaching of context clues at under graduate level in EFL and ESL context affected the outcome of reading comprehension significantly. On the basis of the major findings in their study, several pedagogical implications were drawn for college English teachers as well as for college students: (1) College English teachers should keep the students better informed of the significance and specific functioning of context clues in contextual guessing. (2) College English teachers should encourage the students to guess word meanings from context instead of inhibiting it when there are adequate context clues offered.

#### **D. Conclusion and Suggestions**

From the findings above, it can be concluded that first; the UNP's English Department students' ability in applying context clues was categorized as *good* since the percentage of overall context clues result was 66,9%. Although the ability was interpreted as good, their ability was not spread evenly on the seven

types of context clues. The students are *excellent* in using definition & synonym clue, *good* in using contrast clue, but *average* in using the rest 4 types of context clues. Second, there were some problems faced by the students in applying context clues strategy in reading text; There are some vocabulary which is unrecognized, where actually those words are the clue for the questioned unknown word; doubtfulness in determining the types of context clues; the text was too long to read and difficult to be understood; tend to use dictionary with the reason of effectivity; and not mastering the basic knowledge of context clues types.

Based on the research findings, discussions, and limitation of the research, the researcher gives numbers of suggestions. First, it is suggested that the next research might be done in better place atmosphere which is more comfortable and less disruption for the students to do the test. Second, it is suggested for the next researcher to change the test's time to the earlier time which the students are still in good and fresh condition to do the test.

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