Using Context Clues as Task-Based Learning for Students' Vocabulary Improvement in Digital Surrounding

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Abstract

The study was to observe English vocabulary improvement of students who studied Critical Reading at Khon Kaen Wittayayon School in the first semester of 2021 academic year. The participants were 42 students moderated mattayomsuksa six students. They were trained to apply digital devices, connect to the platform, use applications, and find definition of words in context clues from the particular task on each school meet. The tasks comprised texts with 30 multiple choices items that were set for the participants to find out the meanings of the unfamiliar words given. These words were sought out from reliable resources and designed as tasks. The participants were encouraged to log in on the platform set and do the pre-test. They were encouraged to study the clues and finish their mediated tasks for 10 periods. Then they were to do the post-test. The participants' progressive scores were compared. The results showed that the participants' vocabulary had been improved gradually by integrating context clues strategies into digital surrounding.

Keywords: context clues, digital surrounding, task-based learning, vocabulary improvement,

1.   Introduction

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

Reading is one of four essential language skills involving ability to interpret printed words (Mauliza., 2018). Reading is part of a daily habit as well as a school activity.

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 as mentioned by Gilakjani previously are conducted to help students learn languages more self-directed while searching for meanings provided. The reading activities are: using background knowledge, asking questions, making inferences, prediction, summarizing, visualizing, and comprehension monitoring.

To create task, a researcher had to find various kinds of authentic sources of reading material as Yasrida (2018) suggested that teachers need to use a kind of material which can renews students efforts to have their attention attain the highest achievements and bring positive effect to the learners and give some impacts for both learners and teachers (Santosa., 2018).

There have been some academic texts appeared in the global current stream that are introduced to school assignments during this study. The texts titles cover (1) environment matters that included animal dwelling, animal and plants endanger species, animals' habits and foods, weather, global warming, waste management, etc., (2) 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., (3) places which are tourist attractions, tourist destinations, cultural events, outing habits, food industries, lifestyles, entertaining venues, etc., (4) technology and new discoveries which are the changes of telephone items and their necessaries, new species and scientific matters that are posted through the media, virus pandemic, vaccine discoveries, etc.

To acquire language meanings to those topics mentioned previously, students were to engage in many vocabularies on their mind. Vocabulary plays a big role in understanding reading English texts. To understand the meaning of texts, students have to learn various kinds of words as these words were used in the texts. Using context clues to infer unknown word during is a common used strategy for language readers (Yu, Altunet., 2018).

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 problems the researcher tried to find ways to help by introducing context clues strategies which include (1) definition or explanation clue: the word meaning is explained in the sentence; it used linking verbs

like is, am, are, was, were, is called, are named, are known as, defines, that is, means, etc., (2) example or specific clue: 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., (3) restatement or synonym clues: the meaning of the word is a given sentence or within the sentence and the clue words are: or, that is, also, in other word, similar, too, (4) contrast or antonym clue: the clue word are: but, however, although, otherwise, unless, on the other hand, on contrary, while, unlike, etc., (5) punctuation clue: these following punctuations help to find the meaning of the words: comma, xxx, colon:, semi colon;, dash—, parenthesis (xxx), and (6) inference or general context clue: the following clue words can help readers find the meaning of new words; experience, prior knowledge, educational guess, picture, graphs, etc.

The researcher believed that if the students have experienced with various learning

materials designed along with knowledge they have learned thorough media at home or in community, that would contributed to vocabulary achievement. These context clues strategies might help when the students come up with the reading texts or tests they encounter in other reading texts.

The objective of this study is to improve English vocabulary using context clues into digital surrounding.

There have been many researches who had studied in order to improve students' reading skill. Pradana Akbar (2011 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 need to teach English through English. The fashion of reading has turned to other pages 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.

What reading strategies needed (Pesce., 2014) are (1) reviewing which helps students to know what the text is about that such as headlines, photos, graphs, signals, etc., (2) contextualizing which helps students know or see what things happen, (3) asking and answering question which helps students knows how to ask and what to answer, (4) summarizing which helps students

shorten ideas, (5) skimming which helps students with speed reading and focusing on main points, and (6) scanning helps students find the information they need.

Students' achievement factors: The students' achievement factors that Bertolini (2016) are students resiliency, individual students' ability, health and attendance-motivational factor, physical and affective factor, development difference, social and moral development, social climate, parents 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. The tasks created for this study were for classroom activities. This study was also promoted task-based learning. The principles of task-based learning (Tesol., 2018) are (1) relevant task 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 learning 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) student are motivated and (8) Provide in-put and out-put.

2.　　Research Methodology

This study was conducted as a classroom action research. The study was to do with 42 students who took the very first class of each classroom meet. Then the tasks and texts would be adapted or changed a little for the next classroom meet. The researcher focused on 42 students progressive score who took the later class.

The participants were students who took Critical Reading as a required subject at Khon Kaen Wittayayon School in the first semester of academic year of 2021. The study was conducted for 10 hours out of 20 weeks of normal course.

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

Students' roles were as: (1) joined in classroom line and shared information about online lessons, (2) visited many platforms, (3) downloaded application that might help in learning, (4) shared some topics that they would like to learn, (5) tried out the first class 3 times before school started and some more from a previous observe, (6) attended class regularly and did school work willingly, (7) and well behave (Fryer, 2017).

Teacher's role was: (1) visited school page often, and followed school issues about creating online lessons, (2) connected to each student groups through line platform and asked students to share information about texts they were really interested in, (3) kept the information from national curriculum about reading material, (4) searched and collected news articles from as many resources as possible such as the media, official documents, and textbooks, etc., (5) designed and assigned

the tasks and consulted the expert, (6) redesigned the tasks, uploaded onto socrative.com platform, (7) conducted lesson plans for E 30211 Critical Reading, (8) launched the task to the first 28 students on school meet and adapted the texts, and tasks, (9) Set the target group (42 students) and tried out the assignments, (10) consulted the experts and redesigned the assignments. This part was to make sure that the papers designed were well prepared and well observed, and (11) 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 recorded of each student and (12) as (Aspelin., 2012) mentioned that a teacher had to have good relationships with students.

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 (line) on as to communicate with students in case that they needed help. Even the telephone call was also welcomed as the researcher and students had to keep ongoing communication during the class. One who preferred to work on his/her own page was fine. Those who wanted to work along while the researcher was giving lectures were also welcomed.

Instruments: the pre-test and post-test were used to measure the effectiveness of context clue strategy on vocabulary development (Ilter., 2019). The 30-item of multiple choice tasks were designed and uploaded onto socrative.com platform during this study. Students were allowed to use other applications such as dictionary app. as to find the meaning of words during the on-going class.
  For a better relaxing and creative mood, some students could conduct songs for themselves as they were actually being at home or at their favorite places, to help remember the words.
  As the study was progressing, students were welcomed to seek out help from the teacher through internet platforms. They could consult before or after their school work. The regular school meets were absolutely impossible as it had to be lockdown. The province's orders and issues had to be respected and followed. One thing to keep in mind was that they had to keep themselves healthy and safe from the coronavirus.
  Those who wanted to consult via the internet accessment or by electronic mail 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 to launch the tasks was well equipped with internet accessment all around. This was for some teachers and workers to work on as few teachers had to come to school to work. School had to listen to students' feedback on this kind of lessons.

3.   Results

The result of the study of English vocabulary progresses grew gradually. However there were some times that the learning was hindered by some obstacles like the internet accessment was slow. The very first week of online lessons was distraction by time management. Some of the students did not follow class-timetable well and logged-in a bit later. There had been ways to overcome the problems by letting students to follow teacher's class schedule. They could log in but with the other group who studied at the actual task. 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 repeated doing the same ones. What the research did was to keep the higher score of the same user. The result of the study was well satisfactory.

When the students were familiar with their device along with the clues that they were familiar with, on the 3 and 4 school meet, they did particular well on that. The score dropped down from the 5 as some students had a problem logging in. The researcher had to focus more on the text explanation and get the thing through. The scores then soon kept being better as the students performed well. Fortunately the post test score compared to the pre-test score was gradually higher.

All the details were as follow:
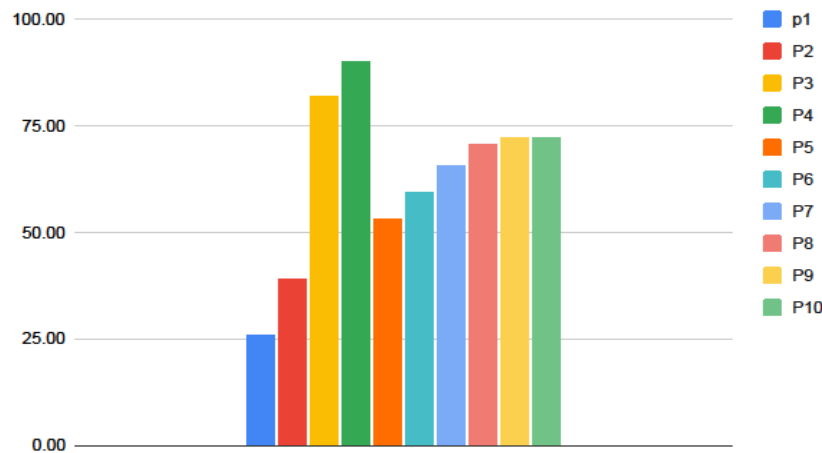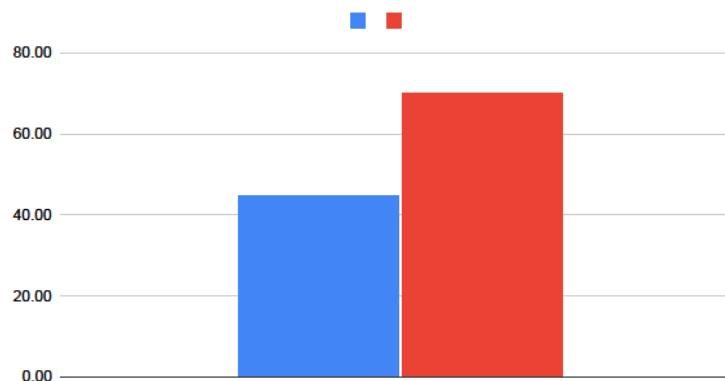Table showed progressive scores of the study from period 1-10.

Table showed the pre-test score which was collected at the first time of a school meet. Then the post test score which was collected after all the tasks were done. Fortunately the post test score was higher which means the students vocabulary was improved.

Pre-test and Post-test score

4.   Discussion and Conclusion

The students' performance from the tables showed that students' scores kept rising which means that they did rather well in school tasks. This interact online lessons between school and students turned out well. Students followed school schedules regularly through all this study. They interacted with teacher through internet accessment during the class. As the students had to study from home, it provided them a more relaxing atmosphere to study and applied other applications for learning vocabulary.

There had been various ways to engage students in learning English language vocabulary through reading tasks as: (1) writing the meaning of words on booklets, (2) grouping the same meaning of words into one set. (3) reading a great number of books, articles appear on the press and social media, (4) following the media through internet assessment or television broadcast to follow current world affairs as the issues are likely to adapt to a test and (5) sharing words among friends or post it on internet websites.

There are also some tips for students to learn language ability as (1) interacting with foreigners for language trainers or friends who have strong language background, (2) listening to various kinds of texts, radio programs, television programs, language channels. (3) surfing internet that use language regularly, (4) participating in language activities both in and outside school, (5) involving in many kinds of local events that learners are able to practice language, (6) writing journals or story to practice language and (7) create a webpage or have their own channel.

The study was to use context clues as task-based learning for students' vocabulary improvement in digital surrounding. The students did the task progressively well. The natures of the students like to study language at home, at school and outside school. Hopefully they can use language in their daily lives as well as for their education or career choices.

Khon Kaen Wittayayon School 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. Besides 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 and do well in their leaning usage. The online lessons are one way to cope with this pandemic.

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