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Text Comprehension Strategy of Grade 11 Students

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Abstract

This study which adopted the descriptive and developmental design dealt on the formulation of prototype learning activities aimed to improve Grade 11 students’ performance in text comprehension, particularly focused on “interpretative and applied levels of comprehension”, which were found to be more challenging to the students. The design of the learning activities is based on guidelines inferred from the merits of research findings.

Generally, the students access both home-based “print and electronic reading materials in English”. Print materials include “books, magazines, encyclopedia, newspapers, pamphlets, and dictionaries”, while electronic materials include “e-books, and readings that are downloadable via internet or through other electronic media channels”. The students’ access to “print materials” (ave. freq.) is slightly higher than their access to “electronic materials” (ave.

freq). Most of the students access “books” and “magazines” found in their homes. Among the least accessed materials at home are “newspapers, pamphlets, and dictionaries .”

The students access a broad range of media types, which include: “internet, television, radio / electronic audio gadgets (for music and for news programs), and newspapers / magazines”. Mostly accessed are the “internet” and “television. However, there are more students who access internet than the so-called “traditional media”, such as “television”, “radio and other electronic gadgets for listening to music, “newspapers and magazines” and radio for listening to news.

The students’ level of performance in text comprehension range from “Outstanding” (maximum) to “Fairly Satisfactory” (minimum), majority of whom registered as “Outstanding”, while the remainder range from having “Very Satisfactory” “Satisfactory”, and “Fairly Satisfactory” levels of performance. Moreover, majority of the students obtained a perfect score in “literal, interpretative, and critical” levels of comprehension in contrast to their inferior scores under “applied comprehension”. A synopsis of the scores revealed that the students were generally more challenged in terms of interpretative and applied levels of comprehension. Statistically, none of the variables were found to be significantly related or associated to their performance in text comprehension.

The study’s findings were discussed in comparison and contrast with previous researches in the same field. Several recommendations are offered based on the merits of the findings which taps the agency of teachers, school, administrators, parents, and instructional material designers as to their complementary roles in improving instructional conditions and strategies in the constant pursuit to develop students’ performance in text comprehension.

Keywords: *text comprehension strategies, supplemental learning materials*

Introduction

Reading is, inarguably, an indispensable skill in many varied contexts of academic and social life in general. To be competitive in a world of complex literacy, one needs to escalate through the increasing demands in reading skills. Surviving through the requirements of formal education, it is notable that school and academic activities start with knowledge of the written word — whether in Math, Science or even Home Economics. As students ascend the educational ladder, reading assignments gradually increase in density and challenge (Philippine Star, 2010). Reading is in the baseline of all formal learning, as it is fundamental in the acquisition of various knowledge and skills in the Arts, Sciences, Mathematics, and language

learning. About this truism, a student's difficulty in reading parallels learning difficulties in content-subjects as well (Ronan, 2015).

The ascending scales of reading skills presuppose the abilities for text comprehension, and various levels of comprehension for that matter. From an academic context, "reading" and "reading comprehension" or "text comprehension" are two different things, presupposing different component competencies. Reading, per se, involves abilities in recognizing, translating and decoding text into sounds and spoken words. On the other hand, text comprehension involves taking what was just read and deriving meaning from those words. Thus text comprehension presupposes the fluency and ability to read, and beyond such an extent --- to understand, process, and recall what was read (Cromley, 2005).

In dealing with text comprehension, readers do not only bring their knowledge of the language but also knowledge of the world or more specifically their schema or background knowledge (Sahagun, 2011). Reading can be futile without comprehension. Thus, comprehension is the essence of reading through the active process of constructing meaning from the text. However, unlike the rudimentary skills presupposed in mere surface reading skills, comprehension skills involve more complex interaction among automatic and strategic cognitive processes that enable the reader to create a mental representation of the text (van den Broek&Espin, 2012).

In addition to the above, comprehension also depends on characteristics and attributes found in the reader, such as prior knowledge, working memory, language processing skills, decoding and vocabulary skills, sensitivity to text structure, inferencing skills, and motivation. Comprehension also requires effective use of strategic processes, such as metacognition and comprehension monitoring. (Moore, 2013).

In the context the above emphasized importance of text comprehension and the complex sub-skills it presupposes, a lengthy research tradition has shown several underlying causes for poor reading comprehension. Among the reasons identified are the complex process of learning to read, inefficient types of instruction, poor method for decoding, limited prior knowledge, and inadequacies in vocabulary. The aforementioned deficiencies indicate low literacy skills which also imply negative effects on learners, making them susceptible to poor self-esteem, low motivation, behavioral problems, and academic underachievement (Blickenstaff, 2013).

In a 2007 interview with Dr. Yolanda Quijano, then head of the DepEd's Bureau of Elementary Education, she attributed "reading problems as the main culprit for the poor performance of some students in the NAT. Her statement is programmatic and should be

construed as an alarming educational problem. Moreover, students' poor comprehension did not only significantly contribute to modest results in state examinations such as the NAT, but it is also regarded to significantly contribute to poor performance in students' other academic subjects (Philippine Star, 2010).

In addition, Cayubit (2012), opined that a Filipino child needs to develop higher order skills and functional literacy. This points to higher levels of competencies compounded in reading fluency, which is text comprehension skills. Accordingly, learners with sufficient reading skills were found to have greater chances of success in school compared to a child whose reading skills are poor or are diagnosed with reading disability. Multiple researches in the field have proven that poor reading skills correlate significantly with poor comprehension skills. If no proper intervention is administered at an early stage, it can affect the academic, social and psychological development of the child.

With regards to the above citations of research findings on the status of students' poor comprehension skills and its probable causes or conditions, so much emphasize have already been done along the investigation of the correlative role of basic reading abilities to the students' development of comprehension skills. Only a few number of research devoted to other factors that explain student's poor skills in text comprehension. Certainly, even if it has been proven in many previous studies that basic skills in reading such as word recognition, etc. has impact to comprehension abilities; nevertheless, learner issues in text comprehension are not simply reduced to these set of factors. Even with some students who are not challenged in their readings skills still perform poorly when it comes to text comprehension. Certainly, other studies have pointed out several other factors that influence reading comprehension (Torgesen, 2006). In Torgesen's paper, he emphasized the interplay of developmental and instructional conditions in shaping learners' comprehension abilities. Moreover, a research-based article by Tompkins (2014) indicates a spectrum of probable factor that include "prior knowledge, ability to connect text with personal experience, comprehension strategies and skills, motivation, and the texts' genre, structure and features".

As to the previous reference to Torgesen's inventory of relevant factors to reading comprehension, it becomes apparent that teachers play a truly important role in improving students' performance. However, persistent problems in learners' mastery of comprehension skills adjacently point at the some poor aspects along instructional condition. Many teachers may not be equipped with sufficient knowledge or understanding of the broad range of causes in students' unsatisfactory comprehension performance. Among such teachers, it also becomes relatively inadequate for them to identify or select teaching methods and strategies that are

contextualized to the students' needs for improvement (Adler, 2001). Adler recommends a total of seven strategies in teaching text comprehension, depending on the particular needs of learners and what factors are at play in debilitating students' comprehension performance.

The above theories from literature find concrete evidences in actual policies implemented by schools. Basic Education Institutions in the Department of Education (DepEd) have been offering remedial reading programs to bridge complement the instruction of struggling students, not only those with low levels of reading fluency but those with low comprehension levels as well. These school initiatives draw from the principle that the earlier students with low reading skills receive interventions, the greater the interventions will impact the students' reading careers (Hausheer, Hansen, & Doumas, 2011). Instructional efforts need to push students to advance from the level of merely knowing how to read words towards abilities in constructing meaning from the text (Klinger, Vaughn, & Boardman, 2007). If schools are able to provide what the students need, there will be more success for everyone involved.

Prior to the conceptualization of this proposed study, the researcher who is registered in the roster of faculty of Urdaneta City National High School (Urdaneta City, Pangasinan) has conducted informal surveys with fellow teachers as a means to gauge the extent to which other teachers' encounter of student problems parallel to the researchers' own observations with her set of students across years of teaching. Some school records have also been initially accessed and reviewed to reinforce her survey efforts. Accordingly, the problem on students' poor reading comprehension ability is a generalizable phenomenon considered to be an issue worthy of urgent address in the assessment of the teachers and not solely by the researcher. This is also the reason that the institutional affiliation of this researcher is hereby also proposed to be this study's locale. It will serve as a starting point to launch further research interest along the concerns of learner text comprehension using the prototype conceptual framework proposed by this study which can be projected to investigate other school settings.

The cause of improving students' text comprehension must be addressed by school management in cooperation with teachers in a well-panned design of effective approaches. Literature points out, as well, that there has been an increased focus on reading instruction in primary, secondary and higher education (Lei 2010). With regards to these efforts, multiple strategies have already been devised and implemented as interventions in improving reading comprehension aptitude (Klapwijk 2012; Medina 2011 and Fan 2010;). Thus, this proposed study pursues the line of such scholarly tradition by also aiming to identify effective strategies that will enable enhanced comprehension skills, particularly among Grade 11 students. This

will be done however through a careful investigation of learner variables to ensure that the proposed intervention strategy is research-informed. Moreover, the aim is to further capacitate the students in “strategic reading”. Strategic reading, according to Alfassi (2010) is when learners intentionally engage in planned actions under their control, in the manner that proficient readers do when they encounter difficulty in comprehending a text. Strategic readers are cognizant of their performance limitations, intentionally weigh their options and willfully execute compensatory procedures.

With the above considerations and issues, the relatively unique framework of this study is thus proposed. At any rate, this study aims to fortify interest in the scholarly investigation of students’ text comprehension difficulties, in the unending pursuit to explore the wide horizon of probable factors and conditions surrounding such phenomenon.

Literature Review

On Text Comprehension

In the field of Linguistics, particularly in ELL (English language Learning), there are synonymous terms used to refer to “text comprehension”, which is also known as “reading comprehension” in other literature. Text comprehension is the ability to process text, understand its meaning, and to integrate it with what the reader already knows (Grabe, 2009). Fundamental skills required in efficient text comprehension are “knowing meaning of words, ability to understand meaning of a word from discourse context, ability to follow organization of passage and to identify antecedents and references in it, ability to draw inferences from a passage about its contents, ability to identify the main thought of a passage, ability to answer questions answered in a passage, ability to recognize the literary devices used in a passage and to determine its tone and mood, and finally ability to determine writer's purpose, intent, and point of view, and draw inferences about the writer” (Davis, 1944).

An individual's ability to comprehend text is influenced by their skills and their ability to process information. If word recognition is difficult, students use too much of their processing capacity to read individual words, which interferes with their ability to comprehend what is read. There are a number of reading strategies to improve reading comprehension and 19 inferences, including improving one's vocabulary, critical text analysis and practicing deep reading (Wolf, 2016).

People learn comprehension skills through education or instruction and some learn by direct experiences (Tompkins, 2011). Proficient reading depends on the ability to recognize

words quickly and effortlessly (Adams, 1994). It is also determined by an individual's cognitive development, which is "the construction of thought processes".

There are specific characteristics that determine how successfully an individual will comprehend text, including prior knowledge about the subject, well-developed language, and the ability to make inferences from methodical questioning & monitoring comprehension like: "Why is this important?" and "Do I need to read the entire text?" are some passage questioning examples (Tompkins, 2011).

Instruction for comprehension strategy often involves initially aiding the students in social and imitation learning, wherein teachers explain genre styles and model both top-down and bottom-up strategies, and familiarize students with a required complexity of text comprehension (Manzo&Manzo, 1993). After the contiguity interface, the second stage involves gradual release of responsibility wherein over time teachers give students individual responsibility for using the learned strategies independently with remedial instruction, if required. The final stage involves leading the students to a self-regulated learning state with more and more practice and assessment. Reading, as in other areas of English language learning, traverses the final aim to develop learner's autonomy (Unciano, 2010).

On Levels of Text Comprehension.

There are different levels of reading comprehension, on the basis of differentiated depths of understanding or thinking, and different analysis applied by the reader of a (Berr text 2005)

Even reading beyond the surface level is already considered a challenge for many secondary school students. The three-level guide was devised by Herber (1978) and developed further by Morris and Stewart-Dore (1984) to help students think through the information in texts. The following examines the levels of reading comprehension according to different reading authorities. Depending on the theory of comprehension levels, some have three, others have four or even more. Though they have different numbers of levels, they agree that these levels of reading comprehension develop sequentially.

Burns et. al. (1984) divided reading comprehension into literal comprehension, interpretative comprehension, critical reading and creative reading. They are discussed sequentially in the following paragraphs.

The first level is referred to as "Literal Comprehension". Reading for literal comprehension, which involves acquiring information that is directly stated in a selection is a

prerequisite on higher level comprehension. Recognizing stated main ideas, details, causes and effects, and sequence is the basis of literal comprehension, and thorough understanding of vocabulary, sentence meaning, and paragraph meaning is important.

The second level is known as “Interpretive/Interpretative Comprehension”. Interpretive comprehension involves reading between the lines or making inferences. It is the process of deriving ideas that are implied rather than directly stated. Reader makes inferences based on their schemata. It is important to realize that children have less prior knowledge than adults and do not make inferences spontaneously; even they possess the necessary schemata or background knowledge.

The third level is “Evaluative Reading/ Critical Reading”. Critical reading is evaluating written materials, comparing the ideas discovered in the material with standards and drawing conclusions about their accuracy, appropriateness, and timeliness. It requires the reader to have critical thinking of what they read. Critical reading depends upon literal comprehension and interpretative comprehension, and grasping implied ideas is especially important.

The fourth and most complex level is “Applied Reading/ Creative Reading”. Creative reading involves going beyond the material presented by the author. It requires readers to think as they read.

On Strategies in Text Comprehension

There are various strategies applied in the process of reading comprehension. They are different at the stages of production, comprehension, and reproduction of discourse. One group of these may be called linguistic strategies, as it links textual and sentential structures with underlying semantic representations. The second group constitutes the cognitive strategies, as it involves the use of world knowledge, episodic knowledge and cognitive information, for instance opinions, beliefs, attitudes or plans (Olszak, 2014).

Mintzberg defined strategy as “a pattern in a stream of decisions” (Mintzberg, 1996). This definition can be contrasted with other literature which argues that “strategy is about shaping the future”and is the human attempt to get to “desirable ends with available means”(McKenon, 2011 in Olszak, 2014). Strategy can also be perceived as a type of problem solving (Rumelt, 2011). Rumelt writes that a good strategy has an underlying structure he calls a kernel. The kernel has three parts, namely the diagnosis that explains the nature of the challenge, a guiding policy in order to cope with the challenge, and coherent actions designed to carry out the guiding policy (Rumelt, 2011). In general, strategies involve various actions, objectives and the concept of optimality.

In other words, a strategy is the most relevant way which leads to achieving an aim. A strategy is often described as a cognitive representation of the same actions undertaken to understand something or reach a certain goal. It pertains to complex action sequences, which means that it is related to the notion of a plan. Finally, another common notion usually used in connection with strategies, even as a synonym, is heuristics. This is a system of discovery procedures, namely operations undertaken to acquire knowledge which enables an agent to accomplish a goal or solve precise problems. A heuristic involves typical sorts of strategies which focus on acquiring knowledge that cannot be obtained automatically or obviously. It is often called a general path of proceeding or an outline for finding something (Rumelt, 2011).

The notion of a strategy also presents actions in the strict sense, that is the intended doings of humans. These actions include thinking, problem solving, specific operations and mental steps in order to reach an explicit goal. They are performed under our conscious control, and that is why we cannot or can only partly verbalize or analyze them. In general, strategies are the result of a mental process linked with much information. Cognitive strategies appear if the process of gaining knowledge is consciously controlled and each step yields the information decisive for the next steps. It is extremely vital to select or come up with a strategy that is good and fast in the understanding of new knowledge. A strategy will, in general, encompass higher levels of information processing, that is, the high-level strategic attempts of a problem solver (Newell and Simon, 1972 in Olszak, 2014). It also happens that the problem is analyzed as being divided into sub problems if it is perceived as complex or with no obvious solution. There is another more general strategic procedure which compares the nature of the obtained goal at the beginning and in the final stage of analyzing. The integration of newly found information into the knowledge set and old information leads to acquiring a certain strategy. It is important for our analysis that strategies in these cases also consist of stepwise, complex acts which lead to a certain aim. Moreover, at each stage of the dispute several options are viable, and at the same time defined knowledge is accessible about context, consequences, participants and actions.

One of the fundamental aspects in the process of developing reading comprehension is language learning strategies. The long-term process of teaching various strategies takes place at school, since students are taught how to synchronize traditional memory and comprehension strategies along with interpretative processes. Figure 1 shows numerous strategies that can be adapted in the process of teaching reading comprehension, based on the taxonomy proposed by Oxford (1990, in Olszak, 2014).

On Graphic and Semantic Organizers As Language Learning Strategy or Comprehension Strategy

Graphic organizers help to illustrate concepts and relationships between concepts in a text. They are given different names, such as “maps, webs, graphs, charts, frames, or clusters”. They are extremely helpful in the process of reading comprehension as they assist readers in focusing on concepts and the way they are connected to other concepts (Olszak, 2014). Graphic and semantic organizers, originally called advanced organizers and then structured overviews, were primarily initiated by Richard Barron (Barron, 1969), but have their roots in Ausubel’s work.

According to his cognitive theory of meaningful verbal learning, the use of graphic and semantic organizers intensifies students’ learning and retention of unfamiliar but meaningful materials (Ausubel, 1968). His assumption was that new information is acquired when it is linked to the learners’ already existing cognitive structure. Therefore, the function of these organizers is to stimulate students’ prior knowledge and link the new material to the previously stored information, providing optimal anchorage and rendering the new material more familiar and meaningful.

Another theory which is consistent with the above-mentioned is the schema theory (Anderson & Pearson, 1984). Those authors claimed that the mind is composed of cognitive structures of knowledge, known as background knowledge, which obtain and assimilate the newly acquired information in order to enhance learning and retention of information. One has to find a “mental home” for the information in the text, or alter an existing one in order to accommodate the new knowledge (Anderson & Pearson, 1984).

Graphic organizers are important and effective pedagogical tools for organizing content and ideas and facilitating learners’ comprehension of newly acquired information. *Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligences* posits that students are better able to learn and internalize information when more than one learning modality is employed in an **instructional strategy**.

There are numerous advantages of applying graphic organizers, for instance they help students focus on text structure differences between fiction and nonfiction as they read; they provide students with tools they can use to examine and show relationships in a text; they help students write well-organized summaries of a text.

Graphic and semantic organizers are visual and spatial ways to construct and represent ideas from texts, such as using tables and grids, Venn diagrams, plot organizers, or concept webs. Teachers need to show students how to select and use graphic organizers as thinking

tools, supporting them to activate prior knowledge, develop new vocabulary, or show relationships between concepts (Trehearne, 2006). Interestingly, English as a Second Language students and students with learning disabilities particularly benefit from their use (Trehearne, 2006).

Venn diagrams are useful graphics for comparing and contrasting the attributes of two or more things. The teacher selects a non-fiction text about a research theme, such as regions in the UK, colonial times, or relationships, and students have to identify what is the same or different about two or three items. Alternatively, a fiction text can be used, with good character development, and students identify what is the same or different about two main characters.

Another type of graphic organizer, which is mainly used in expository texts, is the matrix. This is a kind of input table, which confines the sum of the desired information within its square (Kang, 2004 in Olszak, 2014). It is used to delineate important categories or relationships, and depict similarities and disparities between two or more people, things, places or events (Graney, 1992). In order to design a matrix, learners need to identify which main aspects they wish to focus on and what types of relationships they wish to highlight (Graney, 1992). The matrix has the additional advantage of presenting concept relations both hierarchically/vertically and horizontally in a two-dimensional form facilitating the extraction of information.

Another example of a graphic organizer connected with improving reading comprehension is the story map. It uses a graphic organizer to help students learn the elements of a story or a book. Students become thoroughly engaged in the plot, setting, problem and solution, and learn the details. There are various types of story map graphic organizer. The most basic focus is at the beginning, middle, and end of the story.

On Factors and Conditions Affecting Text Comprehension

Marquez (2008 in Paje, 2013) in their study on the reading comprehension of Fourth year high school students of Iligan, made the following conclusions: (1) Parents' monthly income and educational attainments have contributed to the reading performance of the student;(2) The kind of materials that the respondents read enhanced their ability to comprehend a text; (3) The respondents' attitude towards reading differed from each other; (4) The availability of reading materials at home and in school and the students' curiosity to learn enhanced their reading comprehension. Educational researchers have also focused on the teacher's behavior that should be effective in promoting student's motivation.

In the local context, Mante (2009 in Ilustre, 2011) sought to identify factors that affected Filipino bilingual high school student's reading comprehension in English. The objective of her paper was twofold; first was to determine and measure the participants' dimensions of motivation to read, and second was to identify the relationships between the participants' motivation to read in English, their reading comprehension and their use of meta-cognitive reading strategies when reading in the same language. Results were not conclusive as to whether reading motivation or use of meta-cognitive reading strategies affects reading comprehension more for there was no single predictor of the reading test scores.

On the contrary, Anderson (1994 in Lastrella, 2010) presented that the recall of information in a text is affected by the reader's schemata and explains that a reader comprehends a message when he is able to bring to mind a schema that gives account of the objects and events described in the message.

Reading comprehension too lies on the student's interest in reading. "Reluctant readers tend to gradually lose some academic ground, because wide reading is related to increases in general knowledge and reading comprehension" (Williamson, 1988 in Seitz, 2010).

Furthermore, in the study made by Kelcey (2010), results suggest that schools should be associated with differences in teachers' knowledge. By comparing teachers with similar personal and school backgrounds, results showed that measured knowledge is significantly associated with student's achievement in reading comprehension development.

On Sex and Text Comprehension

The sex of learners is one of the factors affecting reading comprehension performance. Brantmeier (2003 in Sahagun, 2011) indicated that reading performance is measured by comprehension. It is significantly influenced by passage content and readers' sex, whereas enjoyment and interest mattered little. Girls are more interested in reading than boys. According to him, the reading interest of children increases when they are in grades three through six. He said also that what appeals to children most is quite different from the activities which go inside the classroom. Young children's wishes are predominantly for material things.

On Family Income and Text Comprehension

Learners who come from low-income families are likely to have damaging circumstances as part of their life experiences according to Paunil (2008 in Sahagun, 2011). Not unexpectedly economic circumstances can lead the learners to withdraw from school. Furthermore, economically disadvantage learners often withdraw from high school and are less

likely to enroll in post-secondary education. Likewise, high school graduates from low income families are frequently unqualified academically to enter college and may not want to continue once enrolled.

Findings and Discussion

Accessed Reading Materials at Home

The accounts of the student-respondents in terms of reading materials in English found in their homes and which they access. Based on their self-report, the list of their accessed home-based reading materials is generally classified into “print materials” and “electronic materials”. For the print materials, these include “books, magazines, encyclopedia, newspapers, pamphlets, and dictionaries”. The electronic materials include “e-books, and readings that are downloadable via internet or through other electronic media channels”.

The aspect of the finding alone already shows that there is a relatively wide array of home-based reading materials available to the students and which they also access. However, the design of the research instrument does not allow further exploration as to the possible differential rates that the students access each reading material. It is recommendable for future research to pave for such further investigation. The extent of this study’s finding is that all the aforementioned materials are home-based and that they are accessed by the students.

The reason in this study for investigating the students’ access to reading materials in English that are home-based went with the assumption that the home constitutes the biggest part of the students’ learning environment outside the school premises, since at their age, the students are assumed to be spending more time at home than elsewhere beyond the period of their stay in school. As such, it was important to take note of the reading opportunities of the students at home, being the most frequented place where students are found outside the school.

Accessed Types of Media

This study also investigated the types of mass media and electronic media that use English accessed by the students. Accordingly, it was found that the students access a broad range of these media types, which include: “internet, television, radio / electronic audio gadgets (for music and for news programs), and newspapers / magazines”. This aspect of the findings alone already indicates that these mass media types have contents that are regarded to be interesting and relevant to the schema of Grade 11 students.

This study’s findings reveal that there are more students who are more interested in visual media programs than with auditory media programs. A greater number of students (i.e. more than 50%) have reported access to visual programs offered by media types such as

“internet” and “television” and a lesser number of students (i.e. less than 50%) accessing auditory programs such as “music” (from radio and other electronic gadgets) and “news” (from radio). This finding may relatively give a hint on the students’ learning style, although it may only be inferential. The inclination towards visual programs or stimuli is symptomatic of “visual learning style”, while an inclination towards auditory programs or stimuli may indicate an “auditory learning style”. These learning styles are described in the inventory offered by Reid (1995).

PERFORMANCE LEVEL IN TEXT COMPREHENSION OF GRADE 11 STUDENTS INSTRUCTED USING GRAPHIC AND SEMANTIC ORGANIZERS

Overall Performance Rating

From a general impression of the students’ level of performance in text comprehension, it appears that almost all of them register in the upper scales, with a total of 81 students (90%) with the combined number of students notching “Outstanding” and “Very Satisfactory” levels. Only 9 students (10%) are relegated to the lower scales (i.e. Satisfactory and Fairly Satisfactory). Nevertheless, despite these differential levels of performance, all of them passed the performance test, which is based on a 50% passing threshold (i.e. a score of 18 out of the 36 items/points test).

Generally, the performance level of the students is considered above average and rather impressive. In relation to this, previously conducted studies have likewise attempted to test the reading comprehension performance of Grade 11 students, such as the investigation made by Cekiso (2012) on Grade 11 ESL students. Cekiso’s experimental study compared the reading comprehension performance of students instructed in a traditional way and another set of students assigned in an experimental group who were introduced “reading strategy instruction”. As to the study’s findings, although a significant increase in the reading comprehension performance of the students in the experimental group was noted, the fact remains that the general scores in both control and experimental groups were described as “weak and below 50%”. Cekiso emphasized the merits credited to the intervention strategy, although the researcher also explained that the consistent weakness in the reading comprehension of the students, despite the intervention strategy, may be due to some definite factors such as the students’ low performance in the in their English language class and in their other content courses. Cekiso noted that the persistent weak reading comprehension performance of Grade 11 students is alarming as she noted that “reading comprehension is the essence of reading”

itself (Tannenbaum et al, 2006 in Cekiso, 2012),, and essential not only to academic learning in all subject areas but also to professional success and to lifelong learning (Strydom, 1997 in Cekiso, 2012).

PERFORMANCE IN THE FOUR LEVELS OF TEXT COMPREHENSION

The maximum score obtained by the students based on the overview of the results of the test is “9”, i.e. the perfect score for each sub-section in the test. On the contrary, the minimum score obtained by the students is “6”, which is still within the boundary of a passing score (i.e. “5”) in the nine-item sub-section of the test.

Accordingly, the majority of the students (68 or 75.6%) obtained a perfect score in this sub-section of the test. A few of them made one-mistake (16 or 17.8%) or two mistakes (5 or 5.6%) or three mistakes (1 or 1.1%) in this subsection of the test. These general results are relatively very impressive. It means that the students are sufficiently equipped with skills in literal-level comprehension.

Majority of the students (56 or 62.2%) obtained a perfect score in this sub-section of the test. A few of them made one-mistake (18 or 20.0%) or two mistakes (9 or 10.0%) or three mistakes (5 or 5.6%) or four mistakes (2 or 2.2%) in this subsection of the test. Same as the previously discussed comprehension level, the general results for this section are also impressive. It means that the students are sufficiently equipped with skills in interpretative-level comprehension.

Furthermore, majority of the students (60 or 67.8%) obtained a perfect score in this sub-section of the test. A few of them made one-mistake (8 or 17.8%) or two mistakes (10 or 11.1%) or three mistakes (3 or 3.3%) in this subsection of the test. Same as the previously discussed accounts comprehension levels, the general results for this section are also impressive. It means that the students are sufficiently equipped with skills in critical-level comprehension.

Under regular circumstances, it should not be surprising to discover students’ difficulties in the applied or creative level since it is the most complex among the four levels of comprehension. The listing or enumeration of these comprehension levels indicates their billing from the simplest to the most complex. However, there appears to be certain skills presupposed in interpretative and critical levels that are complex in themselves without having to view that the skills in these levels are fundamental or presupposed in escalating towards applied level. This study’s finding revealed difficulties in applied level and interpretative level more than the other comprehension levels. Critical level which is supposed to be more complex than interpretative level but less complex than applied level is not problematic in the students’

performance at all. The findings somehow imply that the billing of the comprehensive may be reconsidered by relegating both the interpretative and applied / creative levels in the billing, since they appear to be more complex and more challenging to the students.

In further synthesis to the entire discussion in this section, it is notable that the students' level of text comprehension was obtained after initially being subjected to instruction mediated by the use of graphic organizers. There is no way for this study to conclude that the students' performance have improved through the use of graphic organizers to facilitate their understanding of the reading selections or rate of retention of data from their reading. This study was not designed to be experimental, and neither was it designed to compare students' performance prior and after the use of an intervention. Nevertheless, what can be clearly gleaned from the findings is the excellent performance of the students in the text comprehension text, generally speaking. As to the extent of what can be inferred from these findings, the use of the graphic organizers did facilitate the excellent performance of the students in the test; otherwise, the students would have been demotivated to perform well in the test if they would have found the manner of teaching the reading selections rather complicated or confusing. Whether, it was also possible for the students to have performed well in the comprehension test even without the use of the graphic organizers, the fact remains that the use of the latter did not impede or obstruct them to perform well in the test. Certain intervention strategies (if found to be ineffective) do not only promote students' performance level but may even lower their level of performance. Certainly however, there was no such evidence in the results of the students' performance in this study. Thereby, the only two possibilities are either that (a) the students are originally performing well in text comprehension and the use of graphic organizers did not interfere with their performance, or (b) the students' performance in text comprehension was even improved through the use of the graphic organizers. Either way, the findings prove that the use of graphic organizers to facilitate students' text comprehension performance may be instrumental to the improvement of their performance or, at the least, it does not pose any negative interference to their text comprehension performance.

CORRELATION OF LEVEL OF PERFORMANCE IN TEXT COMPREHENSION AND USE OF GRAPHIC AND SEMANTIC ORGANIZERS AS INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGY

The main point of this study is to demonstrate the merits in the use of graphic organizers in teaching reading selection to students and enabling them to perform well in a comprehension test. Thus, with the above mentioned findings, it means that the students are not restricted by conditions of their sex, age, mother tongue, and the rest of their profile variables when it comes to their exposure to an instruction mediated by the use of graphic organizers. Thus means further that their personal conditions do not significantly interfere with their comprehension of reading selections taught to them using graphic organizers.

The above mentioned findings of this study strongly concurs with the findings of Asgarabadi (2015) in his research on “Learners’ Gender, Reading Comprehension, and Reading Strategies, in Descriptive and Narrative Macro-genres”. In his research design, Asgarabadi investigated the possible correlation between the respondents’ sex (i.e. he refers to it as “gender”) in both the status of their reading comprehension skills and their efficient grasp or use of reading strategies. In the end, Asgarabadi concluded that neither the learners’ reading comprehension skills nor their efficient use / grasp of reading strategies is significantly related to their sex. It appears that regardless of the students’ sex, their skills in comprehension and their use of reading strategies for comprehension remain relatively equal. Asgarabadi hypothesized that students of either sex may have been exposed to similar prior learning conditions which could explain their analogous levels of performance.

In addition to the above, the study of De Beni et al (2003) was able to give evidence to the decline in a person’s level of reading comprehension as he / she ages through time. Thus, the researchers confirmed that age has a significant relationship with reading comprehension performance which is contrary to the findings of this current study. However, analyzing carefully the terms in De Beni et al’s research, what the latter refer to is a huge age gap, as they tried to compare the reading comprehension performance between persons of 55 to 69 years old and persons who are between 70 to 90 years old. Thus, they set to compare persons whose age gap is, at least, ten years. Accordingly, the researchers found that the probable cause in a person’s decline in reading comprehension performance as he / she ages is due to declines in “memory” and “metacognition skills” which are characteristics very closely associated to a person’s age. While it was previously mentioned that the findings in the study of De Beni et al posed a stark contrast to this study’s findings, the comparability between the findings may not

be altogether absolute. The presence of age gaps among the respondents in this current study is very minimal, with only a few respondents whose ages deviate from the average age expected of Grade 11 students. Moreover, even with the discrepancies of the ages among the respondents in this study, the gaps are likewise very minimal, thereby not too sufficient to pass as a considerable age gap.

DEVELOPMENT OF LEARNING ACTIVITIES TO ENHANCE THE TEXT COMPREHENSION OF GRADE 11 STUDENTS

In generating the set of guidelines for the development of the learning activities, it is important to note that they were drawn from the merits of this study's findings. Thus, the guidelines and the developed learning activities are research-based, rather than merely produced from armchair speculations or from informal surveys. As such, it also means that the guidelines offered by this study, as well as the prototype learning activities purportedly based on the latter, are highly sensitized to the needs of Grade 11 students having characteristics as the respondents of this study, and which may likely appeal to typical students (whether present or future students) in the research locale, i.e. Urdaneta City National High School. This, however, does not necessarily restrict the general applicability of the guidelines and the set of learning activities even as they may be acculturated to the characteristics of this study's respondents. Their learner characteristics are, indeed, very typical for Grade 11 students regardless of institutional affiliation or locale as previously pointed out in the foregoing discussions in this chapter.

In coming up with the guidelines, it was very important to take note that the primary objective is to be able to generate a theoretical and conceptual basis for formulating a set of viable learning activities. Thereby, only the merits of research findings relevant to such an objective were considered. These are the findings on the students' level of performance in text comprehension, which is theoretically based on their performance in a validated text comprehension test. To reiterate the previously discussed findings, the students are, generally, excellent in their performance level in text comprehension, although this does not discount the fact that there remains to be a space for their improvement or advancement in their skills. While the students, generally, scored high in all the four levels of comprehension, their respective performances under "interpretative comprehension" and "applied comprehension" are noticeably lower compared to the other levels of comprehension, i.e. "literal comprehension" and "critical comprehension". On account of this, the guideline offered by this study is to

reinforce instruction along these two levels of comprehension as they seem to pose a relatively greater challenge to the students. As previously mentioned in the foregoing discussions, such findings in this study are also confirmed by other previous studies, thereby giving a cue on some consistency and generalizability of this case even with students enrolled in other schools. It was also previously mentioned in the discussions that such levels of comprehension pose to be challenging not only to Grade 11 students but even to college students. As such, it may be the case that if some problems in reading comprehension are unresolved in the high school level, there is likelihood that students carry over such issues even in their advanced studies in college. This sets the exigency that remediation must be reinforced in the basic education level to prevent the persistence of weakness in certain skills as students advance to higher levels of education. College education is meant to deal with a new set of academic-related skills that students are challenged to face so that they cannot afford to bring along the residues of their problematic skills that they are expected to have, at least mastered competently in their basic education level. The fact that competencies in text comprehension are intrinsic to the basic education curriculum means that these are expected to be foundational for certain advanced skills in the college level. As foundational skills, they should be strong enough to become the underlying matrix for new skills to build upon as students escalate to higher levels of learning (Butler et al, 2010).

The formulated learning activities are meant to enhance students' skills and performance in interpretative comprehension and applied comprehension. The activities also feature the use of graphic organizers, which suggest the assistance of a teacher or which can be used as such independently by a student, even on his / her own. As learning activities, they can be used flexibly to be integrated in a module or any instructional material if they will be utilized by IM designers. On the part of teachers, they can directly use the learning activities in their English classes for Grade 11 as supplements to their lesson plan or to the textbooks they are using. Because the set of learning activities offered by this study is viewed as a prototype, it may also serve as a pattern or basis for developing parallel learning activities in the same levels of text comprehension, which may be done by IM designers and teachers alike.

Conclusion

Based on the merits of the findings, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The Grade 11 students are male and female, and are differentiated in their age, i.e. average, below average and above average relative to the standard age expected of their grade level. Their mother tongues range across Tagalog, Ilokano, and Pangasinan. They

belong to families with varied income, ranging from “very low” to “very high”. They access print and electronic reading materials at home, such as “books, magazines, encyclopedia, newspapers, pamphlets, and dictionaries” (print); and “e-books, and readings that are downloadable via internet or through other electronic media channels” (electronic). They access different media types like “internet, television, radio / electronic audio gadgets (for music and for news programs), and newspapers / magazines”.

2. All the students passed the text comprehension test, although their differentiated scores fit them to different levels of performance in text comprehension ranging from “Outstanding” to “Fairly Satisfactory”. The rate of their performance in interpretative and applied comprehension are inferior to other comprehension levels.

3. Sex, age, mother tongue, range of family income, accessed reading materials at home and accessed types of mass media are not significantly associated to performance in text comprehension.

4. The appropriate learning activities for Grade 11 students to improve their text comprehension level ideally focus on “interpretative and applied levels of comprehension”.

Recommendation

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are hereby presented:

1. On account of the their profile along learner variables, students’ are recommended to improve their access to more print and electronic reading materials and access to more media types that feature authentic English inputs. This also presupposes the cooperation of their parents who are recommended to invest in more reading materials that can be accessed by their children at home and to promote in them a positive culture and attitude for reading and delighting exposure to various media types in English;

2. On account of their performance in text comprehension, students are recommended to work on further improvements in their grasp of interpretative and applied comprehension. This also presupposes the cooperation of teachers, parents and all school agents to provide means to reinforce students’ performance in text comprehension;

3. On account of the correlational findings, future researchers may confirm the generalizability of the results in other school settings or they may nominate alternative variables in the search for learner conditions and characteristics that are

significantly associated to their text comprehension performance in view of determining factors that can be targeted for potential instructional intervention and remediation;

4. On account of the guidelines offered by this study in the formulation of learning activities that can improve students' text comprehension performance, it is highly recommended that the guidelines be adopted by teachers and instructional material designers. The prototype learning activities offered by this study is recommended for actual deployment or recommended to be used as a pattern for formulating prospective learning activities in text comprehension.

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