

Improving the Reading Comprehension Skills of Fifth-Grade Students at UPT SD 068007 Medan Tuntungan through the Direct Instruction Learning Model in Indonesian Language Instruction

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Abstract

Reading comprehension is a fundamental language skill that enables elementary school students to understand learning materials across subject areas; however, the reading comprehension achievement of fifth-grade students at UPT SD Negeri 068007 Medan Tuntungan remained relatively low. This study aimed to improve students' reading comprehension skills through the implementation of the Direct Instruction model in Indonesian language learning. Classroom action research based on the Kemmis and McTaggart model was conducted in two cycles, each comprising planning, action, observation, and reflection. The participants were 23 fifth-grade students. Data were collected through observations, tests, interviews, and documentation and analyzed using qualitative and quantitative descriptive techniques. The findings demonstrated progressive improvements in students' reading comprehension achievement across the research stages. At the preliminary stage, only five students (21.7%) achieved the Minimum Mastery Criterion, with a mean score of 52.17. Following

the implementation of Direct Instruction in Cycle I, mastery increased to 39.1%, with a mean score of 62.61. In Cycle II, mastery further increased to 82.6%, accompanied by a mean score of 83.50. Teacher activity improved from 66% in Cycle I to 86% in Cycle II, while student activity increased from 58% to 80%. These findings indicate that the Direct Instruction model effectively improves reading comprehension by providing structured explanations, guided practice, and systematic learning activities. The study contributes practical evidence supporting the use of explicit and sequential instruction to enhance reading comprehension achievement and classroom engagement among elementary school students.

Keywords: Classroom Action Research; Direct Instruction; Elementary Education; Learning Outcomes; Reading Comprehension

INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the fundamental language skills that plays a crucial role in the learning process, particularly at the elementary school level (Frans et al., 2023; Sari et al., 2021; Suastika, 2018). Through reading activities, students not only acquire information but also develop critical thinking skills, broaden their knowledge, and enhance their overall language proficiency (Putri et al., 2024; Yani, 2025; Anjani et al., 2026). In Indonesian language learning, reading constitutes one of the core competencies that students are expected to master, as it serves as the foundation for understanding a wide range of subject matter across the curriculum (Pratama, 2022; Ambarwati & Wati, 2025; Aprian et al., 2025).

In essence, reading is a complex process that encompasses multiple dimensions. It involves not merely decoding written symbols but also engaging in visual processing, cognitive activities, psycholinguistic processes, and metacognitive regulation (Manurung, 2022; Sembiring, 2026). From a visual perspective, reading is the process of translating written symbols (letters) into spoken words.

However, in practice, elementary school students' reading comprehension skills remain relatively low. This has become one of the most prevalent challenges in the field of education. Many students are able to read texts fluently but are unable to comprehend their content. This condition indicates that students' reading activities remain largely mechanical and have not yet progressed to the level of meaningful comprehension. This finding is consistent with previous studies reporting that many students continue to experience

difficulties in understanding reading passages, highlighting the need for instructional improvement through the implementation of appropriate learning models.

Reading comprehension is a fundamental competency that students must possess to support their academic achievement across subject areas (Davison & Seipel, 2022; Crawford et al., 2025). To improve the reading comprehension of students in the lower grades of elementary school, instruction should incorporate reading comprehension modeling, which is considered psychologically significant and should be explicitly facilitated by teachers. As students observe teachers performing specific reading tasks, such as word extraction, they gradually learn to recognize letters and read words effectively (Kodariah, 2022, p. 3034).

Several studies have demonstrated that numerous factors influence reading achievement. According to Aisyah (2018), reading comprehension is affected by several key factors, including students' active engagement in reading, vocabulary knowledge, the use of reading strategies, student participation, as well as the role of teachers and meaningful instruction in facilitating the comprehension process (Aisyah, 2018).

The issue of low reading comprehension was also identified at UPT SD Negeri 068007 Medan Tuntungan, particularly among fifth-grade students. Based on interviews conducted with the fifth-grade classroom teacher, it was found that students' reading comprehension ability remained relatively low. The teacher explained that although most students were able to read fluently, they had not yet developed the ability to comprehend the content of texts in depth. In fact, only approximately 30–40% of the students genuinely understood the texts they read.

To address this issue, an instructional model is required that can enhance students' active engagement while systematically assisting them in comprehending reading materials. One instructional approach that can be implemented is the Direct Instruction model. This model emphasizes the structured and sequential delivery of learning materials, accompanied by explicit demonstrations and guided practice.

The Direct Instruction model offers several advantages, including providing clear explanations, presenting explicit demonstrations, and allowing students to engage in guided practice before progressing to independent practice. Through this structured learning process, students are able to develop a deeper understanding of the instructional content. Furthermore, the model promotes greater student participation because learners are directly involved in every stage of the learning process.

These findings are supported by the study conducted by Rosfiani et al. (2024:1294), which reported that the implementation of the Direct Instruction model significantly improved students' reading achievement. The study revealed a substantial increase in students' learning outcomes from Cycle I to Cycle II, as reflected in the significant improvement in the percentage of students achieving learning mastery. Moreover, students became more actively engaged throughout the learning process.

Similarly, a study conducted by Fitri (2024:403) found that the implementation of the Direct Instruction model effectively enhanced both students' learning interest and learning achievement. The study reported that students' learning interest increased substantially from an initial level of 27.27% to 93.94% in Cycle II. In addition, students' learning outcomes also showed significant improvement, with the majority of students achieving scores above the Minimum Mastery Criterion (MMC). These findings indicate that the Direct Instruction model is effective in improving students' learning performance in Indonesian language instruction.

Thus, it can be concluded that the Direct Instruction learning model represents an appropriate alternative for improving students' reading comprehension skills. This model enables students to develop their comprehension of reading texts progressively, enhances their active participation throughout the learning process, and contributes to the overall improvement of their learning outcomes.

Based on the identified problems, a learning model is required that not only promotes students' active engagement but also provides systematic and gradual guidance in developing reading comprehension. The Direct Instruction learning model was selected because it incorporates well-structured instructional procedures, beginning with teacher demonstrations, followed by guided practice, and culminating in independent practice. Such a sequence makes the model particularly suitable for assisting students who continue to experience difficulties in comprehending reading texts. Furthermore, this model allows teachers to provide explicit and direct instructional support, enabling students not only to read the text but also to understand its content in a more structured and meaningful manner. Therefore, the implementation of the Direct Instruction learning model is considered appropriate for improving the reading comprehension skills of fifth-grade students at UPT SD Negeri 068007 Medan Tuntungan.

Based on the foregoing problems, this study aims to improve the reading comprehension skills of fifth-grade students at UPT SD Negeri 068007 Medan Tuntungan through the implementation of the Direct Instruction learning model in Indonesian language instruction. In addition, this study seeks to examine the effectiveness of the Direct Instruction model in enhancing students' learning engagement and overall learning outcomes in reading comprehension instruction.

METHODS

This study employed the Classroom Action Research (CAR) method. Classroom Action Research was selected because it is a form of research designed to improve the quality of the teaching and learning process through the implementation of direct instructional interventions within the classroom. CAR is conducted systematically, reflectively, and continuously, enabling researchers to provide solutions to various problems that emerge during the learning process (Reza et al., 2025; Lidiawati et al., 2025; Syaqiqoh et al., 2025). Through this research, the teacher served not only as the instructional practitioner but also as a researcher who continuously refined instructional practices based on the reflective findings obtained from each research cycle.

According to Kemmis and McTaggart, Classroom Action Research is a research process carried out through iterative cycles consisting of four stages: planning, acting, observing, and reflecting (Ramadhani et al., 2026; Alifha & Pamessangi, 2025). These stages are interrelated and implemented continuously until the research objectives or predetermined success indicators have been achieved. Through these recurring cycles, researchers are able to evaluate the effectiveness of the implemented interventions and make necessary improvements to the shortcomings identified in the preceding cycle.

This study was conducted in two cycles, with each cycle comprising the four principal stages proposed by Kemmis and McTaggart. If the success indicators had not been achieved in the first cycle, improvements were implemented in the subsequent cycle based on the results of the reflection. Accordingly, each cycle represented a process of refining and improving the instructional interventions that had been implemented in the previous cycle.

The first stage was planning. At this stage, the researcher identified the problems encountered during the learning process based on the findings of the preliminary observation. After the problems had been identified, the researcher prepared all instructional

and research instruments required for implementing the intervention. These included developing teaching modules or Lesson Plans (Rencana Pelaksanaan Pembelajaran [RPP]), preparing instructional media, designing Student Worksheets (Lembar Kerja Peserta Didik [LKPD]), preparing observation instruments to assess both teacher and student activities, developing learning achievement test instruments, and determining the research success indicators. All of these instruments were systematically prepared to ensure that the implementation of the instructional intervention proceeded in a well-directed manner and remained aligned with the objectives of the study.

The second stage was action implementation (acting). This stage involved the execution of all plans that had been prepared during the preceding planning phase. The teacher implemented the instructional process in accordance with the procedures of the learning model employed in the study. Throughout the instructional process, the teacher endeavored to establish an active, engaging, and student-centered learning environment, thereby enabling students to participate optimally in every learning activity. The instructional intervention was expected to address the learning problems that had been identified during the preliminary stage of the research.

The third stage was observation (observing). Observation was conducted concurrently with the implementation of the instructional action. At this stage, the researcher observed all activities occurring throughout the learning process, including both teacher activities and student activities. The observations were conducted using observation sheets that had been prepared in advance to ensure that the data obtained were systematic and objective. The data collected included the implementation of the instructional process, students' learning engagement, interactions between the teacher and students, the use of instructional media, and various constraints encountered during the learning process. In addition, the researcher collected data on students' learning outcomes through achievement tests administered at the end of each cycle.

The fourth stage was reflection (reflecting). Reflection involved analyzing and evaluating all data obtained during the implementation of the instructional action. The observation findings and test results were analyzed to determine the effectiveness of the intervention that had been implemented. If the predetermined indicators of success had not yet been achieved, the researcher, together with the classroom teacher, identified the factors contributing to the shortcomings and developed improvement plans to be implemented in

the subsequent cycle. Conversely, if the indicators of success had been achieved, the intervention was considered successful, and the research was concluded.

This study was conducted collaboratively between the researcher and the classroom teacher. The collaboration encompassed all stages of the research, including planning, action implementation, observation, and reflection. The classroom teacher served as the practitioner responsible for implementing the instructional process in the classroom, while the researcher was responsible for preparing the research instruments, observing the instructional process, collecting the data, analyzing the research findings, and evaluating the effectiveness of the implemented intervention. The collaboration between the researcher and the classroom teacher was expected to produce more effective instructional interventions capable of improving both the quality of the learning process and students' learning outcomes.

Through the implementation of this Classroom Action Research, it was expected that the quality of the instructional process would improve progressively across each research cycle. These improvements were reflected in increased student learning activities, greater student participation throughout the instructional process, and improved learning outcomes in accordance with the predetermined indicators of success. Therefore, this study was not only oriented toward improving students' learning outcomes but also toward enhancing the overall quality of the instructional process, thereby generating a positive impact on classroom learning.

RESULTS

This classroom action research was conducted in Class V of UPT SD Negeri 068007 Medan Tuntungan, involving 23 students as the research participants. The study was carried out in two cycles, each consisting of four stages: planning, action implementation, observation, and reflection. Prior to the implementation of the intervention, the researcher conducted classroom observations of the Indonesian language learning process to identify the students' initial reading comprehension ability. In addition, a pretest was administered to all students to determine their baseline ability to comprehend reading passages, identify the main idea, draw conclusions, and answer questions based on the texts they had read.

The results of the pretest revealed that the students' reading comprehension ability was still relatively low. Of the 23 students, only 5 students (21.7%) achieved scores above

the Minimum Mastery Criterion (MMC) established by the school, which was set at 70, while the remaining 18 students (78.3%) had not yet attained mastery. The mean class score was 52.17. These findings indicate that most students continued to experience difficulties in comprehending the content of reading passages, identifying the main idea, recognizing essential information, and drawing accurate conclusions from the texts. The preliminary observations also showed that students' learning activities remained at a low level. Most students tended to be passive, lacked confidence in expressing their opinions, had difficulty maintaining attention throughout the learning process, and relied primarily on the teacher's explanations. These conditions indicate that the learning process was still predominantly teacher-centered, thereby necessitating the implementation of an instructional model capable of enhancing both students' learning engagement and learning outcomes.

Based on these findings, the Direct Instruction learning model was implemented in Cycle I. The model was carried out through several stages, including communicating the learning objectives, demonstrating the instructional material, providing guided practice, checking students' understanding, delivering feedback, and assigning independent practice. The teacher explained the reading comprehension material systematically and sequentially, followed by guiding students in understanding the reading passages through relevant examples. Throughout the learning process, students were also provided with opportunities to participate in discussions, answer questions, and present their understanding of the texts they had read.

The implementation of the intervention in Cycle I demonstrated an improvement compared with the initial condition. Students began to exhibit greater interest in learning, became more attentive to the teacher's explanations, and showed increased confidence in responding to the questions posed. Nevertheless, several students still experienced difficulties in comprehending the reading passages and were not yet able to accurately identify essential information. Based on the evaluation results, the number of students who achieved mastery increased to 9 students (39.1%), while 14 students (60.9%) still failed to meet the Minimum Mastery Criterion (MMC). The mean class score also increased to 62.61. Observation results indicated that teacher activity achieved a score of 66%, which was categorized as good, whereas student activity reached 58%, categorized as fairly good. Although improvements were observed compared with the initial condition, the results had not yet fulfilled the predetermined indicators of research success, as classical learning mastery had not reached the target of 75%.

Based on the reflection results from Cycle I, several improvements were implemented in Cycle II. The teacher prepared the instructional materials more thoroughly, improved classroom management, provided more systematic explanations, increased the frequency of reading comprehension exercises, offered individualized guidance to students experiencing learning difficulties, and provided motivation and reinforcement to encourage students to participate more actively in the learning process. Furthermore, the teacher created more opportunities for students to ask questions, engage in discussions, and communicate their understanding of the reading texts.

The implementation of the intervention in Cycle II demonstrated highly positive changes. Students appeared to participate more actively in the learning process, paid closer attention to the teacher's explanations, and exhibited greater confidence in answering questions and expressing their opinions regarding the content of the reading materials. The classroom atmosphere became more interactive, as the majority of students were actively engaged in every stage of the instructional process. The implementation of the Direct Instruction model enabled students to comprehend the learning materials progressively, thereby facilitating their ability to identify the main ideas, understand the content of the texts, and draw conclusions based on the reading passages.

The evaluation results in Cycle II revealed a substantial improvement compared with those obtained in Cycle I. Of the 23 students, 19 students (82.6%) achieved scores above the Minimum Mastery Criterion (MMC), while only 4 students (17.4%) had not yet attained mastery. The class mean score increased to 83.50. Consequently, the research success indicator was achieved, as classical learning mastery exceeded the predetermined minimum criterion of 75%. In addition, the observation results indicated that teacher activity improved to 86%, which was categorized as very good, while student activity increased to 80%, which was categorized as good.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the implementation of the Direct Instruction learning model had a positive impact on both the instructional process and students' learning outcomes. This instructional model assisted the teacher in delivering the learning materials in a structured, systematic, and sequential manner, enabling students to develop a better understanding of reading comprehension. Through guided practice and

immediate feedback, students were provided with opportunities to identify and correct their mistakes while enhancing their comprehension of the reading texts. Furthermore, the interaction established between the teacher and the students throughout the instructional process contributed to increased student engagement, confidence, and willingness to participate actively in classroom learning activities.

The improvement in learning outcomes, as reflected in the increase in the mean score from 52.17 on the pretest to 62.61 in Cycle I, followed by a further increase to 83.50 in Cycle II, indicates that the implemented intervention successfully achieved the objectives of the study. Likewise, the percentage of students achieving learning mastery increased progressively from 21.7% on the pretest to 39.1% in Cycle I and subsequently to 82.6% in Cycle II. These findings indicate that the implementation of the Direct Instruction learning model was effective in improving students' reading comprehension skills.

The findings of this study are consistent with those of previous studies, which have reported that the Direct Instruction model is effective in improving learning outcomes because instruction is delivered in a gradual, structured, and systematic manner while providing students with opportunities to receive direct guidance from the teacher. Furthermore, this instructional model facilitates students' understanding of concepts in a more systematic way, thereby enhancing their thinking skills, learning engagement, and academic achievement in Indonesian language learning, particularly in reading comprehension.

Based on the overall findings of this study, it can be concluded that the implementation of the Direct Instruction learning model was effective in improving the reading comprehension skills of fifth-grade students at UPT SD Negeri 068007 Medan Tuntungan. This success was evidenced by the improvement in students' learning outcomes, the increased levels of teacher and student classroom activities throughout the instructional process, and the achievement of classical learning mastery by the end of Cycle II. Therefore, the Direct Instruction learning model can be considered a viable alternative instructional approach for teaching the Indonesian language to enhance elementary school students' reading comprehension skills.

This study has several limitations that should be taken into consideration. First, the research was conducted in only one class involving 23 students and employed a Classroom Action Research (CAR) design implemented over two cycles; therefore, the findings cannot

yet be generalized to broader educational contexts. In addition, the study focused exclusively on the implementation of the Direct Instruction learning model to improve reading comprehension skills without comparing its effectiveness with other instructional models. Accordingly, future studies are recommended to involve larger sample sizes, extend the duration of the research, and employ experimental research designs in order to provide more comprehensive evidence regarding the effectiveness of the Direct Instruction learning model in enhancing students' reading comprehension skills.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the classroom action research conducted over two cycles, it can be concluded that the implementation of the Direct Instruction learning model was effective in improving the reading comprehension skills of fifth-grade students at UPT SD Negeri 068007 Medan Tuntungan during the 2025/2026 academic year. This instructional model facilitated a more structured, systematic, and interactive learning process, enabling students to better comprehend reading texts, identify the main ideas, recognize essential information, and draw conclusions based on the texts they read. Furthermore, the structured instructional stages provided students with gradual guidance, which contributed to improvements in their learning engagement, confidence, and willingness to participate actively throughout the learning process.

The improvement in students' reading comprehension skills was evident from their learning outcomes across each research cycle. During the pretest, only 5 out of 23 students (21.7%) achieved the Minimum Mastery Criterion (MMC), with a class mean score of 52.17. Following the implementation of the Direct Instruction learning model in Cycle I, the number of students achieving mastery increased to 9 students (39.1%), with the class mean score rising to 62.61. A more substantial improvement was observed in Cycle II, during which 19 students (82.6%) successfully achieved the MMC, with the class mean score increasing to 83.50. These findings indicate that the research success indicators were successfully attained, as the level of classical learning mastery exceeded the predetermined target of 75%.

In addition to improving students' learning outcomes, the implementation of the Direct Instruction learning model also enhanced students' learning activities throughout the instructional process. Students became more attentive to the teacher's explanations,

participated more actively in asking and answering questions, demonstrated greater confidence in expressing their opinions, and showed improved reading comprehension through guided practice and immediate feedback. Therefore, the Direct Instruction learning model can be regarded as an effective instructional alternative for Indonesian language learning, particularly in enhancing the reading comprehension skills of elementary school students.

This study contributes to the advancement of educational knowledge, particularly in the field of Indonesian language instruction at the elementary school level, by providing empirical evidence that the implementation of the Direct Instruction learning model effectively enhances students' reading comprehension skills through a structured, systematic, and sequential instructional approach. These findings strengthen the existing body of literature regarding the effectiveness of Direct Instruction as an alternative instructional model capable of improving students' academic achievement, classroom engagement, and reading comprehension skills in elementary education.

Future researchers are encouraged to extend this study by implementing the Direct Instruction learning model across different educational levels, subject areas, or instructional materials while involving larger and more diverse participant groups to obtain more comprehensive findings. Furthermore, subsequent studies may integrate Direct Instruction with innovative instructional media or educational technologies to further investigate its effectiveness in enhancing reading comprehension as well as other language skills.

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