Developing Literacy Skill through Direct and Explicit Comprehension Strategy Instruction (DECSI)
An Action Research

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Abstract: This study reports the findings of action research on the development of students' literacy skill particularly through Direct and Explicit Comprehension Strategy Insctruction (DECSI) in English literature class of the English Education Program Department in Indonesia. Drawing on data of students' reflective journals, observation and interview, empirical findings showed that the students engaged actively in text identifying, word defining, class presentation, vocabulary enforcement and reflection through Direct and Explicit Comprehension Strategy Instruction (DECSI). Empirical data also revealed that through role scaffolding by teachers and peer support, the student participants engaged in the discovery of English literature vocabulary by documenting unfamiliar or interesting words from their English literature readings and by exploring different meanings of vocabulary using electronic dictionaries, corpus software called BNC and skell.sketchengine.co.uk. The other research findings showed that student teachers had enhanced of being autonomous learners. The findings suggest that DECSI can be a catalyst for engaging students in post-reading tasks such as writing a summary of the English literature text and promoting language awareness and improving comprehension as well.

1 INTRODUCTION

Teachers often consider that literature is unsuitable for the language classroom. This view reflects how the study of language and the study of literature are separated, which refers to as a border dispute over territory between linguists and literary critics. This divergence has resulted in the teaching of the two subjects as 'disconnected pedagogic practices' and has, consequently, led to the limited role of literature in the language classroom.

However, the awkward fact that many learners want and love literary texts was probably the first driving force which brought literary texts back in the language classrooms.

In recent research studies, teaching literature has promoted language learning, cultural awareness, students' awareness of a different usage of language, and has enriched new vocabulary and imaginative expression (Krsteva and Kukubajska, 2013; Nasirahmadi, 2014; Tevdovska, 2016). The importance of literary texts (i.e., short stories) as sources of teaching and learning materials for EFL

contexts has been recommended by professionals and intellectuals as the literary texts reveal comprehensive language use in authentic contexts (Pathan, 2013).

Traditionally, the teaching of literature has been a teacher-dominated process, allowing for limited opportunity for students to do their own ideas creatively and feelings towards a literary text. This conventional teaching activity of reading comprehension on literary text does not afford students the opportunity to share what they have read and what language resources they have learned from literary reading texts. In short, such process of literary text reading activities does not create a supportive environment where students engage in interactive reading tasks and collaborative learning community of reading as a social practice (Widodo, 2014).

In contrast, a student-centered approach encourages learners to develop their own opinions, feelings and responses to a literary text. It is then predicted that learners will be able to apply these proficiencies to further reading of texts for their own

benefit. For this reason, Direct and Explicit Comprehension Strategy Instruction (DECSI) is suggested in engaging literary texts through the discovery of English literature meaning.

This present study was inspired by the study of Haggard (1982), Martin (2002) and Widodo (2015). The implementation of DECSI has been well understood in the ESL context but the implementation of this instructional method in the literary class of EFL context remains under-explored. To fill this gap, the present study adopts DECSI. Two research questions guide this study:

1. In what ways do students engage in Direct, Explicit Comprehension Strategy Instruction (DECSI)?
2. What are students' reactions to these activities?

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Defining and conceptualizing literacy

Literacy is now commonly defined as being able to read and write, including 'skills enabling access to knowledge and information' (UNESCO, 2005b). Literacy is not only the decoding and encoding of a written script; it is also a socioculturally embedded practice, dependent on understandings of the language, culture, and other texts (those that are similar and those that are different). Comprehensively literacy is a construction and reconstruction of knowledge, attitude, value, skill and experience. Language itself is a key aspect of students' culture. Through language, students can gain access to the literary heritage of humanity and develop their appreciation of the richness and breadth of world's literary heritage.

2.2 Direct, Explicit Comprehension Strategy Instruction (DECSI)

Literature explains that the explicit-implicit dichotomy is applied to three different concepts–learning, knowledge, and memory–and it is only very rarely explained how these are interconnected. Further, Dörnyei (2009) adds that explicit knowledge is acquired through explicit learning and is stored in explicit memory; and implicit knowledge is acquired through implicit learning and is stored in implicit memory.

In this research, comprehension strategies refer to routines and procedures that readers use to help them make sense of texts. These strategies include, but are not limited to, summarizing, asking and answering questions, paraphrasing, finding the main idea, text identifying, word defining, and vocabulary enforcement. An important part of comprehension strategy instruction is the active participation of students in the comprehension process. In addition, explicit instruction involves providing a sufficient amount of support, or scaffolding, to students as they learn the strategies to ensure success.

3 RESEARCH METHOD

The research was undertaken at a university in Indonesia. The twenty-six student teachers were the second year from English language education major. To address the two research questions, the nature of the present study employed an action research. Two strategies were implemented in this present study: Vocabulary self-collection and learning logs: reading, grammar, and vocabulary. The reading log focused on how much time student teachers read and how much information they learned. The grammar log was used to record grammatical resources that the student teachers learned. The vocabulary log was employed to record all the lexical items that the student teachers learned or found useful.

4 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The data collected from the students' interviews and reflective journals were analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. Driven by the thematic analysis to the students' interviews and reflective journals, four central finding themes were identified revealing that DECSI with learning logs helped the students be autonomous learners, develop vocabulary, promote language awareness, and improve comprehension. These were clearly portrayed in one of the students' reflective journals asserting:

"By learning logs we were encouraged to fill up the format with some unfamiliar words taken from the short story we read to find out their meanings, summarize the story, and analyze the grammatical structures, so that the learning logs helped me comprehend the content of the story" (Haris).

As can be inferred from the student's response above, the learning logs encouraged the student to actively and independently learn new words from

the text he read. The learning logs also provided the student to activate his language awareness by analyzing the structure of the sentences from the story, and hence he comprehended the story well. The following discussions reveal the four central finding themes elicited from the students' responses in their interviews and reflective journals.

4.1 Being autonomous learners

The students' responses to the use of learning logs while reading a short story revealed that the learning logs facilitated them to be active and independent in comprehending a short story. The following excerpts, taken from the students' interviews and reflective journals, demonstrate the students' autonomy in learning.

Table 1: Students' responses reflecting autonomous learning.

Students	Responses
Budi	Learning logs were quite beneficial for me because ...hmmm the activities in the learning logs encouraged me to input some unfamiliar words into the learning logs format ...hmmm and analyse the grammatical structures which made me actively read and comprehend the story.
Dita	Ya, hmmm by using learning log I could be more active to find out every word I wasn't familiar with, then I searched for their meanings and I input the words into the learning logs.
Fajar	I think some advantages were that we could understand some unfamiliar words by finding out their meanings and synonyms. We could learn how to summarize the story and learn to analyse the grammar of our favourite sentences taken from the short story.
Rani	Besides reading activity, we were also encouraged to find out some unfamiliar words, our favourite sentences and so on. From those activities I could understand the story well.

The students' responses on the use of learning logs in reading a short story revealed that the learning logs provided the students with some activities that enabled them to actively and independently learn new words and comprehend the story well. The students actively and independently utilized the learning logs to record unfamiliar words, to look for their meanings and synonyms from their dictionaries, to summarize the story, to record some favorite sentences from the text, and even to analyse

their grammatical structures. The various activities that the students employed with the learning logs promoted autonomous learning for them. It can be inferred that they became autonomous learners during accomplishing the activities in the learning logs.

The benefit LL is also informed in previous research by Widodo (2015:167) as "the students were engaged in the act of reading as meaning making process (ideational meaning, interpersonal meaning, and textual meaning)". The ideational meaning in this reading a short story deals with how a literary text is used to represent student teachers' experience in order to organize, understand, and express their perceptions of the literary texts. The interpersonal meaning focuses on how elements of the literary text create patterns of interaction and evaluation: the type of interaction taking place and the way writers take a position in their message within the literary text. Additionally, the textual meaning refers to with the literary works to create a connected and coherent discourse (Halliday 1975; Christie & Unsworth, 2000; Bloor & Bloor, 1995).

4.2 Developing vocabulary

All of the students shared the similar opinions that the activities in the learning logs assisted them to develop their vocabulary. The following excerpts highlighted the students' responses on how the students could develop their vocabulary in using the learning logs.

Table 2: Students' responses reflecting vocabulary development.

Students	Responses
Dewi	I got some new vocabularies after I filled up the learning logs while reading "Teenage Wasteland"
Angga	I could find out the meanings and synonyms in every new word I found in the short story. It helped me the process to add new words for me.
Robi	I think some advantages of learning log were that I could understand some unfamiliar words by finding out their meanings and synonyms...
Siska	In learning log I learned to understand new vocabularies by looking for their meanings and synonyms.

As can be inferred from the students' responses, the learning logs assisted them to obtain some new vocabularies during their reading. In the learning logs activity dealing with selecting some important

unfamiliar words, the students were encouraged to find out the meanings and the synonyms of the selected unfamiliar words they needed to understand from reading a short story. The students most importantly acquired some new vocabularies from their attempts to find out the synonyms of the selected unfamiliar words facilitated by the learning logs. These indicate that through LL 'student teachers increased their reading ability, developed positive attitudes toward reading, had increased motivation to read, and made gains in various aspect of proficiency in English, including vocabulary and writing' (Day & Bamford, 1998, p. 33). Therefore, it can be inferred that learning logs are really helpful tools for developing vocabulary.

4.3 Promoting language awareness

Besides identifying important unfamiliar words to find out their meanings and synonyms, in one of the learning logs activities the students were encouraged to identify the word class and the grammar of the sentences from the story they read. These activities for the students were considered to help them comprehend the text well during their reading of a short story. The following students' responses reveal the evidence.

Table 3: Students' responses reflecting language awareness.

Students	Responses
Cepi	Hmm ... learning logs helped me know more deeply about the function of words in the sentences and the structure of the sentences.
Risa	I think some advantages (of learning logs) were ... and learning to analyze the grammar used in the selected sentences from the story.
Asep	The advantages I got in using learning logs were adding more vocabularies, sharpening my grammar ability, and being able to understand well the function of words in the sentences.
Widia	By learning logs I could know the meanings of the unfamiliar words from the story, then I could understand the grammar use. Besides that, I also learned to analyze the structure of the sentences and the tenses. I could also train my thoroughness to comprehend the story.

The students' responses depict how the learning logs have facilitated the students in promoting language awareness. Based on the responses, in the learning log activities the students were encouraged

to identify the function of words in the sentences and to analyze the structure of the sentences taken from the text they read. These activities indirectly activated their knowledge about language that they already had in their minds in order to gain knowledge and information from the text they read. Therefore, the language awareness activities can be valuable experience for the students in promoting their literacy skills.

4.4 Improving comprehension

The main point of being literate as proposed by UNESCO is that we are able to access knowledge and information to the text we read (UNESCO, 2005b). During reading a short story, the students were facilitated by the learning logs in order to gain meaningful access to the content of the story. After using the learning logs, the students shared the similar opinions that the tools assisted them in improving their comprehension on the text they read. The following responses show the evidence.

Table 4: Students' responses reflecting comprehension improvement.

Students	Responses
Andika	...we were encouraged to select unfamiliar words, our most favourite sentences, and so on. From those activities in the learning logs I could easily comprehend the short story "Teenage Wasteland"
Gita	Learning logs helped me learn the vocabularies and the structure of the sentences from the short story "Teenage Wasteland" which could gradually help me comprehend the content of the story.
Mila	In the learning logs activities I analysed the unfamiliar words and sentences. It really helped me to comprehend the short story "Teenage Wasteland" easily.
Nuri	In the learning logs, for the unfamiliar words I had to find out their meanings and synonyms, so that I could understand the meanings of the sentences from the story. It helped me more understand and comprehend the plot and the content of the story.

Based on the students' responses, all of the students agreed that the learning logs provided them some activities to improve their comprehension on the plot and the content of the story they read. Selecting some important unfamiliar vocabularies to find out their meanings and synonyms, summarizing the story, selecting most favourite sentences, and analyzing the structure of the sentences were

available in the learning logs which gradually enabled the students to comprehend the story better. Therefore, meaningful access to knowledge and information occured when the students utilized the learning logs during their reading to a short story.

5 CONCLUSION

Three important instructional implications can be highlighted from the findings of the research. First, Direct and explicit comprehension strategy instruction (DECSI) can be implemented into literary extensive reading program that focuses on (1) linguistic aspects: a variety of styles, registers, and language learning materials; with this in mind, such exposure to authentic materials will improve language acquisition through literary texts; (2) methodological aspect: great interaction opportunities in a language class internalizing the lexico-grammatical repertoires or resources from context, and (3) motivational aspect: stimulation to express student teachers' opinions dealt with the topics and the characters in the literary texts to their own life. The findings suggest that the use DECSI (i.e., learning logs vocabulary self-collection strategy) engage student teachers in reading literary texts as meaning making and learning autonomy that expand their reading ability and lexico-grammatical repertoires. In addition teachers can use a variety of literary texts so that student teachers can discuss different dimensions of the texts, such as cultural knowledge or cultural issues in terms of the history, people's customs and traditions, student teachers' personal responses, their personal satisfaction or engagement to the literary texts they read focusing beyond the lexico-grammatical resources.

The present study has revealed how DECSI were employed in a literary extensive program. We acknowledge that a more complete picture of the use of DECSI in both extensive and intensive reading programs could be provided in future studies. For example, an experiment study may be conducted to look at the effect of DECSI on student teachers' reading fluency and achievement. A qualitative case study may also be undertaken to investigate different types of teacher scaffolding and peer support in learning logs-based literary texts in EFL/EAL extensive and intensive reading programs. These future research agendas focus on documenting more empirical evidence regarding the implementation of DECSI beyond short story texts.

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