

## EXPLICIT INSTRUCTION: A METHOD TO ENGAGE STUDENTS IN ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE (EFL) SOURCE-BASED WRITING

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**Abstract:** Academic writing is a crucial subject for university students to equip them with the necessary skills for writing academic research papers. However, writing is a particularly complex skill for a second language and foreign language learners to learn. University students may lack background knowledge about English writing, particularly writing based on sources. Source-based writing is a fundamental academic writing skill in universities. It includes the skills of paraphrasing, summarizing, and synthesizing. English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners may face difficulties in producing such writing which could lead to higher practices of plagiarism and academic misconduct. These practices of plagiarism and academic misconduct could be minimized by explicit instruction on source-based writing in Academic Writing courses. This paper argues that explicit instruction is an effective method for teaching source-based writing. The paper aims to explore the concept of explicit instruction in teaching and learning EFL source-based writing. The writer utilized qualitative secondary research and reviewed 15 relevant sources published between 2014 and 2024. Through this qualitative secondary research which is a form of library research, the notion of explicit reading and writing instructions is investigated. Furthermore, this paper explores strategies that can be employed in teaching source-based using explicit instruction in Indonesian tertiary-level EFL classrooms. The paper also highlights the challenges in implementing explicit instruction. This method of explicit reading and writing instructions should provide practical implications for teaching source-based writing.

**Keywords:** academic writing; explicit instruction; source-based writing; paraphrasing; summarizing; synthesizing

### INTRODUCTION

Writing based on sources is an important skill to be mastered in academic writing, particularly for university students. Source-based writing is a type of academic writing task usually assigned in academic writing courses. These tasks include writing summaries, research papers, literature reviews, and theses. Cumming et al. (2016) describe source-based writing as a fundamental academic writing skill in universities since it involves the acquisition of new knowledge and is required for writing course papers and tests. Paraphrasing, summarizing, and synthesizing are major forms and strategies to transfer the information from the original source into someone's own writing. Paraphrasing is defined as "recontextualizing source information in one's own writing with a credit to the original author" (Shi et al., 2018, p. 31). In summarizing, writers shorten the text by restating only the main ideas of the text (McDonough et al., 2014). On the other hand, in synthesizing, writers select information from several texts, and integrate, organize, and connect that information into a new written text (Crossley et al., 2021; Zhao & Hirvela, 2015).

This study was inspired by the findings and discussion of the literature of a PhD research conducted by the writer herself on the practices, perceptions, strategies, and challenges in the

teaching and learning of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) source-based writing in Indonesian Higher Education institutions (Maulidiyah Jailani Abin Dulah, 2023). Based on the research, the participating students seemed to have little understanding of the differences between the skills of paraphrasing, summarizing, and synthesizing. Moreover, the students encountered challenges when doing the process of reading and writing when using outside sources. The students were found to face challenges in the writing process when paraphrasing, challenges in the reading process when summarizing, and challenges in both reading and writing processing when writing syntheses. These challenges may lead the students to plagiarize and commit academic misconduct if not treated well.

To overcome these challenges, it was suggested to apply explicit instruction. This is because, as Cumming et al., (2016) and Weston (2015) claimed, instruction can help EFL learners improve their writing from outside sources. Moreover, Rossi (2022) encouraged the implementation of explicit instruction on teaching source-based writing, particularly paraphrasing. Rossi argued that students' paraphrasing ability is still low and "underdeveloped" because there is a lack of explicit instruction. Leijten et al. (2022) also claimed that there is little instruction in the field of source-based writing. This lack of explicit instruction may lead the students to patchwrite. Patchwriting is the behaviour of copying the original texts and changing or deleting only some words. On the students' skill of summarizing, Ahn (2022) further suggested the significance of giving explicit instruction on strategies of summary writing because the students in her research wrote wrong summaries because they had no knowledge about the summarizing strategies. Regarding synthesizing, providing instruction on synthesizing strategies including organizing, selecting, and connecting when integrating multiple sources into one's own writing can improve the written performance of learners (Cheong et al., 2019, as cited in Rezaei & Marandi, 2022).

Based on the explanation above, it can be seen that the lack of explicit instruction on teaching source-based writing may influence students' understanding of these skills of paraphrasing, summarizing, and synthesizing which in turn will influence the students' ability to write these skills. Accordingly, this paper aims to explore the concept of explicit instruction and the implementation of this method and way of teaching.

## **METHOD**

This study is a research library based on the literature review and synthesizing data and information from the findings of previous studies. The documents analyzed comprise journal articles, books, reports, dissertations, and theses. The writer analyzed and synthesized these secondary sources. In other words, the writer utilized Qualitative Secondary Research to achieve the aim of this study which is to explore the concept of explicit instruction in teaching and learning source-based writing and how can this explicit instruction be employed in the Indonesian

university EFL classroom. Concerning Qualitative Secondary Research, Largan and Morris (2019) define it as “a systematic approach to the use of existing data to provide ways of understanding that may be additional to or different from the data’s original purpose” (p.14).

The writer applied the data collection process proposed by Largan and Morris (2019). This data collection process includes the process of searching data, selecting data, reducing data, and then analyzing the data. In the data search process, the writer focused on identifying and gathering a wide range of relevant sources. The search included relevant books, journal articles, and research reports which are available online in Google Scholar, Education Resources Information Center (ERIC) journals, and Taylor and Francis online journals. Furthermore, the keywords “definition of explicit instruction” and “explicit instruction in teaching EFL reading and writing” were used to search the data. These keywords were chosen to capture a broad spectrum of literature related to the topic of explicit instruction, ensuring a comprehensive collection of relevant studies, articles, and reports. In selecting the data process, the writer undertook the selection process. This involved examining the relevance and quality of sources. The writer prioritized sources published between 2014 and 2024. However, the writer also referred to older sources and scholars since the term “explicit instruction” was coined and developed more than ten years ago.

In the process of data reduction, the obtained data were reviewed by skimming and scanning to evaluate the relevancy and currency of the information to go in line with the aim of the research which is exploring the concept of explicit instruction and examining the implementation of explicit instruction in teaching source-based writing. The data were reduced to 15 relevant journal articles. Then, in the final stage, the writer analyzed and synthesized the data before reporting the result. The writer engaged in a thorough analysis and synthesis of the selected data. This involved critically examining the content, identifying key themes, and drawing connections between different sources.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### ***Defining Explicit Instruction and Explicit Reading and Writing Instruction***

There was little literature found that explained about the definition of explicit instruction. One of the leading scholars who discussed in depth about this topic was Anita L. Archer. She wrote a book with her colleague Charles A Hughes entitled: “Explicit Instruction: Effective and Efficient Teaching”. Archer and Hughes define and describe explicit instruction as follows:

In the quest to maximize students’ academic growth, one of the best tools available to educators is explicit instruction, a structured, systematic, and effective methodology for teaching academic skills. It is called explicit because it is an unambiguous and direct approach to teaching that includes both instructional design and delivery procedures.

Explicit instruction is characterized by a series of supports or scaffolds, whereby students are guided through the learning process with clear statements about the purpose and rationale for learning the new skill, clear explanations and demonstrations of the instructional target, and supported practice with feedback until independent mastery has been achieved (2011, p.1).

Thus, according to Archer and Hughes, explicit instruction is one of the teaching methods that is structured and systematic. Explicit instruction is characterized by scaffolding and clear explanations and demonstrations.

Although Archer and Hughes (2011) describe explicit instruction in general that can be used for teaching any subject, this structured and systematic method can be applied in teaching EFL writing particularly EFL source-based writing. In teaching source-based writing skills of paraphrasing, summarizing, and synthesizing, there is a need for both explicit writing and explicit reading instructions. Explicit writing instruction involves teaching about the conventions of writing good paraphrasing, summarizing, and synthesizing. On the other hand, explicit reading instruction involves teaching the strategies of reading actively to encourage the students to engage with outside sources and integrate the information into their writing.

### ***The Effectiveness of Explicit Instruction in Teaching Writing Based on Sources***

Students at all levels who are novices to academic practices need explicit instruction to understand and meet the language-related expectations of writing (Bitchener et al., 2017), in this case, source-based writing. The findings of the research conducted by Ahn (2022) have proven that teaching the strategies of summarizing skills explicitly enhanced the summary writing ability of Korean university students particularly in finding main ideas, paraphrasing, and integrating ideas. The strategies of writing summaries taught were the selection strategy, the deletion strategy, sentence combination and integration strategy, paraphrasing and integration skill, generalization strategy, and intervention which is creating a topic sentence.

The effectiveness of explicit instruction was also seen by Rossi (2022). She attempted to revise the teaching of paraphrasing and found that there is a need to conduct explicit instruction to help students engage well with the source texts. According to Rossi, however, teaching paraphrasing explicitly is not about teaching single-sentence or using decontextualized practice activities, but the original context of information should be provided.

Explicit writing instruction can be applied when teaching source-based writing using the process-genre approach. For instance, Kim and Paek (2020) conducted a study on the effectiveness of explicit writing instruction and investigated its role in an EFL college writing

class. The explicit instruction was applied in teaching the process of writing that includes 'Purpose', 'Organization', 'Elaboration', 'Voice', and 'Grammar'. The findings of their research showed that explicit instruction helped improve the students' writing.

The effectiveness of explicit instruction was also investigated by Chaleila & Khalaila (2020) using an experimental research design. The writers found that the students' writing performances improved after the treatment using comprehensive explicit instruction.

### ***The Implementation of Explicit Instruction in Teaching Source-Based Writing***

Archer and Hughes (2011, p.2-3)) discussed 16 elements of explicit instructions. These elements were related to the focus of instruction, scaffolding, demonstration, giving examples and feedback, and practicing. Several studies implemented these elements of explicit instruction. One of these studies was conducted by Chaleila & Khalaila (2020). They implemented their model of focused instruction (I do), guided instruction (we do), collaborative learning (you do it together), and independent learning (you do). This model was adopted from Archer and Hughes's model of (I do), (you do), and (we do).

Explicit instruction can be implemented by teaching the strategies and conventions of writing based on sources explicitly such as the studies by Chumworatayee (2017), Weston-Sementelli et al., (2018), Yagiz (2019), and Yenus (2018) .

Moreover, the implementation of explicit instruction can be useful by having clear rubrics and scaffolding practices. In the case of teaching synthesizing, breaking down the process involved in synthesizing such as in scaffolding, can help teachers teach and assess synthesis more effectively (Lundstrom et al., 2015). Furthermore, Lundstrom et. al., in their research created comprehensive and clear rubrics to help determine which aspects of synthesizing students may struggle with to help them improve their ability to integrate sources into their writing (Lundstrom et al., 2015).

### ***Challenges of Applying Explicit Instruction in Teaching Source-Based Writing.***

Writing lecturers have a significant role in enhancing the student's understanding of the skills of source-based writing. It will be challenging to apply explicit instruction when the writing teachers have little understanding of the use of source-based writing. Based on the online interview results with university students in South Kalimantan Province, the writing lecturers need to have a clear understanding of the definition of the skills of paraphrasing, summarizing, and synthesizing to be able to teach these skills explicitly (Maulidiyah Jailani Abin Dulah, 2023). This idea is also supported by Davis-Duerr (2016) who argues that the confusion of the cognitive processes of the strategies and skills of source-based writing will lead to ineffective teaching. In order to give good explicit instruction on paraphrasing, summarizing, and synthesizing, the

teachers and lecturers of academic writing need to be trained and participate in workshops for effective teaching of these skills (Yeh, 2021).

Overall, based on the result and discussion above, it is found that explicit instruction is a highly structured and systematic approach to teaching, and has proven effective across various educational contexts. When applied to teaching source-based writing, it can assist students in understanding the mechanics of writing and also the critical skills needed to engage with and integrate external sources effectively. Explicit instruction helps break down the writing process into manageable steps, helping students understand each component thoroughly. It offers step-by-step guidance, modeling each stage of the writing process. For instance, teachers can explicitly teach how to identify credible sources, take effective notes, paraphrase and summarize information, and integrate these sources into their writing with proper citations. However, despite the effectiveness of implementing explicit instruction in teaching source-based writing, it is challenging for teachers to apply if they have little understanding of source-based writing. Thus, more studies are needed to examine the implementation of explicit instruction in teaching source-based writing and investigate the challenges faced in using explicit instruction and how to overcome these challenges.

## **CONCLUSION**

This qualitative secondary research was conducted based on the findings of the writer's PhD research that the students experienced confusion among the skills of paraphrasing, summarizing, and synthesizing. Accordingly, explicit and clear instruction on these skills was suggested. Then, the writer conducted this library research to explore further the concept of explicit instruction and how it is employed in teaching these source-based writing skills. Based on the discussion, it is found that teaching source-based writing explicitly is effective in helping students engage well in writing based on sources. However, challenges may appear in applying the explicit instruction. As a suggestion, there is a need for more empirical studies that could be conducted on the teaching and learning practices of source-based writing, particularly when explicit instructions on these skills are employed.

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