

EMPOWERING MINDS: ELEVATING READING COMPREHENSION IN TENTH GRADE STUDENTS WITH DIRECT METHODS

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Abstract

Reading comprehension is a critical skill for academic success and lifelong learning. Direct instruction methods have gained attention for their effectiveness in improving reading comprehension outcomes among high school students. This study explores the significance of elevating reading comprehension in tenth grade through direct methods. The research design employed was collaborative Classroom Action Research (CAR), with the researcher serving as the observer while the classroom English teacher conducted the teaching and learning activities. The subjects of this research were tenth grade students of SMAN 3 Kefamenanu in the 2023/2024 academic year, consisting of 25 students: 9 males and 16 females. Data analysis involved both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Thematic analysis was used to evaluate the instructional strategies and their efficacy in enhancing reading comprehension. The results showed that all 25 students (100%) scored higher than the minimal passing grade of 76. Teaching students to employ these strategies consistently can significantly improve their reading comprehension skills, leading to better academic performance and a greater ability to engage with complex texts throughout their lives.

Keywords: *Empowering Minds, Elevating Reading Comprehension, Direct Methods, Tenth Grade Students*

INTRODUCTION

Reading comprehension is a critical skill for academic success and lifelong learning. In the tenth grade, students are expected to engage with increasingly complex texts across various subjects, making it imperative to enhance their comprehension abilities. Direct instruction methods have gained attention for their effectiveness in improving reading comprehension outcomes among high school students. This study explores the significance of elevating reading comprehension in tenth grade through direct methods.

Tenth grade marks a crucial juncture in a student's educational journey, as they transition from foundational learning to more advanced concepts. Strong reading comprehension skills are essential for understanding complex texts encountered in literature, science, history, and other subjects. Without proficient comprehension abilities, students may struggle to grasp key concepts,

analyze information critically, and express their ideas effectively in both academic and real-world settings (Baker et al., 2020; Magliano et al., 2023).

Moreover, the ability to comprehend texts efficiently correlates with overall academic achievement and future success. Research indicates that students who excel in reading comprehension tend to perform better in standardized tests, achieve higher grades, and exhibit stronger critical thinking skills (Kheang et al., 2024; Li & Doyle, 2020). Thus, investing in strategies to enhance reading comprehension in tenth grade is imperative for promoting students' academic growth and long-term success.

Direct instruction methods involve explicit teaching techniques that aim to systematically develop students' skills and knowledge. These methods provide structured lessons with clear objectives, modeling, guided practice, and feedback, facilitating active engagement and mastery of targeted skills (Mohammed, 2024).

In the context of reading comprehension, direct instruction methods encompass strategies such as explicit instruction in comprehension strategies, vocabulary development, text structure analysis, and metacognitive awareness (Madebo & Gutema, 2023). By breaking down the components of comprehension and teaching them explicitly, direct methods help students develop a repertoire of strategies to navigate complex texts effectively (Ebrahimzadeh & Alavi, 2016; Lanchwathanakorn, 2011; Stewart et al., 2023).

Numerous studies have demonstrated the efficacy of direct instruction methods in improving reading comprehension outcomes among high school students. For instance, a meta-analysis by (Thomas et al., 2022) found that direct instruction interventions yielded significant improvements in reading comprehension across various grade levels, including high school. Similarly, a study by (Kim et al., 2021) reported positive effects of direct comprehension instruction on the reading comprehension skills of tenth-grade students with learning disabilities.

Enhancing reading comprehension in tenth grade is crucial for fostering academic success and preparing students for future endeavors. Direct instruction methods offer a promising approach to address comprehension challenges by providing systematic and explicit instruction in comprehension strategies. By integrating direct methods into tenth-grade curriculum, educators can empower students with the skills and strategies necessary to comprehend complex texts effectively, thereby laying a solid foundation for their academic and lifelong success.

Students at SMAN 3 Kefamenanu face significant challenges in reading comprehension, including slow reading speeds, distractions, low motivation, and limited vocabulary (Moore et al., 2024). These issues lead to incorrect responses in exercises and overall disinterest in reading. Muhedeen (2023) notes that reading strategies vary across educational levels, and an effective approach is needed to improve comprehension. The Direct Method, highlighted by Yuliani (2020), is a promising solution. It is a teacher-centered, systematic approach that involves the teacher actively explaining the content to enhance understanding. The researcher aimed to apply this method to help tenth-grade students at SMA3 Kefamenanu to improve their reading comprehension skills by providing direct explanations and engaging students more actively in the learning process.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Reading is a mental process involving the understanding of information from printed texts. It requires not only recognizing words but also comprehending the content. According to Udin (2023), reading is the process by which an individual understands an author's message. This interaction between reader and text involves strategies to derive meaning and fully grasp the text's content.

Theory of Reading Comprehension

Reading comprehension is a critical skill for academic success and lifelong learning. It involves not only the ability to decode text but also to understand, interpret, and critically analyze it. According to Nurhidayah (2023), effective reading comprehension strategies include activating prior knowledge, questioning, visualizing, summarizing, and predicting. These strategies help readers make connections between new information and what they already know, fostering deeper understanding. Additionally, reading comprehension can be enhanced through the use of graphic organizers, which visually represent relationships among ideas in the text (Gedik & Akyol, 2022). Teaching students to employ these strategies consistently can significantly improve their reading comprehension skills, leading to better academic performance and a greater ability to engage with complex texts throughout their lives.

Theories of Teaching

Teaching, as a profession, involves guiding and facilitating learning. According to Sumarni, (2007), teaching encompasses guiding students, enabling their learning, and setting the conditions for this process. Similarly, (Khalaf et al., 2021) defines teaching as the guidance of learning. Both definitions highlight the interactive nature of teaching, where teachers impart knowledge and provide guidance to students within the teaching and learning process. This interaction establishes a relationship between teachers and students, emphasizing the role of teachers in creating an environment conducive to learning and fostering student development.

Direct Method

The direct method in language teaching establishes immediate audiovisual associations between experience and expression without using the learner's mother tongue. According to Moore (2024), it is a systematic, teacher-centered, skill-building instructional model where the teacher acts as the primary information provider. Cremin (2022) add that this method often utilizes pictures depicting life in the target language's country. From the beginning, students are taught to respond solely in the target language. Real and simple actions are used alongside pictures to convey meaning, with lessons frequently revolving around question-answer dialogues. This method places significant emphasis on correct pronunciation while deemphasizing strict grammatical structure. Additionally, students read passages to gain information about the target language. The teacher may check comprehension by asking questions about the reading, but translation is never employed. This approach ensures that students immerse fully in the target language environment from the outset.

Direct Methods in Reading Comprehension Instruction

Direct methods in reading comprehension instruction involve explicit teaching techniques that aim to systematically develop students' comprehension skills. These methods provide structured lessons with clear objectives, modeling, guided practice, and feedback, facilitating active engagement and mastery of targeted skills (Pritchard & Dockerty, 2024).

One key aspect of direct methods is the explicit instruction of comprehension strategies. Teachers explicitly teach students a repertoire of strategies such as predicting, questioning, clarifying, summarizing, and monitoring comprehension (Korkmaz & Öz, 2021). Through

modeling and guided practice, students learn how to apply these strategies independently while reading various texts.

Additionally, direct methods focus on vocabulary instruction as an integral component of reading comprehension. Teachers explicitly teach students the meanings of unfamiliar words, provide instruction on word parts and context clues, and offer strategies for acquiring and retaining new vocabulary (Tahir et al., 2021). By expanding students' vocabulary knowledge, direct methods enhance their comprehension abilities, as unfamiliar words can hinder understanding.

Direct methods also emphasize the analysis of text structures and features. Teachers teach students to recognize and understand different text structures such as cause and effect, compare and contrast, problem and solution, and chronological order. By understanding how texts are organized, students can better comprehend and interpret the information presented (Lillis & Scott, 2015; Wolter & Green, 2021).

Direct methods in reading comprehension instruction employ explicit teaching techniques to develop students' comprehension strategies, vocabulary knowledge, and understanding of text structures. By providing structured lessons with clear objectives and guided practice, these methods empower students with the skills and strategies necessary to comprehend and analyze a wide range of texts effectively.

METHOD

The research design employed was collaborative Classroom Action Research (CAR), with the researcher serving as the observer while the classroom English teacher conducted the teaching and learning activities. In some instances, these roles were reversed, with the researcher conducting the teaching and learning activities and the classroom teacher observing. This flexibility was feasible because the collaboratively designed lesson plans were student-centered, ensuring consistency and integrity in the instructional approach regardless of who led the activities. The research followed a cyclical process comprising planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting.

The subjects of this research were second-semester students of SMAN 3 Kefamenanu in the 2023/2024 academic year, consisting of 25 students: 9 males and 16 females. Data were collected through various instruments, including a reading comprehension test, observation sheets, field

notes, and an interview guide, all utilized during the teaching and learning process. This comprehensive data collection approach ensured a thorough understanding of the students' reading comprehension progress and the effectiveness of the instructional methods employed.

The study employs tests as its primary techniques and data collection instruments. According to Kurniawati (2024), a test is a tool designed to assess an individual's abilities. The research process is structured into four key phases: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting.

Planning: This phase involves the preparation and introduction of material on the human respiratory system. It also includes forming discussion groups, which are essential for collaborative learning and engagement.

Acting: During this phase, the pre-planned learning scenarios are implemented. It involves active teaching and learning activities, ensuring that instructional strategies are applied as intended.

Observing: This phase focuses on monitoring and gathering data during the implementation of the action methods. English teachers assist as partners in conducting observations, ensuring the reliability and accuracy of the collected data. Observations concentrate on student activities and behaviors during the learning process, as well as their performance on tests administered at the end of the instructional period.

Reflecting: In the final phases, the collected data and observations are analyzed and reflected upon. This reflection helps in understanding the effectiveness of the instructional strategies and identifying areas for improvement. Based on this analysis, planning and preparation for the next cycle of instruction and research are conducted, aiming for continuous improvement and refinement of teaching methods.

This cyclical process of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting ensures a thorough and systematic approach to classroom action research, ultimately enhancing the quality of education and student learning outcomes (Lufungulo et al., 2021; Vaughan et al., 2023)

Instruments

An instrument is a tool used to collect data in research. In this study, the instrument is a reading comprehension passage with 50 multiple-choice items, designed to assess students' understanding of the text (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This format allows for objective measurement of comprehension skills, offering valuable insights into students' reading abilities

and informing teaching strategies (Fraenkel et al., 2018). The researcher aims to evaluate comprehension and identify areas needing further instructional intervention.

Technique of Analysis

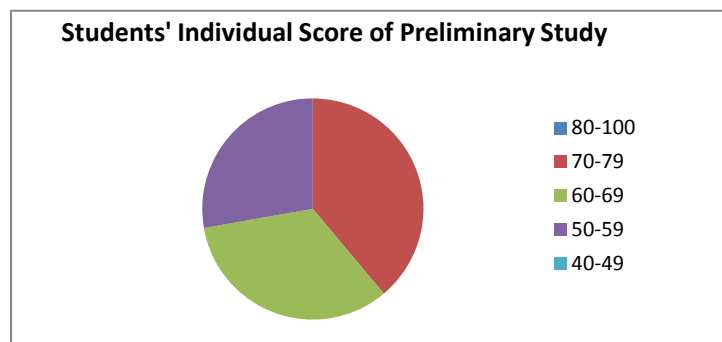
Data analysis in the study involved both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Initially, reading comprehension test scores were quantitatively analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine mean scores and identify trends in student performance. This provided a clear, numerical overview of the improvement in reading comprehension skills over the intervention period.

Qualitative data, including observation sheets, field notes, and interview transcripts, were analyzed using thematic analysis. This involved coding the data to identify recurring themes and patterns related to student engagement, instructional effectiveness, and areas needing further improvement. By triangulating these data sources, the researcher ensured a comprehensive understanding of the instructional methods' impact.

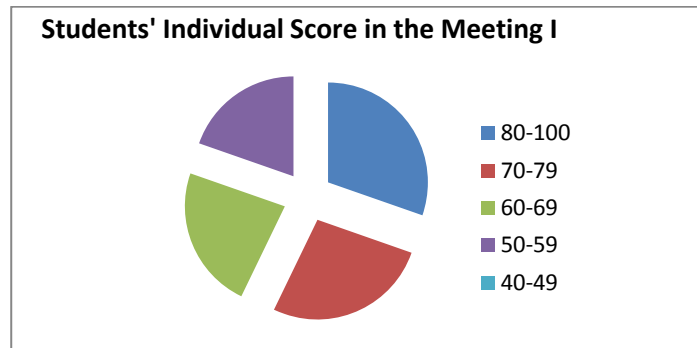
Reflective sessions with the classroom teacher further informed the analysis, offering insights into the practical implementation of direct methods and their reception by students. This robust analytical approach ensured a thorough evaluation of the instructional strategies and their efficacy in enhancing reading comprehension.

RESULT

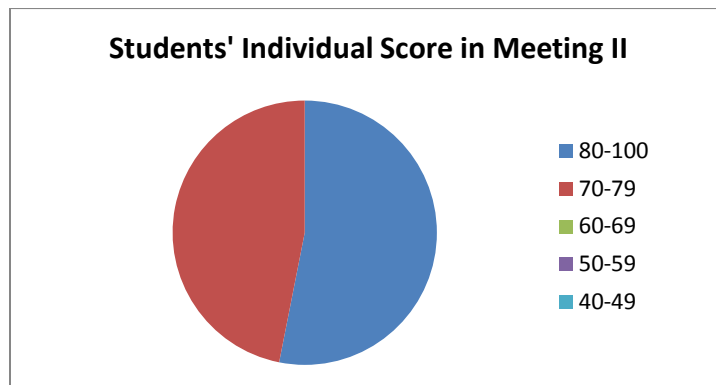
The results of the reading comprehension test, conducted over a single cycle comprising two meetings using the direct method, are presented here. A comprehension test was administered at the end of each session. This section also includes the results of the students' reading comprehension tests, along with observations and field notes on the students' engagement during the reading comprehension process. But before, the researcher conducted the preliminary study to identify the problems experienced by the students. The result of the study is illustrated in the diagram 01 below:



The diagram 01 above shows the individual scores of students in the preliminary test. None of the 25 students (0%) scored in the range of 0-49. Eight students (32%) scored between 50-59, thirteen students (52%) scored between 60-69, four students (16%) scored between 70-79, and none of the 25 students (16%) scored between 80-100. This is contrasted with the students' individual scores and the minimal passing grade in the following diagram 02.



The diagram 02 above illustrates the improvement in students' individual scores from the first meeting's test. The score distribution is as follows: none of the 25 students (0%) scored in the range of 0-49, six students (24%) scored between 50-59, nine students (36%) scored between 60-69, six students (24%) scored between 70-79, and four students (16%) scored between 80-100. Regarding the minimal passing grades, 6 out of 25 students (24%) scored higher than 76, while 19 out of 25 students (76%) scored lower than 76. The improvement from the first meeting is also reflected in the students' mean score, with detailed progress presented in the diagram 03.



The diagram 03 above shows the improvement in students' individual scores from the second meeting's test. The score distribution is as follows: no students (0%) scored in the ranges of 0-49, 50-59, or 60-69. 13 out of 25 students (52%) scored between 70-79, and thirteen students (52%) scored between 80-100.

scored between 80 -100. Regarding the minimal passing grades, fourteen out of 25 students (56%) scored higher than 76, while 8 out of 25 students (32%) scored lower than 76. This improvement is also reflected in the students' mean score, with detailed progress presented in the diagram.

The research findings and discussions revealed that the direct method successfully improved students' reading comprehension skills. This method was particularly effective in the reading instruction at SMAN 3 Kefamenanu, where it is not only enhanced the students' reading comprehension but also increased their motivation to read and boosted their self-confidence in learning. The improvement in the students' reading comprehension using this strategy is evident in the average scores obtained from the preliminary study through to the final test conducted after implementing the direct method, as shown in the diagram 04 below.

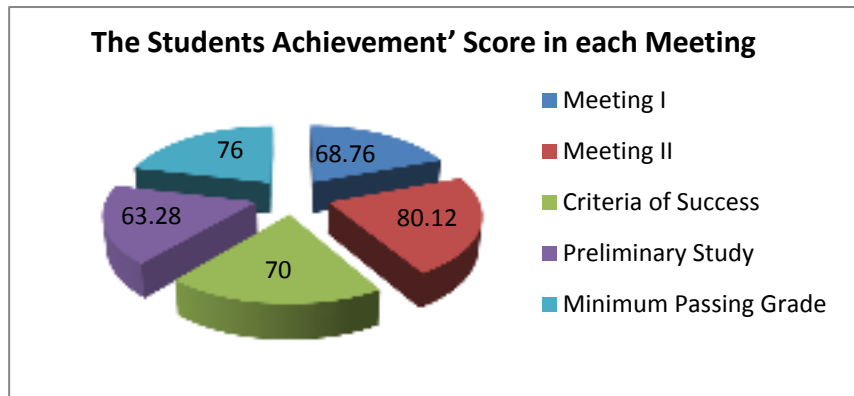


Diagram 04 clearly demonstrates that the students' average reading comprehension test score in the preliminary study was 63.28%. This score significantly improved following the implementation of the direct method, as evidenced by the average scores recorded after each session. The first meeting resulted in an average score of 68.76%, and the second meeting saw a further increase to 80.12%. Consequently, the Minimum Passing Grade (KKM) of 76.00, established during the planning phase, was successfully achieved in the post-action test. The success criterion of a score of 70.00 was determined by the researcher based on students' performance before the intervention, while the score of 76.00 for reading achievement was based on the KKM set by the school.

The use of the direct method in the current classroom action research has proven to be an effective strategy for improving reading comprehension skills. This method also motivated

students to relate the author's opinions in the reading texts to their own real-life situations. Additionally, it facilitated the students' ability to identify the content of passages, leading to improved reading comprehension outcomes, thus demonstrating an enhancement in their skills. Moreover, in the present study, the improvement in students' comprehension was also influenced by the teacher's modeling of the direct method during reading instruction. This modeling was instrumental in helping students understand how to apply the strategy effectively in the reading process.

CONCLUSION

The study demonstrates the significant impact of direct instruction methods on enhancing reading comprehension skills among tenth-grade students at SMAN 3 Kefamenanu. The research employed a collaborative Classroom Action Research (CAR) design, involving both the researcher and the classroom teacher in planning, implementing, observing, and reflecting on the instructional strategies. The comprehensive data collection approach, including reading comprehension tests, observation sheets, field notes, and interviews, provided a thorough understanding of the students' progress and the effectiveness of direct instruction methods.

The results indicate substantial improvements in students' reading comprehension skills over a single cycle comprising two sessions. Initially, students exhibited varying levels of proficiency, with a significant number scoring below the minimal passing grade. However, following the implementation of direct instruction methods, there was a marked improvement in students' performance. By the second session, all students scored above the minimal passing grade, reflecting the effectiveness of the explicit teaching techniques employed.

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