Integrating Context Clues Strategy Instruction into Digital Surrounding on EFL Students' Vocabulary Improvement

Samran Sikkhagit[1]

Abstract

This study was to observe English vocabulary improvement of students who studied Critical Reading at Khon Kaen Wittayayon School in 2020 academic year. The participants were 45 moderated mattayomsuksa six students. They were trained to apply digital devices; to find the platform, useful applications, and definition of words in context cluesfrom the particular task on each scool meeting. The tasks comprised texts with 30 multiple choice items that were set for the participants to find out the meanings of unfamiliar words given. These words were sought out from reliable resources and designed as tasks.The participants were encouraged to log in, study the clues and finished their mediated tasks for eight periods of school hours. The participants' progressive scores were compared. The resultsshowed that the participants' vocabulary had been improved gradually by integrating context clues strategies into digital surrounding.

Keywords: integrating, context clues strategy, digital surrounding, vocabulary improvement

[1] Teacher of Foreign Language Department KhonKaenWittayayon School, Thailand
E-mail: ssikkhagit@gmail.com, tel. 087 223 1076

1. Introduction

Students' English language achievement has been highly required by students, parents, and schools nationwide. Thai mattayomsuksa six students are normally tested on their English. They are then informed of the results of their achievement tests at the end of each school year. They need these English test results to be admitted for university studies. The Ordinary National Educational Test (O-Net) and many other entrance examinations also take place where they would have to take English tests. Therefore, students have to work hard during school weeks to gain language competence for all these examinations.

English has been long introduced to schools around the world as it is used as the language for international communication, involving information exchanges among the global populations. In order to communicate effectively, students need to be good readers.

Reading is an important skill and is the most significant activity (Saaid&Wahab 2014) in both schools and in students' daily life. It is important for people for gaining knowledge and information that come from different sources and platforms.

Reading is an interactive process (Nur, 2017) in which readers construct a meaningful representation of a text using effective reading strategies (Gilakjani, 2016).Reading strategies are considered vital skills that have received special attention from educators and teachers who are concerned with developing students'reading proficiency.

Reading tasks are conducted to help students' learn languages through reading activities. Eisterhold (2003 as cited in Gilakjani 2016) asserts that extensive reading activities can be beneficial for learners as it help them to become more self-directed while searching for the meanings provided. The activities are:

- using background knowledge
- asking questions
- making inferences
- predicting
- summarizing
- visualizing
- comprehension monitoring (Gilakjani 2016)

There have been some reading texts appeared in the global current stream that are introduced to school assignments during this study. The texts cover:

- Environment matters included animal dwellings, animals and plants endanger

species, animals' habits and foods, weather, global warming, waste management, etc.

- Places which are tourist attractions, cultural events, outing habits, food

industries, lifestyles, entertaining venues, tourists destinations, etc.

- People which are political conflicts, outstanding professions, entertaining

industries, medical service, famine affection, diseases control, historical figures, information preferences, military coup, online teaching, online shopping, etc.

- Technology and new discoveries which are the change of telephone items and

their necessaries, news species and scientific matters that are posted through the media, virus pandemic, vaccine discoveries, etc.

To expertise to those topics mention previously, students engage in many vocabularies on their mind. Vocabulary plays a big role in understanding reading English texts. To understand the meaning of texts, students had to learn various kinds of words as these words were used in the text.

There are still many learners who process limited vocabulary knowledge and struggle to master reading for academic knowledge (Ahmad et al, 2018). To overcome the problem the researcher tried to find ways to help by introducing context clues strategies. That are:

- Definition or explanation clue: the word meaning is explained in the sentence. It used linking verbs:
  - is   are   was   were
  - is called   are named   are known as
  - defines that is   means
  - etc.

Example: The numerous cups, cigarette stub in the stadium floor *is called***debris**.

- Example or specific clues: the clue may be found nearby that helps to explain

its meaning. The clue words are:
  - such as   include   like
  - for example   for instance   e.g.
  - other   these
  - etc

Example: At a restaurant we offer a variety of beverage *like* milk or iced tea.

- Restatement or synonym clues: an example of the word is given sentence or within the sentence. The clue words are:
  - or   that is   also
  - in other word   similar   too

Example: And more importantly, how can we cajole *or* encourage or force the multinationals to pay their fair dues. (Sunday Time 2013)

- Contrast or antonym clue: the clue words are:
  - but   however   although   otherwise
  - unless on contrary   while   unlike
  - etc.

Example: He is an **amiable** character when he is in the pub *but* he can be very selfish man.

- Punctuation clue: These punctuations help to find the meaning of the words.
  - comma , xxx,
  - semi colon ;xxx
  - dash –
  - parenthesis (xxx)

Example: When people squabble**,** they quarrel about something that is not important.

- Inference or general context clue: the following words can help readers find the meaning of new word or words.
  - experience
  - prior knowledge
  - educated guess
  - pictures, graph

Example: For health reason, cosmetics or other chemicals are not eligible for donation.

The researcher believed that if the students have experience with various learning materials designed along with knowledge they learned thorough media at home or in community would contribute to language achievement. These context clues might help when they would come up with the reading tests or tests.

2. Objective

To improve English vocabulary using context clues into digital surrounding.

3. Literature Review

There have been many researchers who had studied in order to improve students' reading skill. Pradana Akbar (2011 as cited in Nur, 2017) conducted the research of the Effectiveness of Interactive Approach to Teaching Reading that could affect the improving students' comprehension ability. Lopez (2019) did the research on Improving Teaching Capacity to Increase Students' Achievement. The study found that the analyzed competence and the communication competences both related to students achievement. Richard (2017) studied Teaching English through English and provided an overview of how the role of language proficiency has been addressed in the ELT literature as it described the kind of specialized language skills needed to teach English through English. The fashion of reading has turned to another page as technology keeps coming in.

One of the goals that readers pursue in digital environments is to acquire knowledge from a variety of sources (Salmeron et al, 2017). Digital reading resources involve in many formats, internet assessment, platforms, applications, and many more. Technological advances are dramatically altering texts and tools available to students and teacher (Biancarosa and Griffiths, 2012). These two researchers also supported that technology can be more than a tool for drilling students on skills; it can be a tool for acquiring the vocabulary and background knowledge essential to becoming a skilled reader. They also pointed out that technology advances have created high hopes among many teachers, administrators, researchers, and policy makers.

Reading Strategies needed.

1. Previewing helps students to know what the text is about. There are headlines, photos, signals, etc the students should know.

2. Contextualizing. It helps students know where things happen.

3. Visualizing. It helps students know or see what things happen.

4. Asking and answering question. It helps studentsknow how to ask and what to answer.

5. Summarizing. It helps students shorten ideas.

6. Skimming. It helps students with speed reading and focusing on main points.

7. Scanning. It helps students find the information they need. (Pesce, 2014)

Furthermore, there has been classic context clues that students need to know to help them figure out what the text is all about. These are:

- Definition or explanation clues--such as for example, for instance, that is, is, like, etc.
- Restatement or synonym clues—means, is called, is/was, are/were, etc.
- Contrast or antonym clues—but, however, opposite of, , etc.
- Inference or general clues—given situations,
- Punctuation clues. –xxx- ,xxx, (xxx), etc.

Students' achievement factors. There were many of students' achievement factors that Bertolini (2016.) had mentioned:

- Students' resiliency.
- Individual student ability
- Health and attendance-motivational, physical and affective factors.
- Developmental difference
- Social and moral development

- Social climate
- Parent training
- Building leadership capacity
- Teacher evaluation
- Peer culture and achievement

As for this study, students with learning disability or behavioral problems, were set to study separately.

Another thing the research created for this study was to assign task for students for believing that the tasks would be one of the classroom activity.

Principles of Task Based Learning are:

1. Relevant Tasks that are used in the activities such as problem solving, creative

thinking and sharing personal experience

2. Tasks are various and aimed for meaning and comprehension.
3. Students are learned by interacting.
4. Focus on using and eliciting authentic language.
5. Errors are natural part of learning process.
6. Focus on the whole process
7. Students are motivated
8. Provide in-put and out-put (Tesol 2018)

4. Conceptual Framework

The populations of this study were:

- 45 students who studied Critical Reading as a required subject.
- to know meaning of words used context clues.

Definition of the terms:

- integrating means to link various parts together
- context clues strategy means hints that author gives to help define the meaning of unfamiliar words
- digital surrounding means electronic devices and platforms used for language learning.
- vocabulary improvement means to know the meaning of words and able to get higher scores.

5. Research Methodology

This study was conducted as a classroom action research. The study was to do with 28 students who took the early class of each classroom meet. Then the task and text would be adapted or changed a little for the next classroom meet. The researcher focused on 45 students progressive scores who took the later class.

The participants were students who took Critical Reading as a required subject at KhonKaenWittayayon School in the first semester of academic year 2020. They studied for 20 weeks per semester.

As the coronavirus pandemic struck all over the world, school was ordered to follow the national issues by all mean. So the administrative offers encourage all teachers and workers to create online lessons and perform all the tasks through internet. The researcher chose socrative.com platform and replied to the office about the interacting course. What we did were:

Students' role:

- Joined in class line and share information about online lessons.

- Visit many platforms.
- Download application that might help in learning.
- Shared some topics that they would like to learn.
- Tried out the first class 3 times before school started.
  and some more from a previous researcher:
- Attended class regularly and did school work willingly.
- Well behaved. (Fryer, 2017)

Teacher's role:

- Visited school page often, and followed school issues about creating online lessons.
- Connected to students through line platform. Asked them to share information about text they were really interested in.
- Kept the information from national curriculum about reading material.
- Searched and collected news articles from as many resources as possiblesuch as the media, official documents, and textbooks.
- Designed and assigned the tasks. Consulted the expert.
- Redesigned the tasks. Uploaded onto socrative.com platform.
- Conducted lesson plans for E 30211 Critical Reading
- Launched the task to the first 28 students on school meet and adapted the texts, and tasks.
- Set the target group (45 students) and tried out the assignments.
- Consulted the experts and redesigned the assignments. This part was to make sure that the papers designed were well prepared and well observed.
- Kept the students' scores and did a school report. By the end of the school year, the teacher had to submit a formal report to school. One set of scores was kept and the other had to be sent to the academic office as the reference and record of each student.
  (and)
- Have good relationships with students.(Aspelin, 2012)

While the study was being conducted, teacher allowed student to work as they were pleased since they had to work from home. Let the other platform on as to communicate with students in case that they needed help. Even the telephone call was also fine as the researcher and students had to keep ongoing communication during the class. One who preferred to work on his/her own page was welcomed. Those who wanted to work along while the researcher was giving lectures were also welcomed.

Instruments:

- 30 items of multiple choice tasks.
- Socrative.com platform
- Another applications (students' choice)

For a better relaxing and creative mood, students could conduct a song for oneself as they were actually at home or at their favorite places, to help remember the words. (bootcamp 2015)

As the study was progressing, students were welcome to seek out help from the teacher during school days. For those who needed extra explanation, they could come for consultation inthe morning before school, during lunch break or after school. A small area was set forsharing information. One thing to keep in mind was that they had to keep themselves safe from the coronavirus.

Those who wanted to consult via the internet assessment were also welcomed. This would help students a lot as they could easily send any information to their peers much easier, more rapidly and widely.

School role:

A school area where students whould be studying was well equipped with internet assessment all around. This was for teachers and workers to work on.

A classroom where students were studying had to offer a relaxing atmosphere. As Cheryan(2014) mentioned that classroom environment should be well lighting, acoustics, temperature, and air quality. However this had been seeing only through social media platform.

A classroom where the study was conducted was full equipped with a projector which was used to provide information and specific texts. A microphone and loudspeakers were installed to facilitate language learning. It was also connected to internet assessment that helped students to reach out to more information when needed. The room was also decorated with chart boards, pictures of unknown places or animals, unfamiliar words, etc. These kits helped the students in visualizing and understanding the right meanings of words and contexts gradually.

Listen to students' feedback on this kind of lessons.

6. Results of the Research Paper

The result of the study of English vocabulary progresses grew gradually. However there were some times that the learning was hindered by some obstacles. The very first week of online lessons was distraction of time management. The students did not follow class-timetable well and logged-in a bit late. There had been ways to overcome the problems by letting students to follow teacher's class schedule. By the way, this was not quite the way out because some of students still missed the class and logged-in for wrong tasks or repeating the same tasks. What the research did was to keep the higher score of the same user. The result of the study was well satisfactory.

All the details were as follow:

Table showed progressive scoresof the study.

period	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
score	43.3	60.3	62.7	67.4	72.5	67.7	82.9	87.6

7. Discussion and Conclusion

The students' performance showed that students did rather well in school tasks atschool level.There are various ways to engage students in learning English language vocabulary through reading tasks or:

Writing the meaning of words on booklets.

- Grouping the same meaning of words into one set.
- Reading a great number of books, articles appear on the press and social media.
- Following the media through internet assessment or television broadcast to follow current world affairs. The issues are likely to adapt to a test.
- Sharing words among friends or post it on internet websites.

There are also some tips for students to learn language ability:

- Interacting with foreigners for language trainers or friends who have strong language background.

- Listening to various kinds of texts, radio programs, television programs, language channels.
- Surfing internet that use language regularly.
- Participating in language activities both in and outside school.
- Involving in many kinds of local events that learners are able to practice language.
- Writing journals or story to practice language.

The purpose of the study was "To improve English vocabulary using context clues into digital surrounding." The students did the task progressively well. The nature of the students likes to study language at school and outside school. Hopefully they can use language in their daily live as well as for their education or career choices.

Khon Kaen Wittayayon where this research was conducted was issued class off for three times. The very first time of the online lessons tried out was witnessed by provincial officers, local and national media, parents and some volunteer students. Everybody was well-conscious about their health as well as to care for others. They learned how to manage their time, and share information and things among friends. Beside knowing language, they learned how to love other people.

The author hopes that the ideas, material, procedures, presented above will help the learners who study English will do well in their leaning usage. The online lessons are one way to find the way out of this pandemic.

8. Conclusion and Discussion

The author would like to encourage school teachers and educators to introduce elecric devices in classrooms since they are ways to connect to students during the coronavirus pandemic. They can share resources and day to day knowledge that happens all around during this hard time. Take that to create school tasks for students. This can help them to learn words from the text naturally as the media provide current issues through many platforms.

Students themselve like new kinds of learning style as they can use as many applications from their one-smartphone to study, find the meaning of words, ask question during class, and even share information among friends. Guide them to take adventages of what the media and electric devices provide. Take the best chance to learn, share and improve langauge skills for study and future career choice.

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