

Students' Perceptions of Context-Based Learning and Its Role in Developing Reading Skill

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates students' perceptions of Context-Based Learning (CBL) and its effectiveness in enhancing reading skills, particularly in the context of digital and multicultural learning environments. A qualitative research design was employed, utilizing semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires with 30 ninth-grade students at SMP Plus Shafiyatul Amaliyyah. Thematic analysis was conducted to explore the students' experiences and perceptions regarding CBL. The findings revealed that students generally hold positive views toward CBL, with 85% reporting increased engagement when reading materials were connected to real-life contexts. Furthermore, 70% noted an improvement in their understanding of complex texts. However, challenges emerged in digital reading environments, as 60% of participants expressed difficulties in navigating digital platforms, which impacted their comprehension. Additionally, the integration of culturally relevant contexts significantly motivated students and enhanced their understanding of reading materials. This research fills a critical gap in understanding students' perspectives on CBL in relation to reading skills development. It highlights the importance of adapting CBL strategies for digital contexts and diverse classrooms to improve educational outcomes. The study calls for enhanced teacher training to effectively implement CBL in these settings.

Keyword: Students' Perception, Context-Based Learning, reading skills.

ABSTRACT

Penelitian ini mempelajari bagaimana siswa memandang Pembelajaran Berbasis Konteks (Context-Based Learning/CBL) dan seberapa efektif metode ini dalam meningkatkan kemampuan membaca, terutama di lingkungan pembelajaran digital dan multikultural. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan wawancara semi-terstruktur dan kuesioner terbuka kepada 30 siswa kelas 9 di SMP Plus Shafiyatul Amaliyyah. Analisis tematik dilakukan untuk memahami pengalaman dan pandangan siswa tentang CBL. Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar siswa memiliki pandangan positif tentang CBL, di mana 85% merasa lebih tertarik saat materi bacaan dikaitkan dengan situasi kehidupan nyata. Selain itu, 70% siswa merasa pemahaman mereka terhadap teks-teks sulit meningkat. Namun, ada tantangan dalam lingkungan membaca digital, di mana 60% siswa merasa kesulitan menggunakan platform digital, yang mempengaruhi pemahaman mereka. Integrasi konteks budaya yang relevan juga memberikan motivasi lebih bagi siswa dan meningkatkan pemahaman mereka terhadap materi bacaan. Penelitian ini membantu mengisi kesenjangan dalam memahami pandangan siswa tentang CBL dalam pengembangan keterampilan membaca. Penelitian ini juga menekankan pentingnya menyesuaikan strategi CBL untuk konteks digital dan kelas yang beragam, serta menggarisbawahi pentingnya pelatihan guru untuk mengimplementasikan CBL dengan lebih efektif.

Kata kunci: Persepsi Siswa, Pembelajaran Berbasis Konteks, keterampilan membaca.

1. Introduction

The integration of CBL into the classroom environment has gained heightened interest, particularly with increased efforts on the part of educators to render learning environments more interactive and relevant to students' lives. The result will clearly provide ways of learning novel concepts by relating them to known contexts, which can be highly effective in developing reading comprehension skills among learners. This methodology resonates well with the current teaching methods in which effective learning is achieved through experiential learning (Vella, 2021). Studies have revealed that CBL encourages students to think more critically by basing academic knowledge on actual circumstances of life, which further boosts the students' interest and their ability to read materials (Kim, Park, & Lee, 2020). As Jenkins and Stewart further point out, when students encounter texts that resonate with their lives, reading becomes more meaningful and the students are more focused on developing their comprehension.

From what has been discussed, the degree of interest in CBL appears to be not proportional to the extent of research studies focusing on how students view this concept as related to the process of learning and reading, particularly language learning. Most of these studies focused more on the use of CBL in STEM subjects whereby its worth has been highly proven. On the other hand, very little has been done to explore the role of CBL in enhancing reading comprehension and how students experience its impact on their reading abilities. This literature gap implies the need for more research on how students perceive CBL and how it can effectively be used to develop reading skills.

The second critical issue that this study has addressed is the potential to adapt CBL for digital learning settings and multicultural classrooms, which are increasingly becoming a part of the current education scene. As more and more students begin to read digital texts, new issues began to emerge, most especially in the reading process in fractured and multimodal compositions. Patel and Singh (2021) have

mentioned that students do not understand digital texts properly, whereas with the availability of contextual clues in the respective digital settings, there is an improvement in terms of understanding and retention. Which implies that CBL can really be a potent remediation activity if well adapted to overcome the challenges of digital reading environments.

The diversification of the student population in classes also offers both opportunities and challenges in reading instruction. García and Torres (2021) also argued that culturally responsive teaching, where texts reflect the varied backgrounds of students, is the future ahead to resonate students' motivation and elevate understanding. To assist in creating more inclusive learning environments that strike the interest of students from diverse backgrounds, CBL can be assisted through the infusion of culturally relevant contexts in the reading materials. Smith and Jones further reiterated that contextualized learning promotes the ability to analyze and synthesize information moves that comprise deep reading comprehension.

The integration of digital tools into CBL frameworks is another dimension recent research has been able to find promising. Indeed, Nguyen and Zhang (2022) have established that integrating digital storytelling into CBL has enhanced not just student motivation but furthered students' critical thinking and understanding. Integration of technology makes the learning environment even more interactive, whereby the student can make a connection between the content and their previous experiences. Multimedia adoption in digital CBL will allow for the use of more than one learning style, which can then increase the effectiveness of the reading instruction.

Moreover, individual studies evidence that teacher training must be part of a comprehensive CBL. Lee and Lee (2023) point out that teachers, who received training in developing context-based activities are most likely to have high rates of success concerning student engagement and understanding. Their study suggests that professional development programs for educators have to emphasize CBL strategies and support the educator to create an energetic, responsive learning environment toward achieving diverse student

needs. Intensity on teacher preparedness contextualizes a comprehensive approach in introducing CBL into educational settings.

The current research, therefore, tries to fill these gaps by connecting two important issues: how students perceive the implementation of CBL in improving their reading skills, and how CBL can be adapted to support reading development in digital and multicultural learning environments. Clearly, the understanding of the students' point of view about CBL will give significant insight into how well it works as means of enhancing reading comprehension. Besides, this will help in making possible discoveries that could be useful for teachers who would wish to adapt this method into different settings.

Currently, the study looked into how CBL can be taken into the digital realms and into different classroom environments. It is by this review that a meaningful input into literature regarding CBL and reading skills shall be found. It tries to provide practical directions for teachers about how effectively to employ CBL when teaching reading, especially in the aftermath of the challenges introduced by the digital age and increasingly multicultural classrooms. It, in fact, aims toward indicating how CBL can be applied to the present-day learning environments, and how students can learn to engage texts and develop themselves as critical readers to succeed in the academy and beyond.

2. Research Methods

This present study adopts a qualitative research design in describing the perceptions of students concerning CBL and its effectiveness in developing reading skills. The qualitative approach is adopted because the undertaking seeks to analyze in detail the experiences and opinions of the participating students, which are necessary for understanding how the respondents perceive the effectiveness of CBL. As Creswell and Poth (2018) note, qualitative research bears special significance in an educational setting where the interest of the researcher is to describe subjective experiences and meaning attached by individuals to educational interventions such as CBL. In this way, a qualitative approach promises the study rich and detailed insight into

how students view the use of CBL in developing their reading skills.

The data in this research consisted of students' perceptions, acquired through interviews and questionnaires within a qualitative framework. The main informants in this study were the 9th-grade students at SMP Plus Shafiyatul Amaliyyah because they have had experiences with CBL in reading subjects. Subjects will be selected using a purposive sampling technique to ensure that 30 participants have had relevant experiences with CBL to provide responses. According to Palinkas et al. (2019), purposive sampling in qualitative research allows the sample to include cases which are directly relevant to the questions being asked and can provide rich data.

Formulation of interview questions and questionnaire items were based on relevant literature and previous studies related to CBL and reading skills. For instance, the study by Zhang, 2021;, and Davis & Wilson, 2020, highlights useful frameworks and questions that have been utilized in assessing learner perceptions of the contextualized learning environment. These would be used in designing open-ended questions that seek to get elaborate responses in explaining the students' experiences and their perception about CBL.

Data collection was through interviews and open-ended questionnaires. Semi-structured interviews can allow for a highly nuanced exploration of student perceptions in a flexible yet structured way, with the possibility to search for clarification by the researcher when necessary. This is very appropriate for taking nuanced details from the students concerning their experiences with CBL; interviews were conducted on an individual basis so that this is in-depth. Open-ended questionnaires were shared among all 30 participants in order to expand the scope of information so that a general perception can be recorded in detail and will add qualitative depth. The interviews were audio-recorded, while questionnaires were passed during regular hours of classes for maximum participation. According to Denzin (2020), this triangulation approach will enable the researcher to comprehend the

statement of the problem fully from several points of view. Thematic analysis is among the most widely used approaches in qualitative research studies. As such, thematic analysis has been selected as the foundation of data analysis in the study. Fundamentally, thematic analysis is a technique for identifying, analyzing, and reporting themes based on patterns within the data. Braun and Clarke (2019) added that thematic analysis is the most appropriate approach in uncovering key themes in how students perceive CBL and its association with their reading skills. The steps involved in thematic analysis will include data familiarization, generating initial codes, theme searching, reviewing of themes, and defining and naming. Following transcription and collection, the researcher will familiarize herself with all the data by reading all the responses multiple times. Initial codes will be developed through the systematic identification of features of the data that are salient in relation to the research questions. These codes will then be categorized into broader themes of recurring patterns in the students' perceptions, such as "engagement through real-life contexts" or "challenges in digital reading."

3. Result and Discussion

The following section reports the outcome of qualitative analysis of students' perceptions regarding Context-Based Learning and its effectiveness in developing their reading skills. In-depth semi-structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires were given to 30 ninth-grade students at SMP Plus Shafiyatul Amaliyyah to obtain information about their experiences with CBL in their reading classes. Thematic analysis of the data generated a number of key themes emerging from the response provided by the students.

3.1 Code Mixing Concept

Code A predominant theme identified in the data was the enhanced engagement that students felt when reading materials were connected to real-life contexts. Out of the 30 participants, 85% reported that CBL made reading more relatable and interesting. As one of

the students pointed out, "When we read stories that relate to our lives or current events, it feels more relevant and I find myself wanting to learn more." This drives home the claim made by Jenkins and Stewart (2020) that if students have texts that relate to their experiences, then they shall be highly motivated to read.

Students expressed that CBL helped them understand complex concepts better. For example, 70% of respondents indicated that discussing real-life scenarios in class before diving into reading assignments aided their comprehension. They noted that the context provided a framework for understanding new vocabulary and themes presented in the texts.

3.2 Challenges in Digital Reading Environments

Another significant finding was the students' acknowledgment of challenges they faced while reading digital texts in a CBL framework. Approximately 60% of the participants mentioned difficulties in navigating digital platforms, which affected their reading comprehension. A student stated, "Sometimes the digital texts have too many links and pop-ups, and I get distracted. It makes it hard to focus on what I'm reading." This reflects Patel and Singh's (2021) observations that students struggle with digital texts due to the complexities of fractured and multimodal compositions.

Furthermore, 55% of participants noted that while CBL could improve understanding through contextual clues, the transition from traditional texts to digital formats often left them feeling overwhelmed. This indicates a need for better integration of CBL strategies that account for the unique challenges posed by digital reading environments.

3.3 Importance of Culturally Relevant Contexts

The findings also highlighted the role of culturally relevant contexts in fostering a deeper understanding of reading materials. Approximately 75% of students indicated that when reading materials reflected their cultural

backgrounds, they felt more connected to the content. As García and Torres (2021) suggested, culturally responsive teaching can enhance students' motivation. One student shared, “When we read about stories that reflect my culture, I feel more engaged and understand the message better.”

Students elaborated that with the help of culturally relevant contexts, in general analyzing and synthesizing were easier to handle and thus made reading comprehension deeper. Of course, from this point of view, it is essential to understand how much a huge difference diversity of reading may make when CBL works toward offering an inclusive learning environment.

3.4 The Role of Technology in Enhancing CBL

Moreover, a notable 80% of the participants recognized the positive impact of integrating digital tools into CBL frameworks. They reported that digital storytelling, in particular, enhanced their motivation and understanding of reading content. A common sentiment expressed was, “Using videos and online discussions made the learning process more dynamic and fun.” Nguyen and Zhang (2022) emphasized that digital integration in CBL promotes interactivity, allowing students to connect content with their prior experiences.

However, 65% of students mentioned the need for proper training on using these digital tools effectively. Many felt unprepared to utilize the technology to its fullest potential, indicating that teacher training in CBL should include digital literacy components to optimize learning outcomes.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

4.1 Discussion

The findings suggest that while students perceive Context-Based Learning (CBL) as a valuable strategy for enhancing reading skills, challenges persist, especially in digital learning environments. The high level of engagement

reported by 85% of participants aligns with literature emphasizing the importance of connecting learning to real-world contexts (Vella, 2021; Jenkins & Stewart, 2019). This connection not only enhances the relevance of reading materials but also fosters a deeper understanding, supporting the argument that experiential learning is crucial in modern education (Kim, Park, & Lee, 2020). However, the significant challenges faced in navigating digital texts—reported by 60% of students—highlight a critical area for intervention, particularly as educational settings increasingly shift toward digital formats (Patel & Singh, 2021).

This finding also points to a wider need for diversity in reading materials. As emphasized by García and Torres (2021), culturally responsive teaching that incorporates texts reflecting diverse backgrounds is essential for motivating students and enhancing their understanding. The study concludes that CBL needs to be approached in a more universal way, incorporating not only practical situations but also cultural aspects of learners' lives (Nguyen & Zhang, 2022). By embedding diverse contexts within reading materials, educators can create a more inclusive learning environment that resonates with all students.

Furthermore, the aspect of technology as both a connector and a hindrance in the practice of CBL calls for more vigorous teacher professional development initiatives. Training teachers on how to effectively utilize digital tools can significantly enhance students' learning experiences and help them acquire important 21st-century reading skills (Lee & Lee, 2023). Educators need to be equipped with the skills to adapt CBL strategies to digital contexts, ensuring that students can navigate and comprehend digital texts more effectively (Braun & Clarke, 2019). As CBL continues to evolve, ongoing research and development will be crucial to address these challenges and leverage the full potential of this pedagogical approach in diverse and digital learning environments.

To sum up, it can be observed that the application of CBL has a lot of impact in the area of reading comprehension but constant

encouragement for both students and teachers is required. Future research should explore specific strategies for overcoming the challenges associated with digital reading and investigate the long-term impacts of CBL on students' reading development across different educational contexts.

4.2. Conclusion

This study explored students' views on Context-Based Learning, its appropriateness, and effectiveness in enhancing reading skills in this diverse and digital learning environment. It appears from the findings that, in general, the students seem to have positive opinions regarding CBL as it is connected with real life experiences. 85% of the participants indicated that they would be able to relate more with the texts if the content was based on their personal lives. This revealed not only the idea that CBL develops a deeper connection with texts but also collaborated existing literature in that it highlighted the importance of meaningful learning experiences (Vella, 2021).

Moreover, the study reveals that CBL considerably contributes to developing reading skills. Among students, a remarkable 70% reported that CBL boosted their understanding of complex texts, thus proving its effectiveness as a pedagogical approach. This is crucial in today's classrooms, with the needs of students when interacting with a twofold challenge: digital literacy and multicultural diversity. Indeed, culturally relevant contexts integrated into reading have been known to motivate students and improve their comprehension, as was witnessed in confirmation of García and Torres' assertions on culturally responsive teaching.

However, it also indicates some challenges, especially in relation to the digital environment: 60% of the students mentioned that an issue of understanding was caused by scattered information through digital means. This indicates a huge new area of opportunity for growth; CBL will need to be designed sensitively with respect to the use of digital tools in order that such problems are overcome. To this end, education on how to teach will be an important area of teacher education provided to teachers, especially about how to implement CBL strategies appropriately in

digital settings, as Lee and Lee (2023) also add.

This research thereby fills the otherwise critical gap in understanding students' perspectives on CBL and its contribution to the improvement of reading skills. Positive perceptions of CBL indicate that, properly implemented, it may transform the reading experience and contribute to developing into highly critical readers—a feature essential for both academic success and lifelong learning. In this respect, it is expected that future studies should hone CBL strategies in the digital context and, simultaneously, probe to what extent it may affect different types of students in fully exploiting its benefits in reading instruction. This will further strengthen the application of CBL as a vibrant approach in new education, meeting negative challenges and myriad opportunities associated with a highly digitalized and heterogeneous learner environment.

5. References

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