# Improving Students' Figurative Language Writing through Explicit Instruction

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**General Background:** Writing in English requires mastery of lexical, compositional, and stylistic components, making it a complex skill for learners to acquire. **Specific Background:** Many junior high school students struggle with writing due to limited vocabulary and lack of engagement with creative language use. **Knowledge Gap:** While explicit instruction has been widely used to teach various language skills, its application in developing students' use of figurative language in writing remains underexplored, particularly at the junior high school level. **Aims:** This study investigates how explicit instruction in figurative language contributes to improving students' writing skills. **Results:** Using a pre-experimental design with 30 eighth-grade students in Sidoarjo, the study recorded an increase in mean scores from 59.5 (pre-test) to 70.67 (post-test), supported by t-test results, indicating statistically significant improvement. **Novelty:** This research integrates explicit instruction with figurative language teaching, offering a structured approach that enhances both linguistic creativity and writing quality. **Implications:** The findings suggest that explicit instruction can be a practical strategy for helping students develop stronger, more expressive writing skills, and promote independent application of language in academic and real-life contexts.

**Highlights :**

- Uses pre-experimental design to measure writing skill development

- Focuses on eighth-grade students in a real classroom context

- Emphasizes the role of explicit instruction in creative writing

**Keywords :** Explicit Instruction, Figurative Language, Writing Skills, Junior High School, Language Education

## Introduction

Writing in English involves not just its lexical components but also its compositional and stylistic structure [1]. In addition, the student's writing illustrates the expressive potential of their language. Writing is more than simply copying out a speech. It demands a comprehensive, strict

understanding of syntax, punctuation, pluralization, tenses, capitalization, and other related concepts, particularly for formal or academic purposes [2]. Students can use their language skills to write and communicate ideas through practice with writing [3]. Writing can be used for purposes such as keeping in touch with others, transmitting information, expressing feelings, ideas, and actions, entertaining, and persuading [4]. It can be an effective tool for learning and remembering when used personally. When somebody writes, he attempts to express everything he knows by tracing his knowledge of that recollection, episodes, achievements, failures, current conditions, prospects, and so on. Writing fluency is crucial for students since it not only enhances their learning but is also a necessary communication skill in modern society [5].

According to pre-observation by researchers at one of the junior high schools in Sidoarjo, Students' writing skills remained inadequate, and they showed little enthusiasm in the writing classes, especially due to a lack of vocabulary. Every student is exceptional and distinct in their own way. Learning English may be made more difficult by a lack of vocabulary [6]. Students frequently find it difficult to understand vocabulary in practice [7]. These problems make it more difficult to appropriately convey the ideas and views of the students. A large vocabulary is a crucial part of writing skills. The vocabulary itself is concerned with meanings and words. In written or spoken English, it is all about the words that are chosen to convey thoughts or viewpoints [8]. To overcome these obstacles and become skilled writers, students must strengthen their linguistic abilities and increase the scope of their vocabulary. Liando stated that having an enormous vocabulary is essential for creating sentences [9]. These obstacles will prevent students from progressing toward producing a decent piece of writing. The teacher of the writing class should be aware of the challenges that the students face when writing in English.

Teaching writing to students is a challenge for most teachers. The challenges relate to the following: the learners, the teachers, the teachingal situation, and the linguistic and cultural distinctions between the target languages [10]. But, if they approach it from a different perspective, it may become the most engaging aspect of the educational process. To obtain the desired growth results, every English teacher should approach writing uncommonly and successfully, allowing students to work in groups or independently during the learning phases. While learning a language, students must expand their vocabulary, idioms, and grammatical structure [11]. Furthermore, teachers should be aware of their student's true writing capacity, whether they are aware of proper vocabulary usage. The learning model that will be applied to the content that has to be taught must be carefully chosen and determined by the teacher. Each learning model needs to be suitable or suitable to reach a particular aim, so the teacher needs to employ various teaching strategies for various goals in addition to achieving the learning objectives [12]. One approach to improving vocabulary is using explicit teaching in writing class.

The Explicit instruction is utilized to provide lessons that the teacher transforms directly to the students [13]. Making certain that every step of the learning process is understandable and clear. Helping students internalize the material and abilities being taught will ultimately enable them to use these independently and successfully in their own writing. This strategy requires a high level of teacher involvement, with the teacher systematically presenting new knowledge, modeling desired outcomes, and guiding students through practice activities. Teachers can help students become more independent and proficient writers by providing them with specialized tactics and tools. Lectures, demonstrations, training or practice, and group work are examples of explicit teaching learning models, whereas classroom activities are not [14]. In explicit instruction, the teacher takes the lead in providing knowledge and supporting learning, ensuring that students are actively engaged and can follow a well-defined path to mastery. This approach is especially helpful when teaching complex concepts like figurative language, as students benefit from precise explanations and specific examples. Nowadays, many social media, especially Instagram, use figurative language [15]. Figurative language can be used understandable and easy to remember by teenagers.

Figurative language is an additional manner of expression that differs from the conventional methods of enhancing the beauty of speech [16]. Figurative language certainly has ambiguous

meanings. Figurative language refers to the use of words or expressions with meanings different from their literal interpretation. It is a powerful tool in writing that offers several advantages [17]. Furthermore, figurative language is not meant to be read literally, but rather to appeal to the imagination [18]. It helps to communicate concepts more creatively and vividly, engaging the reader's or listener's feelings and senses. Figurative language can be used effectively in speaking and writing to convey ideas [19]. Figurative language is used in communication to minimize misunderstandings and ensure that the listener understands the information or message being conveyed. Each type of figurative language has a purpose [20]. Figurative language employs figures of speech to be more effective, persuasive, and impactful [21]. Figurative language has several forms such as Personification, Simile, Metaphor, Hyperbole and other forms of metaphor found in books, novels, songs and other literary works [22].

To strengthen the current study, the researchers examined previous research from Akkoc showing that Explicit instruction improves students' formulaic language and argumentative writing skill [23]. The study's findings indicate that students who received explicit instruction demonstrated significant improvements in their ability to construct clear, well-organized arguments and effectively use formulaic language. According to Tsiriotakis that effectiveness explicit writing teaching to improve story writing skills has a positive impact [24]. This approach fosters a deeper appreciation and equips students with the skills needed to write more effectively and imaginatively. Tiawati states that creating description texts is a good application of the explicit instruction learning approach for junior high school students [25]. This learning approach offers students a systematic and well-defined process to improve their comprehension and utilization of writing strategies. Despite the several factors discussed above, the researches are interested in how the use of explicit insttruction can affect the teaching writing with figurative language. It can be employed in academic writing by inserting a few figurative languages that are appropriate for formal language usage.

### Research Question

"Does explicit instruction have an impact on student's figurative language writing skills?"

# Method

This is a quantitative research that used an experiment as its approach. The experimental design chosen by the writer is pre-experimental. A pre-experimental design is utilized in this research. pre-test-post-test designing with a quantitative methodology. Through experimental research, the researchers want to determine the impact of teaching students writing skills through the use of figurative language. By giving a specific treatment, the impact is assessed. As there is little to no control over extraneous variables, this study is classified by using an experimental design [26]. The research population was class VIII students at one of the junior high schools in Sidoarjo, just conducted in one class as a sample which consisted of 30 students. To obtain valid data from this study, the researchers used several instruments: pre-test, treatment and post-test.

### A. Pre-test

The first session was a pre-test organized in the classroom by providing a test in the form of a topic containing teachings to make a short story with a minimum of 3 figurative languages on a free theme consisting of 80-100 words. The test will be measured using scoring rubrics consisting of Content, Vocabulary, Figurative language, Grammar and Mechanics. The scoring rubric uses a scoring rate of 25-50 is poor, 51-75 is Fair, 75- 90 is good and 91-100 is excellent. This rate is for five aspects.

### B. Treatment

The second session is to provide treatment 2 meetings with a duration of 40 minutes in each

meeting. The researchers applied explicit instruction by explaining figurative language and its various types, introducing some new vocabulary about figurative language, interacting with the students asking about examples of figurative language, asking the students to make one sentence that has figurative language in it. After that, the researcher asked about the difficulties experienced by the students and reviewed the material that the students had received.

### C. Post-test

The researchers gave the test with the same subject in the pre-test session but in this session, the students made a short story with a minimum of 6 figurative language consisting of 80 to 100 words. After the post-test is well done, it scored through applying writing assessment such as the fo indicators; Content, Vocabulary, Grammar, and Mechanic. The assessment is made based on the writing rubric to get valid data.

Data was analyzed using statistics. The statistical analysis used for data analysis in this study is the t-test statistic. Before the hypothesis test is carried out, the prerequisite analysis test is carried out, namely the normality test of the data distribution which is intended to determine whether or not it is possible to carry out a hypothesis test to determine the distribution of writing skill score data is normally distributed or not so that it can determine the data analysis technique. To facilitate hypothesis testing in this study using the SPSS (Statistical Program for Social Science) for windows version 27.

## Findings

This study's findings are concerned with the classification of students' pre-test and post-test scores. To answer the research problem's questions, the researcher gave a twice-given test. Before the treatment, students were given a pre-test to assess their writing abilities. Nonetheless, the treatment was followed by the post-test by providing material about figurative language, and the results of the post-test from this study can answer the study's question of whether there is an effect of using explicit instruction on student's figurative language writing skills.

### A. Descriptive Statistic

The descriptive statistics show the students' scores, the minimum and maximum scores, the mean score, and the standard deviation that were collected. The scores were determined from the pre-test and post-test scores.

| No. | Name | Score Pre-test | Score Post-test |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | APF | 75 | 85 |
| 2. | ARP | 55 | 65 |
| 3. | AAA | 70 | 85 |
| 4. | ATW | 60 | 70 |
| 5. | ANQ | 50 | 70 |
| 6. | AAS | 50 | 60 |
| 7. | BAN | 60 | 65 |
| 8. | BWA | 55 | 65 |
| 9. | BNF | 55 | 65 |
| 10. | CAR | 60 | 75 |
| 11. | DRI | 50 | 65 |
| 12. | DAI | 65 | 70 |
| 13. | DSU | 55 | 65 |
| 14. | ECP | 60 | 65 |
| 15. | FMR | 55 | 65 |
| 16. | FPA | 65 | 75 |
| 17. | GFD | 70 | 80 |
| 18. | IPD | 50 | 65 |
| 19. | KIP | 60 | 75 |
| 20. | MIP | 65 | 75 |
| 21. | MAR | 70 | 80 |
| 22. | MFR | 55 | 70 |
| 23. | MFA | 50 | 60 |
| 24. | NDA | 50 | 70 |
| 25. | RAE | 60 | 70 |
| 26. | SM | 65 | 70 |
| 27. | SDA | 65 | 75 |
| 28. | SNS | 65 | 70 |
| 29. | SDR | 70 | 85 |
| 30. | YYP | 55 | 65 |

**Figure 1.** *Result of the Pre-test and Post-test*

| Table 2. Descriptive Statistics | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N | Range | Minimum | Maximum | Sum | Mean | | Std. Deviation | Variance | Skewness | | Kurtosis | | |
| | Statistic | Statistic | Statistic | Statistic | Statistic | Statistic | Std. Error | Statistic | Statistic | Statistic | Std. Error | Statistic | Std. Error | |
| Pretest | 30 | 25 | 50 | 75 | 1785 | 59.50 | 1.364 | 7.468 | 55.776 | .249 | .427 | -1.001 | .833 | |
| Posttest | 30 | 25 | 60 | 85 | 2120 | 70.67 | 1.285 | 7.038 | 49.540 | .701 | .427 | -.230 | .833 | |
| Valid N (listwise) | 30 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

**Table 1.**

The table above shows that the mean score of students' pre-test is 59,5. The maximum score is 75, the minimum score is 50, and the standard deviation is 7,468. While the mean value of students' post-test is 70.67 The maximum score is 85, the minimum score is 60, and the standard deviation is 7,038. From the analysis, it can be seen that almost out of 30 students, their writing skills are in the good classification. As a result, the researchers found that students improved their writing skills when using figurative language.

## B. Pre-requisite Analysis

In pre-requisite analysis, two types of analysis should be performed: normality and homogeneity.

### 1. Normality test.

| | | Unstandardized Residual |
|---|---|---|
| N | | 30 |
| Normal Parameters[a,b] | Mean | .0000000 |
| | Std. Deviation | 2.94048458 |
| Most Extreme Differences | Absolute | .133 |
| | Positive | .118 |
| | Negative | -.133 |
| Test Statistic | | .133 |
| Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)[c] | | .188 |
| Monte Carlo Sig. (2-tailed)[d] | Sig. | .192 |
| | 99% Confidence Interval | Lower Bound | .181 |
| | | Upper Bound | .202 |

**Figure 2.** *Result of the Normality Test*

According to the normality test using the SPSS 27 programme with the One Sample Kolmogorov Smirnov method, Table 3 presents the results of the study. Table 3 indicates that the pre-test and post-test data's Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed) values are 0,188 and 0,192, respectively, so the significance value of both data is more than 0.05, then both data are normally distributed.

### 2. Homogeneity test

The homogeneity test determines if the data gathered is homogeneous or not. The homogeneity test of variance was designed to examine whether the sample selected from the population is derived from similar variances and shows a significant difference from one another.

| Table 4. Result of the homogeneity test | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Levene Statistic | df1 | df2 | Sig. |
| Hasil | Based on Mean | .415 | 1 | 58 | .522 |
| | Based on Median | .559 | 1 | 58 | .458 |
| | Based on Median and with adjusted df | .559 | 1 | 57.378 | .458 |
| | Based on trimmed mean | .539 | 1 | 58 | .466 |

**Figure 3.**

From the data above, The researchers determined that given the pre-test and post-test data, the mean-based significant value is 0.522. As a result of the significance value, or Sig. > 0,05, the pre-test and post-test data are homogeneous. So that it fulfils the requirements for the t-test.

### 3. T-test

The table below determines the paired sample t-test analysis result:

| Table 5. Result of the T-test | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Paired Differences | | | | | | Sig. (2-tailed) |
| | | | | | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | | | |
| | | Mean | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean | Lower | Upper | t | df |
| Pair 1 | Pretest - Posttest | -11.167 | 3.130 | .572 | -12.336 | -9.998 | -19.539 | 29 | .000 |

**Figure 4.**

Based on the data presented in table 5 above, provides information about the "paired samples test" value of -11,7. The difference between the mean scores for learning from the pre-and post-tests is shown by this statistic: 59,5 - 70,67 = -11,17. The results indicate a substantial rise between pre-test and post-test values, with Sig. (2 tailed) of 0.000 < 0.05. This implies the null hypothesis (Ho) is rejected and the alternative (Ha) is accepted. It is possible to deduce that there is a change from the post-test results, indicating that teaching writing skills with figurative language has an effect.

# Discussion

The researchers presented figurative language with words that students typically find to make the learning process of writing in figurative language as engaging as possible for students who had never learned it before. To that end, the researchers created a range of in-person interactive exercises engaging students. To facilitate students' understanding and use of the concepts of figurative language in their writing, the content is adapted to their interests and daily experiences. Researchers also utilize various educational sources, including quotations from relevant literary works. so that students will become more engaged and encouraged to learn using this entertaining and relevant approach. To help students improve their writing skills with greater originality and confidence, the researchers also gave them the freedom to explore and express their thinking.

The implementation of teaching writing skills with figurative language at one of the junior high schools in Sidoarjo had a good impact. A lot of figurative language was used in their writing after they received the treatment, such as "It was so cold I feel like I was in Snow World", "Mother when angry like a monster",and "Our car drove at high speed like a cheetah". Most students use figurative language especially similes. Additionally, these students exhibited enhanced confidence in their writing, which was reflected in their ability to produce more persuasive and coherent essays [23]. Explicit instruction not only helps students grasp fundamental writing skills but also empowers them to apply these skills independently in various academic and real-world contexts. Similarly, Tsiriotakis' research revealed that explicit instrution on teaching writing strategies satisfied the demands of all students in general, irrespective of their writing proficiency [24]. This approach proved effective across different skill levels, helping both struggling writers and advanced students improve their writing abilities. The structured, step-by-step nature of explicit instruction allowed students to understand and implement key writing strategies, leading to marked improvements in clarity, coherence, and overall writing quality [25]. By addressing individual learning needs and providing tailored feedback, explicit writing teaching fostered a more

inclusive and supportive learning environment where all students could thrive and achieve their writing goals.

From the findings of the research and hypothesis testing, it appears that developing writing skills with figurative language has an impact on the writing skills of students at one of the junior high schools in Sidoarjo. The Pre-test and post-test findings demonstrate this, with the post-test results outperforming the Pre-test results. The primary goal of the research is to determine whether the use of figurative language may improve students' writing abilities. In this research, a pre-test was used to assess the students' writing abilities before they began treatment. After the data was obtained, it was analyzed with SPSS 27 software. The pre-test resulted in a mean score of 59.5, indicating low initial understanding. After the pre-test stage, students received a treatment that incorporated figurative language into their writing skills. Students have high curiosity during the process of teaching writing skills using figurative language. This is because students have limited knowledge about figurative language, and the explicit teaching approach stimulates their curiosity when writing, which leads to improved learning outcomes when the post-test is given. After that, student's mean post-test score was 70.67, indicating that the outcome had improved from the previous pre-test result. Followed by the results of the t-test calculation. Pre-test and post-test results indicate a significant difference (Sig. 2 tailed) of 0.000 and this result is less than 0.05, in which that the results of the experimental class in the post-test are higher than the results of the pre-test. Thus, it can be argued that the research hypothesis is accepted. Using Explicit instruction can improve writing skills for students in class VIII at one of the junior high schools in Sidoarjo.

## Conclusion

According to the data analysis that was done, there has been a noticeable increase in the use of explicit teaching in teaching writing with figurative language. This is evident from the t-test results, which indicate that the mean score on the post-test following treatment was 70.67, significantly higher than the pre-test score of 59.5 before the treatment. These results show that the use of explicit instruction on student's figurative language can improve the writing skills of class VIII students in one of the junior high schools in Sidoarjo. These findings demonstrate that the strategy adopted helps improve students' writing abilities, while also demonstrating that the use of explicit instruction on student's figurative language can significantly improve the quality of their writing. Additionally, this increase in scores reflects that students are better able to express their ideas in a more creative and effective way, which in turn increases their confidence in writing. Thus, The use of explicit instruction not only facilitates students' writing skills, but also encourages them to be more confident and innovative in expressing their ideas and feelings.

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