ENLIGHTING MODERN LITERACY WITH POWERFUL READING

By:
Wahyunengsih
Wahyu.nengsihhasan@gmail.com

Abstract

Since modern literacy is no longer defined as the ability to read and write, all of EFL readers must make sure that all of the readings take them to the powerful reading level. It means that readers can get the actual message that is willing to communicate with the writer. Contextual guessing strategy is one of the most crucial strategies that must be given as the fundamental reading strategy. Studies show that this way significantly helps to guess the unfamiliar words in a text effectively and precisely correct. Teachers must reveal and make sure all of the steps given before and during the reading process. Therefore, the main problem in reading which deals with unfamiliar words will be absolutely solved and leave the readers a powerful understanding. There are at least five steps that teachers need to implement in their classroom without abandon some fundamental functions of context clues.
Key Words: Literacy, Powerful Reading

Introduction

Indonesia is one of the most successful developing countries for eliminating illiterate citizen in the world. As mentioned by the ministry of education Muhadjir Effendi in tribunnews.com, the number of the illiterate citizen in Indonesia in 2017 is only 2.07 percent of the total population reaches the fourth highest population in the world. However, the main purpose is no longer focus on the conventional concept of illiterate. All must realize that being able to read is not necessarily means reading. The illiterate person today is not literally seen from the ability to read or write. However, the definition of literacy goes beyond the conventional definition. The actual concept of literacy in the modern era leads to the absorption of complex information from many sources into a knowledge. The knowledge will be performed through all creative ideas to invent a new innovation of masterpiece. Literacy is no longer defined in simple ability to the complication of different terms, yet it develops into broader meaning. However, the process of acquiring knowledge cannot be separated from a superb reading ability of various reading texts (Ewing:2016).

A survey conducted by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2015 shows that less than 1% of 229 in 16 to 65 years old adults in Jakarta have the highest proficiency in reading which is categorized into 4 to 5 grade of reading proficiency. Only 5.4% of them have level proficiency 3 of reading. This result shows that most of the information read from many sources still cannot be interpreted and comprehended well by Indonesian readers.

Since English places as the foreign language, readers must face more complicated problems. In reading an English text, readers suffer mainly from the understanding vocabulary (Medjahdi, 2015). There are many strategies that can solve these problems. One of the strategies called Contextual Guessing Strategy. It effectively and efficiently solves the students' problem dealing with unknown words. According to Burns, et al

(1984) there are many kinds of reading techniques that require a certain level such as literal reading, interpretive, critical and creative reading. All of these levels must lead the students to be able to solve their major problems in reading which covers finding topic, main idea, details, and conclusion. However, all of those reading components will never be able to discover if the reader cannot cope with their problem with unfamiliar vocabulary. In this case, using a dictionary and other translation tools, of course, cannot be included as the solution in reading. Moreover, there are no tools allowed in TEP. However, dealing with new words in a context will improve students' vocabulary. According to Thornbury (2002), words in context enhance the chances of learners to appreciate both their meaning and their typical environments, such as their associated collocations or grammatical structures. Students understand from context by making connections between the new word and the text. It is important to develop the ability to guess the meaning of unknown words without referring to the dictionary since it will save time and let the students keep reading without interruption (Mart: 2012). Furthermore, Clarke and Nation (1980) state that developing the skill of guessing meaning will significantly improve the skill of reading of the students. Therefore, the contextual guessing strategy bridges the students' lack of vocabulary and reading comprehension.

This reading strategy has been proven to effectively solve the students' reading comprehension problem. Suhaidah (2017) clearly states that the type Contextual Guessing technique has a positive effect in teaching reading comprehension at the second-grade students of SMA Negeri 1 Galesong Selatan. Rahayu (2016) also clarifies the similar result of contextual guessing technique to improve students reading comprehension at the second grade of SMA N 1 Palopo. The similar study was conducted by Emilia (1997) shows that contextual guessing technique is clearly effective to teach reading comprehension and vocabulary in SMU Sint Corolus Bengkulu.

Contextual guessing is also considered as one of the useful reading skill for the reader to be able to understand a reading text in any level. This strategy is also easily used during the class hour and outside the classroom (Thornbury: 2002). Another study which was conducted by Ahmad, et al (2018) shows that teachers need to teach and guide learners to make more effective use of contextual clues strategies they deem necessary because learners can be more confident and informed in making the most suitable strategy choices to assist their vocabulary learning. Moreover, this study shows that with many learners still making inaccurate guesses of even commonly used word in exclusive contexts, the teaching of contextual clues needs to primarily focus on creating awareness among language learners on the multiple and dynamic meanings of words before teaching them to guess from more specialized context for academic purposes.

Furthermore, this strategy has also given a significant contribution to the students in the university level. A study conducted by Aliva (2014) found that the implementation of contextual guessing strategy could give meaningful improvement to the reading comprehension in the second semester of Management I students at University of Muhammadiyah Malang. Kojima and Narita (2004) also say that the word guessing strategy training had an influence on reading comprehension and that the ability to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words extended significantly at .01 level. This suggests that word guessing strategy training can be a facilitative approach to improve Japanese students' reading comprehension. This is in line with the goal of reading comprehension itself, as defined that reading comprehension is the process of making meaning from text. Therefore, the objective is to gain an overall understanding of what is described in the text rather than to obtain meaning from isolated words or sentences (Woolley:2011).

Although, this concept tends to focus on the very basic component of reading comprehension, the effect of mastering this strategy gives significant influence. Nouri and

Zerhouni (2016) state that there is a significantly strong correlation (p<.01) between depth and reading comprehension performance. Hirsch (2003) says "World knowledge is an essential component of reading comprehension because every text takes for granted the readers' familiarity with a whole range of unspoken and unwritten facts about the cultural and natural worlds. "The focus of giving a proper way of finding the meaning of the words is expected to make better and deeper comprehension of all types of text given to all readers.

Guessing the Meaning of Unfamiliar Words

Since English is a foreign language, it is impossible to hope most the words in all texts will be familiar enough by the readers. It is for sure that many of the words existed in a reading text will be categorized as difficult or unfamiliar words. A study conducted by Petahuddin, Syawal, and Tahir (2017) shows that the EFL learners' strategy in learning English vocabulary such as doing the assignment, practicing English pronunciation, learning English tenses, practicing English dialogue, English translation exercise, reading English text, memorizing and writing practice. In addition, the Indonesian EFL learners acquired English vocabulary through the dictionary, reading English book, listening to and watching English songs and movies, playing the game, the internet, and reading English advertisement. Teachers must use more effective and applicative ways of getting the meaning of the unfamiliar words in a text. Since learning vocabulary must be related to the context of the text, contextual guessing becomes one of the most common ways of solving unfamiliar words. However, this strategy is still not to rally highly implemented by teachers.

There are several steps that must be employed by teachers. First, teachers must be aware that unfamiliar vocabulary is one of the highest difficulty in reading. Based on taxonomies of reading skills, vocabulary indeed takes an important place. Davies (1968) says that identifying of the words meaning is the first skill required in reading. Teachers need to lead the students to put this challenge as one of the triggers to get better understanding instead of focusing it as difficulties that threaten students to read further. Moreover, Munby (1978) mentions deducing meaning and get used to familiar lexical items is one of the most essential skills in reading. The emphasizing of understanding unfamiliar words is not necessarily focus on finding the translation of each unfamiliar word into the equivalent meaning in the target language which is Indonesian.

Furthermore, teachers need to encourage students that finding many unfamiliar vocabularies is not a demotivated factors. This situation is a common thing that must be found in any kind of English text not only by the EFL readers but even face by native speakers of English themselves. This situation is the major target problem that must be solved by all readers. This motivation can remind the students to actually use and implement the strategy of contextual guessing as a major solution in reading any texts.

The second steps are transferring the conventional method of solving unfamiliar words into contextual guessing method. For all EFL using a dictionary or translation, machine becomes one of the best solutions of unfamiliar vocabulary. Readers tend to directly open their dictionary and find the translation meaning of the words. This method is absolutely avoided in contextual guessing meaning method. Lunzer, at al (1979) proposes the highest skills in reading skills taxonomy is finding the words' meaning in the context. It means that finding the equivalent meaning of the words in a dictionary will not give a proper solution for understanding a text because one word in the different text or even in the same text may have different meaning based on the context that being discussed. Therefore, putting the dictionary as the last option and also setting it away from the process of reading must be placed as a new habit of reading. The teacher must ask the

students to focus on the text only without counting on their dictionary to figure out the meaning of unfamiliar words they found in a text. Besides, using dictionary will not give proper solution to the vocabulary problems because of several reasons. First, it will be highly time-consuming. If all unfamiliar words must be seen in a dictionary, readers will need at least sixty to seventy seconds to find the equal meaning of the words in a dictionary. This way is absolutely not effective to read a text. Generally, readers only have five to seven minutes to read one-page text with six hundred until one thousand words. After that, using a dictionary is also more complicated. A dictionary will provide more than one meaning or translation of the unfamiliar words in a target language. Readers must read them all to find out the proper meaning that is suitable for the context of the text. It is quite often that sometimes this condition makes readers improper meaning that leads to misunderstanding comprehension of the text. In other words, the meaning taken from the dictionary cannot be taken for granted because it can mislead the readers to the actual context given in the text. Last, using a dictionary is also banned in many situations such as test or interview. It is also quite difficult to rely on a dictionary in many urgent situations such as reading a text in immigration, restaurant, and other public and mobile situation.

The next step is related to their mastery of grammar. Grabe (1991) clarifies that vocabulary and structural knowledge take in the important position in reading skills. Since a sentence consists of a group of words that are placed in the certain position that form a complete meaning in form of a sentence, so the students must also be aware of their grammar ability. Teachers must make sure that the students at least understand the basic structure of a sentence which must consist of subject and verb. Grammar must also require students to understand part of speech in order to place those words into the appropriate position in a sentence. In this steps, make sure students are really able to differentiate the basic words like noun, adjective, verb, and adverb. They also really need be provided by the knowledge of affixes. Since prefix and suffix will have a significant role of the meaning and also the function of a word. One word can be changed and put in a different function in a sentence just by employing suffixes and prefixes.

After getting sure with those previous steps are precisely implemented in the reading process and before the reading process, then make sure the teacher teach the students about how to guess the meaning of the unfamiliar words in a text by using context clues. Bailey (2017) mentions that context clues are using the surrounding words to help you determine what the word means. Besides the words, readers also can see other forms of context clues which are not in form of words such as, pictures, tables, graph, sketches or drawing. All of these visual aids are taken and placed for a purpose. These clues definitely will help readers to understand the whole context of the text in general. And getting the general content of the text will help the readers to guess particular unfamiliar words that they found. Usually, a picture will represent the main topic that is discussed. Moreover, the existence of table and graph usually give the conclusion and an easier way to get the data presentation. It means that when the reader finds unfamiliar words in the explanation of the table and graph, of course looking at the table and graph and understanding the data given will generate the proper meaning of certain unfamiliar words in the explanation of the visual aids.

Moreover, teachers ask the students to identify other context clues that can be utilized to guess unfamiliar words that will be the main tools for them which are called other words in the sentence. In each sentence, there will consist of several types of words. Some of the must be quite familiar by all readers, such as conjunction, to be, article, determiner, etc. It means that not all words in the sentence that will be categorized into unfamiliar words. However, it is essential to make sure that they have already aware of each function of each word. For example, the article such as a, an, the act as a modifier of

a noun. So, by seeing the existence of an article in a word phrase, students will be aware that the phrase must be categorized as a noun phrase, for example, the existence. The article "the" in that phrase clearly shows that the word "existence" is a noun. It will work in other situation such as auxiliary must followed by a verb. So, the students need to get used to all words that can be easily identified. Readers also need to realize that vocabulary size and depth are shown to be closely related in the EFL context. However, claiming that these two dimensions are highly interrelated might still take hold in the EFL context given that EFL learners do not develop size and depth equally well. Thus, ESL studies" results should not be generalized to the EFL context, given the dissimilarities between the two contexts. Going back to the present study first objective, it is then fundamental to estimate vocabulary size and depth of EFL readers to find out whether these two dimensions develop equally and to investigate whether the size-depth difference is due to language proficiency level, vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension (Nouri and Zerhouni (2016).

The other context clues are certain words in a sentence. Noticing some of the words that can directly lead the readers to get further and guess the predictive meaning of unfamiliar words is crucial. Readers must be familiar with these certain words, such as defines, means, for example, for instance, such as, like, as, etc. These words are literally given a definition and further explanation of several terms in each text. The terms that are being explained might be one of the unfamiliar words for readers. Just by knowing these valuable clues, readers easily predict the meaning or definition of the unfamiliar terms that is explained after those certain words. Understanding the context can help the students to improve their reading skill, whereas it can make them easier to find out contains, messages and details information (Harahab, Mukhaiyar, Hamzah: 2014).

As known the function of conjunction, this is also placed as another helpful context clues in reading. However, students must know there are many functions of conjunction based on each of the types. Either as the coordinate conjunction or sub-coordinate conjunction, all conjunction will be effectively used as the context clues. To give a detail explanation, please pay attention to these examples.

A poultice made from noni leaves are commonly used topically for wounds; the unripe fruit is used for mouth sores, gingivitis, toothaches, <u>and</u> abscesses.

In the text above, the word "abscesses" might consider as one of the unfamiliar words by readers. However, by seeing the existence of the conjunction "and" which has an addictive function that means must be equal with the previous words in term of meaning and also function, the readers will easily predict the meaning of the word "abscesses" is one of the sicknesses which is not far from "toothaches".

Furthermore, punctuation is one of the most valuable context clues. All of the punctuations around the unfamiliar words will give significant clues to help the process of prediction of the meaning. Aebersold and Field (1997) support that vocabulary is important to get the meaning of a text. To bridge the lack of vocabulary by seeing one of the most obvious clues makes the contextual guessing strategy significantly help the students to understand some unfamiliar vocabularies. Here are the examples:

Brackets*: A tornado (a violent storm of twisting wind) struck Edmonton and caused damage.*

Commas: *A tornado, a violent storm of twisting wind, struck Edmonton and caused damage.*

Dashes: *A tornado – a violent storm of twisting wind – struck Edmonton and caused damage.*

(Annmarietunney, 2015)

5

All of that three punctuation give further explanation of the term "tornado". These are commonly used in many reading texts. The readers must be woken up about the importance of punctuation. One punctuation may have more than one function. The teacher must teach this basic knowledge and provide them with enough information before reading any text.

The next clues are affixes. As mentioned above this clue will definitely help the reader to guess the unfamiliar words step by step. The reader must know the function of a prefix that can change the meaning of the word that usually gives the opposite meaning. For example, possible means there is still so many ways or opportunity, however, if this word has prefix im- which makes a new word "impossible" which has the opposite meaning. The existence of a suffix even can help more in guessing unfamiliar words because the function of the suffix is to change the function of the word itself. For example:

Function	Suffix	Examples
Change to noun	-ion, -ity, -ent, ect.	Classification, possibility, entertainment
Change to adjective	-ive, -al, -ful, etc.	Objective, classical, helpful
Change to adverb	-ly, -ward, -wise, -fold	Easily, forward, timewise, fourfold
Change to verb	-ise, -ate, -en, -ify	Authorize, passionate, awaken, identify

Many teachers often do not focus on acknowledging their students of the function of this affixes. Giving a pre-teaching assignment to find the function of suffixes will help student independently figure out the various types and uses of affixes.

The last clues that absolutely assist readers called references. References as one of the context clues can be divided into several types. They are pronoun, adverb, substitution and ellipsis words. References essentially exist in all text. It is used to link the ideas and also to avoid repetition. Any writers cannot avoid using references. To give a detail view, here are the examples are given:

Pronoun: *After checking the Autobot, the engineer sent it to the factory.*

Adverb*: The main analysis of the virus will be placed at the new venue. It will be safer there.*

Ellipsis and Substitution: *Long time ago, the job as a pilot was considered as one of the luxurious profession. Now, it is one that mostly avoided because of the risk.*

It is clearly seen that all of those references refer to a particular word or words that have been mentioned earlier. By noticing the existence of these context clues, students are no longer need their dictionary to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words precisely and more appropriate to the context of the text being discussed. The actual use of context clues is being noticed. This is the fundamental element of reading comprehension. As stated by Scott (2007), one of the most fundamental aspects of comprehension is the ability to deal with unfamiliar words found in a text.

Conclusion

To get to the level of powerful reading ability, all readers must rely on all clues that are provided by the text itself. Readers must learn to put away the help of any out of context tools to give them a solution to their reading problems. Solving the main problem of reading foreign language texts which focuses on the existence of unfamiliar words leads

the readers to get a better and easier way to understand the text. Although, the readers also need to know about other important elements of reading comprehension way such as, topic, main idea, supporting sentences, and also types of the text that will show the goal of the writer, using contextual clues to solve and predict the unfamiliar words will take very significant position in modern literacy.

References

Adhiyuda, Fransiskus. 2017. *Tingkat Buta Aksara di Indonesia Turun Drastis, Kini Tinggal 2,07 Persen.* Tribunnews, September 9th, 2017.

Aebersold, J. A. & Field, M. L. 1997. From Reader to Reading Teacher. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Annmarietunney, 2015. *Vocabulary: A Powerful Weapon*. Retrieved on 22nd on https://teachlikeapcv.wordpress.com.

Bailey, Eileen. 2017. *Using Context Clues to Improve Reading Comprehension.* Retrieved on 22nd of August 2018 on https://www.thoughtco.com.

Davis, F. B. Fundamental Factors of Comprehension in Reading. *Psychometrika,* 1944, 9, 185-197.

Ewing, Robyn. 2018. *Teaching Literacy is More than Teaching Simple Reading Skills: It Can't Be D*one In Five Easy Steps. Retrieved on 21st of August 2018 on https://www.aare.edu.au/blog/?p=1532.

Grabe, William. 1991. Current developments in second language reading research. *TESOL Quarterly.* 25 (3): 375-406.

Harahap, Melwan, Ady R. M, & Hamzah . 2014. The Influence of Context Clues Mastery In Students' Reading Comprehension of Descriptive Text at STKIP "Tapanuli Selatan" Padangsidimpuan. *Journal English Language Teaching (ELT),* Volume 2 No. 3, PP 88-96.

Lunzer, E., Waite, M., & Dolan, T. 1979. *Comprehension tests. In E, Lunzar & K. Gardner (Eds.), the effective use of reading.* London: Heinemann Educational.

Kojima, H., & Narita, H. (2004). *The Effects of Word Guessing Strategy Instruction on Reading Comprehension.* Retrieved April 18, 2013 from www. researchgate. net/.../37182094_ The_Effects_of_ Word_Guessing_St.

Medjahdi, Wahiba B. 2015. *Reading Comprehension Difficulties among EFL Learners: The Case of Third-Year Learners at Nehali Mohamed Secondary School.* Retrieved on 22nd of August 2018 on dspace.univ-tlemcen.dz.

Munby, John. 1978. *Communicative Syllabus Design : A Sociolinguistic Model for Defining the Content of Purpose-specific Language Programmes.* New York : Cambridge University Press

Nouri, Nadia and Zerhouni, Badia. 2016. The relationship between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension among Moroccan EFL learners. *IOSR Journal of*

Humanities And Social Science (IOSR-JHSS) Volume 21, Issue 10, Ver. 5 (October.2016) PP 19-26.

Scott, R. McQuirter. 2007. Word Study and Reading Comprehension: Implications for Instruction. Ontario: Brock University Press.

Syawal, Patahuddin, Nasrullah A. S, Rahman, Ali W. 2018. Good EFL Learner's Strategy In Enhancing English Mastery: A Case Study at Indonesian College Students. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, Volume: 9 Issue: 3, PP 55-59.

Thornbury, S. (2002). How to Teach Vocabulary. Harlow: Longman.

Woolley, Garry. 2011. Reading Comprehension: Assisting Children with Learning Difficulties. Retrieved on 22nd of August 2018 on https://link.springer.com.