

STIMULATING LITERACY AWARENESS THROUGH CONTEXT-BASED READING TASKS

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Abstract

The presence of authentic learning resources in EFL setting is a strategic way of nurturing contextual learning. The use of context-based reading incorporated with authentic reading text is believed as an alternative way to promote students' literacy awareness. The current study is aimed at investigating how context-based reading tasks are used to stimulate students' literacy awareness in Intensive Reading course. Through observation and authentic assessment, this case study discovered that the use of context-based reading tasks conducted through task based learning and cooperative learning strategies can stimulate student's literacy awareness through their efforts to complete their reading course's tasks on authentic reading texts taken from an online newspaper "The Jakarta Post" provided in <https://www.thejakartapost.com>. The presence of literacy awareness is indicated by several learning performances of the students, among others are (a) autonomous exploration on preferable topics of reading, (b) exchange of the result of individual reading task in group discussion, (c) presentation of the group discussion's resume in classroom forum, and (d) students' inferential level of reading comprehension. In conclusion, context-based reading tasks is another alternative way to raise students' literacy awareness by incorporating the use of authentic reading texts in a contextual learning setting in reading comprehension practices. This study can be further developed into a quantitative research by adding more participants and additional intensive treatment of reading instructions.

Keywords – literacy awareness, contextual learning, context-based reading, authentic text

Introduction

Literacy development has become a central issue that cannot be separated from the sphere of language education as well as EFL context. Efforts have been done to promote literacy development through various activities of language learning (Murtisari, 2021; Robiasih et al., 2023; Venketsamy & Sibanda, 2021). Language skill improvement, ranging from listening, reading, speaking, writing and including translation, always goes in line with students' literacy development.

Attaching practices of literacy improvement to listening, reading, speaking, writing and translating activities in EFL courses is an effective way where students experience learning process and literacy improvement as well. It is as shown by studies regarding with the issue of literacy development

integrated into the language skill courses (Artieda, 2017; Bacus & Alda, 2023; Bakken & Lund, 2018; Lucas, 2020; Menggo et al., 2023; Trenkic & Warmington, 2019; Zhong & Wakat, 2023).

Language in its contextual use has shown the variety of meaningful communication settings. It is then necessary to stimulate literacy awareness since language learning practices should be meaningful and engaged with real life. It is the reason why language is a social medium of communication, so when communication occurs between speakers, there must be various meaning negotiations (Trenkic & Warmington, 2019). Along with this notion, reading course should be conducted in a contextual setting, that is by engaging

students with extensive authentic reading texts.

Providing extensive learning resources is one of the necessary ways in maintaining contextual learning. This point of view refers to the concept of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) which is a learning concept that helps teachers link material taught with real-world situations of students and encourages students to make connections between the knowledge they have and their application in their lives as family and community members (Berns & Erickson, 2001). Studies revealed that the implementation of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) in reading courses gave valuable contributions to the improvement of reading comprehension (Azzahra & Ambarwati, 2021; Utami et al., 2023).

In the scope of reading courses, contextualizing learning materials can be done by incorporating authentic texts through reading tasks. Studies have found the benefit of using authentic text for language skill development with its accompanying challenges (Albiladi, 2018; Islam & Santoso, 2018; Sun & Pan, 2021). It is then questioned whether authentic text can also be utilized to help raise students' literacy awareness along with their learning process to improve their language skills in the framework of contextual learning.

The presence of authentic reading resources in fact has contributed to enriching students' reading materials by which students are exposed to extensive meaningful vocabularies (Alzu'bi, 2013; Madjdi et al., 2024) but there comes a question of how it works to engage students with contextual learning activities for literacy development. The current study is aimed at investigating how Context-Based Reading Tasks (CBRT) are used to stimulate students' literacy awareness through the use of

authentic reading text in Intensive Reading (IR) courses.

Methodology

The study used a qualitative research design. It is a case study which tries to investigate in what ways context-based reading tasks can contribute to stimulate students' literacy awareness. The study portrayed the learning process and students' learning attitude in Intensive Reading (IR) class which was designed in a setting of contextual learning performed by incorporating the procedures of task-based learning and cooperative learning techniques (Astuti & Lammers, 2017; Chen, 2018; Sukarni et al., 2020).

The subjects of research are students of the English Education Department. The study was conducted in 2 classes of Intensive Reading classes with the total number of 44 students. The students are in the second semester. They are students who took Extensive Reading (ER) class in the previous semester. In the previous semester, during the ER class they also experienced reading assignments through a program of nurturing reading logs or reading journals for their individual extensive reading activities (Madjdi et al., 2024).

The data of the study were collected by using two instruments, those are observation and authentic assessment. The observation was done for recording the students' attitudes/performance of learning during the implementation of context-based reading tasks. Meanwhile, the authentic assessment was used to measure the level of students' literacy awareness. The authentic assessment used the framework of *Bloom Taxonomy* Anderson (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Hyder & Bhamani, 2016; Godsell, 2022).

Observation rubric was used to collect the research data of students' learning

performance and attitudes. The rubric documented students' activities during the learning process where cooperative learning technique was applied. The learning activities referred to the cooperative learning model of *read-pair-share*, in which students were, firstly, instructed to *read* elective authentic reading texts provided by the website of <https://www.thejakartapost.com>. Secondly, students were asked to make *pairs* for discussion and then they had to *share* what they have read to their group.

Regarding the authentic assessment, after reading the elected authentic texts, students were asked to submit their responses towards the guided questions as written in the following instruction.

- 1.) *Visit the Jakarta post website in the segment of "Culture", choose one of the following topics of news!*
 - a.) technology
 - b.) food
 - c.) entertainment
 - d.) Art and Culture
 - e.) Sport
 - f.) people
 - g.) etc. (you may choose another topic)
- 2.) *Give response to the following question guidelines*
 - a.) What is the topic of the news?
 - b.) Does the news talk about people? If yes, who are they?
 - c.) Does the news talk about things? If yes, what is it?
 - d.) What is the main idea of the news?
 - e.) What are the values that you can learn from the news?

Meanwhile, the collected data from the observation rubric were analyzed to describe the students' learning attitude and learning performance. To reach a trustworthiness, the observation results were validated with authentic assessment. The authentic assessment's result were further analyzed by using the concept of Bloom Taxonomy and reading

comprehension level to describe students' literacy awareness.

In terms of Bloom Taxonomy, literacy awareness can be categorized as Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) and Lower Order Thinking Skills (LOTS). Meanwhile, in terms of reading comprehension level, there are three (3) main categories, i.e., *literal level*, *inferential level* and *critical level*. Literal comprehension level is a basic level of reading comprehension, where a reader is able to understand information which is explicitly stated in reading materials. With reference to inferential comprehension level, it is a level of reading comprehension in which a reader is able to comprehend explicit and implicit meaning contained in the reading text. Meanwhile, critical level is a level of reading comprehension where a reader is able to critically evaluate the reading text (de-la-Peña & Luque-Rojas, 2021; Ha, 2022; Safitri & Melati, 2023).

Results and Discussion

The use of Context-Based Reading Tasks (CBRT) in Intensive Reading (IR) class were sequentially performed through the course procedure of *Pre-Reading*, *Whilst Reading*, and *Post Reading* (Harmer, 2017 cited in Safitri & Melati, 2023). This learning strategy was also applied by incorporating cooperative learning method with model of *read-pair-share-present*, in which students were asked to read the selected reading text, and then they shared their reading comprehension with their partners in pairs to respond to the given question guidelines, and at last, they have to share their *reading* results to the classroom forum.

In *pre-reading* session, several pre-reading activities were done, those are the lecturer gave introductory learning guidelines, then informed the learning activities that the students would go through. In this session, students prepared

their cellphone or personal computer to browse a topic of news item provided in <https://www.thejakartapost.com>. The students participated in the pre-reading activities enthusiastically since they were allowed to choose any topics of news item based on their own preferences. Next, the students were asked to make groups of 4 persons, in which they would have discussion in pairs in the next activity.

Next stage is *Whilst Reading*. In this stage, first students had a discussion in pairs, then they shared in a wider scope, i.e., in their group of 4 persons. The discussion was done following the question guidelines. In this stage, students practiced solving problems referring to the question's guidelines. They were encouraged to stimulate their critical thinking, collaborate and communicate with their partners. The presence of literacy awareness is reflected in the students efforts when solving problems (their attempt to give response to the reading questions during the activity of *pair and share* in the group's discussion). The discussion activity can be seen in Figure 1.



Figure 1. *pair and share* in a group

Finally, it came to the stage of *Post Reading*. In this stage, students of the same group should have worked together to present the summary of their discussion. They had to present it in front of the class and received feedback from the rest of students (other groups). To make the presentation session run well in a good order, there was a spokesperson

represented each group to present the discussion's results. During the presentation, the other groups were also stimulated to give responses based on their knowledge and point of view. The presentation session can be seen in Figure 2.



Figure 2. Group's presentation

Based on the observation on the students' activities of implementing the Context-Based Reading Tasks (CBRT), it was found that students' literacy awareness were systematically stimulated during the learning process of exploring the preferred topic of news item, comprehending the content of the reading text, solving the problems contained in the question's guidelines. The presence of literacy awareness was also reflected in the sharing session of the group discussion and the presentation of the classroom discussion. To be seen in the theoretical framework of Bloom's Taxonomy as suggested and revised by Anderson & Krathwohl (2001), in which there are gradation level of thinking, from the Low Order Thinking Skills (LOTS) up to Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS). From this framework, students seemed to experience learning practices of developing their critical thinking potentials.

The gradual rise of student's critical thinking was represented by the increasing level of thinking from LOTS to HOTS, realized by students learning process of remembering the topic of reading text, understanding the content of reading text, applying what they understand through *a sharing* and

discussion session, analyzing the accuracy of their opinion through discussion, evaluating their responses by peer assessment (peer correction), and creating a summary text to be presented before the class.

It is empirically confirmed that there is a correlation between literacy development and critical thinking level. Additionally, critical thinking level is much dependent on the knowledge level, while the increase of knowledge also correlates with the level of reading comprehension. In fact, reading habit also contributes to the increase of knowledge and literacy as well, so reading habits needs to be nurtured (Madjdi et al., 2024; Quinonez-Beltran et al., 2023).

The result of observation has shown several indicators of the presence of literacy awareness of the students in Intensive Reading course. The indicators appeared in the students exploration of preferable topics of reading, learning opportunities experienced by the students in building knowledge and sharing the knowledge/information for solving problems as well as communicating the result of discussion. The qualitative indicators of literacy awareness were then also validated by the results of authentic assessment on students' level of reading comprehension.

Based on the results of the authentic assessment to 44 students, there were approximately 12 students, categorized as having critical/evaluative level of reading comprehension, 22 students with inferential level of reading comprehension and 10 students categorized as in the basic level/literal level of reading comprehension. This findings showed that literacy awareness were stimulated along with the implementation of the Context-Based Reading Tasks (CBRT), but still efforts need to be developed to nurture their

reading habits for the sake of literacy development. Reading habit can be promoted by creating a supporting reading environment program, such as the presence of reading corner at classrooms or other representative spots. Additionally, the number of books in libraries should also be increased as the reading resources. To make the students participate in the effort of fostering their reading habit, engagement program, such as conducting reading clubs, maintaining reading logs, an others, must be intensively done by teachers/lecturers. This research can further be developed into a quantitative research by adding more participants and additional intensive treatment of reading instructions.

Conclusions

It can be inferred that literacy awareness can be stimulated through the implementation of the Context-Based Reading Tasks (CBRT) as indicated by students' learning performances of their autonomous exploration on elective theme of reading text, the results' exchange of the individual reading task in group discussion, presentation of the group discussion's resume in classroom forum, and students' level of reading comprehension. Future researach can be done quantitatively to give stronger valitating findings that context-based reading tasks is an alternative and effective way to raise students' literacy awareness through the use of authentic reading texts in a contextual learning setting in reading comprehension practices.

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