

## EVALUATION OF CONTEXTUAL CLUES: EFL PROFICIENCY IN READING COMPREHENSION

**Margaret Stevani**

*Faculty of English Education, Universitas Pembinaan Masyarakat Indonesia*  
Email: margaretstevani19@gmail.com

**Meikardo Samuel Prayuda**

*Faculty of English Education, Universitas Katolik Santo Thomas Sumatera Utara*  
Email: meichardohanon@gmail.com

**Dyan Wulan Sari**

*Faculty of School Teacher Education, Universitas Katolik Santo Thomas Sumatera Utara*  
Email: wulansdyan@ust.ac.id

**Sumarlin Mangandar Marianus**

*Faculty of School Teacher Education, Universitas Katolik Santo Thomas Sumatera Utara*  
Email: sumarlinmm.sinaga@gmail.com

**Karisma Erikson Tarigan**

*Faculty of English Education, Universitas Katolik Santo Thomas Sumatera Utara*  
Email:erick\_tarigan2006@yahoo.com

APA Citation: Stevani, M., Prayuda, M. S., Sari, D. W., Marianus, S. M., & Tarigan, K. E. (2022). Evaluation of contextual clues: EFL proficiency in reading comprehension. *English Review: Journal of English Education*, 10(3), 993-1002. <http://doi.org/10.25134/erjee.v10i3.7076>

Received: 19-06-2022

Accepted: 23-08-2022

Published: 30-10-2022

**Abstract:** The present research evaluated EFL perspectives about contextual clues in reading comprehension at different proficiency levels. The data analysis using qualitative descriptions with frequencies and percentages was employed for 38 intermediate-level students and 25 advanced-level students in the university level through teaching contextual clues in reading comprehension with an experimental design. The results proved that students' proficiency in reading ability could be demonstrated by their use of idiomatic expressions, indirect language, direct language, series of words, comparison, synonym, tone, situation, mood, reference, restatement, preposition, cause-effect, modification, and example. Advanced students with a high level of vocabulary, grammar, and decoding skills were better able to utilize many contextual clues than intermediate students. Thus, reading ability was strongly correlated with the ability to infer word meaning from contextual clues.

**Keywords:** *contextual clues; English proficiency; reading comprehension.*

### INTRODUCTION

The growing number of non-native English students learning to read prove that the curriculum should emphasize students' ability to construct knowledge, think critically, and process information. Students' literacy at all levels is characterized by the ability to use prior knowledge and to use effective reading strategies that focus on meaning, and this behavior enables them to become proficient readers (Taufan, 2020). A good reader is an active reader who is clear about what they intend to accomplish through their reading and continuously evaluates whether they are achieving their goal. Selective readers constantly make decisions regarding what to read carefully, what not to read, and what to reread. As

they read, they construct, revise, and question meaning since comprehension issues can arise at various levels, such as the word level, sentence level, sentence-to-sentence level, and sentence-to-subject level (Jaelani *et al.*, 2022).

Besides the context-based strategies in reading comprehension, students also rely on using prior knowledge. By having enough background knowledge, readers can integrate the words they have read into their existing framework of knowledge or schema, resulting in constructing meanings of some unknown words in the text. Students who engage in wide reading will develop extensive vocabulary. The more a learner reads, the more unfamiliar words someone will be confronted with through the use of prior

knowledge because comprehension is the process of making sense of words, sentences and connected text (Salant & Berant, 2018; Stevani & Tarigan, 2022).

Researchers have acknowledged that students need a specific set of word-learning strategies to unlock the meaning of the unknown words and this promotes deep exploration of texts during interpretation. Different previous studies also stress the importance of contextual clues if students want to become skillful and proficient in obtaining meaning from their reading material, such as the contribution of grammatical knowledge to enhance the students' guessing ability (Oclarit & Casinillo, 2021); to improve understanding of new words in locating appositives, searching for explicit definitions and using prior knowledge (Iltter, 2019), and to predict the outstanding scores in the vocabulary size test and the English college test (Jaelani *et al.*, 2022).

Based on the researchers' observation, several English teachers claim that many teachers waste lesson time by asking students to read a passage silently. These weak students are unable to identify and use the contextual clue, signal, and reading strategy because their background knowledge and decoding skills are low. In the case of an unfamiliar word, many students look up its meaning immediately using an electronic dictionary. Additionally, some words have multiple meanings, so students choose the wrong one, resulting in misunderstandings. Consequently, most students cannot follow the flow of ideas provided in printed materials, such as finding the main idea, making predictions, using background knowledge, creating mental images, asking questions, drawing inferences, and summarizing information. Increasing evidence suggests that students are failing to make progress with reading because of a lack of vocabulary. They have difficulty reading fluently due to their lack of vocabulary, and tabdulhis results in difficulties with comprehension because inferring or deducing word meanings from the context accounts for 75% to 90% of comprehension (Abdulmalik, 2020; Zamani *et al.*, 2022).

Students who cannot overcome vocabulary difficulties while reading experience frustration and can lose focus on context because understanding the content requires inferring meaning, which is the essence of comprehension development, especially in the long-reading text. The first previous research shows that being unable to handle long and complex sentences and failing to grasp the main idea are the main causes

of not achieving high scores when students take the Reading Test for English Major, as the requirement of management business for English major (Ahmad *et al.*, 2018). The second previous research identified students' reading problems such as small vocabulary size, slow reading speed, and inadequate background knowledge (Ficzere *et al.*, 2021). The third previous research pointed out that EFL in Indonesia have similar reading problems and they also lack decoding skills and effective reading strategies (Ilahude *et al.*, 2021).

However, the ability to use context clues among the intermediate and advanced level of English education students has been little studied. Instead, most researchers have focused solely on the effectiveness of teaching the context clue strategy in the classroom using various approaches. Whereas not much attention was given to vocabulary instruction in reading comprehension by using contextual clues and the students' perspectives about the way to select the contextual information based on a reading passage. Therefore, in this research, the student's ability to use context clues in reading passages and how to identify context clue types based on English reading tests, and the correlation between reading comprehension and the students' opinions regarding the context clue strategy to derive the meaning of unfamiliar words will be investigated. Generally, the most common contextual clues were classified into: (1) Restatement: Stated the word in simpler terms; (2) Synonyms: The similar meaning of one or two words; (3) Antonyms: Opposite meaning of the word; (4) Definitions: The clear statement that defined the meaning of the word; (5) Explanation: The same ideas that could be found in the sentence before or in the sentence following the word to explained the difficult word; and (6) Relationships: The clue of the difficult word and something the author had stated in the text which required reader's thinking process (Fudhla *et al.*, 2020; Inal, 2021). Thus, the main objectives of the study are: (a) to investigate the effect of contextual clues types to improve the reading comprehension of different texts, and (b) to examine the students' perspectives when using the types of contextual clues which require students to guess the meaning of unfamiliar vocabularies in the text quickly.

## **METHOD**

The research design in this study was an experimental study aiming to achieve 98-95% lexical coverage for successful reading

comprehension (Razaq *et al.*, 2022; Hassanzadeh *et al.*, 2020). Based on their scores on the Vocabulary Levels Test and Word Associates Test in reading comprehension tests, the students were divided into two groups: 38 intermediate level students and 25 advanced level students majoring in English Education program in North Sumatra to ensure that the target words and text topics were familiar to their level of proficiency (Wulandari, 2017). In the pre-test of Vocabulary Levels Test and Word Associates Test, each student was required to read the texts and sentences and infer the meaning of the underlined words (50 words in total). Every correctly inferred word received one point, resulting in a maximum score of 30 for single sentences and 20 for longer text.

The research process was described as follows: First, after taking the pre-test, the students in the experimental group were taught how to use contextual clues without referring to a dictionary, such as definitions, synonyms, antonyms, comparisons, associations, and cause and effect. In administering the context clues, the researchers explained the purpose of context clues and demonstrated how to locate them by displaying a passage with unfamiliar words highlighted and surrounding context clues highlighted. Second, four long expository texts were given to students with contextual clues containing 15-20 target words per text (50 in total) chosen based on their reading proficiency level. The third step was for students to clarify some questions about the reading passage by spending approximately 40 minutes going back through the text to find the words they did not know and guess the meaning from the context, as well as stating their confidence regarding their strategy to infer the types of the unknown words. Fourth, the students had to rely solely on text contextual clues during the word identification and comprehension task, since they were not allowed to consult a dictionary or ask their classmates or researchers for help. Fifth, the students were able to verify the accurate meaning of the words by using a

bilingual dictionary and the researchers asked the students in each experimental group to present their results to the entire group. Sixth, a questionnaire was administered after all treatments to assess the students' opinions on contextual clues for determining unfamiliar words' meanings.

In data analysis, qualitative descriptions with frequencies and percentages were used to describe the nature and characteristics of contextual clues in reading comprehension and it was observed by two researchers in the field of English education by using a checklist of teaching procedures. The checklist included direct classroom features, such as the process of using contextual clues, items of reading passage tests, and classroom observation. The checklist included using responses to agree and disagree with classroom observation (Boonchum, 2018).

A content validity test and a face validity test were used to establish the validity of pre-test and post-test. A test's content validity measured the variety of reading passages covered all vocabulary words discussed over the past month, including synonyms, antonyms, comparisons and contrasts, associations, and cause and effect. The face validity was conducted by asking four English teachers to analyze and review the pre-test and post-test to assess the degree to which the test looked valid. According to four English teachers, the test and the reading passage were good comprehensive tests since it was included the most types of vocabulary questions according to intermediate and advanced level students (Haerazi *et al.*, 2019).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### *The analysis of contextual clues on students' reading comprehension test*

The main concern of this section was to answer problem 1, which was the analysis of contextual clues types and what type of contextual clues that the students used in the process of the unfamiliar word investigation.

Table 1. *The classification of contextual clues in reading comprehension*

Contextual Clue Types	Frequency and Percentage of Students' Level	Examples
Idiomatic expressions	Advanced: 18 (72%) Intermediate: 21 (55%)	He had a good personality to prove that he was easily able to <u>get along with</u> everyone he knew. a. manage                      c. give up b. be friendly                d. move on [The answer was (b) because <u>get along with</u> was similar to be friendly].
Indirect language	Advanced: 19 (76%) Intermediate:	Especially well-suited for those who should not take aspirin products. Dosage for adults: 1 to 2 tablets 4 times daily. Based on the instruction, what is the maximum dosage per day for an adult?

**Margaret Stevani, Meikardo Samuel Prayuda, Dyan Wulan Sari, Sumarlin Mangandar Marianus, & Karisma Erikson Tarigan**

*Evaluation of contextual clues: EFL proficiency in reading comprehension*

	25 (65%)	a. 8 tablets b. 4 tablets	c. 3 tablets d. 2 tablets
		[The answer was (d) because “3 tablets four times daily” would be equal to three times four, or twelve tablets every twenty-four hours. Choice (a) referred to the dose per time, not to the total dose for four times daily. Choice (b) referred to the number per day, not to the number of tablets. Choice (c) referred to the minimum, not the maximum dosage].	
Direct language	Advanced: 17 (68%) Intermediate: 26 (68%)	a. invitation b. notice	c. questionnaire d. application
		Based on the passage, the title below that best expressed the ideas in this passage was ..... [The answer is (b) because the passage provided information without subjective commentary. Choice (a) referred to the notice of an occasion with a time, date, and place mentioned. Choice (c) referred to a series of questions. Choice (d) referred to a form with personal and professional information on it].	
Series of words	Advanced: 16 (64%) Intermediate: 28 (73%)	a. show over b. show out	c. show down d. show up
		Although we always send a representative to the airport to welcome new international students, very often they do not <u>arrive</u> on the flights that we expect them to. [The answer is (d) because the word is a phrasal verb as a synonym].	
Comparison/contrast	Advanced: 19 (76%) Intermediate: 22 (57%)	a. solar energy was popular. b. less than 1 percent of our energy sources were from solar cells. c. the Department of Energy supported a complete solar electricity plan. d. the cost of solar energy was cheap.	
		According to the Department of Energy, 1 percent of the nation’s electricity will be generated from solar cells at the enormous cost of one billion dollars a year. The text might be inferred that..... [The answer was (b). Choice (a) contradicted the fact that less than 1 percent was available. Choice (c) contradicted the fact that the percentage projected for the future was only 1 percent. Choice (d) contradicted the fact that the cost of one billion dollars a year was enormous.	
Synonym	Advanced: 16 (64%) Intermediate: 16 (42%)	a. nature b. center	c. surface d. top
		Seeds are contained in the <u>core</u> of fleshy fruit, such as apples and pears. [The answer was (b). Choice (a), choice (b), choice (c), and choice (d) was not synonym of the word <i>core</i> ].	
Tone, situation, mood	Advanced: 15 (60%) Intermediate: 17 (44%)	a. one b. two	c. three d. none
		The second leading cause of death in this country, cancer claimed the lives of over 420,000 Americans every year. Based on the statement, how many conditions rank above cancer as a cause of death? [The answer was (a) because since cancer was the second leading cause, it must be concluded that there was one condition that ranked above it. Choice (b) referred to the rank of cancer, not the rank above cancer. Choices (c) and (d) were not mentioned and might not be concluded from information in the passage].	
Reference	Advanced: 22 (88%) Intermediate: 22 (57%)	a. 1 percent of the nation’s total electricity. b. 2000 solar cells. c. 10 percent of the total electricity for the country. d. one billion solar cells per year.	
		In the year 2001, 1 percent of the nation’s electricity will be generated from solar cells at the enormous cost of one billion dollars a year. Based on the statement, how much solar electricity will be generated in the future? [The answer was (a). Choice (b) referred to the year, not to solar cells. Choice (d) referred to the cost in dollars, not to solar cells. Choice (c) was not mentioned and might not be concluded from the information in the sentence.	
Restatement	Advanced: 20 (80%) Intermediate: 23 (60%)	a. the manager could be forced to leave. b. they could leave because the manager was forced to. c. they could be forced to leave by the manager. d. both the manager and they were forced to leave.	
		The manager could force them to leave the apartment. [The answer was (c) because it was a restatement of the given sentence. Choice (a) was not the same because in the original sentence they, not the manager, leave. Choice (b) was not the same because in the original sentence they, not the manager, were forced. Choice (d) was not the same because in the original sentence they, not the manager and they, were forced].	
Preposition	Advanced: 23 (92%) Intermediate: 22 (58%)	a. us to ask b. us asking	c. our asking d. we asking
		They forgot about ..... to join us for lunch. [The answer was (c) because the <i>-ing</i> form <i>asking</i> was used after the verb phrase <i>forgot about</i> , and the possessive pronoun <i>our</i> was used to modify the <i>-ing</i> form <i>asking</i> ].	
Cause/effect	Advanced: 20 (80%) Intermediate:	a. the students could not stay here.	
		If Oxford University had a degree program in education, the students could have stayed here.	

	22 (58%)	b. the students stayed at Oxford University. c. the students studied education at Oxford University. d. the students could study education at Oxford University. [The answer was (a). Choices (b) and (c) were not the same because in the original sentence the students could have stayed here if there had been a program but did not stay because there was no program for them. Choice (d) was not the same because in the original sentence Oxford University did not have an education program.]
Modification	Advanced: 15 (60%) Intermediate: 16 (42%)	She moved from the dormitory ..... the noise. a. because of                      c. because b. cause                              d. caused from [The answer was (a). <i>Because of</i> was used before the noun <i>the noise</i> to express cause. <i>Because it was noisy</i> would also be correct].
Example	Advanced: 18 (72%) Intermediate: 24 (63%)	Based on the passage, we could infer that a student who had completed 160 quarter hours would be a..... a. freshman                      c. junior b. sophomore                      d. senior [The answer was (d) because since 156 hours were required to graduate, it must be concluded that the student who had completed 160 hours would be in his or her last year, that was, the senior year. Choices (a), (b), and (c) were the first, second, and third years].

Based on this result, the students were required to identify contextual clues types when guessing the meaning of unknown words. Readers with more proficiency could shift attention to more abstract and conceptual ideas by using background knowledge to confirm and predict what was being said in the text only as much information as was needed (Mutmainnah, 2020). Consequently, co-references, logical implications, and cause-and-effect relationships were useful for highly proficient language users when integrating propositional units (Ebrahimain & Nabifar, 2015). The result of this research showed that advanced students used guessing strategies more frequently than intermediate students because advanced students preferred to use English as their first language to describe their strategies. Some intermediate students always linked words or ideas by using conjunctions to guess the meaning

of the text. Most intermediate students used a list of words and memorized them based on a dictionary while advanced students used the word as the identification of another unknown word to interpret a whole text. Overall, contextual clues were generally regarded positively by students when determining the meaning of unfamiliar words. As a result, they accepted that contextual clues strategy was fundamental to learn in the classroom, as well as to increase their reading speed.

*The students' objectives to use contextual clues in reading comprehension*

The main concern of this section was to answer problem 2, which was the effectiveness of contextual clues according to the student's objectives in reading comprehension.

Table 2. Goals of reading comprehension by using contextual clues

Statements	Reading Level	Frequency	Percentage
I could comprehend, critique, and assess the veracity of the claims made as well as the soundness of the arguments made.	Advanced	20	80%
	Intermediate	26	68%
I could offer oral analyses or interpretations of texts based on specific evidence.	Advanced	19	76%
	Intermediate	27	71%
I could select the communication goals by understanding the strengths and limitations given in the text.	Advanced	18	72%
	Intermediate	24	63%
I read and listened actively to gain a deeper understanding of other cultures and perspectives. My ability to communicate effectively with people of diverse backgrounds was also enhanced.	Advanced	23	92%
	Intermediate	26	68%
I could effectively communicate intricate or multifaceted information.	Advanced	20	80%
	Intermediate	25	65%
I could build on others' ideas, express their ideas, and confirm their understanding of those ideas.	Advanced	23	92%
	Intermediate	24	63%
I could demonstrate command of standard English when they used a wide range of vocabulary.	Advanced	17	68%
	Intermediate	20	52%
By identifying when and why the meaning of the text was unclear, I could determine what needed to be clarified.	Advanced	18	72%
	Intermediate	23	60%
The unfolding text information provided the opportunity to evaluate the existing ideas.	Advanced	20	80%
	Intermediate	22	60%
I exhibited independence in my work.	Advanced	19	76%
	Intermediate	18	47%

Table 3. Standard competence in contextual clues

Statements	Reading Level	Frequency	Percentage
------------	---------------	-----------	------------

*Evaluation of contextual clues: EFL proficiency in reading comprehension*

Used specific textual evidence to support conclusions drawn from a text.	Advanced	20	80%
	Intermediate	25	65%
Read to state explicitly and make logical inferences from the text.	Advanced	18	72%
	Intermediate	24	63%
Analyzed the development of a text's central ideas or themes.	Advanced	18	72%
	Intermediate	24	63%
The development and interaction of individuals, events, and ideas in a text must be examined.	Advanced	17	68%
	Intermediate	23	60%
Determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings of words and phrases used in a text, as well as how specific word choices affected meaning.	Advanced	16	64%
	Intermediate	20	52%
Identified the relationship of specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of a text were fitted together.	Advanced	16	64%
	Intermediate	18	47%
Examined how point of view or purpose influenced a text's content and style.	Advanced	17	68%
	Intermediate	17	45%
Evaluated the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence, as well as the logic of the argument in a text.	Advanced	17	68%
	Intermediate	32	84%
Learned how two or more texts address the same themes or topics to build knowledge or compared how the authors approached the topics.	Advanced	19	76%
	Intermediate	27	71%
Displayed an understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and word meaning nuances.	Advanced	20	80%
	Intermediate	26	68%
Explained how key details could support the text's main idea.	Advanced	21	84%
	Intermediate	25	66%
Provided relevant facts, definitions, concrete details, quotations, and other examples and information about the topic.	Advanced	22	88%
	Intermediate	24	63%
Used a variety of transitional words, phrases, and clauses to manage sequence.	Advanced	23	92%
	Intermediate	20	53%

The act of reading did not simply involve picking up information word by word from the page. As an active process of comprehension, it was rather characterized as a selective process (Wongwiwattana & Watanapokakul, 2021). Most students had difficulties understanding the words as a result in not knowing many words for expressing themselves during speaking and writing because they did not know many words. Concerning this statement, students might read the text to gain an overall understanding, but they might interpret each sentence differently, as the text might not be interpreted identically. As well as the author's messages, reading also had a relation to what the reader found out based on their level of language proficiency (Kaivanpanah, 2020). Based on this result, some of the students found that the length of a text influenced their ability to identify the meaning of technical words in the text and the quality of their knowledge of these words. As the words were not used often in the text, most intermediate students categorized

them as low and high-frequency words, assuming that the rare words were best learned with vocabulary instruction. Nevertheless, since advanced students had previous experience with these words, they accepted high-frequency vocabulary as their core vocabulary in any text given. Overall, the students achieved some clear objectives regarding how to construct the meaning using context clues, as it was sensible to reveal the knowledge from the text, such as word recognition, fluency, lexical knowledge, and pre-existing knowledge.

*The classroom observation procedures when using contextual clues*

The main concern of this section was to answer problem 2, which was the effectiveness of contextual clues according to the students' perspectives in reading comprehension to guess the meaning of unfamiliar vocabulary in the text quickly.

Table 4. *Students' strategies when using contextual clues*

Statements	Reading Level	Frequency	Percentage
The word had to be read twice.	Advanced	16	64%
	Intermediate	22	60%
Noticed the letter or sound that starts the sentence.	Advanced	17	68%
	Intermediate	20	52%
Checked the illustrations around the text for more information.	Advanced	17	68%
	Intermediate	18	47%
Words should be broken up.	Advanced	15	60%
	Intermediate	18	47%
Saying the words out loud.	Advanced	14	56%
	Intermediate	18	47%
The word should be chopped into syllables.	Advanced	16	64%
	Intermediate	22	60%
Noticed the word's ending.	Advanced	17	68%

	Intermediate	26	68%
Checked the word's length.	Advanced	18	72%
	Intermediate	24	63%
Identified a family of words.	Advanced	15	60%
	Intermediate	18	47%
Identified smaller words within the word.	Advanced	17	68%
	Intermediate	19	50%
Checked out the headings in the text.	Advanced	14	56%
	Intermediate	26	68%
Analyzed the text for its features	Advanced	14	56%
	Intermediate	27	71%
Broke the text up by chunking it.	Advanced	17	68%
	Intermediate	23	60%
Taking notes while reading.	Advanced	15	60%
	Intermediate	26	68%
The use of unfamiliar words should be accompanied by a question.	Advanced	16	64%
	Intermediate	19	50%
The word could be used to describe different kinds of texts.	Advanced	15	60%
	Intermediate	22	60%
Connected the words to as many situations as possible.	Advanced	23	92%
	Intermediate	20	52%
The words needed to be illustrated by a classmate.	Advanced	13	52%
	Intermediate	26	68%
Discussed synonyms, antonyms, and other words related to the word.	Advanced	18	72%
	Intermediate	24	63%

Table 5. *Students' behavioral when practicing contextual clues*

Statements	Reading Level	Frequency	Percentage
Whenever I read a passage, I read it from beginning to end.	Advanced	22	88%
	Intermediate	27	71%
Reading was usually something I did in my head.	Advanced	18	72%
	Intermediate	26	68%
My mind often wondered what was going to happen next in the text.	Advanced	17	68%
	Intermediate	23	60%
It was interesting to exchange ideas with other readers and discussed how they interpreted the texts.	Advanced	16	64%
	Intermediate	23	60%
My friends' reading habits had been a source of reflection for me.	Advanced	15	60%
	Intermediate	22	60%
A good book sometimes changed my mind about something I thought I knew.	Advanced	13	52%
	Intermediate	24	63%
Reading was a voluntary activity that I chose to engage in.	Advanced	14	56%
	Intermediate	25	65%
I was regularly monitored and reviewed regarding my reading comprehension skills.	Advanced	15	60%
	Intermediate	22	60%
My role was to initiate dialogue, debate, or discussion about the meaning of a text.	Advanced	20	80%
	Intermediate	23	60%
My daily reading was influenced by university literacy activities.	Advanced	17	68%
	Intermediate	16	42%
Reading outside of the university had been an encouraging and supportive experience for me.	Advanced	16	64%
	Intermediate	18	47%
Reading comprehension is useful in a variety of English content areas based on my experience.	Advanced	16	64%
	Intermediate	19	50%

Table 6. *Skill categories in reading comprehension through contextual clues*

Skill Category in Contextual Clues	Description	The Students' Comment
Determining the meaning of words (Word meaning)	Determined the meaning of words in context while recognizing familiar words and tied them to prior vocabulary knowledge.	Before learning a new word's meaning, I could not understand it in different contexts. My contextual awareness improved since then, which allowed me to better comprehend the multiple meanings of a word.
	Pronounced words, searched for related words with similar meanings, and analyzed prefixes, roots, and suffixes.	To improve an understanding of unknown words, I tended to focus on roots, prefixes, and suffixes. We sometimes used Quizlet to practice the words and add images to get a broader understanding.
Understanding the content, form, and function of sentences (Sentence meaning)	Determined the meaning of the sentence based on a sense of words and phrases.	After using the chunk-by-chunk reading method, I could have a good grasp of the general idea rather than reading a sentence by using word by word.
	Analyzed sentence structures to understand the meaning of a sentence.	I used the main idea of the passage when guessing, no matter if the word was common or rare to be used.
	Comprehend a sentence based on personal experience and general knowledge of the world.	I thought guessed meanings were better remembered than given meanings because unclear words had a low possibility to be remembered later on in other contexts.

*Evaluation of contextual clues: EFL proficiency in reading comprehension*

Understanding the situation implied by a text	Imagined mental models of characters, settings, actions, ideas, and events.	As I looked closely at the unknown word, I then reviewed the clause containing the unknown word, and finally, I reviewed the whole clause against other clauses, sentences, and paragraphs to guess its meaning.
	Selected the most important points and details in a text with evidence.	As an active reader, I had to think about the ideas of those words and obtained knowledge from those words and sentences since I could easily get overwhelmed by a long string of ideas or events.
	Utilized personal experience and knowledge of the world to fill in the situation implied by the text by inferring cause-and-effect relationships between actions and events.	Ignoring words from the text was not a good idea because their meanings were crucial to understanding.
Understanding the content, form, and function of larger sections of text (Global text meaning)	Synthesized meaning from multiple sentences to comprehend longer sections of texts.	Utilizing contextual clues would help me expand my knowledge by focusing on what I had already known rather than what I did not know before.
	Recognized the organizational structure of a text and used it as a guide while reading.	Through contextual clues, I figured out the word's meaning without reading the whole text or remembering the previous paragraphs.
	Evaluated what had been read against information from other sources and interpreted information critically.	When reading an English text, it would be easier to comprehend each new word rather than just focusing on the word without the assistance of a teacher or a dictionary.
	Identified the main point, summarizing, characterizing, or evaluating them.	Using passage comprehension as a starting point, I wanted to think like an expert on words and come up with hypotheses.
	Recognized implications in a text, concluded it and identify underlying assumptions.	I found it easier to guess the meanings of unfamiliar words when I read a text with rich context.
Analyzing authors' purposes, goals, and strategies (Pragmatic meaning)	Determined the target audience and the purpose of the writing.	I could make predictions about the events occurring in the text based on the word relationship and at the same time, I could also ignore unknown words when reading the text.
	Analyzed the choices made by an author in terms of content, organization, style, and genre.	To identify the passage, we previewed the headings and section titles of all types of reading tasks in groups. Following that, we skimmed and scanned the text and made predictions about content and vocabulary. From there, we started guessing based on the context.
	Explained an author's choice of words and phrases supported the author's message.	Using dictionaries was time-consuming, so I considered ways to save time and proceed with reading comprehension without them.

Strategic use of contextual words could also be effective in promoting independent reading because EFL teachers might not have to teach every single unfamiliar word in a time-consuming reading passage (Mirza, 2011). Moreover, when the students had deduced the meaning of a word, they often used a combination of strategies rather than a single strategy. The improvement of students' vocabulary retention and reading comprehension when using contextual clues could be attributed to several reasons, such as fostering students' ability to find information, predicting unfamiliar words in context, and determining the meaning of unfamiliar words while reading (Wongwiwattana & Watanapokakul, 2021; Stevani & Tarigan, 2022).

Based on this result, the students gave different reasons why they stopped reading whenever they encountered a new word. Most intermediate students translated the words in the sentence word into Indonesian. However, most advanced students were familiar with the words but had

difficulty remembering where and when the word was seen or learned because they preferred to use their background knowledge to guess the word on English tests. Some advanced students chose self-answer questions to guess the word on English tests.

Based on the observation, the reasons of the students used contextual clues to answer reading comprehension test were: (1) Failed to determine which option in reading comprehension test was appropriate for the reading text because the options were so similar, (2) Unfamiliarity with the vocabulary in the options, regardless of whether they understood the information in the reading text, (3) There were two similar and tricky answers to identify the correct answer in reading comprehension tests, (4) The main idea in the text did not match the options in reading comprehension tests, so they should read the whole text twice, (5) Some students should answer the synonym of the vocabulary given based on the context in the text, (6) Some students



did not understand what the paragraphs in the reading text meant, but if they were able to find the correct answer in the options, they could guess the meaning of the question offered, (7) Some students took more time to read the question due to the length and complexity of the text, so they chose the context to minimize the time, (8) The students who had experience with the given reading text chose their answer based on the context, (9) Students who noticed the first paragraph in the reading text wanted to clarify the next paragraph using the clues from the first paragraph, (10) Some students avoided the options that were too specific or too broad by using contextual clues, (11) Some students always made the best educated guess by choosing the options that seemed consistent with the main idea, (12) Some students ignored text details and chose contextual clues to predict where the author's arguments were leading, (13) Some students chose to read the question first because the reading text was lengthy, and (14) Some students recalled some of the sentences and they removed information based on context in the option choices to find the correct answer.

Overall, the students' perspectives based on classroom observation indicated that there were no significant differences in strategies used between intermediate students and advanced students because some of the students could not match their previous knowledge of English or Indonesian language since the reading text might have different linguistic abilities.

## CONCLUSION

To conclude, readers who possessed a high level of vocabulary, grammar, and decoding skills were better able to utilize many types of contextual clues than readers who possessed a lower level of literacy and language competence. The results of this research indicated that reading ability and the ability to infer word meaning from context clues were strongly correlated. This research also led to some suggestions regarding its results. Teaching context clues chronologically from easiest to most difficult should be the goal of English teachers. By taking notes about the clues that helped students guess the unknown words in reading texts, students would be encouraged to investigate their guessing words-in-context strategies. Occasionally, teachers would check students' notes on the clues they had used during five to ten-minute intervals. As a result of this analysis, the researchers proved that students' proficiency in reading ability could be demonstrated by their

use of idiomatic expressions, indirect language, direct language, series of words, comparison, synonym, tone, situation, mood, reference, restatement, preposition, cause-effect, modification, and example. As a limitation, this research was the lack of consideration of the contextual factor as well as the frequency of word exposures. Accordingly, this research merely showed that the students scored higher on words found in an expository text because the context contained more information.

## REFERENCES

- Abdulmalik A., M. (2020). Investigation of vocabulary learning strategies to identify word meanings for Saudi EFL students in reading context. *Arab World English Journal*, 11(3), 149–169. <https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol11no3.9>
- Ahmad, S. N., Muhammad, A. M., & Kasim, A. A. M. (2018). Contextual clues vocabulary strategies choice among business management students. *English Language Teaching*, 11(4), 107. <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v11n4p107>
- Boonchum, P. (2018). English reading efficiency of non-English-major students via context clues reading drills. *Journal of Community Development Research (Humanities and Social Sciences)*, 11(4), 118–125.
- Ebrahimain, A., & Nabifar, N. (2015). The effect of three vocabulary learning strategies of word-part, word-card and context-clue on Iranian high school students' immediate and delayed English vocabulary learning and retention. *The Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 8(17), 42–63.
- Ficzere, A., Stranovska, E., & Gadusova, Z. (2021). Foreign language reading comprehension in the context of internet use. *TEM Journal*, 10(4), 1983–1991. <https://doi.org/10.18421/TEM104-64>
- Fudhla, N., Solusia, C., & Oktoviandry, R. (2020). Context clues as a vocabulary learning strategy: A view of its implementation in EFL classroom. *411(Icoelt 2019)*, 83–87. <https://doi.org/10.2991/assehr.k.200306.014>
- Haerazi, H., Prayati, Z., & Vikasari, R. M. (2019). Practicing contextual teaching and learning (CTL) approach to improve students' reading comprehension in relation to motivation. *English Review: Journal of English Education*, 8(1), 139. <https://doi.org/10.25134/erjee.v8i1.2011>
- Hassanzadeh, Z., Tamjid, N. H., & Ahanghari, S. (2020). Lexical inferencing strategy instruction and the development of reading comprehension: The case of Iranian EFL learners. *Journal of English Language Pedagogy and Practice*, 13(27), 1–25. [http://jal.iaut.ac.ir/article\\_679373.html](http://jal.iaut.ac.ir/article_679373.html)
- Ilahude, F. F., Fatsah, H., Luwiti, S. R., & Otoluwa, M.

- H. (2021). The influence of the use of context clues strategy on reading comprehension. *International Journal of Education and Social Science Research*, 4(6), 166–180. <https://doi.org/10.37500/ijessr.2021.4613>
- Ilter, Ii. (2019). The efficacy of context clue strategy instruction on middle grades students' vocabulary development. *RMLE Online*, 42(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19404476.2018.1554522>
- Inal, S. (2021). The effect of contextual guessing strategy on identifying the meaning of low-frequency words and behaviours of Turkish EFL students in identifying the meaning of unknown words. *European Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 5(3), 118–137. <https://doi.org/10.46827/ejfl.v5i3.3625>
- Jaelani, S. R., Wathoni, H., Purnama, B., Harianto, H., & Wadi, S. (2022). The students' ability in reading comprehension of TOEFL test for The EFL learners. *JSHP : Jurnal Sosial Humaniora Dan Pendidikan*, 6(1), 60–66. <https://doi.org/10.32487/jshp.v6i1.1296>
- Kaivanpanah, S. (2020). The effect of contextual clues and topic familiarity on L2 lexical inferencing and retention. *Porta Linguarum Revista Interuniversitaria de Didáctica de Las Lenguas Extranjeras*, 47–61. <https://doi.org/10.30827/digibug.53951>
- Mirza, A. A. (2011). The effects of contextual meaning aspects on reading comprehension. *Journal on English as a Foreign Language*, 1(2), 79. <https://doi.org/10.23971/jefl.v1i2.192>
- Mutmainnah, M. (2020). Implementing context clues strategy to improve students' reading comprehension. 1(1), 1–107. [https://digilibadmin.unismuh.ac.id/upload/18696-Full\\_Text.pdf](https://digilibadmin.unismuh.ac.id/upload/18696-Full_Text.pdf)
- Oclarit, R. P., & Casinillo, L. F. (2021). Strengthening the reading comprehension of students using a context clue. *Journal of Education Research and Evaluation*, 5(3), 373–379. <https://doi.org/10.23887/jere.v5i3.34772>
- Razaq, Y., Amiruddin, A., Inayah, N., A. M., & Khas, S. A. (2022). Development of the context clues method to improve the reading skills of pre-service teachers. *Jurnal Pengabdian Masyarakat*, 1(3), 148–154.
- Salant, S., & Berant, J. (2018). Contextualized Word representations for reading comprehension. *NAACL HLT 2018 - 2018 Conference of the North American Chapter of the Association for Computational Linguistics: Human Language Technologies: Proceedings of the Conference*, 2(1), 554–559. <https://doi.org/10.18653/v1/n18-2088>
- Stevani, M., & Tarigan, K. E. (2022). Evaluating English textbooks by using Bloom's taxonomy to analyze reading comprehension question. *SALEE: Study of Applied Linguistics and English Education*, 4(1), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.35961/salee.v0i0.526>
- Stevani, M., & Tarigan, K. E. (2022). Need analysis of dyslexia students in English reading comprehension instructions. *JEELS (Journal of English Education and Linguistics Studies)*, 9(2), 327–352. <https://doi.org/10.30762/jeels.v9i2.520>
- Taufan, M. Y. (2020). Improving students' vocational vocabulary mastery through context clues technique. *Edumaspul: Jurnal Pendidikan*, 4(2), 347–354.
- Wongwiwattana, S., & Watanapokakul, S. (2021). Types of context clues and vocabulary meaning inference: Abilities and perceptions of English major undergraduate students. *REFlections*, 28(3), 357–380.
- Wulandari, F. (2017). The use of context clues in improving students' reading ability. *Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa*, 6(2), 144–155.
- Zamani, M., Nematzadeh, E., & Alihademi, A. (2022). Investigating the impact of Iranian EFL learners (elementary, intermediate, advanced) use of contextual clues on their knowledge of unknown vocabularies. *International Journal of English Language Teaching*, 10(3), 15–23. <https://doi.org/10.37745/ijelt.13/vol10no2pp.15-23>