

## DEVELOPING SEVENTH GRADE STUDENTS' UNDERSTANDING OF POSSESSIVE PRONOUNS THROUGH CONTEXTUAL LEARNING

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### Abstract

*Grammar mastery plays a crucial role in developing students' English proficiency; however, grammar instruction in junior high schools is often perceived as abstract and disengaging. Many students experience difficulties in understanding possessive pronouns due to traditional rule-based teaching methods that lack contextual relevance and meaningful application. This study aimed to improve seventh-grade students' understanding of possessive pronouns through the implementation of the Contextual Learning Approach (CLA) at SMP Negeri 2 Pematangsiantar. This research employed a qualitative Classroom Action Research (CAR) design conducted in two cycles involving 32 students of class VII-5. The data were collected using tests, observation sheets, field notes, interviews, and documentation. The implementation of contextual learning activities emphasized real-life situations, such as identifying ownership through classroom objects and personal belongings, to help students construct grammatical understanding meaningfully. The findings revealed a significant improvement in students' grammar mastery and classroom engagement. The students' mean score increased from 60.06 in the pre-test to 83.25 in the final test, while the percentage of students achieving the minimum mastery criterion (70) improved from 37.5% to 90.6%. Qualitative findings indicated increased motivation, participation, confidence, and collaboration among students during the learning process. In conclusion, the Contextual Learning Approach effectively enhanced students' understanding of possessive pronouns by linking grammatical concepts to real-life contexts. The study implies that contextual-based grammar instruction can create more meaningful, interactive, and student-centered learning environments, and it is recommended for teaching other grammatical topics in junior high school.*

**Keywords:** Contextual Learning Approach, Grammar Mastery, Possessive Pronouns.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Grammar plays an essential role in learning English as it provides the foundation for understanding and producing accurate language. However, many junior high school students in Indonesia still experience difficulties in mastering grammar, particularly possessive pronouns, in both spoken and written communication. These difficulties often arise because grammar instruction is commonly delivered in an abstract manner, with limited connection to students' real-life experiences. Therefore, an effective teaching approach is needed to make grammatical concepts more meaningful and easier to comprehend. One approach that has been proven effective in improving students' understanding of grammatical structures is the Contextual Learning Approach (CLA). This approach emphasizes the relationship between learning materials and real-world

situations, enabling students to construct knowledge through meaningful contexts. According to Sugiyono (2019), learning becomes more effective when students can relate lessons to their daily lives, as it enhances motivation and retention.

Several previous studies have supported the effectiveness of contextual learning in English language instruction. Rahmawati (2021) found that contextual learning significantly improved students' understanding of English grammar by encouraging active participation and collaboration. Similarly, Sinaga (2020) reported that contextual activities helped junior high school students understand grammatical forms more naturally. Santoso (2020) also revealed that contextual teaching increased students' comprehension as well as their motivation and engagement in English classes.

In addition, Lestari (2019) identified that many students continued to make errors in using possessive pronouns, particularly by confusing them with possessive adjectives or nouns with apostrophe-s. Her findings highlighted the need for more contextualized grammar instruction that allows students to practice ownership expressions through relevant classroom tasks. Furthermore, Putri (2022) emphasized that Classroom Action Research (CAR) is effective in improving grammar mastery as it enables continuous reflection and instructional improvement.

Although several previous studies have reported that Guided Reading or contextual reading strategies can improve students' reading comprehension, most of them focus on reading comprehension in general and do not specifically examine students' ability to identify main ideas as a distinct and measurable skill. Previous research rarely explains clear indicators of main idea identification, such as identifying topic sentences, distinguishing main ideas from supporting details, and summarizing paragraphs accurately. In addition, limited studies have been conducted in the context of seventh-grade students at public junior high schools, particularly at SMP Negeri 2 Pematangsiantar. Most prior studies also employed experimental designs, which provide limited opportunities for continuous reflection and improvement during the teaching process. Therefore, there is a need for a classroom-based study using Classroom Action Research (CAR) to specifically address students' difficulties in identifying main ideas through the implementation of the Guided Reading strategy in a real classroom setting.

Based on the problems identified and the research gap discussed above, this study aims to improve Grade VII students' ability to identify the main idea of reading texts through the implementation of the Guided Reading strategy at SMP Negeri 2 Pematangsiantar. Specifically, this study seeks to examine how the Guided Reading strategy influences students' achievement in identifying main ideas and how it affects their participation and engagement during reading activities. Therefore, this research addresses two main questions: how the Guided Reading strategy improves students' ability to identify the main idea of reading texts, and how the strategy contributes to increasing students' active participation in the reading learning process.

## **2. METHODS**

To ensure that the objectives of the study could be measured clearly, indicators of success were determined prior to the implementation of the action. The study was considered successful if at least 70% of the students achieved the Minimum Mastery

Criterion ( $KKM \geq 70$ ) in identifying the main idea of reading texts. In addition, students' participation during reading activities was expected to improve, with at least 75% of the students actively involved in the Guided Reading process as observed through observation sheets. These indicators were used as benchmarks to evaluate the effectiveness of the Guided Reading strategy in improving both students' reading comprehension and classroom engagement. This study employed Classroom Action Research (CAR) as its research design. Classroom Action Research is a reflective process conducted by teachers or practitioners to improve teaching practices and students' learning outcomes through systematic actions (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). This design was chosen because the purpose of the study was not only to identify students' difficulties in identifying the main idea of reading texts but also to improve their reading comprehension through the implementation of the Guided Reading strategy in a real classroom context.

The CAR model used in this study followed the framework proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988), which consists of four cyclical stages: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The research was conducted in two cycles to allow continuous improvement based on reflection from each cycle.

The participants of this study were 32 students of Class VII-5 at SMP Negeri 2 Pematangsiantar in the 2024/2025 academic year. This class was selected using purposive sampling, as suggested by Sugiyono (2019), which allows researchers to choose participants based on specific characteristics relevant to the research objectives. The students in this class were identified as having difficulties in reading comprehension, particularly in identifying the main idea of reading texts.

The selection of Class VII-5 was based on preliminary observations conducted by the researcher during the teaching practicum (PPL). It was found that although students were able to read texts fluently, many of them struggled to determine the main idea of paragraphs and to distinguish between main ideas and supporting details. The participants consisted of male and female students aged between 12 and 13 years old, representing the typical age range of seventh-grade students in Indonesian junior high schools. The research was conducted in the English classroom, which was equipped with basic learning facilities such as a whiteboard and LCD projector. During the implementation of the study, the researcher acted as the teacher, while the English teacher served as a collaborator and observer.

Several instruments were used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data in this study, including reading comprehension tests, observation sheets, field notes, interview guides, and documentation. The use of multiple instruments aimed to ensure data triangulation and enhance the credibility of the findings (Satori & Komariah, 2020). The reading comprehension test was used to measure students' ability to identify the main idea of reading texts. The test consisted of 20 items, including multiple-choice and short-answer questions. The items were designed to assess students' ability to identify topic sentences, determine the main idea of paragraphs, distinguish main ideas from supporting details, and select appropriate titles that represent the main idea of a text. The level of difficulty of the test items ranged from easy to moderate, in accordance with students' proficiency level.

The test items were developed based on the learning indicators of the Grade VII English curriculum. Prior to implementation, the test was validated through expert judgment by an English teacher to ensure content validity, clarity, and suitability. A small try-out was also conducted with students outside the research class to identify ambiguous or unclear items. Minor revisions were made based on the try-out results before the test was administered as the pre-test and post-test.

Observation sheets were used to collect qualitative data related to students' participation and engagement during the Guided Reading activities. The aspects observed included students' attention to the lesson, participation in group discussions, ability to respond to guiding questions, cooperation with peers, and confidence in identifying main ideas. Each aspect was assessed using a four-point scale ranging from very poor to very good. Observations were conducted collaboratively by the researcher and the English teacher. To ensure reliability, both observers discussed the observation criteria and scoring rubric before the implementation of the research. After each meeting, the observers compared and discussed their observation results to align perceptions and reduce subjectivity. This simple inter-rater agreement strengthened the trustworthiness of the qualitative data. Field notes were used to document classroom atmosphere, students' responses, and significant events during the learning process. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with several students after Cycle II to gather their perceptions of the Guided Reading strategy. The interview questions focused on students' experiences, difficulties, and motivation during the reading activities.

The data were collected through two cycles of Classroom Action Research, with each cycle consisting of two meetings. Each meeting lasted for  $2 \times 40$  minutes, following the regular English lesson schedule. The reading materials used in the study were short descriptive and recount texts adapted to the Grade VII curriculum, with clearly identifiable main ideas at paragraph level. The implementation of the Guided Reading strategy followed three main stages: pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading. In the pre-reading stage, the teacher activated students' background knowledge by introducing the topic, discussing key vocabulary, and asking prediction questions. During the while-reading stage, students read the text individually and in groups while the teacher guided them through focused questions that directed attention to topic sentences and main ideas. In the post-reading stage, students discussed the main ideas of each paragraph, answered comprehension questions, and summarized the text.

In Cycle I, the implementation focused on introducing the Guided Reading strategy and identifying students' initial difficulties in finding main ideas. Reflection results showed that some students were still passive and confused. Therefore, improvements were made in Cycle II by providing clearer modeling, more guiding questions, pair and group discussions, and explicit feedback. These improvements led to increased participation and better comprehension. A pre-test was administered before Cycle I to identify students' initial ability, while a post-test was given after Cycle II to measure students' improvement. The data collected in this study were analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Qualitative data from observation sheets, field notes, and interviews were analyzed through data reduction, data display, and conclusion

drawing, as suggested by Sugiyono (2019). The analysis focused on identifying patterns related to students' participation, motivation, and ability to identify main ideas.

Quantitative data obtained from the pre-test and post-test were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The mean and standard deviation were calculated to describe students' achievement. A paired-sample t-test was employed to determine whether there was a significant difference between students' pre-test and post-test scores, as the same group of students participated in both tests. The results were used to support the qualitative findings and to demonstrate students' improvement after the implementation of the Guided Reading strategy. Ethical considerations were taken into account throughout the research process. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the school principal and the English teacher of SMP Negeri 2 Pematangsiantar. The research was conducted as part of regular classroom learning activities without disrupting the normal teaching process. Students' identities and personal data were kept confidential, and all data were used solely for academic research purposes.

### 3. RESULTS

Students' learning outcomes were measured through a pre-test, a post-test in Cycle I, and a final test in Cycle II. The Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM) for English at SMP Negeri 2 Pematangsiantar was set at 70.

#### 3.1 Students' Learning Outcomes

**Table 1. Students' Scores in Pre-Test, Post-Test Cycle I, and Final Test (Cycle II)**

No	Student (Initial)	Pre-Test	Post-Test Cycle I	Final Test Cycle II
1	A.H	55	68	80
2	A.Z	60	72	82
3	A.K.A	58	70	85
4	A.A	62	75	84
5	A.R.A	50	65	78
6	A.B	57	70	80
7	A.A.D	60	74	85
8	C.P.W	52	68	75
9	D.F	66	75	88
10	D.R	55	70	82
11	F.A	61	72	84
12	G.J	63	76	86
13	H.S	58	68	80
14	J.S	50	65	74
15	J.N	56	70	82
16	K.L	60	74	86
17	K	62	70	84
18	M.S.R	59	73	83
19	M.Z.L	54	68	80
20	M.P.A	63	76	88

No	Student (Initial)	Pre-Test	Post-Test Cycle I	Final Test Cycle II
21	M.B.S	61	74	82
22	M.R.R	57	70	85
23	N.H.A	55	68	78
24	R.M	60	72	86
25	R.Y.M	58	74	88
26	R	64	78	90
27	R.H	67	76	88
28	S.H	59	70	80
29	T.P.S	55	65	74
30	Z.S.L	61	74	84
31	Z.R	63	78	90
32	A.A	65	80	92

**Average Scores**

- Pre-Test: **60.06**
- Post-Test Cycle I: **71.53**
- Final Test Cycle II: **83.25**

**Students Achieving KKM ( $\geq 70$ )**

- Pre-Test: **12 students (37.5%)**
- Post-Test Cycle I: **20 students (62.5%)**
- Final Test Cycle II: **29 students (90.6%)**

The table shows a consistent increase in students' scores from the pre-test to the final test.

**3.2 Descriptive Statistics of Students' Scores**

In addition to the mean scores, descriptive statistics were calculated to provide a clearer picture of students' learning progress. The standard deviation (SD) of the pre-test scores was higher, indicating varied initial ability among students. After the implementation of the Contextual Learning Approach, the SD of the final test scores decreased, suggesting more homogeneous achievement. The mean gain score from the pre-test to the final test also demonstrated substantial improvement in students' understanding of possessive pronouns.

**3.3 Students' Learning Progress Across Cycles**

Students' learning progress can be observed from the increasing mean scores and the number of students achieving the KKM in each cycle. In the pre-test, most students scored below the minimum mastery criterion. After Cycle I, a higher number of students reached scores above 70. In Cycle II, almost all students achieved the minimum mastery criterion, indicating overall improvement across the class.

**3.4 Classroom Observation Results**

Classroom observations were conducted to record students' motivation, attention, participation, collaboration, and understanding during the learning process.

**3.4.1 Observation Results in Cycle I**

**Table 2. Observation Results in Cycle I**

Aspect	Observed Score (%)	Category
Motivation	65.63	Fair
Attention	68.75	Fair
Participation	62.50	Fair
Collaboration	70.31	Good

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Observed Score (%)</b>	<b>Category</b>
Understanding	59.38	Fair
<b>Average</b>	<b>65.31</b>	<b>Fair</b>

The observation results indicate moderate student participation and understanding during Cycle I.

The observation results indicate that students showed moderate participation and understanding during Cycle I.

### 3.4.2 Observation Results in Cycle II

**Table 3. Observation Results in Cycle II**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Observed Score (%)</b>	<b>Category</b>
Motivation	87.50	Very Good
Attention	90.63	Very Good
Participation	87.50	Very Good
Collaboration	90.63	Very Good
Understanding	85.94	Good
<b>Average</b>	<b>88.04</b>	<b>Very Good</b>

The observation results show higher scores across all aspects in Cycle II.

### 3.5 Students' Achievement Classification in Final Test

**Table 4. Classification of Students' Scores in Final Test (Cycle II)**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Score Range</b>	<b>Number of Students</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Very Good	85–100	10	31.25
Good	75–84	12	37.50
Fair	65–74	7	21.88
Poor	<65	3	9.37
<b>Total</b>		<b>32</b>	<b>100</b>

### 3.6 Interview Results

Interview data were collected from several students after Cycle II to capture their learning experiences during the implementation of the Contextual Learning Approach. The excerpts below are presented sequentially.

(1) *"I can understand possessive pronouns better when we use real objects in the classroom."* (P1)

(2) *"Learning English is more fun because we talk about our own things."* (P4)

(3) *"It is easier to remember the lesson when the examples are related to daily life."* (P7)

## 4. DISCUSSION

This study aimed to improve seventh-grade students' understanding of possessive pronouns through the implementation of the Contextual Learning Approach (CLA) in Class VII-5 of SMP Negeri 2 Pematangsiantar. The findings from the Results section indicate that the application of CLA led to notable improvements in students' learning outcomes, classroom participation, and overall engagement. This section discusses the significance of these findings by explaining why the strategy was effective in this particular classroom context.

The improvement in students' achievement can be attributed to the core principle of contextual learning, which emphasizes linking grammatical concepts to students' real-life

experiences. In this study, possessive pronouns were taught through familiar contexts such as personal belongings, family members, and classroom objects. Based on classroom observations and field notes, students showed greater attention and curiosity when examples were directly related to their daily lives. This supports Johnson's (2017) view that contextual learning enables students to construct meaning more effectively because new knowledge is connected to existing experiences.

During Cycle I, several challenges were identified. Observation data and field notes revealed that some students were still confused in distinguishing between possessive pronouns (mine, yours, theirs) and possessive adjectives (my, your, their). In addition, students tended to rely heavily on teacher guidance and were hesitant to use possessive pronouns independently during oral and written tasks. The observation results in Cycle I showed that students' motivation, participation, and understanding were mostly in the "Fair" category. These obstacles suggest that students were still adapting to the new learning approach and required more structured practice and reinforcement.

To address these issues, several instructional improvements were made in Cycle II. The teacher incorporated more interactive and student-centered activities, such as pair dialogues, contextual games, and group tasks using real objects brought by the students. Field notes indicated that these activities encouraged students to use possessive pronouns more naturally and confidently. For example, students were asked to describe ownership of their personal items (e.g., "This bag is mine," "That pencil is hers"), which reduced confusion between grammatical forms. These adjustments contributed to a significant increase in students' participation and understanding, as reflected in the observation results of Cycle II, which reached the "Very Good" category.

The effectiveness of CLA in this study is also supported by students' responses from the interview data. Students reported that learning grammar became easier and more enjoyable when the examples were related to their own lives and surroundings. This finding aligns with Mulyasa (2020), who states that contextual learning promotes active involvement and meaningful learning experiences. Furthermore, collaborative activities in Cycle II not only improved grammatical accuracy but also enhanced students' confidence and willingness to participate in English lessons.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research indicating that contextual learning can improve grammar mastery and student engagement. However, this study provides more specific evidence by focusing on possessive pronouns at the seventh-grade level within a Classroom Action Research (CAR) framework. The cyclical process of planning, action, observation, and reflection allowed the researcher to identify learning problems in Cycle I and implement targeted improvements in Cycle II, resulting in better learning outcomes.

Despite these positive results, the findings of this study are limited to one class in one junior high school. Therefore, the conclusions should be interpreted within this specific context. Further research involving different classes, schools, or grammatical topics is recommended to determine whether similar improvements can be achieved in broader educational settings.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

This study investigated the use of the Contextual Learning Approach (CLA) to improve seventh-grade students' understanding of possessive pronouns in Class VII-5 of SMP Negeri 2 Pematangsiantar. The findings indicate that the implementation of CLA led to meaningful improvement in students' grammar mastery, as shown by increased achievement of the Minimum Mastery Criterion (KKM) and higher levels of classroom participation. These results suggest that contextual instruction is effective in supporting students' understanding of grammatical concepts when learning is connected to real-life experiences. Beyond academic achievement, the study highlights important pedagogical implications for English teachers. The use of familiar contexts, real objects, and collaborative activities helped students become more engaged and confident in using possessive pronouns. Therefore, English teachers are encouraged to apply contextual learning by using graded reading texts, organizing students in small groups, and allocating sufficient time for guided practice and reflection. Such practices can make grammar instruction more meaningful and student-centered, particularly for abstract grammatical topics. Despite these positive outcomes, this study has several limitations. The research was conducted in one class within a single school and over a relatively short period of time. In addition, the focus was limited to one grammatical topic, namely possessive pronouns. These factors may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Future research is recommended to involve comparison classes, longer intervention durations, and a wider variety of text genres or grammatical topics. Further studies may also examine the effectiveness of the Contextual Learning Approach across different schools or integrate it with other instructional strategies to strengthen English language teaching practices.

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