

# Explicit Grammar Instructions to Enhance Students' Reading Ability on Cognitive Aspect

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## ABSTRACT

This research aimed to find out whether explicit instruction influences the strategy of developing student's cognition in language grammar on reading skills at MTS Al Muddakir Banjarmasin. There were 20 students as control group and another 20 students as experimental group. The data were collected from essay and reading tests. The validity and reliability of the instrument were measured before both kinds of instrument were applied. Then, independent sample t-test was used to find out the mean score of the cognitive ability of the students in language grammar on reading skills. The result shows that sig (2-tailed) 0.000 is less than 0.05. It means that there is a difference in the cognitive ability of the students in language grammar on reading skills. However, in independent sample t-test, the result is 0.164 > 0.05. It means that there is no difference of the mean score of the cognitive ability of the students as experimental group but there is a difference of the influence resulted in the cognitive ability of the students in reading skills.

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## 1. Introduction

Most Indonesian people still have problems in using good English. They need to learn how to create a good English in communication. By using good English, learners can produce good language to express suitable information. Each text has different grammatical items. Nevertheless, it requires knowledge about grammatical rules to comprehend the text in reading. [Savage et al. \(2010\)](#) implies that grammar is the most important part of language skills consisting of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Thus, grammar is nucleus of achieving language skills in spoken or written language.

In learning a language skill, learners need knowledge. There are two kinds of knowledge in gaining language skill, namely explicit and implicit knowledge ([Ellis, 2004](#), [Widodo, 2006](#)). The knowledge is accomplished by different ways. Explicit knowledge is knowledge about grammatical rules gained by learners through formal classroom instruction or conscious learning. In this sense, a person's explicit knowledge apprehends about the system of language and ability to utter those facts in some way ([Brown, 2001](#), [Widodo, 2006](#)). Of course, it means that explicit knowledge is acquired by learning it consciously in the classroom to get the knowledge of grammatical rules better ([Ellis, 2004](#), [2009](#), [Widodo, 2006](#)). [Ellis \(2009\)](#) also states that explicit knowledge needs a control process to gain the knowledge, while implicit knowledge is gained automatically or unconsciously in the process of language learning ([Widodo, 2006](#)). In this case, it can be concluded that

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grammar can be learnt by automatic and conscious processes. Moreover, it requires an instruction in teaching in order to achieve the measurable knowledge.

Ellis (2014) says that teaching grammar will be the most effective if it considers the way learners learn grammar. Furthermore, it can be meant that grammar teaching can help students more effectively how to gain the knowledge about grammatical rules either implicitly or explicitly. To make successful in teaching grammar, teachers can use grammatical explicit instruction to develop students' knowledge especially for explicit knowledge. So grammatical explicit instruction helps students easily comprehend reading text and improve their ability in reading skills.

Grammar is a part of learning a language. Grammar can be resulted by the process of teaching and learning. Students cannot learn grammar without giving grammar teaching before. Thornbury (1999) clarifies that grammar is a study of language to form sentences. In this respect, grammar has an important role in sentence construction both in oral and written communication. Savage et al. (2010) writes the grammar view as a skill to be prepared in learning EFL or ESL and also explains three roles to reveal the emphasis of grammar view in ESL or EFL. The roles consist of the grammar as an enabling skill, as motivator, and as means of self-sufficiency (Savage et al., 2010). First, grammar as an enabling skill, it views the grammar as a foundation to master skills or develop competence all areas in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Second, grammar as motivator, it considers grammar as a strong element in language curriculum which makes students motivated to learn it. Besides, it can motivate teachers in teaching it.

As suggested by Scott Thornbury in Scrivener (2011), dealing with teaching grammar, he explains that we could open up our concept of grammar if we start thinking of it not only a noun (i.e. the information), but also a verb (i.e. the active skills of using languages). Above all, it explains that grammar is not only about noun and verb but grammar functions to convey information in all kinds of text either written or spoken language implemented in each skill of language.

The explanation above proves that the teaching of grammar has the main role to make a good communication clearly and exactly in each skill of language. By giving the teaching of grammar in reading skills, teachers can help students more understand the contexts and functions of the text each genre text. It could be assumed that teaching grammar is the main element to achieve the proper information in a text and to construct students' knowledge explicitly especially in reading text.

Explicit knowledge is a language element used by learners and a role of language knowledge maintained in human life gained by learners consciously through the process of learning, teaching, and expressing language (Ling & Quan-feng, 2015). Shirzad (2016) wrote the definition by Ellis that "acquisition of knowledge about the underlying structure of a complex stimulus environment by process which takes place naturally, simply and without conscious operation". Indeed, it can be accepted through stimulation of a surrounding environment process naturally, simply and unconsciously to acquire the knowledge. Ellis (2014) defines that the influence of implicitly knowledge acquisition can be attained directly either through the attraction of attention in the use of a certain grammatical form by means of an input-base task or the establishment of a context for the precise expressed and purposed use of a definite grammatical form by means of output-base task. Then, implicit and explicit knowledge also oblige learners to achieve a successful language learning. It could be concluded that explicit knowledge could help students comprehend how the way to learn language by implementing grammatical form as the first input in learning a language especially for English.

Ellis (2009) proclaims that instruction is an endeavor to intervene in inter-language development. Instruction is a way of intermediary to achieve the goal of target language. In teaching ESL or EFL, it requires an instruction to make students obtaining the achievement of the accurate target language. Therefore, in this case, by establishing an instruction in teaching grammar, it makes better progress for learners.

The use of implicit and explicit instruction is useful to survey the development of students' language to reach the target language. In explicit instruction, the activity done by teacher is began by starting to focus on the grammar and explaining it, possibly giving the learning of grammatical terms, whereas implicit instruction is an instruction that started by explaining about the target structure in meaningful context but it doesn't explain about grammar (Savage et al., 2010). Thus, the instructions can be implemented in grammar teaching. Explicit grammar teaching is a method of teaching used by teacher to make students more successful in learning grammar rules whereas implicit grammar teaching method doesn't present the grammar rules (Ling & Quan-feng, 2015). In this case, the teaching of grammar of using explicit instruction could help students in understanding grammar knowledge in order to achieve the effective target language.

In cognitive ability, there are three main things to develop the cognition (Patel & Jain, 2008) namely meaning, knowing, and understanding. In reading skill, learner is not only able to read correctly but also know

and understand the meaning of a text. Reading needs a critical thought because most of formal processes in education rely on reading by understanding (Snowling & Hulme, 2011), (Marchand-Martella & Martella, 2013). Thus, reading needs a cognitive ability to react the critical thought in order to comprehend text.

Wren (2001) expresses two main things how to establish the cognitive perspective in reading ability namely language comprehension and decoding. Language comprehension is an ability how to construct meaning from spoken system of language. Decoding is an ability how to recognize word system in written and spoken form. In other words, to obtain the learners' ability in reading, Cognitive process is the main process to construct the students' ability in language comprehension and decoding. Language comprehension and decoding are essential cognitive knowledge that needs to be learnt by students to gain good system in communicating written and spoken language.

Nazari (2013) mentions the result of research that an explicit teaching strategy has a better effect in enhancing the EFL learners' L2 grammar. Akakura (2012) discovers the study result that explicit instruction can give useful knowledge either implicit L2 knowledge or explicit knowledge. Thus, explicit instructions can give more advantage effect in developing learner's grammar. Besides, by the explicit instructions, learner also gets more favorable knowledge on both implicit knowledge and explicit knowledge

The study by Green & Hetch (1992) and Macrory & Stone (2000) displayed correlation study about whether learners' explicit and implicit knowledge has the relationship. Hu (2002) also showed whether the available use of explicit knowledge could be utilized to invent implicit knowledge.

All the above studies show that explicit instructions have more influence in enhancing learners' knowledge explicitly and also help to fortify learners' implicit knowledge. Explicit instruction is an instruction that not only construct the learners' insight in learning language but also help the learner to increase language knowledge especially for grammatical knowledge either explicit or implicit knowledge.

## 2. Research Method

Each class consisted of 20 students either experimental and control groups. The researchers took data by using an essay test. In the test, researchers ask students to classify the nouns referring to person, place, and object. Besides, the researchers conducted a test about a base word which students ask to analyze word and correct the words to become a base word. Then, researchers did a treatment by using explicit instructions in the experimental group and the control group by using implicit instructions. Researchers also constructed instrument validity and reliability before doing the treatment in the experimental group. They also built up paired sample t-test to find out the influence of explicit instructions in the experimental group. Besides, they used independent sample t-test to discover the mean score of the students in strengthening the cognitive ability of students in language grammar on reading skills.

## 3. Result and Discussion

### 3.1. Validity of the Instrument

Researchers used r-product moment to find out the result of the instrument validity. The result could be looked at the following table:

Table 1. Correlations

		Score_X	Score_Y
Score_X	Pearson Correlation	1	,925**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,000
	N	20	20
Score_Y	Pearson Correlation	,925**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	
	N	20	20

Based on the above table, it shows sig. (2-tailed) 0,925 either score X or Y and the number (N) = 20 in the table. It means that r-table = 0,561 is significant 1% (2-tailed). The result of the sig. (2-tailed) is 0,925 > 0,561 meant that the instrument used by research was valid.

Then, researcher did the instrument reliability to find out whether the test is reliable or not. The table below showed the reliability statistics as follows:

Table 2. Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
,710	4

It can be seen that the result  $r_{11} = 0,710$  in the Cronbach' alpha with N of item = 4 items. It can be concluded that  $r_{11} 0,710 > 0,6$  was reliable. To find out each question item whether it was corrected or not, the researchers used *Corrected Item-Total Correlation*. The table below explained the corrected item.

Table 3. Item-Total Statistics

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Item_1	47,60	38,989	,608	,592
Item_2	50,00	46,316	,581	,648
Item_3	49,70	48,537	,492	,682
Item_4	36,00	19,368	,648	,670

The table above can be seen that the result of each items in correction item-total correlation were more than  $r$ -table 0.444 in item 1, the correction item-total correlation was  $0,608 > 0,444$ . It means that the item 1 was corrected item. The item 2 was  $0,581 > 0,444$ . The item was also corrected item. And then the item 3 and 4 were 0.492 and 0,648, the items were more than 0,444. So the items were corrected item.

### 3.2. Normality test

In the step, the researchers find out the normality test. The table below showed the statistics of normality.

Table 4. One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

	Group1	Group2
N	20	20
Normal Parameters <sup>a,b</sup>		
Mean	60,10	63,95
Std. Deviation	9,603	7,430
Most Extreme Differences		
Absolute	,137	,149
Positive	,137	,110
Negative	-,102	-,149
Test Statistic	,137	,149
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,200 <sup>c,d</sup>	,200 <sup>c,d</sup>

In the table, it shows Asymp. sig. (2-tailed)  $0,200 > 0,025$ . It means that the data found by researcher were normal distribution. Because the data were normal, the researchers used a parametric statistics. The researcher measured the hypothesis using Paired sample T-test and Independent T-test as follow below:

### 3.3. Paired sample T-test

The test was used to find out the mean difference of two variable in one group at the experimental group. The result of the test can be seen this table below:

Table 5. Paired Sample T-Test

	Paired Different				T	df	Sig. (2 tailed)	
	mean	std. deviation	std. Error mean	95% confidence interval of the difference				
				Lower				Upper
Paired 1 pretest-posttest	-3.600	2.037	.455	-4.553	-2.647	-7.906	19	.000

The writers also conducted paired sample t-test to find out the mean differences of two variables in one experimental group. Based on the table above, the researchers discover the result of sig. (2 tailed) 0000, it shows that it is higher than t-table 0.05 in which  $H_0$  was rejected while  $H_a$  could be accepted. It means that there was the mean difference of two variables (pretest-posttest) in one group at the experimental group.

### 3.4. Independent T-test

The test was used to size whether the influence of explicit instruction to improve students' English grammatical structure in cognitive aspect in reading skills. The table below showed about the statistical result of Independent T-test as follows:

Table 6. Statistic Result of Independent T-test

Variable	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig	t	Df	Sig (2tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	1.956	.170	1.418	.164	3.850	2.715			
Equal variances not assumed			1.418	.165	3.850	2.715			

The table above could be seen that the sig (2-tailed) 3.850 was bigger than t-table 0.05. It means that  $H_0$  could be accepted and could be assumed that there was no difference of the result of the mean score of students' cognitive ability in English grammatical structure at explicit instruction of reading skills.

To measure the students' cognitive ability in English grammatical structure at reading skills, the researchers conducted a test. After giving the students a test, the researchers gave them explanation or feedback toward the result of the students' answer on the test by using explicit instruction which could show and observe the improvement of students' cognitive ability in English grammatical structure at reading skills. The test was given in pretest and posttest in different period of time. In pretest, the researchers didn't give explanation about the instruction to the students. The researchers directly asked the students to answer the test given by the researchers without giving explanation. In pretest, the test was also used by the researchers to measure the validity and reliability of the test as the instrument of the research. The statistical result of the validity and reliability discovered by the researchers was valid and reliable on the score X and Y sig (2-tailed)  $0.925 > 0.561$ .

After measuring the validity and the reliability of the test, the researchers did the normality test to show the size of the data distribution that was collected by the researchers. Based on the findings above, the normality data gotten by researchers was shown by sig. (2-tailed)  $0,200 > 0,025$ . So to measure the hypothesis, the researchers used a parametric statistics.

Because the collected data were normal, the researchers used the parametric statistics by using the formula of Paired sample T-test to find out the mean difference of two variables in one group at the experimental group. In the findings above, it was seen that the result of sig. (2 tailed) is 0000 bigger than 0.05. The result indicated that it was the mean difference of two variables (pretest-posttest) in one group at the experimental group. In the pretest, the researchers used implicit instruction without giving direction in answering the test. However, in posttest, the researchers used explicit instructions to help the students in answering the test. It proves that the mean difference of the two variables in the pretest-posttest in experimental group was accepted for developing the cognitive students by using grammatical explicit instructions. It means that the grammatical explicit instruction has big impact to developing students' cognitive aspect in enhancing the students' reading ability.

However, based on the result of the finding of the differences between control and experimental groups in Independent T-test, the researchers got the sig (2-tailed) 3.850. So, the sig. was bigger than 0.05. The result shows that there is no difference of the scores of the students' mean scores in cognitive aspects in English grammatical structure at explicit instruction.

#### 4. Conclusion

In this research, the researchers can show the result of the mean difference of grammatical implicit and explicit instructions by the way of finding out the statistic result of instrument validity, normality test, paired sample T-test, and Independent T-test. Based on the discussion and findings above, it could be concluded that the grammatical explicit instructions could enhance the students' reading ability in cognitive aspects. Besides, using explicit instruction, students get more understanding in learning English and strengthen their ability especially for reading skills.

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