

DOES EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION IMPROVE EFL STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION?

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to improve students' reading comprehension using explicit instruction. Two-cycle classroom action research was applied in conducting this study. The study involved forty-eight (48) 8th-grade students of a private junior high school in Denpasar, Bali. In the process of collecting the data, the researcher administered a pre-test and post-test to find the difference in students' reading comprehension before and after being taught using the explicit instruction method. A questionnaire was also administered to find out students' responses during the teaching and learning process. The results of this study indicate that explicit instruction could improve students' reading comprehension significantly. It was also supported by the data of the questionnaire that discovered students' positive responses to the method being used.

Keywords: Explicit Instruction, Reading Comprehension, EFL Students

INTRODUCTION

Reading skills play a very strategic role in someone's academic life. Through good reading skills, a student would be able to learn more effectively so then she or he could get successful learning achievements (Palani, 2012; Scott & Saaiman, 2016). In research done by Rooy & Rooy (2015) on several university students in South Africa, the lack of students' reading comprehension was one of the most significant factors in their poor academic performance. For that reason, it can be stated that reading is an essential skill that is needed by students along the process of education to acquire better knowledge and achievement in school.

Despite the fact of the importance of reading comprehension was widely stated by several research, students' lack of reading skills was still discovered at a private junior high school in Denpasar Bali. Through an interview that was done with the English teacher in that particular school, it was discovered that the students found it difficult to recognize and understand both the vocabulary and the full sentences used in a passage. Based on the interview which was done with students, this was caused by the teaching approach used by the teacher. The teacher usually asked them to answer the LKS (Students' Worksheet) without giving a detailed explanation of the unrecognized and new vocabulary or term in a passage.

Through interviews, the researcher also found another reason for such a condition. It was because of the uncondusive learning situation. 48 students in this particular classroom were making the teacher face difficulties in choosing the best method to teach the students. The students had difficulty mastering reading comprehension, and its components namely identifying general information, finding specific information, determining the textual references, and determining contextual meaning (Jorgensen & Philips, 2002).

Due to the importance of reading skills in every aspect of everyday life, it was necessary to find out an advantageous method to improve students' reading skills. One method that is worth to try was explicit instruction. Archer and Huges (in Huda, 2013) on

their research found that explicit instruction was made specifically to improve student's learning process and achievement. This method describes and defines some key instructional that should be done during the learning process. Explicit instruction is used to support the students by guiding the students by using clear explanations and demonstrations. Supported practice and constructive feedback will also be given throughout the learning process with the purpose of students achieving their independent mastery and well achievement (Hughes, Riccomini & Morris, 2018).

Research done by Yulia (2019) analyzed that explicit instruction was able to give a significant effect on students' English writing skills. It was proven by the mean score of students' post-test which passed 75 as a passing-grade score. Moreover, in her research, Yulia also states that along the learning process of explicit instruction class, the students became more active.

Pangestu, Hidayah, & Apriani (2021) have also researched the impact of implicit and explicit instruction on students' reading comprehension. It was found that explicit instruction implementation was giving more significant effect on students' better reading comprehension skills compared with the implicit instruction method.

Another research on explicit instruction was also done by Lumaela & Que (2021). The research learned about the effect of explicit instruction on students' grammar. At the end of their study, they found out that the students achieved a good result in the use of English grammar especially simple present tense, auxiliary verbs, subject-verb agreement, and on the use of the third singular person.

The explicit Instruction method is delivered into three steps namely opening, body, and closing (Hughes, et al., 2017). There are several purposes of the opening activities, which are to gain students' attention, review students' prior knowledge, and discuss and link the students' prior knowledge with the target/learning material. Next in the "body" step, the first simulation is given to the students and followed by another simulation that involves students' roles. In the "close" step which is also the last step in explicit instruction, the students are asked to do independent practice. The teacher provides the students with feedback to build the student's knowledge of the material.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher believes that explicit instruction could be beneficial for students to improve their reading comprehension. This study is focused on one research question; can the reading comprehension of the 8th-grade students of a private junior high school in Bali be improved through explicit instruction?

METHOD

This study applies a classroom action research (CAR) method. It was done in 2 (two) cycles. The participant of this study were 48 (forty-eight) eight grade students of a private junior high school in Denpasar, Bali. The data perceived in this research were from the pre-test and post-test to see students' reading comprehension achievement before and after being taught using explicit instruction methods. Questionnaires were also applied to find out students' responses qualitatively on the use of explicit instruction in the classroom. The research design is presented below to give a more distinct understanding:

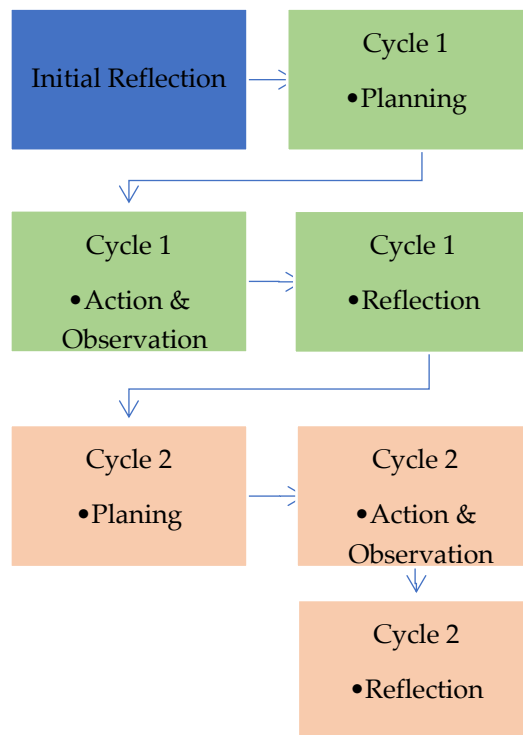


Chart 1. Classroom Action Research Design

2 (two) cycles Classroom Action Research method was administered in this study. In each of the cycles, there were four main interconnected activities, namely: Planning, Action, Observation, and Reflection. Moreover, before those main activities were implemented, the researcher also had the Initial Reflection. In the Initial Reflection of this study, a pre-test was taken to find out students' reading comprehension achievement before the treatment. The pre-test was focusing on finding out students' mastery of descriptive-themed passages. At the end of the section, the result of every pre-test means the score was compared to assess whether explicit instruction was able to improve students' reading comprehension significantly.

The first stage of this research was planning. The planning stage was down to identifying the problems. It could be stated that this stage was important to determine the right problem, so then the researchers could seek the right answers or solutions.

Instructional planning was done at the beginning of the study. Firstly, the researcher decided on the topic that was going to be carried out in the first and second cycles of the study. Secondly, the researcher who also acted as the teacher designed the lesson plan. The next stage was constructing the pre-test and post-test that were going to be used to assess the student's mastery of the subject matter. The last stage was delivering the pre-test to determine students' mastery of the subject.

The plan was implemented in the action stage. This stage was the most important activity in the research. In the action stage, the researcher acted as a teacher and did the teaching process for the students. Throughout the teaching process, the researcher carried out an explicit instruction method. There were 2 meetings done during a single cycle of action. In each meeting, the class was divided into three phases, those were pre-activity, whilst-activity, and post-activity.

The first activity that was done in the pre-activity stage was greeting. It was continued by attendance list checking. The teacher also asked several leading questions to brainstorm with the class on the subject matter. The pre-activity would be done in approximately 10 minutes in every meeting. The pre-activity stage was continued by the whilst-activity. It was also known as the main activity stage. In this stage, the teacher carried out the main teaching process using an explicit instruction method. This stage would be done in 60 minutes in every session. In this step, the teacher did some specific activities in modeling how to answer the questions. There were 5 steps that the researcher did; First, the review. The researcher gave the students a review of the theory of the learning objective, the background information, the purpose of the study, and also the outline activity of explicit instruction.

Next, the second step is modeling or demonstration. There were 5 main activities in this present study. First, the researcher read the question carefully and explain the meaning of the question to the students. Second, the researcher turned the question into part of the answer and write it down. Third, the researcher thought of the answer or located the answer in the article by underlining the supporting sentences. Fourth, the researcher completed the answer. Fifth, the researcher reread the answer. The researcher practiced and showed the students how to answer the questions properly step by step.

The third step is guided practice. The researcher asked the students to answer the questions together by following the teacher's instructions from the first step until the last step. In this step, the teacher also gave some corrections to the students and made the students understand the steps. And the last step is independent practice. The researcher asked the students to finish their work independently by using the steps already shown by the researcher. The post-activity became the last part of the action. In this session, the researcher concluded the subject and then asked the students to collect their work and the researcher confirmed some difficulties with the material. The researcher which was also the teacher gave homework to the students so they could train their reading comprehension at home. This session was taking around ten minutes.

The next step was observation. In this stage, the researcher observed how explicit instruction would improve students' English reading comprehension. Student's response to the learning process was also recorded by the questionnaire that was given by the researcher at the end of the stage. The researcher took some notes when the learning process happened about the daily attitude of the students. The result of the questionnaire would be used as feedback on the teacher's teaching process and to find the weaknesses that appeared during the learning process.

The last stage of each cycle was reflection. In this stage, the researcher administered the post-activities. The post-activities would be done at the end of each session. In this stage, the researchers applied a post-test that would assess students' reading comprehension mastery.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

In collecting the data, the researcher applied three kinds of instruments, those were; pre-test, post-test and questionnaire. The pre-test and post-test were administered to find out students' results on reading comprehension before and after the implementation of explicit

instruction as a teaching method. The pre-test and post-test were done in each cycle of this study.

Table 1. Mean Score during Pre-Cycle, Cycle 1, & Cycle

	Pre-Cycle	Cycle 1	Cycle 2
Mean Score	70.52	75.42	85.31

The table below shows the result of a questionnaire that was answered by the students. The data was analyzed using a Likert scale of 1-4 points. The data represents as follows:

Table 2. Students' Questionnaire

Students (Total)	A (4)	B (3)	C (2)	D (1)
48	70.23%	26.74%	2.67%	0.35%

The limitation of this study only covered the descriptive text especially in understanding the general information, specific information in the passage, and the textual meaning and reference. The study was considered successful if 80% of the students were able to pass the passing grade, which was 72. The pre-test shows that students had very low reading comprehension with a mean score of 70.52. Fortunately, the mean score of Cycle 1 was automatically higher than the previous mean score. The result of the mean score in Cycle 1 was 75.42. This mean score was revealed higher than the pre-test result. This data revealed that teaching students' reading comprehension significantly increased after being taught using explicit instruction. The result of the data analysis of the reflection obtained in Cycle 2 showed a result of 85.31. There was a significant difference in mean score by 9.89 (85.31 - 75.42) between the mean score of each cycle. It concluded that explicit instruction supported students' learning. It was shown by the Cycle II data which was higher than the Cycle I.

On the other hand, the result of the questionnaire score showed that the subjects gave quite positive responses toward the implementation of explicit instruction. It showed that there were 70.23% of the subjects surely agreed, 26.74% agreed, 2.67% quite agreed and only 0.35% of students disagreed. For the agreed answer most of the students answer questions 6 to 10. Based on the response to the questionnaire, it can be concluded that explicit instruction could help the students to increase their ability in comprehending the text especially in determining the general information, specific information, textual meaning, and textual reference. Unfortunately, in this study, the researcher got 6 points for the disagreed response. Some of the subjects thought that explicit instruction was less fun for them which was identified because of the highly structured environment that was needed in the classroom. So it would obtain most of all students' attention to the work. After all,

most of the students agreed that explicit instruction could increase their ability in comprehending the reading passage. And the result of their study showed a significant improvement. It was confirmed that explicit instruction could positively be accepted as a learning method to improve students' reading comprehension.

CONCLUSION

After this research was conducted, the EFL students' reading comprehension significantly improved. Based on the result of the pre-test, the mean score was 70.52. Furthermore, the researcher applied a pre-test after implementing explicit instruction during the teaching session in Cycle 1. Furthermore, based on the post-test result in Cycle I, it was found that there was a significant difference in students' reading comprehension.

However, of 48 students there were only 30 students who could achieve the minimum score, which was 72. In this phase, the mean score was 75.42. Moreover, the research continued to Cycle II, with better planning than Cycle I. The result of the post-test mean score was 85.31. Among the 48 students involved as participants in this study, 42 of them achieved the minimum score in reading comprehension. It could be concluded that 80% of the participants had achieved a good result.

Based on the result of the questionnaire findings, it could be summarized that explicit instruction supports learning. Most of the participants in this study chose A (strongly Agreed) and B (Agreed) in the questionnaire. It also could be concluded that explicit instruction methods could support students learning especially in reading comprehension for eight grade students in a private junior high school in Denpasar, Bali.

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