

USING CONTEXTUAL TEACHING AND LEARNING (CTL) STRATEGY IN DIGITAL ERA TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION

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Abstract

This research aims to improve students' reading comprehension through the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) strategy in the digital era. This study was conducted as a Classroom Action Research (CAR) in three cycles involving eleventh grade students of SMK Citra Mandiri Cakung in the 2024/2025 academic year. Each cycle consisted of planning, action, observation, and reflection. The CTL strategy was implemented by integrating digital tools such as Canva, Google Forms, and Kahoot to enhance student engagement. The findings revealed a significant improvement in students' reading comprehension. The average score increased from 69.79 in Cycle I to 72.1 in Cycle II, and 85.3 in Cycle III. The number of students who achieved scores above the Minimum Mastery Criteria rose from 24% to 93%. Based on this research, it can be concluded that the application of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) strategies can improve students' reading comprehension. The use of CTL encourages students to actively connect reading material with their real life experiences, making the learning process more meaningful and interesting.

Keywords: Contextual Teaching and Learning, reading comprehension, digital era, CAR

1 INTRODUCTION

In the context of the rapidly evolving digital era, technology has become a driving force in reshaping the landscape of education, particularly in improving reading comprehension. The integration of digital tools in the learning process is no longer just a convenience but an essential element in enhancing students' engagement and understanding. As students today have easy access to a vast array of digital resources, the use of tools like Google Forms, Canva, and Kahoot has become an increasingly popular way to facilitate interactive and effective learning experiences. This is especially true for reading comprehension, which remains a cornerstone of academic success.

The research at hand focuses on exploring the potential of the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) strategy, combined with digital tools, to improve the reading comprehension skills of students. CTL is a teaching approach that aims to make learning more meaningful by connecting academic content to real-world experiences. By relating learning material to students' everyday lives, CTL encourages them to make personal connections with the material, thereby fostering deeper understanding and retention. This approach is particularly useful for students who struggle with traditional, passive learning methods, as it encourages active participation, critical thinking, and collaboration.

In this study, the researcher focuses on a group of eleventh-grade students at SMK Citra Mandiri Cakung, a vocational school, where students face particular challenges in mastering reading comprehension. These challenges include difficulty in understanding main ideas, unfamiliar vocabulary, and a lack of motivation to engage with reading tasks. Traditional classroom approaches, such as rote memorization and passive reading exercises, often fail to address these challenges effectively. As a result, students frequently struggle to comprehend what they read, hindering their overall academic progress.

The study seeks to answer key questions about how the CTL strategy, when integrated with digital tools, can enhance students' ability to understand and engage with reading

materials. The research aims to identify specific techniques within CTL that can help students not only improve their comprehension skills but also become more motivated and active participants in the learning process. Through the use of digital resources like Canva for visual aids, Google Forms for self-paced quizzes, and Kahoot for interactive learning games, students are encouraged to explore reading materials in a more engaging and interactive way, enhancing their ability to retain information and apply what they've learned.

The significance of this research lies not only in its potential to improve students' reading comprehension but also in its broader implications for the future of education. By combining CTL with modern technology, this approach aims to prepare students for the demands of the 21st-century workforce, where digital literacy and critical thinking are essential skills. For teachers, the findings from this study provide valuable insights into how they can implement effective teaching strategies that connect reading materials to real-life contexts and engage students in meaningful learning experiences. Furthermore, for future researchers, the study offers a foundation for further exploration into the application of CTL strategies in other aspects of language learning and education.

Ultimately, this research contributes to the ongoing development of the English education program at STKIP Kusuma Negara, offering new perspectives on how to improve teaching methods and student engagement in the digital era. By focusing on the application of CTL in reading comprehension, the study aims to provide a model for future educational practices that integrate technology with pedagogical strategies to create more effective and engaging learning environments.

2 RESEARCH METHODS

This research utilizes the Classroom Action Research (CAR) method, following the cyclical model proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart, which is designed to improve teaching practices through continuous reflection and refinement. The CAR method involves four key stages: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The research is focused on improving the reading comprehension skills of students by implementing the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) strategy, augmented with the use of digital tools such as Google Forms, Canva, and Kahoot. The study was conducted in three distinct cycles, with each cycle providing an opportunity to implement, observe, and refine the strategies used to teach reading comprehension.

In the planning phase of each cycle, lesson plans were carefully prepared to integrate the CTL strategy and relevant digital tools. The teacher selected specific topics related to reading comprehension and designed activities that would not only help improve students' understanding of the text but also actively engage them in the learning process. This phase also involved preparing digital resources such as Google Forms for comprehension tests, Canva for visual aids, and Kahoot for interactive quizzes, ensuring the material was aligned with the needs and context of the students. During the acting phase, the teaching activities were carried out over two meetings in each cycle. The first meeting focused on introducing the topic, activating prior knowledge, and guiding students through the reading material. The students were encouraged to engage with the content interactively, making connections to real-life contexts and utilizing digital tools to enhance their understanding. The second meeting was dedicated to assessing students' comprehension using tools such as Google Forms for individual tests and Kahoot for a more interactive, game-based review of the material. These activities were designed to keep the students engaged and motivated while reinforcing their comprehension skills through a mix of individual and group activities.

The observing phase involved closely monitoring students' participation, engagement, and responses to the teaching methods employed. Data was collected through various means such as field notes, student feedback, and direct observation of classroom dynamics. This phase also involved tracking students' progress in comprehension, noting how well they were able to apply the reading material in context, and identifying areas where they struggled. The observations were essential for understanding the effectiveness of the CTL strategy and digital tools in improving student learning.

In the reflection phase, the researcher analyzed the results from the observation phase, identifying strengths and areas for improvement. Based on this reflection, modifications were made to the teaching strategies and materials for the subsequent cycle. For instance, if students faced difficulties using the digital tools or struggled with specific reading concepts, these issues were addressed in the next cycle by adjusting lesson plans, providing additional practice, or offering more guided support. This iterative process allowed the researcher to refine the approach over time, ensuring the strategies were continuously adapted to meet the students' needs.

Data collection in this research was multi-faceted, incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methods. The primary data sources included observations, tests, interviews, and documentation. Observations provided insights into student behavior, engagement, and comprehension during lessons. Interviews allowed the researcher to gather students' opinions and feedback on the learning process, helping to identify challenges or areas of interest. Tests, primarily conducted through Google Forms, assessed students' comprehension of the reading material and tracked their progress over the cycles. Documentation, such as lesson plans, student activity sheets, and reflection notes, served as a record of the teaching process and the adjustments made throughout the research. To analyze the data, the researcher employed Miles and Huberman's interactive model of data analysis, which consists of three main components: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. In the data reduction phase, irrelevant or extraneous information was filtered out, and only the most pertinent data related to reading comprehension and student engagement was retained. This data was then displayed in various forms, such as tables and charts, to facilitate a clear understanding of patterns and trends. Finally, conclusions were drawn based on the displayed data, and the findings were verified through triangulation, which involved comparing results from multiple data sources to ensure consistency and reliability.

The success of the research was determined based on the improvement in students' reading comprehension scores and their overall engagement in the learning process. The minimum passing grade (KKM) for reading comprehension was set at 75, and the progress of the students was measured by how many students met or exceeded this threshold by the end of each cycle. Additionally, student participation, collaboration, and motivation were also key indicators of success. Through this research, the effectiveness of integrating the CTL strategy with digital tools in improving reading comprehension and fostering a more engaging and interactive learning environment was thoroughly explored and evaluated.

3 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Result

The research aimed to explore the effectiveness of the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) strategy combined with digital tools in improving students' reading comprehension. Conducted across three cycles, the findings showed significant improvements in student engagement, participation, and reading comprehension scores, demonstrating the positive impact of integrating CTL with digital tools.

In the first cycle, the lesson focused on the topic "The Roles of Management in Business Success." The initial results from the pre-test showed that students were struggling with reading comprehension. The average score for the reading comprehension test was 69.79, with only 24% of students achieving scores above the minimum passing grade (KKM) of 75. This indicated that many students faced difficulties in understanding the reading material. Observation during the cycle revealed that although the students participated in the activities, many remained passive during discussions and had challenges using digital tools such as Google Forms and Kahoot. Despite these initial struggles, there was a slight improvement in group collaboration as some students began working together to complete assignments.

The reflection after Cycle 1 highlighted the need for clearer instructions on using digital tools and more structured examples to help students better engage with the material. Based on these insights, modifications were made in Cycle 2, including more guided questions and additional support in digital tool usage.

In Cycle 2, the lesson shifted to a more practical topic, "Essential Skills for Future Managers." The integration of visual aids through Canva and more structured reading tasks was designed to make the material more accessible. The average score in Cycle 2 improved to 72.1, with 55% of students achieving a score above the KKM. This improvement was attributed to better engagement with the content, as students had more time to interact with the material using digital platforms. While some students still struggled with vocabulary, participation in discussions increased, and group collaboration was more active compared to Cycle 1.

Observation during Cycle 2 showed that the students were more comfortable using Google Forms and Kahoot, and the teacher noted greater enthusiasm during the Kahoot quiz. However, independent learning was still a challenge, as most students still relied on the teacher for direction. The reflection from Cycle 2 emphasized the need for further support in developing independent learning habits, particularly in making deeper connections between the text and real-life applications.

By Cycle 3, the focus shifted to a topic more directly related to students' vocational studies, "Leadership Styles in the Workplace." The lesson was designed to include more complex texts and incorporated feedback from the previous cycles to refine the teaching strategies. The results from the post-test in Cycle 3 showed a significant improvement, with the average score rising to 85.3 and 93% of students scoring above the KKM. This marked a notable increase in both comprehension and engagement. Students were able to understand and interpret the reading material more effectively, drawing connections between the content and real-life scenarios.

In terms of participation, most students actively engaged in discussions, answered questions, and contributed to group work. The use of digital tools such as Canva for visual aids and Kahoot for interactive quizzes helped reinforce the learning material, making the process more enjoyable and engaging. The observation during this cycle revealed that students were more independent in their learning, requiring less guidance from the teacher. They demonstrated a better understanding of the main ideas, and their reflection and summarization skills improved.

3.2 Discussion

The findings align with previous research by Johnson (2002), who asserted that CTL enhances comprehension through meaningful learning contexts. The use of digital platforms supported the process by increasing interactivity and motivation. These results also confirm Farikhah and Ariestina (2020), who highlighted the importance of adapting curriculum to the digital era.

Overall, the integration of CTL and digital media not only improved comprehension scores but also developed students' 21st century skills, such as critical thinking, collaboration, and digital literacy.

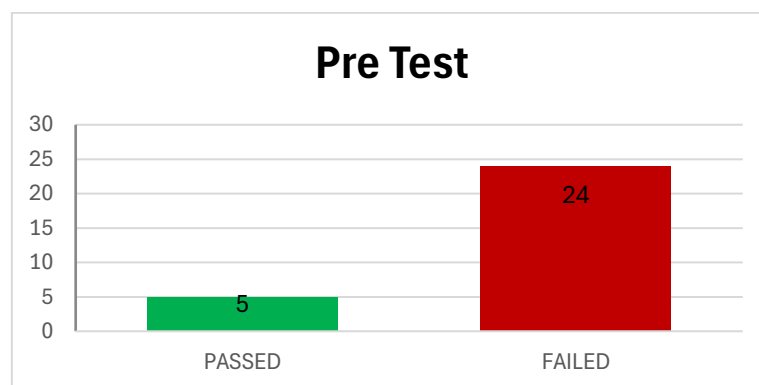
3.3 Tabel

Tabel 1. Students' Reading Comprehension Results Across Cycles

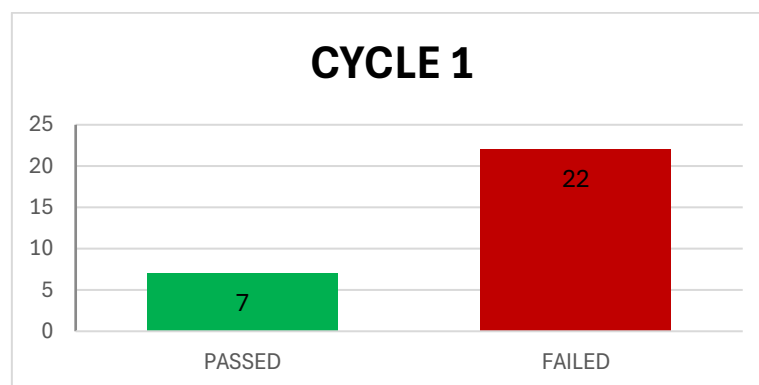
Cycle	Average Score	Mastery Percentage
I	69.79	24%
II	72.1	55%
III	85.3	93%

The table above shows the development of students' reading skills from cycle I to cycle III in the Classroom Action Research (CAR) Using contextual teaching and leaning strategy in digital era to improve students' reading comprehension

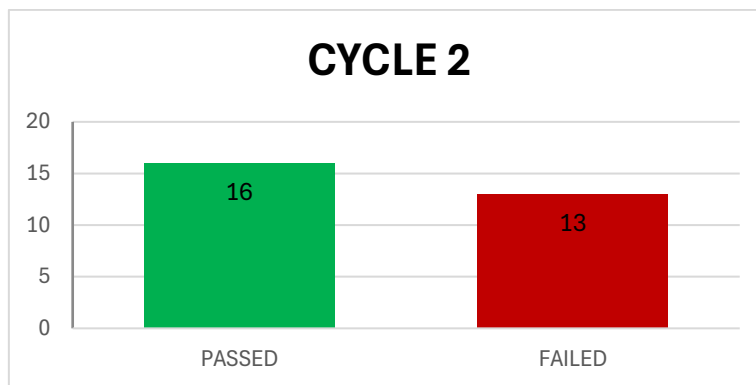
3.4 Picture



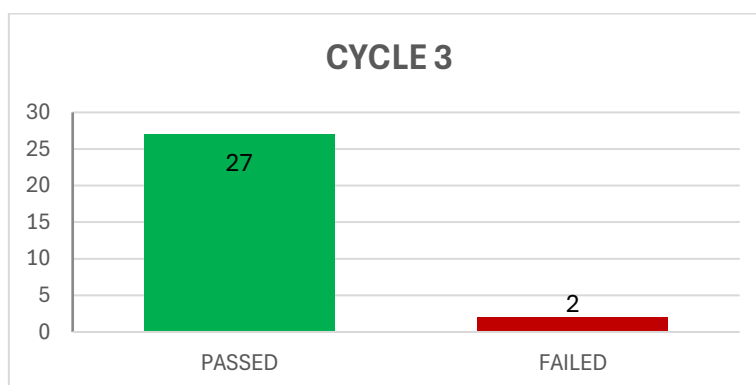
Picture 1. The Results of pre test Reading Comprehension



Picture 2. The Results of Reading Comprehension in Cycle 1



Picture . The Results of Reading Comprehension in Cycle 2



Picture 3. The Results of Reading Comprehension in Cycle 3

4 CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the CTL strategy, when integrated with digital platforms such as Canva, Google Forms, and Kahoot, is highly effective in improving students' reading comprehension. The strategy not only raised academic performance but also developed student motivation, engagement, and digital literacy. The implications of this research suggest that teachers should integrate CTL with technology to create meaningful and engaging learning environments. Future studies may explore its application in other skills such as writing, speaking, and listening.

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