



# Assessing the Impact of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) Approach in Reading Instruction: A Multiple Case Study

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## Abstract

This research reveals the impact of implementing the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) Approach in the teaching of reading. Through the CTL approach, reading learning is integrated with real-world contexts, making learning more meaningful and relevant to students. This pedagogical framework aims to engage students in deeper understanding and critical thinking while facilitating the application of reading skills in various contexts. However, the effectiveness of CTL in reading instruction has been a subject of debate, with some studies reporting positive results while others show limited effectiveness, especially for students with low vocabulary or intelligence. This study aims to comprehensively assess the impact of CTL on reading learning, considering aspects such as vocabulary improvement, student motivation, reading comprehension, and learning outcomes. Through a qualitative approach and a multiple case study, involving 40 second-semester students from two universities in Sumbawa Island, West Nusa Tenggara Province, this study found that CTL can significantly improve students' psychological, linguistic, and achievement factors. In terms of psychological factors, students showed increased motivation and engagement in reading activities when the material was relevant to their lives and interests. Linguistically, CTL facilitates vocabulary improvement through personalized learning strategies and culturally relevant materials. In addition, CTL had a positive impact on students' achievement in reading, which was reflected in their improved comprehension and scores. These findings suggest that CTL can effectively improve students' reading skills and motivation when implemented with consideration of contextual relevance and personalized learning approaches. However, further research is needed to understand the complex effects of CTL on various aspects of student learning

outcomes. Continuous evaluation and refinement of CTL implementation are essential to maximize its effectiveness in improving students' reading skills and their academic achievement.

**Keywords:** *Impact; CTL; Reading; Multiple Case Study*

## **Introduction**

Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) in reading instruction has attracted significant attention in educational research as educators seek effective strategies to improve learners' reading skills. This pedagogical framework emphasizes the integration of real-world contexts into the teaching and learning process, aiming to make learning more meaningful and relevant to students' lives. By placing reading activities in authentic contexts such as everyday situations, and cultural experiences, CTL aims to engage learners in deeper understanding, critical thinking, and application of reading skills. CTL also plays an important role in facilitating the meaning-construction process for teachers and students by linking learning materials with relevant real-world contexts (Johnson, 2002; Sears, 2003). Through real-life related reading experiences, students not only hone their reading skills but also learn how to apply those skills in various contexts of their lives. This results in more meaningful and sustainable learning.

CTL recognizes the interconnectedness of language and context, acknowledging that comprehension and interpretation are strongly influenced by the environment in which reading occurs (Logan et al., 2013; Soden et al., 2015). In this paradigm, reading is not only viewed as simply decoding text messages but as an active process that occurs in real-life contexts (Lee & Jin, 2017). By exploring students in rich and authentic contexts, CTL aims to bridge the gap between abstract reading skills and their practical application. Through reading experiences integrated with everyday reality, students can see how the information in the text can be applied to their lives (Puspita et al., 2023). This not only strengthens their understanding of the text itself but also allows them to develop critical thinking skills when they encounter problems or situations in the real world.

In addition, CTL often promotes collaborative and research-based learning, encouraging students to explore texts through discussion, problem-solving, practical activities, and active participation thus enabling them to discover concepts through their knowledge and experience (Selvianiresa & Prabawanto, 2017). Researchers have also found that learning using real-life contexts not only improves reading ability (Gagné et al., 2022) but also fosters motivation (Azzahra & Ambarwati, 2021; Haerazi et al., 2019b; Indrayadi et al., 2020), metacognitive awareness (Hakim & Sari, 2022; Ramadansur et al., 2023; Wardoyo et al., 2021),

and transferability of skills across different settings. However, different results were found by Azan et al. (2017), who stated that CTL was not effective for improving students' reading ability with limited vocabulary. In addition, Sunarti et al. (2019) noted that the CTL approach was only beneficial for students with high locus of control, while students with low locus of control did not affect students' reading achievement. This finding was then confirmed by Peni's (2018) research, which revealed that CTL was not effective for students with low intelligence. This means that CTL is only effective for students who have high intelligence.

Based on the results of the previous literature review, there was a discrepancy (gap) between the findings reported by some previous researchers. This indicates the complexity of understanding the impacts of Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) in the context of reading learning. Therefore, to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the impact of CTL on reading learning, a careful examination of several aspects is required, including vocabulary improvement, student motivation, reading comprehension, and learning outcomes. Therefore, the study aimed to evaluate the impact of implementing a contextual teaching and learning approach in reading instruction.

## **Method**

This research used a qualitative approach which is a dynamic, flexible, and interpretive approach, enabling in-depth exploration of participants' lived experiences and a contextualized and nuanced understanding of social phenomena (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Cresswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 2009; Patton, 2002). This study particularly adopted a multiple case study approach as a research design (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Lapan et al., 2012; Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2014). This study involved 40 second-semester students of the English study program who were taking reading courses from two universities located in two different districts in Sumbawa Island, West Nusa Tenggara Province. Of these, 12 students were selected to be interviewed as representatives of students with high, medium, and low levels of English proficiency. The data collection methods used included observation, interview, and documentation. Observation was conducted to gain a direct understanding of the learning process in the classroom. Interviews were used to explore students' experiences related to reading learning by applying the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach. Meanwhile, documentation was used to obtain student score data. The collected data were then analyzed using the thematic analysis technique developed by Braun and Clarke (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which includes the stages of transcribing interview results, coding, categorizing, naming themes, and making a storyline.

## **Result**

### ***The Impact on Students' Psychological Factors***

The psychological impact which is closely related to students' motivation level in reading activities is very important in the context of implementing the contextual approach. Students' motivation becomes a key factor that determines how much they engage in the learning process. Through the application of the contextual approach in reading instruction, students simultaneously felt a significant drive to learn and participate in reading lectures, as expressed by several students. One student stated, "Of course, it motivates us a lot to study and participate in reading lectures" (S7). Another student added, "Learning with contextual method is very motivating because the atmosphere is lively" (S10). Students not only participate more actively in learning but also feel the relevance of the material to their daily lives. The suitability of the material to students' interests and life goals also plays an important role in increasing their learning motivation, as expressed by the following students:

"For me, the material used by the lecturer motivates me because it matches my interests" (S3),

"I feel that if I choose materials that I like, according to my life goals and passions, it will increase my motivation in learning" (S5).

Then, the addition of cultural elements in reading materials can also increase students' learning motivation, as expressed by the following students:

"In my opinion, it is good if the reading materials are related to culture because it can increase motivation to learn and also update knowledge about culture" (S6).

"I am motivated to learn using materials related to our culture and also the methods employed." (S9)

This shows that learning experiences that are contextualized and relevant to students' lives have a significant impact on their motivation to learn. When students see that the material, they are learning can be applied in their daily lives or matches their interests and life goals, they tend to be more motivated to engage in the learning process. Contextualized learning experiences help students understand the importance of the material learned and how it can be beneficial in their future lives. In addition, when students feel that the learning environment accommodates their needs and interests, they will feel more engaged and motivated to learn actively. Therefore, ensuring that learning is contextualized and

relevant to students' lives is key to improving their learning motivation and academic success.

### ***The Impact on Students' Linguistic Factors***

The linguistic impact in the context of this study relates to the improvement of vocabulary skills. The contextual approach facilitates students' active participation in interaction with texts that are relevant to their context. This enables them to improve their vocabulary skills as well as develop an understanding of how words are used in appropriate contexts, as one student stated:

"Yes, it can improve vocabulary because there are some words that are unknown or that I have never encountered before. I note down the words and translate them using Google Translate, or if not, I can directly ask the lecturer for an explanation" (S1).

Similar responses were also revealed from other students who stated that they were indirectly encouraged to look up the meaning of unfamiliar words because of their desire to understand the text thoroughly, as expressed by another student:

"Yes, it is very helpful to increase our vocabulary, because for every word that we don't know, of course, we will find out the meaning even though we are not told. Indirectly, we still try to find the meaning of the words ourselves so that it is familiar to us when we meet such words again" (S2).

Activities such as recording new words in a notebook also help to improve their vocabulary understanding, as expressed by another student, "When we find new vocabulary, we write it down in a notebook. But the point is that our vocabulary comprehension improves when we find new vocabulary" (S3). In addition, some students also attributed their vocabulary improvement to local cultural knowledge, suggesting that culture-based materials can be an effective means of improving vocabulary comprehension, as the following student stated:

"With this kind of material in reading, we can learn various vocabulary related to local culture" (S8).

The use of a contextual approach in reading learning not only improves text comprehension, but also contributes significantly to students' vocabulary development in contexts that are meaningful to them, as another student recognized, "Yes, using contextual techniques with culture-based materials can improve our knowledge, vocabulary, and participation" (S10).

### ***The Impact on Students' Achievement***

The impact on students' achievement in reading skills includes not only students' comprehension of reading materials but also students' scores in reading skills. The evaluation of the implementation of the contextual teaching and learning (CTL) approach showed a significant improvement in students' comprehension of the reading. This approach allows students to engage in the learning process through personal and contextual experiences, which makes the text learned more meaningful and relevant to them. In addition, the CTL approach allows students to develop their reading skills more authentically. This is reflected in the direct response from one of the participants who confirmed this finding: "The applied CTL method is very helpful in understanding the reading text and also provides a fun learning experience" (S1). This shows that the contextual method applied by lecturers contributes significantly to improving students' text comprehension and reading skills.

Moreover, the views of another participant also support the findings, highlighting the benefits of the contextual approach in improving text comprehension and reading skills: "The contextual method applied by lecturers is very helpful in understanding or improving text comprehension and reading skills" (S3).

The implementation of the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach has a positive impact on the achievement of students' reading scores, in addition to improving comprehension in reading, as reflected in the final scores illustrated in the distribution of student scores. The data documented in the grade distribution chart shows an encouraging trend. Of the 40 students who attended the reading course using the CTL approach, 35 students achieved grades between 62 and 89, reflecting a significant improvement in their academic achievement. 5 students scored below 60, which may indicate certain challenges encountered in the learning process. Nonetheless, the overall data confirms that the implementation of the CTL approach has had a positive impact on students' academic achievement in the reading course.

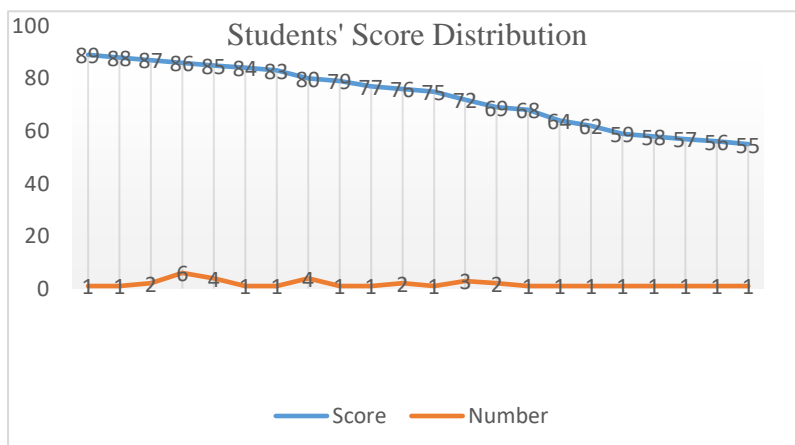


Chart 1. Students' Score Distribution

**Discussion**

This study revealed three significant impacts arising from the implementation of the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach in teaching reading. **Firstly**, the impact of psychological factors relates to students' feelings and perceptions of the learning process. All interview subjects recognized that the application of the CTL approach in reading instruction boosted students' learning motivation due to the relevance of the material to their contexts. Haerazi et al. (2019) documented research that highlighted the positive influence of the CTL approach on students' learning motivation, along with improved reading comprehension. The study by Vaknin-Nusbaum & Tuckwiller (2022) supports these findings, showing that the implementation of a reading remediation program aimed at increasing reading motivation resulted in improved reading achievement and motivation in first-grade students. According to Manuas et al.'s (2022) research, there are two types of reading motivation that can be enhanced to increase students' interest in reading activities. These findings highlight the crucial role of contextual relevance in fostering students' intrinsic motivation to learn. When students feel that learning materials are closely related to their experiences and lives, they tend to be more actively involved in the learning process and feel responsible for their learning. Contextual teaching and learning approaches emphasize the importance of linking learning content to real-world contexts and encouraging students to relate knowledge to its application in everyday life (Jalinus et al., 2017).

Furthermore, findings show that all students exhibit high levels of motivation in the learning process, especially when the material presented is culturally based and relevant to their interests or passions. Similarly, Pittman et al. (2022) underlined that culturally relevant approaches have been shown to have a positive impact on student engagement and motivation. This approach emphasizes the importance of linking students' culture with school subject matter, thus making learning more meaningful and interesting for students (Rosa & Orey, 2020).

Then, the students also emphasized the importance of personalization in the learning approach. The fact that students feel motivated when allowed to choose materials that match their interests and passions highlights the importance of accommodating a diversity of learning needs and preferences. Previous research has shown that students' motivation is significantly affected by the opportunity to make choices in their learning experience (Cordova & Lepper, 1996). In addition, Evans & Boucher (2015) highlighted the important role of choice in increasing students' intrinsic motivation to learn. This finding is supported by Mcclung et al. (2019), who state that providing choice during learning can increase motivation. Furthermore, Flowerday & Shell (2015) report that students' perceptions of choice do not necessarily impact intrinsic motivation, but Ackerman et al. (2014) highlight that when students have control over their learning experience, perceived autonomy increases, leading to increased intrinsic motivation and more independent learning.

**Secondly**, the use of CTL in teaching reading has a linguistic impact, especially on the vocabulary aspect. Although the degree of impact varies, in general, it can improve students' vocabulary knowledge (Bera, 2016; Omolu et al., 2022). Some students emphasize the importance of personal note-taking and searching for the meaning of unfamiliar words as strategies for expanding their vocabulary. Similarly, Liu et al., (2019) found that personalized vocabulary note-taking has been widely recommended as an effective approach to help learners review, organize, and memorize new vocabulary. Additionally, the skillful use of dictionaries, note-taking, paying attention to word formation, contextual encoding, and activation of newly learned words have been found to positively correlate with language learning outcomes (Gu & Johnson, 1996). Furthermore, the effectiveness of personal vocabulary techniques in improving students' vocabulary has been demonstrated in various studies (Ali & Marzuki, 2021). To know the meaning of the new vocabulary, the students use a variety of sources, such as asking classmates or using applications such as Google Translate, to help them understand newly encountered words. However, machine translation and online translators are not always effective in overcoming these obstacles unless accompanied by higher metacognitive skills such as critical thinking and using words in context (Omar,



2021). Therefore, it is important to consider the significance of contextual vocabulary teaching in aiding students' perspective and their achievement scores (Tosun, 2017). Contextualized vocabulary learning is beneficial, as methods that provide both definitional and contextual information significantly improve comprehension (Nelson & Stage, 2007). Additionally, the study by Alroe et al. (2018) found that less proficient students who studied via translation performed significantly better than those who studied contextually when tested by translation.

Students also highlight the role of culturally relevant materials in improving vocabulary comprehension. Students express that the presentation of culturally relevant material enables them to encounter new vocabulary in a more meaningful context, thus facilitating the learning process. This is in line with several previous studies that have shown that incorporating culturally relevant content in reading materials can significantly enhance vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension for language learners (Cho & Christ, 2021; Raihana & Nurkhamidah, 2022). Similarly, Manangkari (2018) found that the implementation of CTL in teaching reading can improve students' vocabulary. Furthermore, Dewi (2017) found that the integration of cultural values in the English language learning of young Indonesian learners led to an increase in vocabulary. This suggests that content and contextual factors in learning play a crucial role in the effectiveness of implementing CTL in improving students' vocabulary. Furthermore, the use of culturally relevant texts has been found to support various aspects of comprehension, such as making connections, inferencing, and vocabulary knowledge (Bakhoda et al., 2022; Cho & Christ, 2021). This demonstrates the importance of integrating cultural content into the classroom, which not only enriches the learning experience but also helps to improve vocabulary comprehension.

**Thirdly**, the impact on student achievement is one of the important aspects that need to be evaluated in the context of learning. Student achievement, often measured in terms of reading ability and achievement in various types of assessments such as assignments, quizzes, presentations, midterm exams, and final exams, becomes an important indicator of the effectiveness of the applied learning approach. In the context of this study, the assessment of student achievement is reflected in the form of the average score of the accumulated five types of assessment. Chart 1 above shows that the use of the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach in teaching reading, especially by integrating culture-based materials, has been proven to improve students' reading ability, albeit to a limited extent. Some previous researchers have also reported that the application of CTL has a positive impact on students' reading comprehension (Aprizani, 2016; Haerazi et al., 2019a; Indrayadi & Yandri, Hengki, 2020; Syahputri & Mariyati, 2019).

This suggests that the use of the CTL approach has the potential to improve students' academic achievement in the context of reading learning, which can be seen from the improvement in their evaluation scores. However, it should be noted that this impact may vary depending on factors such as the learning environment, student characteristics, and the teacher's implementation of the learning approach. Therefore, careful and continuous evaluation of the impact of CTL on students' achievement is necessary to fully understand the effectiveness of the approach in the context of reading instruction.

### **Conclusion**

This study has revealed three significant impacts resulting from the implementation of the Contextual Teaching and Learning (CTL) approach in reading instruction. Firstly, concerning psychological factors, students' level of motivation in reading activities is crucial to their engagement in the learning process. The findings illustrate that the contextual approach significantly increases students' motivation to learn and actively participate in reading lectures, especially when the material presented is relevant to their context and interests. This is in line with previous research that shows the positive influence of CTL on students' learning motivation and comprehension. Secondly, the linguistic impact of CTL in reading instruction, particularly in vocabulary enhancement, emphasizes the importance of personalized learning strategies and culturally relevant reading materials. Students' active participation in enriching vocabulary through notetaking, contextual understanding, and utilization of cultural elements in their reading materials contribute to their overall language proficiency. Finally, the impact on students' achievement, as reflected in their reading scores, highlights the potential of CTL to improve academic performance in reading. Although the data showed a positive trend in students' achievement scores after the implementation of CTL, further investigation is needed to understand the complex effects of this approach on the various factors that influence students' learning outcomes. Therefore, continuous evaluation and refinement of CTL implementation are important to maximize its effectiveness in improving students' reading skills and their academic achievement.

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