

PROMOTING STUDENTS' READING COMPREHENSION THROUGH EXPLICIT READING STRATEGIES

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Abstract

This research was conducted to find out which aspect of reading comprehension was influenced most by explicit reading strategy instruction and to know the students' perception about it. The design of this research was pre-test post-test control group design with two classes; experimental and control class. The instruments were reading test and questionnaire. This research used content and construct validity. To measure the reliability of the instrument, iteman was used. The subjects were two classes of eleventh year students of senior high school. The results of the data analysis showed that from five aspects of reading comprehension, determining main idea became the most improved aspect; in contrary understanding vocabulary became the least improved aspect. Then, concerning students' perception towards explicit reading strategy instruction, the result showed that most of students perceived positively that explicit reading strategy instruction could improve their reading comprehension. Finally, it could be concluded that explicit reading strategies could affect the students' reading comprehension.

Key words: explicit reading strategies, reading comprehension

Abstrak

Penelitian ini dilakukan untuk mengetahui aspek membaca apakah yang paling dipengaruhi oleh pembelajaran strategi membaca secara eksplisit and persepsi siswa tentang strategi tersebut. Desain penelitian ini adalah desain kelompok control pre-test post –test dua kelas; eksperimen dan kontrol. Instrumen pada penelitian ini berupa tes membaca dan kuesioner. Validitas instrumen diukur menggunakan validitas isi dan konstruk dan reliabilitas instrumen diukur menggunakan iteman. Subjek penelitian yaitu 2 kelas XI di SMA. Hasil analisis data menunjukkan bahwa dari 5 aspek membaca, tertinggi adalah aspek menentukan ide pokok dan terendah aspek memahami kosakata. Akhirnya, dapat disimpulkan bahwa pembelajaran strategi membaca secara eksplisit dapat mempengaruhi kemampuan membaca siswa.

Kata kunci: pembelajaran strategi membaca secara eksplisit, kemampuan membaca

INTRODUCTION

Anderson et al. (1985) pointed out that reading is a basic life skill. According to him, it is a cornerstone for a child's success in school and throughout life. It can help them to obtain knowledge and to understand it in various subject areas.

However, the majority of learners especially EFL have low capability in reading comprehension (Cabardo: 2015). He stated that majority of the students in Philippine belonged to frustration level of reading proficiency. Besides, based on the survey of adult skill done by OECD in Jakarta (2014) showed that less than 1% of adults in Jakarta attain the highest levels of proficiency in literacy. Not only in Jakarta, but also in other regions face the same case. For example, in SMAN 1 Trimurjo, based on preliminary observation conducted by the researcher, the students still faced difficulties in reading comprehension.

Explicit reading strategies as strategy instruction has recently been widely used to improve learners' mastery of reading comprehension (Oyetunji, 2013; Rajabi et al., 2013; Al-Darayseh, 2014; Tiruneh, 2014; Enciso, 2015; Iwai, 2016; The studies conducted on explicit instruction and reading strategies to improve reading comprehension. The result pointed out that by teaching reading strategies explicitly, the students' can improve their reading

comprehension. Lai et al. (2008) revealed that teaching comprehension strategies, both explicitly and directly to language learners, help them become more thoughtful and proficient readers.

Numerous studies have recently been undertaken with respect to explicit reading strategies for reading comprehension, for example (May, 2009; Souhila, 2013; Alqahtani, 2015) conducted research that focused on explicit reading strategies developed by Oxford (1990). May (2009) conducted research that focus on explicit instruction of reading strategies to achieve comprehension in reading.

Meanwhile, Souhila (2013) conducted the same research that the purpose is to show the importance of reading strategies in reading comprehension for first year English Department students. The results of this study showed that strategies of reading are effective and helpful, but unfortunately, this cannot be achieved unless teachers teach them how to use some of strategies to be successful in reading comprehension and also they will be able to achieve comprehension in reading texts. It means that the use of reading strategies can be effective because the teacher teaches it explicitly. In line with Souhila, Alqahtani (2015) also conducted the same research. However, in contrast with May (2009), they use all the six of reading

strategies by Oxford (1990) and the result showed the same. By explicit reading strategies, the students can improve their reading comprehension.

By considering the previous studies, the researcher conducted the same research based on Oxford's perspective (1990) on explicit reading strategies developed by May (2009), Souhila (2013) and Alqahtani (2015).

In this case, the researcher used all the six reading strategies explicitly to improve reading comprehension. However in the improvement, the researcher specifically investigated which aspect of reading comprehension was influenced most by the strategies instruction. Therefore, the present study attempted to address the following research question:

1. Which aspect of reading comprehension is influenced most by explicit reading strategy instruction?
2. How is the students' perception after being taught by using explicit reading strategy instruction?

RESEARCH METHODS

The design of this research was pre-test post-test control group design with two classes; they are experimental and control class. The instruments were reading test and questionnaire. The sample was chosen by cluster random sampling. They were two classes of eleventh year students of senior high school.

The reliability of the instrument was measured with iteman. By considering the level of difficulty and discrimination power, there were 20 items distributed to students. While the validity of the reading test was measured with content and construct validity. It was arranged based on the objective of teaching in syllabus for senior high school grade eleven. In order to analyze the improvement of students' reading comprehension and the students' perception about the training, the data was analyzed by these following procedures: 1). Scoring the tests and questionnaire. 2). Tabulating the result of the test and questionnaire, and calculating the mean of tests and questionnaire. 3). Analyzing the items of tests respected to each aspect in reading comprehension. 4). Drawing a conclusion from tabulated results of tests and questionnaire, then was analyzed by using paired t-test / ANOVA of SPSS 16 version for windows.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Having been mentioned in research questions, i) the first research question attempted to investigate whether explicit reading strategy instruction statistically significant affects on students' reading comprehension, especially on four aspects of reading. To know the effect of explicit reading strategy instruction on students' reading comprehension, the results of pre test and post test were compared. The result can be seen on the table 1 and 2:

Graph 1. The Comparison Mean Score of Reading Aspects between Experimental and Control Class

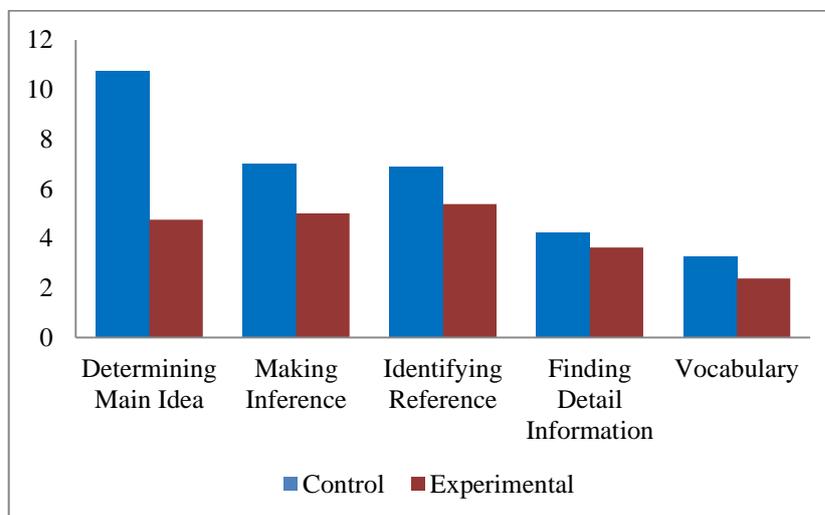


Table 1. The Gain of Mean of The Aspects of Reading Comprehension in Experimental Class

No.	Aspects of Reading Comprehension	Gain of Mean
1.	Determining Idea	10.25
2.	Making Inference	7.00
3.	Identifying Reference	6.88
4.	Finding Detail Information	4.25
5.	Understanding Vocabulary	3.25

The graph 1 shows the comparison of the students' achievement between experimental and control class in all reading aspects. The result showed that the students in experimental class had higher achievement than the control class in all reading aspects.

Based on the graph, the difference of four aspects were making inference, identifying reference, finding detail information and vocabulary achievement were not so significant. Moreover there was a significant difference in one aspect that was determining main idea. In this aspect,

the students' achievement between experimental class and control class was totally different. In sum, the students' achievement was increased in all aspects. However, determining main idea became the one aspect which was increased most.

While, table 1 shows that from five aspects of reading comprehension ; determining main idea, making inference, identifying reference, finding detail information, and understanding vocabulary, the aspect of determining main idea was influenced most by the reading strategy instruction. It showed that

the students were easy to find the main idea in the paragraph by using reading strategy instruction. It was supported with the result of students' scores in reading test. The gain score of the aspect of determining idea between pretest and posttest reached 10.25.

The second aspect of reading comprehension increased was making inference. The result showed that the students were easy to look for the implied meanings in the sentences by their prior knowledge. The students tried to make a prediction about something unknown based on available facts and information. Therefore, the students could find out the meanings of some words that were not stated directly in the sentences. The increase of aspect of making inference could be seen from the students' gain score in pretest and post test. The gain score was 7.00. It was lower than the aspect of determining idea.

The findings of the aspects of main idea and making inference were correlated refers to Afflerbach (1990) who points out that the construction of a main idea from text is tremendously influenced by the reader's prior knowledge of the content domain of the text. One of the most important functions of explicit reading strategy instruction then, is to help students recognize the knowledge that they already have about the topic of a text, which enables them to make sense of what is read.

The third aspect of reading comprehension was identifying reference. The students seemed hard

to identify the referents of a pronoun when the referent has been mentioned recently in the text than when it was mentioned earlier. It was showed from the results of students' gain scores in pretest and posttest especially in the aspect of identifying reference. The gain score was slightly lower than the aspect of making inference, it was about 6.88.

The fourth aspect was finding detail information. The students seemed could not get all information of the text thoroughly. It happened because they had less vocabulary to identify the information in the text. Therefore, the students failed to improve their ability in identifying detail information. The students' failure of identifying detail information was fit with the students' gain score in pretest and posttest. The gain score was around 4.25.

The last aspect of reading comprehension as the lowest increased was understanding vocabulary. As the lowest mastery of students' vocabulary, it influenced their ability in understanding the vocabulary in the text. The lack of vocabulary was supported by the lack of prior knowledge that being important problem in understanding the vocabulary in the text. The students' lowest achievement of aspect of understanding vocabulary was stated with their gain scores in pretest and posttest, it was 3.25.

Based on the results of the aspects improvement, explicit reading strategy instruction increased better on students' foundation in the process of meaning construction and activation of prior knowledge

through several treatments in teaching process, such as the process of predicting, skimming, scanning, and inferring. However, explicit reading strategy instruction failed to construct the students' vocabulary knowledge to identify the reference and detail information, because the students had less vocabulary mastery before the treatments were conducted. Whereas, vocabulary is a vital thing in comprehending reading text. As mentioned by Aaron and Joshi (2000), they found that vocabulary knowledge is a strong predictor of reading ability when factoring reading speed with decoding and comprehension.

ii) The second research question attempted to know the students' perception toward explicit reading strategy instruction. There were 11 questions which were given to 29 students. To know the result of the students' perception of explicit reading strategy instruction, the results of pre questionnaire and post questionnaire were compared. The results were showed on the following table:

Table 4.14
Percentage of Students' Perception of Explicit Reading Strategy Instruction in Reading Comprehension

No.	Alternatives of Questionnaire	Alternatives of Perception	Percentage	
			Pre Questionnaire	Post Questionnaire
1	Strongly Agree	Positive	0 %	12 %
2	Agree		16 %	75 %
3	Uncertain	Neutral	48 %	0 %
4	Disagree	Negative	26 %	12 %
5	Strongly Disagree		10 %	1 %
Total			100 %	100 %

The table 4.14 above reports the results of students' perception of explicit reading strategy instruction before and after the strategies were taught. Before the strategies were trained, most students showed their negative perceptions about explicit reading strategy. It was proven by the percentage of the alternatives of

perception. Around 16 % students showed positive perception, then 48 % students were neutral, while 36 % students perceived the negative one. From the results in pre questionnaire, it seemed that the majority of the students chose "neutral" category of explicit strategy in reading comprehension.

After being trained with explicit reading strategy instruction, the students seemed to realize that the strategy affecting their reading comprehension. It was proven with the results of percentage of students' perception after being taught with explicit reading strategy. Around 87 % students gave the positive perception, and then none of students was doubtful, while 13 % students perceived the negative perception. After seeing the results in post questionnaire, it seemed that most students showed their positive perception to the explicit strategy in reading comprehension.

Based on the results of questionnaire, most students agree about explicit reading strategy instruction because some activities in the strategy instruction could improve their reading comprehension, such as predicting what is the text about could help them find the main idea of the text, inferring the conclusion helped them getting the missing information, and helped them to comprehend the chronologies of the content in the text. Those facts were supported by the result of questionnaire. Before reading strategy instruction was taught, only 16% students agreed with the strategy instruction. Nevertheless, after being taught with reading strategy instruction, around 87% students stated that they agreed that the strategy instruction could improve their reading ability.

While, the students who disagreed about explicit reading strategy supposed that the activities such as glancing through the text could not make them easy to get the gist of

text, inferring the conclusion did not make them comprehend the content of the text easier and self-monitoring could not minimize the mistake in comprehending the text. The data showed that before the explicit strategy instruction given, around 36% of students disagreed with the instruction. While, after the instruction, the percentage decreased to 13%.

The finding of the study about the students who felt positive from the explicit strategy instruction was elaborated by Ellis and Sinclair (1989:2). They considered it in the following way: "The strategy of learning aims to help learners consider the factors that affect their learning and discover the learning strategies that suit them best so that they may become more effective learners and take on more responsibility for their learning".

This finding was in line with Salli who (2005) carried out a study to discover the reading strategies used by first year students in eastern Mediterranean University when they read academic or non-academic English texts. Three hundred forty students in this study were from Turkey, North Cyprus, Iran, African countries, Pakistan and Russia. The results showed that students were aware of the benefits of reading strategies before and while reading the text to help their comprehension.

In a quantitative meta-analysis, Taylor, Stevens, and Asher (2006) investigated the effects of explicit strategy instruction on reading comprehension in a second or foreign language. The authors found

that overall; the students who received explicit strategy training outperformed those who did not. However, the nature of the strategies taught did not yield any statistically significant difference.

In conclusion, based on the result showed, explicit reading strategy had been perceived positively by the students and could be accepted well especially in reading comprehension.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

There are five aspects of reading comprehension, they are: determining main idea, making inference, identifying reference, finding detail information, and vocabulary. Based on the gain score of each aspect in experimental class, it was found that the strategy instruction enhanced the students' particular comprehension in five aspects of reading. Moreover determining main idea became the most influenced aspect among the others. This indicates that the students were interested in determining main idea question and it became the priority to be answered because they had known the strategy to answer it easily even though they did not know the overall content of the text.

The researcher suggests the English teacher to apply explicit strategy instruction since it was effective to be used in reading class. The strategy could promote the students in five aspects of reading comprehension especially in understanding the gist of the text even though they have less

vocabulary. Besides, the strategy also could make the students easier to predict the content of the text by finding the keyword.

The researcher also suggests further research to modify the training procedure of the five reading strategies; determining main idea, making inference, identifying reference, finding detail information, and vocabulary. The purpose is to cover the weakness and to make it more perfect. At the end, the researcher expects that this study can be a contribution as a reference for further research related to explicit reading strategy instruction. Therefore, the researchers, educators, and teachers will concern more about the importance of explicit reading strategy instruction.

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