# Improving Students' Vocational Vocabulary Mastery through Context Clues Technique

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### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui penggunaan *Context Clue Technique* dapat membantu meningkatkan kemampuan kosa-kata siswa secara signifikan atau tidak dan menginvestigasi pandangan siswa terhadap penggunaan metode ini dalam penguasaan kosa-kata. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini yaitu quasi-ekperimen dengan desain *non-equivalent* control grup. Hasil dari penelitian ini adalah strategi *Context Clue Technique* efektif dalam meningkatkan kemampuan kosa-kata siswa. Hal ini dapat dilihat dari hasil tes t-test yang menunjukkan perbedaan yang signifikan setelah perlakuan selesai. Setelah perlakuan pengajaran ditemukan nilai siswa di kelas eksperimen lebih tinggi dari nilai di kelas kontrol. Selanjutnya, respon siswa terhadap penggunaan *Context Clue Technique* dalam peningkatan kemampuan kosakata siswa terbagi dua yaitu positif respon dengan 80 %, sedangkan yang menganggap negative bahwa penerapan strategi ini sangatlah sulit hanya 20%  dari keseluruhan siswa.

**Kata Kunci:** *Tehnik Context Clue, Penguasaan Kosakata*

### Abstract

*This research aims to investigate whether the use of context clues technique can help students to improve their vocational vocabulary mastery significantly, to describe the implementation of context clues technique in improving students' vocational vocabulary mastery and to investigate the students' view on the use of context clues technique in improving their vocabulary mastery. This research is a Quasi-experimental with The Non-equivalent Control Group Design. This research found that contextual clue strategy is an effective way to increase the students' vocabulary mastery. It can be seen through the data analysis of the t-test that shows a significant difference after the study has finished. By giving the treatment, students in the experimental group achieve higher mean score than the students in the control group. The students' response on the use of context clues technique in improving students' vocational vocabulary mastery falls into positive and negative response. 80 percent of the respondents state that this method is quiet helping in guessing the meaning of the unknown words because they do not need to know the precise meaning of the words. However, 20 percent respondents state that it is hard to apply this method without a large size of vocabularies.*

*Keywords: Context Clues technique, Vocational Vocabulary Mastery*

## Introduction

Vocabulary mastery is very important for the success of using English because without extensive vocabulary, someone will not be able to use structure or compose sentences in English. However, teaching vocabulary is indeed not easy for teachers, many teachers are still lacking in creativity in teaching English. The teacher must be able to choose and use many vocabulary teaching techniques. As teachers, they must build students' interest in learning English using a variety of techniques. The choice of teaching technique or strategy is very necessary to consider the material presented, the purpose of learning, the time available, and the number of students, the character of students and classes as well as matters related to the teaching and learning process.

Vocabulary plays important role in the foreign language acquisition and academic achievement. Limited vocabulary might cause problems in reading, writing, speaking and listening. The acquisition of a large number of vocabularies in language learning has long been stressed by the experts as argued by Lewis (in Maghsodi: 2010) that "the single most important task facing language learners is acquiring a large size of vocabularies". Vocabulary is also the key to understand the lesson besides to communicate with other people successfully. Students with insufficient knowledge of vocabulary will find difficult to achieve comprehension.

The lack of vocabulary is one problem that confronted by the English language learners. The learners will find difficulties to read, speak, listen and write. In contrary, the acquisition of a large number vocabulary is very important because it will help the students to read, write, speak, and listen well. Good vocabulary mastery is also can help the students to easily understand the language learning. This situation then will enables the students to handle many kinds of test in school include vocabulary questions. The acquisition of a large numbers of vocabularies will bring the student in simplicity to do English test. Therefore, the acquisition of a large numbers of vocabularies for students is strongly suggested.

Vocabulary is one of crucial aspects to support the four major skills in English language, especially reading skill. As stated by Sedita (2005), vocabulary is one of five core components of reading instruction that are essential to successfully teach students how to read. These core components include phonemic awareness, phonics and word study, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension. Vocabulary knowledge is important because it encompasses all the words we must know to access our background knowledge, express our ideas and communicate effectively, and learn about new concepts.

Context clues involve the linguistic such as words, phrases, sentences and nonlinguistic information available surrounding an unfamiliar word, which a reader can use to infer the word's meaning. Instruction in context clues typically involves teaching students to use linguistic information to predict the meaning of a word. Context clues are defined as words found around an unknown word that provides clues that reveal the meaning of the unknown word (Beck et. al: 2002). Because Contextual clue analysis involves recognizing and understanding unfamiliar words through the use of the words or sentences surrounding them, students can determine the meaning of an unfamiliar word through the context in which the word is found that provide clues that can help students read independently other than using the help of a dictionary.

SMK Tiwikrama is one of schools that located in Mamuju City. According to preliminary research, students in this school are having weak vocabulary mastery. Most of the students have problems with

vocabulary mastery. They feel hard to express their idea and understand the whole English subject matter because a limited vocabulary. Therefore, more strategies to improve students' vocabulary in this school are needed.

This research contributed to provide improvement of pedagogy of the vocational vocabulary learning and its solution for vocabulary problems at vocational school in Indonesia. Spesifically, the result of this research is expected to contribute for giving information on a best method that can be employed to improve vocabulary at school, especially in the school where this research is conducted.

**Method**

This research is a Quasi-experimental with The Non-equivalent Control Group Design.The population of this research is the second year students of SMK TiwikramaMamuju in academic year 2019/2020 which consists of nine classes. The total size of population is 294 students. The population of this research is the second year students of SMK TiwikramaMamuju in academic year 2019/2020 which consists of nine classes. The total numbers of population of the second year student in this school are 294 students. The researcher used vocabulary test in pre-test and post-test. The test items were consisting of 30 numbers of questions in pre-test and post-test.The vocabulary test focuses on four parts of speech(noun, verb, adjective and adverb). The vocabulary test consists of 8 items that refers to Noun, 8 items refers to Verb, 7 items refers to Adjective and 7 items refers to Adverb. The test content is adapted from the complete test of TOEFL Longman. To know the students' response on the use of context clues technique to improve their vocabulary, questionnaires was distributed to students in experimental group after the experimentationwasconducted. To investigate about the implementation of context clues technique in improving

students' vocational vocabulary mastery, the researcher used observation checklist.

**Result and Discussion**

**Result**

**a. The Data of the Vocabulary Mastery Test Score of the Experimental-Group and Control-Group in Pre-Test**

Based on the result of the calculation, it shows that the gained mean score of the vocabulary test score of the experimental group in the pre-test is 68.79. The standard deviation (SD) of the scores is 7.879. The maximum score gained in the test is 80 and the minimum score is 50. Based on the result of the calculation, it shows that the gained mean score of the vocabulary test score of the control group in the pre-test is 68.15. The standard deviation (SD) of the scores is 9.546. The maximum score gained in the test is 80 and theminimum score is 50.

*Table 1.Descriptive Analysis of the Experimental& Control Group in Pre-test*

| Group | Mean | SD | Median | Mode | MaxScore | MinScore |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Experimental** | 68.79 | 7.879 | 69.00 | 70.00 | 80 | 50 |
| **Control** | 68.15 | 9.546 | 65.00 | 67.00 | 80 | 50 |

*Table 2.Distribution Score of the Experimental& Control Group inPre-test*

| No. | Score Interval | Category | Experimental | | Control | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | F | (%) | F | (%) |
| 1 | 93-100 | Very high | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | 84-92 | High | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 3 | 75-83 | Fair | 6 | 18 | 4 | 12 |
| 4 | 66-74 | Low | 21 | 62 | 21 | 65 |
| 5 | < 65 | Very low | 7 | 20 | 7 | 23 |
| | | | 34 | 100 | 32 | 100 |

The students' score is in fair category (18%). There is no student in very high category. There is no student in high

category, while the other 62% is in low category and 20% is in very low category. It is also supported by the mean score of 68.79 which belongs to the low category 66-74.The same as in the experimental-group, the majority of the students score is also in low category (65%). There is no the student in very high category. There is no the student in high category and the other 12% in fair category and 23% is in very low category. It is also supported by the mean score of 68.15 which belongs to the low category 66-74.After the data of the pre-test scores were collected from both groups, the next step is to compare the data to see that both groups are in the same level of vocabulary test score before the treatment.

## b. The Data of the Vocabulary Test Score of theExperimental & Control-Group in Post Test

Based on the result of the calculation, it shows that the gainedmean score of the vocabulary test score of theexperimental-group inpost-test is 87.20. The standard deviation(SD) of the scores is 7.242. The maximum score gained in the test is97 and the minimum score is 67.

*Table 3: Descriptive Analysis of the Experimental& Control Group inPost-test*

| Group | Mean | SD | Median | Mode | MaxScore | MinScore |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Experimental | 87.20 | 7.242 | 85.00 | 87.00 | 97 | 67 |
| Control | 72.25 | 7.580 | 70.00 | 73.00 | 87 | 50 |

*Table 4: Distribution Score of the Experimental& Control Group inPost-Test*

| No. | Score Interval | Category | Name of Group | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Experimental | | Control | |
| | | | F | (%) | F | (%) |
| 1 | 93-100 | Very high | 11 | 32 | 0 | 0 |
| 2 | 84-92 | High | 15 | 44 | 1 | 3 |
| 3 | 75-83 | Fair | 7 | 21 | 9 | 27 |
| 4 | 66-74 | Low | 1 | 3 | 18 | 58 |
| 5 | < 65 | Very low | 0 | 0 | 4 | 12 |
| | | | 34 | 100 | 32 | 100 |

After the treatment was conducted, the majority of the students' score (44%) is in high category. There is also an increase in the very highcategory with 32%. The other 21% is in faircategory and 3% is in low category. Meanwhile, there is no student in thevery low category. It is also supported by the mean score of 87.20which belongs to the high category 84-92.

Based on the result of the calculation, it shows that the gainedmean score of the vocabulary test score of the control-group in post-test is 72.25. The standard deviation (SD) of thescores is 7.580. The maximum score gained in the test is 87 and the minimum score is 50.Different from the experimental group, the majority ofthe students' scores (58%) is still in low category which is thesame as in the pre-test scores. There is no student in veryhigh category and 3% of the students are in high category.The other 27% is in fair category and 3% is in very lowcategory. It is also supported by the mean score of 72.25 whichbelongs to the low category 66-74.

## c. Hypothesis Testing

The hypothesis testing is used to investigatel whether or notthe treatment which is using contextual clue has significant difference between the twogroups in their mean scores of the vocabulary mastery test.It is considered that is having a significantdifference when the value of t-observed ($t_o$ ) is higher than thevalue of t-critical in the table ($t_t$). If $t_t$is higher than $t_o$ , itmeans that the alternative hypothesis ($H_a$) is accepted and thenull hypothesis ($H_0$) is rejected. It can also be seen assignificant if the *p* value is lower than 0.05. Thecomputerization of the calculation is enclosed below.

*Table 5: The Hypothesis Testing*

| Variable | $t_o$ | $t_t$ | *P* | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Post-test | 2.817 | 1.998 | 0.006 | The hypothesis is accepted |

Based on the table above, it can be seen that $t_o$value ofthe test is 2.817. The $t$ value of the test was compared with the$t_t$value in the significance level 5%. The $t$ value of the tablecan be found from the degree of freedom (df). The table withdf 64 is 1.998 at significance level of 5%. The $p$ value of thepost-test is 0.006.It can be seen that the value of $t_o>t_t$ (2.817>1.998) and $p<0.05$; therefore, the proposedhypothesis ―there is a significant difference in students' vocabulary mastery between those who are taughtby using context clue andthose who are not is accepted.

### d. The Students' Response on the Use of Context Clues Technique in Improving Students' vocational Vocabulary Mastery

The students' response on the use of context clues technique in improving students'vocational vocabulary mastery in EFL class falls into two different categories namely positive response and negative response. Based on the result of the analysis of the instrument, the students' response on the use of context clues technique in improving their vocational vocabulary mastery can be seen as follows:

*Table 6. Students' Positive & Negative Response on the Use of Context Clues Technique in Improving their Vocational Vocabulary Mastery*

| Response | Reason | F | % |
|---|---|---|---|
| Positive | Contextual clues technique is so much helping in guessing the meaning of the unknown words because the respondents do not need to know the precise definition of the words | 27 | 80 |
| Negative | Respondents need a large vocabulary size in guessing the meaning of the unknown words | 7 | 20 |
| | Total | 34 | 100 |

From the table above, as many as 27 students from 34 students or 80% of the whole respondents drop their choice that contextual clues technique is so much helping in guessing the meaning of the unknown words because the respondents do not need to know the precise definition of the words. This data indicates that most of the students had a positive response toward the use of context clues technique in improving their vocational vocabulary mastery.The data abovealso indicates that several students had a negative response toward the use of context clues technique in improving their vocational vocabulary mastery. As many as 7 students from 34 students or 20% of the whole respondents drop their choice which says that Contextual clues technique need a large vocabulary size to be applied in order to be able to guess the meaning of the unknown words.

### Discussion

### 1. TheEffectiveness of the Use of Context Clues Technique inImproving the Students' Vocational Vocabulary

The finding of the research proved that there is a significant difference between the experimental and control groups after the treatment was conducted. The result is in line with the previous study conducted by Almunawaroh (2018) that the high understanding of contextual words meaning tends to improve students' vocabulary mastery. Having a significant difference means that the treatment of the study which was using contextual clue analysis to infer word meanings give a positive impact to the students in the experimental group. The score difference of both classes in the post-test can be clearly seen from the statistics result as stated in the hypothesis testing above. The value of t-observed ($t_o$) is higher than the value of t-critical in the table ($t_t$) and the p value is lower than 0.05. It can be said that the alternative hypothesis proposed by the researcher ―there is a significant difference in students' vocabulary mastery between those who are taught by using contextual clue analysis to

infer word meanings and those who are not is accepted. Based on the results of the study, it is concluded that teachingvocabularyby using context cluesstrategy contributes significant differencebetween the students' vocabularyachievement in experimental group whichis higher than the students' vocabularyachievement in control group.

## 2. The Students' Response on the Use of Context Clues Technique in Improving Students' vocational Vocabulary Mastery

Two different categories namely positive and negative response is found after the implementation of context clues technique in improving students' vocabulary mastery. There are 80% respondents feel that context clues technique is a good technique in improving students' vocabulary mastery. One reason why the respondents like this method is because this method is so much helping in guessing the meaning of the unknown words because the respondents do not need to know the precise definition of the words. In other words, they do not need dictionary to find out the meaning of the unknown words.

Indeed, one of the advantages of the use of context clues technique is that the learners do not have to know the precise meaning of the unknown words. This is in line with a research result found by Inacciand Sam (2017) that through context clues technique learners do not have to know the precise meaning of the unknown words. Besides, the students do not have to memorize a list of words and definitions, they become aware of the meanings of word in different passage, they use the skill only when they come across difficult words in text,they read and understand general vocabulary without needing precisedefinitions; general meanings usually enable them to continue reading, the learners develop the quality of taking risks and make themmore confident and

independent in their approach to reading, they read and understand precise meanings of subject terms on which theywill be tested.

On the contrary, there are 20% respondents feel that context clues technique is a bad technique in improving students' vocabulary mastery. One reason why the respondents do not like this method is becauseto apply contextual clues, respondents need a large size of vocabulary in order to be able to guess the meaning of the unknown words. This is in line with Karbalaei (2012) theory that the students who have not enoughvocabulary will be difficult to understand the clue given in a sentence. The successful guessing meanings from context rely on the students' vocabulary size. It is also difficult to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words if the students do not have knowledge about parts of speech or they have no experiences to decide whether the unknown word is noun, adverb, adjective and verb and so on. They will be unable to choose the most suitable meaning of the unknown word because they do not understand the clue. Therefore, finally they will look up the words' meaning in a dictionary. Contextual clues are also difficult for students to use if they do not know the relationship between the clause and sentence containing the unknown word. The students will fail to understand the context and will make errors in meaning of the unknown word.

## Conclusion

The context clue is an effective method to improve students' vocabulary mastery at SMK TiwikramaMamuju. Students were able to differentiate four words classes namely noun, verb, adjectives and adverb. Students were able to mention it, know the meaning and know when to use it in a sentence. It can be seen from the significant difference in mean score between the experimental and the control group in post-test. It means that both groups are in the same level of category before the treatment

is conducted. By giving the treatment, students in the experimental group achieve higher mean score than the students in the control group. Therefore the hypothesis of this research is accepted. The context clue is well implemented by the students and the implementation is able to improve the students' vocabulary mastery. Most of the students state that the use of context clues is very important and facilitate them to infer the unknown words meaning especially while reading and it can increase the students' vocabulary mastery.. The students' response on the use of Context Clues technique in improving students'vocational vocabulary mastery in EFL class falls into two categories namely positive and negative response. In the positive response, most of the respondents state that this method quiet helping in guessing the meaning of the unfamiliar words. Meanwhile, in the negative response, several respondents state that it is hard to apply this method without a large number of vocabularies.

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