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Direct EFL Instruction for Gifted Students: A Case Study

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Abstract: This study aimed to describe the use of direct instruction in English learning for gifted students. This research applied a case study approach. The participants of this study were an English teacher and five students of a special junior high school for gifted students of grades 7 and 8 in the acceleration program. The data were collected through in-depth interview, focused-group interview, observation, and document analysis. The data were qualitatively analyzed through transcribing, data condensing, data displaying through a matrix, and conclusion drawing. The result showed that the teacher used the teaching strategies for direct instruction which were supported by some appropriate teaching aids. The impact of the strategies on the students were the students were actively involved in the teaching-learning process although they still encountered some difficulties in their English learning process. However, the teacher needed to employ other strategies which could meet the other needs of the gifted students in the teaching-learning process.

Key words: Teaching English as a Foreign Language, direct instruction, gifted students

***Abstrak:** Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mendeskripsikan penggunaan instruksi eksplisit dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris untuk siswa cerdas istimewa. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan studi kasus. Partisipan dalam penelitian ini adalah seorang guru bahasa Inggris dan lima orang siswa dari kelas 7 dan 8 di SMP khusus untuk siswa cerdas istimewa dalam program akselerasi. Teknik pengumpulan data yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah wawancara mendalam, wawancara kelompok terarah, observasi, dan analisis dokumen. Data yang diperoleh dianalisis menggunakan teknik analisis*

*kualitatif melalui proses transkripsi, reduksi data, penyajian data dalam bentuk matriks, dan penarikan kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa guru bahasa Inggris di sekolah khusus ini menggunakan strategi-strategi pengajaran instruksi eksplisit yang didukung oleh alat bantu mengajar yang sesuai. Penerapan strategi ini mampu mengikutsertakan siswa secara aktif dalam proses belajar-mengajar walaupun mereka tetap menghadapi beberapa kesulitan dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris. Meskipun demikian, penggunaan strategi pengajaran lainnya dibutuhkan untuk memenuhi kebutuhan siswa cerdas istimewa lainnya dalam proses belajar-mengajar. **Kata kunci:** Media, Pembelajaran bahasa asing, gambar, menulis, pandangan guru, keyakinan.*

***Kata kunci:** pengajaran bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing, instruksi eksplisit, siswa cerdas istimewa*

INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, gifted people have not got the appropriate education. There still the lack schools which provide the appropriate teaching-learning activities for them. Previously, there was the acceleration in some schools as the program for gifted students. However, according to Dikpora Yogyakarta province (Eri-K, 2014), this program was banned recently in 2015 in order to avoid the discrimination between the average student and the high ability student. This situation is opposite to *Undang-Undang No 20 Bab IV Pasal 5 Ayat 4* (2003, p.5) which states that “Warga negara yang memiliki potensi kecerdasan dan bakat istimewa berhak memperoleh pendidikan khusus.” This regulation notes that the students with giftedness need to get a special education.

Some problems occur in the gifted students’ learning process due to the inappropriate treatment in the classroom. For example, according to a parent of a gifted student, his son got some complaints from his teacher in a regular school because of his behavior in the teaching-learning process. The principal of a special school argues that this situation is caused by the general treatment in a regular classroom which causes boredom to the gifted. Additionally, he informed that people with giftedness from wealthy families in Indonesia can go abroad to get the appropriate education, but it cannot happen to the students from low-income families. Consequently, many gifted people in Indonesia cannot develop their high potential due to the inappropriate guidance.

In order to solve the problems of the gifted education, there is a special junior high school for gifted students in Cianjur, West java, which provides some facilities for the gifted students from low-income families to develop their potential. In conducting the teaching-learning process, this school provides the acceleration by compacting the learning materials based on the national curriculum, school-based curriculum. On the other hand, teachers in this school have an adequate knowledge regarding the gifted because the essential requirement to be a teacher in this school is understanding the gifted. Besides, the teachers often involve drawing activity into the learning task because most of the students in this school have the high ability in art especially drawing and interest in the visual media. The teaching learning process is also allowed to be conducted everywhere in this school, so the students do not always have to only sit on their chairs in the classroom.

However, the English teacher in this special junior high school still employs the teaching strategies for direct instruction which are also employed to teach in a regular classroom. This fact is interesting because the students of this school are still able to get a good score in the English subject but lack a little confidence to perform it. Due to this issue, this study aims to investigate the teacher's treatment through the strategies for direct instruction employed by the English teacher and the impact on the gifted students' English learning process. This study is expected to inform the audience about the teaching-learning activities which can be applied to teach the gifted students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A. The nature of gifted learners

Gifted students are a part of students with special needs with some special characteristics. Their special characteristics are different from the average people such as their high ability, high creativity, and high task commitment (Renzulli, 2011). They have an Intelligence Quotient (IQ) score at least 129 (Santrock, 2011). As people with high intelligence, the gifted can understand the learning materials more rapidly than the average students (Fonseca, 2011). Besides, they are good autonomous learners. They are able to learn more independently than the average students (Ormrod, 2003). Additionally, Winner (1997) argued that gifted people also have the other three special characteristics. The first is precocity. Their precocity is identified by their ability to deal with the works which are used to being mastered by the older one (Woolfolk, 2007). They are able to understand the more complex

material more rapidly than the average people (Fonseca, 2011). They are also marching their own drum which causes them to have some differences in their learning process (Winner, 1997). They usually tend to use their own point of view to interpret the learning input and understand it rapidly (Fonseca, 2011). On the other hand, the gifted has a passion for mastering some particular abilities due to their high internal motivation (Winner, 1997). They have the ability in some particular areas such as in leadership and performing arts with higher level (Tunncliffe, 2010). Those characteristics distinguish them from non-gifted students.

As stated previously, gifted students have the high intelligence which is shown by their IQ score, and it probably affects their foreign language learning. Besides the IQ score, actually, there are eight kinds of intelligences introduced by Gardner (2006) as the Multiple Intelligences which can also be a consideration to measure their intelligence. They are linguistic intelligence, logical-mathematical intelligence, spatial intelligence, musical intelligence, bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, intrapersonal intelligence, and naturalistic intelligence. The intelligences have some contributions to the language learning. For example, the logical-mathematical intelligence has a contribution to the process of acquiring semantics and pragmatics for the second language learners (Gardner, 1993). Besides, the bodily-kinesthetic is related to the learning process of the language phonology (Brown, 2000). On the other hand, people with musical intelligence have the good capability of acquiring and producing the intonation of the second language (Brown, 2000). Additionally, in using the language as a means of communication, the interpersonal intelligence has a contribution to it (Brown, 2000). In other words, the high intelligence probably has a positive role in the gifted students' language learning.

Although the gifted students are well known as learners with high ability, they still encounter some problems in their learning process. Some gifted students are misjudged because they attain the low achievement in their learning process due to boredom issue from the unchallenging teaching-learning activities (Fonseca, 2011). Besides, the unchallenging activities in the classroom also cause them to lack a little motivation to learn (Clinkenbeard, 2012). In fact, motivation is important to lead the students' attention and affects their learning process (Schunk, 2012). On the other hand, they are afraid of making mistakes. They believe that making mistakes is a part of the inability (Fonseca, 2011). As a result, those high ability students need the appropriate guidance in order to solve their problems in their learning process.

It is clear that gifted learners are those who have the high ability in some particular areas which are supported by the creativity and task commitment. As high ability learners, they have some superior characteristics which give them the advantages in their learning process such as their precocity, their passion to master, and their different way of learning. Besides, their high intelligence might give them some benefits in the teaching-learning process of their foreign language. On the other hand, they still encounter some problems in their learning and need some help to solve them.

B. Direct instruction

In teaching using direct instruction, there are some strategies that can be employed in the classroom. Lecturing is one of the strategies used in direct instruction. In lecturing, the teacher transfers the knowledge to the students through explaining the learning materials orally (Moore, 2012). In order to conduct an effective lecturing, the teacher can utilize some technologies as the teaching aids such as films, photograph, and interactive media to get the students' attention (Moore, 2012). Besides, the teacher needs to ensure that he/ she presents the explanation clearly and enthusiastically (Muijs & Reyn, 2011). Muijs & Reyn (2011) also suggest that the teacher needs to provide some practicing sessions before going on to the next step in order to help the students to mastery the learning materials and to avoid boredom.

Modeling is another way to explain the learning materials in direct instruction. The teacher can apply it through visual and verbal cues or demonstration to show the way the students can do their task (Dell'Olio & Donk, 2007). This strategy is suitable for providing the explanations regarding the learning materials to the learners with visual learning style (Muijs & Reyn, 2011). In conducting this strategy, the teacher should pay attention to some important aspects that need to occur such as the students' attention, students' retention, students' production, and students' motivation (Borich, 2007).

In applying the direct instruction, the teacher also provides questioning in the teaching-learning process. The question and answer activity is able to build the interaction between the students and the teachers (Moore, 2012). Moreover, the questioning has an important role in teaching process because the teacher can stimulate the students to think, and the teacher can get the information about the students' progress in learning (Killen, 2009). Furthermore, Moore (2012) highlights that the questioning has an impact on the students' self-esteem and students' involvement in the teaching-learning process, but it depends on what the questions are, how the questions deliver,

and how the students respond to the questions. The questions which contain the real-life issues can challenge the high ability students in their learning process (VanTassel-Baska, 2014).

Giving some prompts also a part of direct instruction. The aim of the probing is to help the teacher to get the clearer information regarding the students' comprehension because the students' initial response to the teacher's initial questions might not clear enough (Killen, 2009). In this strategy, the teacher can use some supplementary instructional stimuli that can stimulate the students to respond correctly regarding the learning materials (Borich, 2007). Furthermore, Borich (2007) categorizes the prompts into spoken prompts (cues, reminders, or instruction), gestural prompts (modeling or demonstrating), physical prompts (handwriting, cutting out shapes, and tying shoelaces), least-to-most intrusive prompting (integrating the verbal and physical prompts), and full-class prompting (dialog).

It can be concluded that through direct instruction, the teacher becomes the main sources in the teaching-learning process (Moore, 2012). The teacher explicitly delivers the learning materials to the students. Although the teacher becomes the center of the class, the teacher also still builds the interactive atmosphere in the classroom through the questioning. The strategies are suitable for providing the new topic, introducing a unit, and creating a frame of reference (Moore, 2012).

C. Previous studies

There are many studies which inform about the gifted students education. Regarding the EFL learning, according to Vu & Vu (2102), the gifted students in Vietnam found that a special program called Teaching English as a Foreign Language Major (TEAM) is useful for their future study and career. On the other hand, a study was undertaken by Gollif (2008) regarding the appropriate teaching strategies for the gifted which established that the clustering, Multiple Intelligences, Habits of Mind, multicultural approaches, and Dixon-Hegelian strategy make the students engage with the learning process because of the challenging tasks provided by applying the strategies. The data provided some appropriate practices from the strategies regarding the challenging tasks for the gifted students with the teacher as a guide. Moreover, the Dixon-Hegelian method can provide the tasks that focus on the critical thinking of the gifted students (Dixon et al., 2004). Additionally, Mann (2006) found that it is important to provide the teaching learning activities for the gifted which are suitable for their strength area.

METHODOLOGY

Because the aim of this study was to investigate the implementation of the direct instruction strategy for gifted students, a case study approach was applied. Through the case study approach, the phenomenon was deeply investigated and within its real-world context (Yin, 2014). The data were collected from a special junior high school for gifted students in Cianjur, West Java. The participants were an English teacher and 5 students of grades 7 and 8 of this special school. The students were those who had passed the elementary level of this special school. They entered the school by passing some tests conducted by the professional psychologists to identify their giftedness. On the other hand, the English teacher had the experience in teaching the gifted for about six years in this school. For the last six years, the teacher had the intensive interaction with the gifted students because they stayed in the boarding school. The activities of both the teacher and the students in the classroom gave the information about how the direct instruction was employed in the EFL class. The principal and the school counselor were also participated to give more information about the students and the learning process. The data were collected in the academic year 2016/2017 in the acceleration program of this special school.

There were three techniques of data collection conducted in this study. They were observation, interview (focused-group interview and in-depth interview), and documentary study. The observation was held in seven meetings in the English class of this special junior high school. The in-depth interview was conducted with the English teacher, principal, and school counselor, and the focused-group interview was conducted with the gifted students. The collected documents in this study included the students' works, the students' report books, and the lesson plan. In the process of collecting the data, the researcher used some protocols as the instruments to conduct the observation, interview and documentary study. The interview and the observation were recorded to help the researcher to analyze the data.

The data were analyzed as suggested by Miles, Huberman, & Saldana (2014) for qualitative data analysis. The first step of analyzing the data was transcribing all of the data into transcripts because some data were in the form of video and sound recording. The next step was condensing the data by coding process, developing themes, and categorizing them. After the data were appropriately condensed, they were displayed in a matrix as seen in table 1. The last step was interpreted them with the literature guidance to draw a conclusion. The trustworthiness was gained from triangulation. The

triangulation of the data can strengthen the construct validity of this study (Yin, 2014). The data were collected from several different types of sources in order to get the valid data. First, the data were obtained from the interview. The interview was conducted with different sources, the English teacher, the gifted students, the principal, and the school counselor. The next technique was observation. To triangulate the data, the observation was held in seven meetings in order to get saturated data. The last was the document analysis. There were three types of documents were analyzed in this study, the students' work, the students' report book, and the lesson plan. On the other hand, the use of protocols for each instrument which had been validated from an expert in evaluation and research in education of ELT was used to obtain the reliability of this study.

RESULTS

In this section, the results regarding the direct instruction in the gifted class are discussed. The data were obtained from the interview, observation and document analysis. The data are presented in the following table.

Table 1:
The use of strategies for direct instruction in teaching English for gifted students

No.	Teaching Strategies	The Implementation	The Students' Responses
1.	Lecturing	Explaining the learning materials through lecturing	Paying attention to the teacher's explanation
		Explaining the learning materials from an electronic book.	Doing another activity while listening to the teacher's explanation
			Answering the teacher's questions regarding the delivered topic.
2.	Supplementary instructional stimuli	Giving clue	Understanding the meaning of the new vocabulary
		Using body language	Still asking about the vocabulary
		Mentioning the synonym of the word	

3.	Modeling	<p>Modeling how to describe a thing</p> <p>Asking the students to produce their own description</p>	<p>Involving in the teacher's demonstration through comment</p> <p>Laughing and closing mouth before producing their own description in front of the class</p> <p>Lack of confidence</p> <p>Needing teacher's help</p>
4.	Questioning	<p>Conversation between teacher and student</p> <p>Giving some questions regarding the students' task and learning materials</p> <p>Asking the students to answer some questions orally</p>	<p>Answering the teacher's correctly but sometimes incorrectly</p>
5.	Visual teaching aids and learning task	<p>Showing some videos whether it is related to the learning material or not</p> <p>Showing some videos from a cell phone.</p> <p>Using some pictures from the electronic book</p> <p>Asking the students to draw</p>	<p>Directly paying attention to the video</p> <p>Understanding the learning materials</p> <p>Some still paying attention to another activity</p> <p>Complaining their work due to some mistakes</p> <p>Applying the learning materials</p>

Based on the data above, in teaching the gifted students, the English teacher actually still involved the activities which were also used in a regular classroom. Based on the observation, the teacher still delivered the learning materials and explained them to the students through the lecturing. The principal argued, "Sometimes lecturing is more effective to teach gifted students". In the lecturing, the teacher was explaining the learning materials to the students orally. The lecturing was conducted in English, but sometimes it was delivered

in Bahasa Indonesia if it was necessary. Regarding the lecturing, the students were doing the other activities such as playing, writing randomly, or drawing while the teacher was delivering the learning materials because of the boredom issue, yet they paid their attention to the teacher's explanation. The students admitted that they still did another activity in order to avoid boredom while listening to the teacher's explanation. In order to conquer this issue, the teacher used some teaching aids to take the students' attention. It is relevant to Moore's explanation (2012) about the use of the teaching aids to conduct an effective lecturing. When the teacher explained the learning materials, the teacher inserted some videos or images related to the learning materials. In an interview section, the teacher informed that the students were interested in the visual and audiovisual media such as the images and videos. Because all of the students in this school were interested in the visual media, they fully paid their attention to the learning materials in the video without doing another activity. In other words, the effective lecturing which is supported by the appropriate teaching aids is able to decrease the boredom issue encountered by the students.

Besides utilizing the visual teaching aids such as the videos and images, the evidence showed that the teacher also sometimes asked the students to draw as their learning task because they had the high ability on it. This activity makes the students more engage with the teaching-learning process. Mann (2006) found that providing the teaching learning process which was suitable for the students' strength area was important. In this process, the students are able to apply the learning materials that they have learned into a creative way. Their creative works regarding the learning materials are usually displayed in their classroom. They liked this kind of task. It was revealed in an interview with the students that they liked when the learning task contained the drawing activity, and the results were displayed in a particular spot at school. Furthermore, some students showed their perfectionism when they made a mistake in this task. They complained their mistake although it was not a fatal mistake. It hinders the students in finishing their task because they stop doing the task and become over thinking about their mistake in the task. For them, making mistakes is represented the inability (Fonseca, 2011). The teacher usually tried to calm down the students who faced this problem and ensured them that they still could trick the mistakes and finish the task with good result.

On the other hand, the teacher also gave some questions to the students after explaining the learning materials. The questions were about the learning materials which had been explained by the teacher such as from a text or a

dialog. The aim of the teacher's questions to the students is similar to Killen's argument (2009) about the questioning which can be used to measure the students' progress in their learning process. The teacher also sometimes asked about the students' daily activity which could represent the learning materials. In response to the teacher's questions, the students answered the teacher's questions whether their answer was correct or incorrect. Through the questioning activity, it is seen that the teacher tries to interact with the students using English, so the students are used to with the English language. The question and answer activity is suitable for building the interaction between the students and the teachers (Moore, 2012). Besides, the teacher has a perspective that in learning a foreign language, interaction between the teacher and the students in the teaching-learning process is an essential part. The English teacher argued, "...asking and answering, the conversation between the teacher and student should work". Unfortunately, there lack the real-life issue in the questioning activity. According to Van Tassel-Baska (2014), giving some questions regarding the real-life problems can provide a challenging learning experience for the gifted students. It means that the teacher needs to ask not only the questions in which the students can easily find the answer in the text given, but also the questions about the texts which are related to the real-life issue. The questions asked by the teacher do not stimulate the thinking skills of the students as a critical thinker. In order to promote the students' critical thinking skills, the teacher can try to ask the students to discuss the thesis and antithesis of the text (Dixon et al, 2004). The topic which is related to their future goals also needs to be inserted. It is related to their positive expectation toward their English learning for their future study and career (Vu & Vu, 2012). They expect that English might be useful for their future life (Okan and Ispinar, 2009). Actually, the other topics that are related to the other communities can also be inserted to challenge them in doing the task related to the text (Goliff, 2008).

According to the observation, the teacher also did a modeling to deliver the learning materials. He did the modeling when he attempted to ask the students to perform their English ability in some particular materials in front of the classroom. When the teacher demonstrated what the students needed to do in their performance, some students were participated by giving some comments on the teacher's demonstration. When the students give some comments to what the teacher models, it means that they pay attention to what the teacher does. A meaningful modeling is when the students pay attention to the teacher's modeling (Borich, 2007). However, the students still lack a little confidence in performing their ability although the teacher has shown what they need to do in their performance. Based on the observation, when the

students were in front of the classroom, they did not directly perform their task. Some students laughed smoothly and closed their mouth or face. They even needed the teacher's guidance to start their performance. Although the gifted students are well known as the students with high ability, lack of confidence is a common problem which is encountered by them. They even can violently behave to their friends due to their confidence problem (Gross, 2004). Nevertheless, according to the teacher's explanation and the document analysis, the students are able to gain a good score in the English test more than the standard score. Unfortunately, their ability cannot be shown, especially in speaking, due to their confidence problem.

As stated previously, the gifted students are known as a good autonomous learner and a high intelligent student. In fact, the evidence showed that the students also encountered the difficulty in their English learning, for example, English vocabulary. When the teacher asked them about a text or dialog, there were some vocabularies which were new for the students. In this activity, the teacher gave some supplementary instructional stimuli to help the students to understand the meaning of the vocabularies. The supplementary instructional stimuli are useful to stimulate the students to respond correctly regarding the learning materials (Borich, 2007).

In this study, the teacher gave some prompts such as mentioning the synonym of the words, gesturing, and asking the students to pay attention to the previous or the next sentences. In response to the stimuli, sometimes the students were able to understand the words and correctly mention the appropriate meaning, but sometimes they still asked about the vocabulary that they did not understand.

Generally, the students look enjoying the learning process with the English teacher. When the students were asked about their feeling towards the learning process in an interview section, they explained their positive feeling, but it still depended on their mood. QS, a student, answered "I like it" when she was asked about the learning process. "If the mood is good", added her friend, ST. It showed that the gifted learners' responses towards the teaching strategies also depended on their mood in learning. In response to this issue, the teachers need to provide the various, exciting, and challenging activities in order to foster the gifted students to retain their language learning (Okan & Ispinar, 2009).

CONCLUSION

The study showed that through the interaction between the teacher and the students in the direct instruction strategy, the students were actively involved in the teaching-learning process. This situation is suitable for the gifted students who cannot only sit nicely and pay attention to the teacher's explanation in the classroom. Besides, the use of the teaching aids which were suitable for the students' strength as a visual learner made the students more engage with the teaching-learning process. However, the students still encountered the boredom issue in a particular learning situation when the teacher employed the strategies. The teacher needs to insert more real-world issues into the learning materials in order to give more challenging learning experience. The teacher also needs to employ other strategies and adds more various topics related to the students' interest for their future goals in order to promote the students' thinking skill. Furthermore, for the future research, investigating the students' process of acquiring a foreign language beyond the classroom is needed because the gifted students are also well known as the autonomous learner.

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