

# Reading Comprehension Through Text Structure Instruction: Does It Work?

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## ABSTRACT

In English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts, reading plays a key role in academic success. However, many learners struggle with complex academic texts (or expository texts) due to limited strategic reading skills. Text structure instruction offers a promising solution by enabling learners to recognize and process textual organization through strategies such as identifying structural patterns, interpreting signal words, and summarizing with graphic organizers. This study investigated the impact of a 10-week text structure instruction program on students' reading comprehension, aiming to determine whether explicit instruction in text structure could enhance comprehension more effectively than traditional methods. A quasi-experimental design was used, with one group receiving traditional reading instruction and the other exposed to text structure instruction. Both groups completed pre- and post-tests to assess gains in reading comprehension. Results showed significant improvement in both groups, with the experimental group demonstrating a greater increase in scores. These findings suggest that structured instruction in text structure is more effective in improving reading comprehension than traditional approaches. The study highlights the value of incorporating text structure into reading instruction to better support language learners.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly interconnected world, proficiency in English has become an essential skill in education, as it serves as a global medium for communication and knowledge exchange. Among the four language skills - reading, listening, speaking, and writing - reading is particularly vital in EFL settings, where academic success often depends on strong reading comprehension abilities. For EFL learners with limited exposure to English in daily life, written texts serve as a primary source of language input, making reading a crucial component of language acquisition. As a result, extensive research has been dedicated to improving reading comprehension in EFL contexts.

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Despite its importance, many EFL learners, especially those pursuing academic study in English, continue to struggle with processing expository texts, which are commonly used in academic settings. Many studies have suggested that while vocabulary and lower-level language skills contribute to reading performance, higher-order cognitive processes - such as metacognitive strategies and content knowledge - play a more significant role in academic reading success (Kintsch, 2018; Grabe & Stoller, 2020). In "reading-to-learn" contexts of academic environments, proficient readers engage in strategic processing techniques, including comprehension monitoring, predicting, and identifying key information, which enhance their overall understanding (Pyle et al., 2017). However, many EFL students face difficulties due to a lack of these strategies, limiting their ability to navigate and interpret complex expository texts effectively.

One widely recognized method for improving academic reading comprehension is text structure instruction (TSI), which refers to any kind of instruction that equips learners with strategies to recognize and process the organizational patterns of texts (Bogaerds-Hazenberg et al., 2021; Grabe & Stoller, 2020). By fostering awareness of discourse structures and rhetorical patterns, TSI enables readers to navigate texts more effectively, improving both comprehension and engagement. This is particularly beneficial for EFL learners, as differences between L1 and L2 organizational patterns can pose challenges to reading fluency. Furthermore, TSI bridges bottom-up and top-down processing by integrating linguistic decoding with higher-order cognitive strategies, allowing learners to construct meaning more efficiently. Given its potential to enhance strategic reading and academic success, incorporating TSI into reading instruction is essential for developing proficient and independent readers.

Despite the well-documented benefits of TSI, it remains underutilized in L2 reading classrooms, where teachers often prioritize vocabulary and grammar over text organization due to time constraints and curriculum demands (Zarrati et al., 2014). In Vietnam, reading instruction continues to emphasize grammar and translation-based approaches, with limited focus on developing students' ability to recognize and utilize text structures (Gorsuch & Taguchi, 2010). Additionally, large class sizes, mixed proficiency levels, and limited instructional time further restrict the implementation of activities that promote text structure awareness, such as predicting, summarizing, and analyzing text organization.

Given these gaps, further empirical research is necessary to examine the impact of TSI on EFL adult learners' reading comprehension, particularly in the context of expository texts, where structural awareness plays a crucial role in meaning construction. To address this need, the present study seeks to answer the following research question: Does text-structure instruction improve reading comprehension among EFL adult learners of expository texts? If yes, to what extent?

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Expository Text Structures**

Text structure refers to the way information is organized within a text, providing a systematic framework that shapes how ideas are presented and related to one another. In expository texts, text structures establish logical relationships between concepts, guiding readers in processing and understanding content effectively (Van Dijk & Kintsch, 1982). Meyer (1975) identified five primary expository text structures: description, sequence,

comparison, cause-effect, and problem-solution. Each of these patterns serves a distinct function in conveying information, influencing both comprehension and recall.

Theoretical models of reading comprehension, such as Van Dijk and Kintsch's (1982) schema theory and Kintsch's (1994) schema theory, emphasize that readers activate prior knowledge structures (schemata) to recognize and interpret text structures, thereby facilitating deeper engagement with the content. Building on this, Kintsch (2018)'s Construction-Integration model further explains that comprehension involves constructing a coherent mental representation by integrating textual information with background knowledge. This model highlights how structural cues within texts, such as signal words and organizational patterns, support readers in forming macrostructures and connecting ideas meaningfully (Johansson et al., 2018).

From a cognitive perspective, understanding text structures enhances higher-order processing, allowing readers to integrate new information with prior knowledge for meaningful comprehension. Recent studies (e.g., Bogaerds-Hazenberg et al., 2021; Xu et al., 2024) reinforce this view, showing that instruction in identifying and using text structure improves higher-order comprehension processes, including inference-making and summarization. Given its role in shaping comprehension, explicit instruction in text structure is considered a crucial pedagogical approach to improving students' reading abilities.

## **2.2 Explicit Instruction of Text Structure: Key Elements**

Explicit text structure instruction typically includes teaching students to recognize signal words and use graphic organizers to identify and organize key ideas. Signal words, such as "because" in cause-and-effect texts, serve as linguistic markers that help readers discern a text's organizational pattern (Pyle et al., 2017). These words guide comprehension by highlighting relationships between ideas and distinguishing main points from supporting details. Additionally, graphic organizers (GOs), including framing, tree-diagramming, mapping, and flowcharting, provide visual frameworks that aid in structuring and retaining information (Jiang & Grabe, 2007). By explicitly teaching these strategies, educators can enhance students' ability to recognize and process text structures, thereby improving comprehension and recall.

## **2.3 Empirical Studies on Text Structure Instruction (TSI)**

A substantial body of L1 reading research has explored how explicit instruction in text structure enhances reading comprehension, particularly for younger students and struggling readers (Abu Hamameh et al., 2018; Aghasafari & Aziz Malayeri, 2015; Meyer & Ray, 2011; Roehling et al., 2017). Williams et al. (2014) demonstrated that teaching second graders to recognize cause/effect structures through graphic organizers, clue words, and sentence-level instruction significantly improved their comprehension. Importantly, this instruction did not interfere with content learning, reinforcing earlier findings on the benefits of text structure awareness.

Beyond traditional classroom instruction, some studies have examined technology-based interventions. (Wijekumar et al., 2012) investigated the impact of a web-based tutoring system designed to teach text structure strategies to fourth graders. Their findings showed significant comprehension gains, suggesting that digital tools can provide consistent modeling and scaffolding for text structure learning. Another key focus in L1 research has been supporting struggling readers and students with reading disabilities.

(Stevens et al., 2020) found that explicit instruction in paraphrasing and text structures improved students' ability to generate main ideas, though its effects on overall reading comprehension were less pronounced. Similarly, Arfé et al. (2018) emphasized the role of cognitive text simplification, which improves text coherence and organizational clarity through discourse markers and rhetorical devices, rather than merely reducing linguistic complexity.

Compared to L1 reading research, studies on TSI in L2 contexts remain comparably less extensive. Nevertheless, a growing body of research suggests that TSI can positively impact various aspects of L2 reading development. While some studies have reported mixed findings regarding its effectiveness (Meyer & Ray, 2011; Xu et al., 2024), the majority of empirical research supports its benefits. Specifically, TSI has been found to improve students' reading comprehension (Li et al., 2024; Roehling et al., 2017), recall (Hon & Mukundan, 2023; Tang, 1992; Tüchler & Cain, 2025; Yeh et al., 2011), metacognitive awareness and strategic reading skills (Pyle et al., 2017); Vettori et al., 2024), and engagement with texts, including motivation and attitudes toward reading (Izquierdo Castillo & Rodríguez Sosa, 2020).

Several L2 studies have examined the effectiveness of GOs in enhancing readers' comprehension by visually representing text organization. Jiang (2012) investigated the impact of a 16-week reading instruction program using discourse structure graphic organizers (DSGOs) on Chinese college-level EFL students. Results indicated significant improvements in discourse comprehension that persisted on a delayed post-test, while gains in general reading ability diminished over time. Similarly, Astuti (2020) examined the effects of graphic organizers (GOs) on Grade 11 students' reading comprehension in Indonesia, finding that students receiving GO instruction performed significantly better than those receiving traditional instruction.

Building on this foundation, Izquierdo Castillo & Rodríguez Sosa (2020) implemented GOs in high school settings in Colombia and found that students not only improved in reading comprehension but also reported increased motivation and vocabulary acquisition. This finding aligns with Qi & Jiang (2021), who examined how GOs facilitate sustainable development in English reading comprehension for EFL learners and found the greatest benefits among students with medium reading ability. Imsa-ard (2022) provided further empirical support by reporting large effect sizes of GO-based instruction in Thai secondary schools. She found that visually representing text structures helped students process information more effectively and compensate for linguistic limitations. Similarly, Rohman (2017) conducted a classroom action research study with Indonesian university students, concluding that GO implementation significantly enhanced students' comprehension, as measured by improved test scores.

A separate but related line of research has focused on explicit instruction in text structure awareness to improve reading comprehension. In the Netherlands, Bogaerds-Hazenberg et al. (2024) investigated the effects of a text-structure intervention for Dutch primary school students, highlighting its benefits in reading comprehension, summarization, and writing tasks, especially for younger students.

More recent studies have expanded this approach by incorporating digital tools and examining instructional complexity. Xu et al. (2024) implemented a web-based text structure strategy through the Intelligent Tutoring of Structure Strategy (ITSS) program with Chinese adult ELLs, reporting significant improvements in comprehension and higher-order reading strategies. This highlights the growing role of digital interventions in text-structure

instruction. Ghorbani Shemshadsara et al. (2019) examined the impact of raising students' awareness of expository text structures on Iranian undergraduate EFL learners. They reported significant improvements in comprehension compared to a control group. Extending this research, Ghorbani Shemshadsara et al. (2021) analyzed the effects of textual awareness-raising under different levels of complexity. The study found that instruction was most effective when texts were both linguistically and cognitively complex, reinforcing the importance of tailored interventions in reading instruction.

While extensive research in L1 contexts has highlighted the benefits of TSI for reading comprehension (Bogaerds-Hazenberg et al., 2021), studies on its effects in L2 settings are less extensive, especially among adult learners in underrepresented contexts (Qi & Jiang, 2021). Therefore, this study seeks to contribute to the existing body of research by examining the effectiveness of TSI in improving academic reading comprehension among adult EFL learners in Vietnam, a context in which this instructional approach remains underexplored.

### **3. METHOD**

#### **3.1 Participants**

This study involved 58 adult EFL learners (21 males, 37 females) enrolled in a 10-week IELTS training course (Level 3 – Intermediate) at a language center operated by a public university in southern Vietnam. Participants, aged 18 to 43, were randomly assigned to four existing classes by the registration office, with an average class size of 15. All students had taken a placement test before enrollment, confirming their B2 proficiency level (CEFR). They were native Vietnamese speakers with at least 10 years of uninterrupted English education. To ensure anonymity, participants were assigned unique identification numbers and provided informed consent.

The IELTS course had three 3-hour sessions per week, covering all four skills. Reading and writing were taught in the first two periods, and listening and speaking in the last two. Two classes were randomly assigned to the experimental group (text structure instruction), while the other two served as the comparison group (traditional reading instruction). Both groups were comparable in age and proficiency level. The first author taught reading and writing for both groups, while another instructor handled listening and speaking. Since language skills were taught independently, the reading instruction treatment did not interfere with learning other skills.

#### **3.2 Research Design**

This study employed a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest design to investigate the effect of TSI on the reading comprehension of EFL adult learners for expository texts. To address whether TSI improves reading comprehension and to what extent, the experimental group ( $n=30$ ) received TSI, while the control group ( $n=28$ ) received traditional reading instruction.

A pre-test was administered to both groups before the intervention to assess their baseline reading comprehension levels. Following the 10-week instructional period, a post-test was conducted to measure learning gains. The differences in pre-test and post-test scores between the two groups were analyzed to determine the impact of TSI. The quasi-experimental design was selected to allow for a controlled comparison of instructional

approaches while maintaining the natural classroom environment. By utilizing pre-test and post-test measures, this design provided a reliable means of evaluating the effectiveness of TSI on reading comprehension.

### 3.3 Research Instruments

The primary instrument for data collection in this study was a reading comprehension test used to assess the effectiveness of text structure instruction. Reading comprehension tests are commonly used in text structure research because they provide a direct, practical measure of how students process and understand texts after instruction (Pyle et al., 2017). In this study, reading comprehension tests were administered twice, before the treatment (pre-test) and after the treatment (post-test), to assess any improvement in students' reading performance. Both tests were taken by all 58 participants, including those in the control and experimental groups. The tests used in this study were from the IELTS Academic series: Cambridge English (2022) for the pre-test and Cambridge English (2020) for the post-test. These tests were selected for their alignment with the instructional materials, ensuring that test content and question types were familiar to the participants and consistent with the curriculum. Both tests consisted of three reading passages, each with 40 questions covering a range of question types (e.g., reading for main ideas, reading for specific details, predicting, and summarizing).

The reading tests were highly valid and reliable, having undergone rigorous piloting and testing. Reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) for the pre-test and post-test were 0.869 and 0.865, respectively, indicating high internal consistency and stable measurement of reading comprehension across both tests. This high reliability suggests that the observed differences in students' performance were likely due to the text-structure instruction rather than to inconsistencies in the test forms.

### 3.4 Data Collection

The data collection process consisted of three phases: pre-test administration, implementation of the text structure intervention, and post-test administration. In phase 1, the pre-test was conducted in the first week of the course to assess participants' baseline reading comprehension. It consisted of 40 comprehension questions based on three reading passages (900 -1,000 words each), covering various IELTS-style question types such as note completion, true/false/not given, and multiple-choice. To ensure familiarity with the test format, both groups participated in a 30-minute instructional session before the test. The test was completed within 60 minutes, and all answer sheets were collected for analysis.

In the intervention phase, the experimental group received explicit TSI integrated into their reading lessons over 10 weeks. The training aimed to help students identify text structures, select key information, and summarize texts using graphic organizers. The instruction followed a structured approach as follows: (1) Introduction to Text Structures (Week 1): Students were introduced to five common expository text structures (description, sequence, comparison/contrast, cause/effect, and problem/solution) along with their signal words and graphic organizers. The teacher explained the purpose of text structures in organizing ideas and modeled their identification using real-world examples. (2) Modeling and Guided Practice (Week 2): The teacher demonstrated how to identify text structures in reading passages using think-aloud strategies. Signal words, topic sentences, and logical

connections were highlighted to guide comprehension. Students practiced identifying text structures from sample texts with the teacher's feedback. (3) Weekly Text Structure Integration (Weeks 2–9): Each week, a specific text structure was emphasized using reading passages from the textbook. Lessons followed a consistent format with 1) predicting the main idea based on headings and subheadings; 2) identifying signal words and structural elements; 3) organizing key information into graphic organizers; 4) summarizing texts using structured templates; and 5) group and individual practice with teacher support. (4) Independent Practice and Application (Weeks 8–10): As students became more proficient, they worked independently to identify text structures, summarize passages, and apply their learning to different types of expository texts.

In contrast, the control group followed a traditional reading instruction approach without explicit text structure instruction. Their lessons followed a pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading framework, with a focus on reading sub-skills and answering comprehension questions. Table 1 summarizes the data collection procedure.

**Table 1**  
Data collection procedure

Week	Control group	Experimental group
<b>Week 1</b>	- Pre-test (session 1) - Orientation to reading subskills (sessions 2-3)	- Pre-test (session 1) - Introduction to five text structures (sessions 2–3)
<b>Week 2-9</b>	- Traditional reading instruction (focus on reading subskills)	- Text structure instruction (focus on identifying and using text structures)
<b>Week 10</b>	- Review sessions (sessions 1–2) - Post-test (session 3)	- Review sessions (sessions 1–2) - Post-test (session 3)

The post-test, following the same format as the pre-test to measure improvements in reading comprehension, was administered in the final week. Students had 60 minutes to complete the test, and their responses were collected for comparison with pre-test scores. The results helped evaluate the effectiveness of text structure instruction in enhancing reading comprehension.

### 3.5 Data Analysis

To evaluate the effectiveness of TSI on students' reading comprehension, statistical analyses were conducted on the pre-test and post-test scores of both the experimental group and control group. An independent-samples t-test was used to compare post-test scores between the two groups. This analysis determined whether the experimental group, which received TSI, showed a statistically significant improvement over the control group, which followed traditional reading instruction. Additionally, a paired-samples t-test was conducted within each group to assess the improvement from pre-test to post-test. This approach allowed for both between-group and within-group comparisons, providing insights into the impact of the instructional intervention while controlling for initial performance differences. Statistical significance was set at  $p < 0.05$  to ensure the reliability of the findings. All analyses were performed using statistical software to verify the TSI's effectiveness in enhancing reading comprehension.

## 4. RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of text structure instruction (TSI) on the reading comprehension of EFL adult learners, specifically focusing on how explicit instruction in recognizing expository text structures influences their ability to understand and engage with academic texts.

### 4.1. Normality Testing

To verify the suitability of the test scores for parametric analysis, normality tests were conducted on the pre-test and post-test scores for the control group (CG) and the experimental group (EG). Due to the relatively small sample size ( $n < 50$ ) in each group, the Shapiro-Wilk test was selected, as it is particularly recommended for assessing normality in small datasets.

**Table 2**  
Shapiro-Wilk Normality Test Results

Group	Test	W Statistic	p-value
CG	Pre-test	0.939	0.105
CG	Post-test	0.946	0.157
EG	Pretest	0.961	0.332
EG	Post-test	0.959	0.299

As shown in Table 2, the Shapiro-Wilk test of the control group revealed no significant departure from normality in the pre-test ( $W(28) = 0.939$ ,  $p = 0.105$ ) and post-test ( $W(28) = 0.946$ ,  $p = 0.157$ ) scores. Additionally, skewness and kurtosis values remained within acceptable thresholds, further supporting an approximately normal distribution. Likewise, the experimental group demonstrated normality in both the pre-test ( $W(30) = 0.961$ ,  $p = 0.332$ ) and post-test ( $W(30) = 0.959$ ,  $p = 0.299$ ) scores, with skewness and kurtosis values confirming the assumption of normality. Given these results, paired samples t-tests and independent samples t-tests were deemed appropriate for further statistical analysis.

### 4.2. Independent Sample t-test of Pre-test and Post-test Scores

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare pre-test reading comprehension scores between the control and experimental groups. Table 3 showed that the control group ( $M = 18.32$ ,  $SD = 1.93$ ) and the experimental group ( $M = 17.47$ ,  $SD = 1.96$ ) had no statistically significant difference in their pre-test scores,  $t(56) = 1.67$ ,  $p = .10$ . Additionally, Levene's test for equality of variances indicated that the assumption of equal variances was met ( $F = 0.00$ ,  $p = .99$ ). These results suggest that both groups started at a comparable level in reading comprehension before the intervention.

**Table 3**  
Independent Samples t-Test for Pre-test Scores

Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference
Pre-test CG	18.32	1.93	1.67	56	.10	0.86
Pretest EG	17.47	1.96				

Descriptive statistics were conducted to compare pre-test and post-test scores within each group.

**Table 4**  
Descriptive Statistics for Pre-test and Post-test Scores of CG and EG

Group	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-test CG	28	15.00	22.00	18.32	1.93
Post-test CG	28	17.00	27.00	23.43	2.38
Pre-test EG	30	14.00	22.00	17.47	1.96
Post-test EG	30	20.00	32.00	25.23	3.31

The descriptive statistics in Table 4 indicate that both the control group and experimental group showed improvement in reading comprehension from the pre-test to the post-test. For the control group, the mean pre-test score was 18.32 (SD = 1.93), while the post-test score increased to 23.43 (SD = 2.38). Similarly, the experimental group, which received text structure instruction, showed a notable increase in scores. The mean pre-test score was 17.47 (SD = 1.96), rising to 25.23 (SD = 3.31) in the post-test. This increase was greater than that of the control group, indicating that TSI had a more significant impact on reading comprehension improvement. The greater standard deviation in the experimental group's post-test scores also implies more variation in individual performance, potentially due to differences in how students applied the text structure strategies.

To further examine the significance of the improvements observed in both groups, a paired samples t-test was conducted to compare pre-test and post-test scores within each group. The results are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5**  
Paired Samples t-Test for Control and Experimental Groups

Group	Mean Difference	Std. Deviation	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre-test CG Post-test CG	-5.11	1.40	-19.35	27	.000
Pre-test EG Post-test EG	-7.77	1.85	-22.98	29	.000

As shown in Table 5, the control group demonstrated a statistically significant improvement in reading comprehension. The mean difference was -5.11 (SD = 1.40),  $t(27) = -19.35$ ,  $p < .001$ . Similarly, the experimental group also showed significant improvement, with a mean difference of -7.77 (SD = 1.85),  $t(29) = -22.98$ ,  $p < .001$ . These results indicate a significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores in both groups. To further examine the effectiveness of TSI, an independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare post-test scores between the control and experimental groups.

**Table 6**  
Independent Samples t-Test for Post-test Scores

Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	Levene's Test (F)	Levene's Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Post-test CG	23.43	2.38	4.07	.049	-2.37	56	.02
Post-test EG	25.23	3.31	-	-	-2.40	52.68	.02

The results of the independent samples t-test for post-test scores indicate a statistically significant difference between the control group ( $M = 23.43$ ,  $SD = 2.38$ ) and the experimental group ( $M = 25.23$ ,  $SD = 3.31$ ),  $t(56) = -2.37$ ,  $p = .02$ . Levene's test for equality of variances was significant ( $F = 4.07$ ,  $p = .049$ ), suggesting that equal variances should not be assumed. Under the adjusted t-test, the difference remained significant,  $t(52.68) = -2.40$ ,  $p = .02$ . These results suggest that the experimental group, which received TSI, outperformed the control group in reading comprehension.

## 5. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study revealed that both the control and experimental groups demonstrated significant improvements in their post-test scores, indicating that reading practice alone can enhance comprehension. However, the greater gains observed in the experimental group highlight the added value of TSI. The mean difference between pre-test and post-test scores for the control group was 5.11, while for the experimental group, it was 7.77. This larger gain suggests that explicit instruction in text structures provides learners with strategic tools to better process and retain information from expository texts. These findings align with previous research emphasizing the role of text structure knowledge in reading comprehension (Bogaerds-Hazenberg et al., 2021; Li et al., 2024; Pyle et al., 2017). This suggests that explicit instruction in recognizing and using text structures can positively influence reading comprehension, particularly in expository texts.

The findings of this study corroborate the extensive body of L1 research demonstrating the benefits of TSI. Studies such as those by Guo et al. (2020), Williams et al. (2014), and Xu et al. (2024) have shown that explicit instruction in text structures enhances comprehension by helping students recognize organizational patterns within texts. The present study extends these findings to an L2 context, supporting the argument that TSI is beneficial not only for L1 readers but also for EFL learners.

Additionally, the findings align with research highlighting the role of graphic organizers in supporting reading comprehension (Jiang & Grabe, 2007; Bayat, 2012; Imsa-ard, 2022; Laraib Rahat et al., 2020; Minaabad, 2017; Vargas Vásquez & Zúñiga Coudin, 2018). The use of graphic organizers in the experimental group likely contributed to the observed improvements, as these tools help readers visually represent text structures and establish relationships between key ideas. Studies in L2 contexts, such as those by Rohman (2017) and Imsa-ard (2022), have similarly found that graphic organizers facilitate deeper comprehension and information retention, particularly among EFL learners. However, some studies have reported mixed findings regarding the effectiveness of TSI (Meyer & Ray, 2011; Xu et al., 2024). One possible reason for such discrepancies is the variation in instructional duration and complexity. The ten-week treatment period in this study provided sufficient time for learners to internalize text structure strategies, which may explain the strong positive effects observed.

The findings of this study have important pedagogical implications for EFL reading instruction. First, they underscore the need to integrate explicit text-structure instruction into reading curricula. Given the significant improvements observed in the experimental group, language instructors should consider incorporating structured lessons on expository text structures, signal words, and graphic organizers into their teaching. Second, the results suggest that providing learners with metacognitive tools to recognize text structures enhances their ability to process information efficiently. Educators should emphasize

strategies such as identifying main ideas, distinguishing between supporting details, and using visual aids to map text organization. These strategies not only improve comprehension but also foster independent reading skills, enabling learners to navigate complex texts more effectively. Third, the study highlights the potential of TSI in supporting struggling readers. Given that text structure instruction has been shown to benefit students with varying proficiency levels (Kansizoglu, 2017; Morfidi et al., 2018; Zimmermann & Reed, 2020), educators should adapt instruction to accommodate diverse learner needs. Differentiated instruction, such as scaffolding exercises and interactive digital tools, could enhance accessibility and engagement for learners at different proficiency levels.

Finally, the findings suggest that TSI could be particularly beneficial in contexts where traditional reading instruction focuses primarily on grammar and vocabulary. In Vietnam, for example, reading instruction has historically emphasized linguistic features over discourse-level comprehension (Gorsuch & Taguchi, 2010). Implementing TSI in such contexts could help bridge this gap and improve learners' overall reading proficiency. In short, the study confirms that TSI significantly enhances the reading comprehension of EFL adult learners. The study emphasizes the importance of integrating TSI into EFL curricula, particularly in contexts where traditional reading instruction has focused primarily on grammar and vocabulary. These results provide strong evidence for the efficacy of TSI, especially for learners with varying proficiency levels, and highlight its potential in improving reading comprehension outcomes in EFL contexts.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of explicit instruction in expository text structures in improving the reading comprehension of EFL adult learners. The findings provide strong evidence that TSI significantly enhances learners' ability to comprehend expository texts. Teaching students how to recognize and utilize various text structures - such as cause-effect, problem-solution, and comparison - appears to be an effective strategy for improving reading comprehension, aligning with prior research that emphasizes the benefits of TSI. The results underscore the pedagogical value of incorporating explicit text structure instruction into EFL curricula. Given the positive impact of TSI, language educators are encouraged to integrate structured lessons on expository text structures, signal words, and graphic organizers into their teaching. This approach not only helps students improve their reading comprehension but also equips them with metacognitive tools to navigate complex texts independently. Furthermore, TSI may benefit struggling readers by providing strategic ways to process and retain information more effectively, which is crucial in diverse EFL contexts.

However, several limitations should be considered. The relatively small sample size limits the generalizability of the results, and future studies should involve a larger and more diverse participant pool to ensure broader applicability. Additionally, this study focused exclusively on expository texts; further research should examine the impact of TSI on other text genres, such as narrative and argumentative texts. The short duration of the intervention also limits conclusions about the long-term effectiveness of TSI. Future research should assess the sustainability of these benefits and whether learners continue to apply the strategies beyond the intervention period. Lastly, with the increasing role of digital tools in education, future studies could explore the potential of technologies, such as web-based platforms and intelligent tutoring systems, to deliver TSI and enhance reading

comprehension. This study also provides compelling evidence that explicit instruction in text structures can significantly improve reading comprehension for EFL adult learners. The findings support the integration of TSI into EFL curricula and highlight the need for further research on its long-term impact, its effectiveness across various text types, and the potential for technology to enhance text structure instruction. By considering these implications, educators can better support their students in becoming more proficient and independent readers.

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#### Availability of Data and Materials

All the data generated and analyzed during the current study are not publicly accessible due to ethical restrictions and the presence of sensitive student performance data. However, they are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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#### Authors' Contribution

Thien Thanh Phuong Le worked on the project and the main conceptual ideas, collected the data, performed all statistical analyses, and wrote the manuscript. Thi Phuong Dung Cao collaborated in the data analysis, wrote the results section, provided the discussion, and proofread the manuscript.

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