

**THE IMPROVEMENT OF READING COMPETENCE THROUGH  
CONTEXTUAL TEACHING AND LEARNING IN 8<sup>TH</sup> GRADE  
STUDENTS OF SMP N I KARANGDOWO KLATEN  
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**RESEARCH PAPER**

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### **A. Background of the Study**

Reading is central to the learning process. By reading activity, people may gain important information that are not presented by teachers in the classroom. According to cognitive psychology and schema theory, the reader is an active participant who has an important interpretive function in the reading process ([www.writing.colostate.edu/index.cfm](http://www.writing.colostate.edu/index.cfm)). It means that in the cognitive model, people as readers are more than passive participants who receive information while an active text makes itself and its meanings known to him/her. Actually, the act-of-reading is a push and pull between reader and text. As readers, people actively make, or construct, meaning; what people bring to the text is at least as important as the text itself.

One of the most difficult tasks of a language teacher in the context of teaching English as a foreign language is to foster attitude toward reading. It is caused by the limited time and other constraints they face during the teaching and learning process. Teachers are often unable to encourage students to find entertaining and interesting information in reading materials. Therefore it often creates a negative mind-set in students who consider the effort to interact with reading materials as an unattractive activity compared to the process they may get from visual electronic media.

However, reading programs may help students develop their language skills necessary for success. But it is hard to implement an effective reading program, especially in countries where English is treated as foreign language. The success of implementing reading programs will depend on the students' interest.

In relation to reading, the survey research administered by National Education Department of Republic of Indonesia showed surprising results. It is proved that reading comprehension competence of elementary school students were in a low level. Almost 76.95% of students were unable to use dictionary. Among those who were able to use dictionary, there were only about 5% can search words in Indonesian Dictionary systematically (Muhibbin, 1995: 34).

The same condition also happens in SMP Negeri 1 Karangdowo Klaten. The problem they experienced in English is concerning reading competence. Most students, about 389 students of 630 or equal to 61.74% are lack in English. It is shown from their passing grade in English that are below minimum passing grade required by the curriculum. As a more intensive observation undertaken, the problem is mostly in reading comprehension. Students are unable to comprehend the reading materials in the text. Therefore their understanding on material taught is quite poor.

Based on the fact above, it is necessary for language teachers to foster reading on their students. It may be done by selecting proper materials to the students. The reading programs may be useless if it is not done

properly. Teachers should select reading materials that are relevant to the students' needs and interests.

Teaching and learning process of English in Junior High School mostly emphasize reading, writing, listening and speaking integratedly. Besides those four language skills in teaching English such language components as vocabulary, structure, spelling etc must also be paid attention to. According to *The Outline of Teaching Material of 2004 (Garis Besar Pokok Pengajaran or GBPP)* the competence standard should be mastered by SMP students in reading is to understand various meaning in written texts. The competence covers interpersonal, ideational, and textual meaning (Depdiknas, 2004: 16). It means that the students should master the above meanings in written texts.

Teaching English for Senior High School, especially in reading class for the second grade, conveys the competence of identifying ideational meaning in the text, identifying interpersonal rhetoric in the context, and reading loud the texts. Such a process requires certain approach in the teaching.

As stated in the new curriculum, the methods employed by teachers in teaching should convey the techniques that relate subject matter content to the real word so that the students may construct their knowledge based on their previous knowledge mastered. Such a method is called Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) (Depdiknas, 2004: 17).

According to Berns dan Erickson (www.nccte.com, 2001: 2), CTL is defined as follows:

*Contextual teaching and learning is a conception of teaching and learning that helps teachers relate subject matter content to real world situations; and motivates students to make connections between knowledge and its applications to their lives as family members, citizens, and workers and engage in the hard work that learning requires.*

Contextual teaching and learning (CTL) is a teaching method that provides a constructivist model. The model helps students connect the content they are learning to the life contexts in which that content could be used. Therefore, students may find meaning in the learning process. As they try to attain the learning goals, they draw upon their previous experiences and build upon existing knowledge.

The components in CTL, according to Arends, consist of seven elements. They are covering: 1) constructivism; 2) inquiry; 3) questioning; 4) modeling; 5) learning community; 6) reflection; and 7) authentic assessment (Arends, 1997).

One of the approaches used in the teaching-learning process by using CTL cover bottom-up processing and top-down processing (Debat, 2006: 8). These approaches may work well in schools that have high quality inputs such as schools located in big cities. However, the approach may encounter problems when they are applied in small town schools such as Klaten.

It is interesting to study the teachers' strategies in teaching writing employing the above approaches as implemented in small town school, such

as Klaten. Based on the background above, the writer is intended to do further research about teaching reading using *CTL*.

### **B. Limitation of the Study**

The research only focuses on effectiveness of the contextual teaching and learning model in improving students' competence in reading competence of VIII<sup>th</sup> grade students of SMP N 1 Karangdowo Klaten.

### **C. Problem Statement**

Based on the background of the study explained above, the writer presents the following problem: "Can the contextual teaching and learning model improve the students' competence in reading of VIII<sup>th</sup> grade students of SMP N 1 Karangdowo Klaten?"

### **D. Objective of the Study**

This paper is written to introduce the readers to the topic that becomes the current issue in teaching reading competence. The objective of writing the paper is to describe whether the contextual teaching and learning model can improve the students' competence in reading of VIII<sup>th</sup> grade students of SMP N 1 Karangdowo Klaten.

### **E. Benefit of the Study**

The writer expects that the research paper may give some benefits both theoretically and practically.

1. Theoretical Benefit

- a. The result of the research paper can be used as an input in English teaching learning process especially on reading competence.
- b. The result of the research paper can be used as additional reference for those who want to conduct a research in English teaching learning process.

2. Practical Benefit

- a. The paper may give a broader knowledge about teaching learning process to readers.
- b. The paper may improve students' competence in their reading competence by recognizing the result.
- c. The paper may give understanding about the problems experienced in teaching reading to students.

**F. Paper Organization**

This paper consists of five chapters. It is done to make it carrying out the paper systematically. The writer presents the frame works as follows.

Chapter One is introduction. In this chapter the writer presents background of the study, review of related literature, problem statement, objective of the study, benefit of the study and paper organization.

Chapter Two is underlying theory. It provides the notion of reading, the procedure of the teaching reading using Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach.

Chapter Three is research method. It covers type of research, subject of the study, method of collecting data, and technique of data analysis.

Chapter Four is the presentation of the study, which describes the data analysis and discussion.

Chapter Five is conclusion and suggestions. In this chapter, the writer presents conclusion of the study and some suggestions for further study.