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Expository Text Structure: A Visual Strategic Representation in Enhancing the Reading Comprehension Skills of the Learners

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Abstract

Expository Text Structure strategy addresses the informational structure of the text that provides students with a feasible way to analyze through a visual representation of the text which creates an understanding of the basic part of the expository text. This study was carried out through a quasi-experimental design or two group pre-test post-test designs to determine the effectiveness of the Expository Text Structure strategy on the reading comprehension of the students. The researchers developed a reading comprehension test to gather data and were analyzed using percentage rate, frequency count, percentage mean, and t-test for independent samples. Results revealed an increase in the result of the experimental group than the control group after the application of the intervention. Therefore, there was a difference in the reading comprehension level of the pupils in both groups. The change between pre-test and post-test scores of both groups was significantly different. Hence, the study concluded that the Expository Text Structure strategy was significantly effective in enhancing the reading comprehension skills of the students. This offers pedagogical implications such that the Expository Text strategy can be applied to increase the comprehension of the students.

INTRODUCTION

Numerous learners have difficulties comprehending what they had read because of the lack of comprehension skills. They cannot understand the text due to the lack of strategy on how to comprehend the text and the inability to figure out the principal structure of the text. Some students are baffled by words and cannot even see the bigger picture (Dymock, 1998). For example, according to Educational Statistics in 2005, 26% of eighth-grade students are struggling with reading comprehension in academic texts performing below the basic level on the National Assessment of Educational Progress reading tests (Cromley & Azevedo, 2007). Numerous students suffered from a lack of reading comprehension skills.

Many children showed difficulties in reading as reported by the National Assessment for Educational Progress in the study of Cayubit (2015). Rahman (2004) stated that students do not understand long sentences, and they miss the links between parts of a text. As a result, they lose their patience and their interest until they give up reading. Most students fail to understand the syntax, especially when the sentence structures are long. They also have problems with understanding text organization. Likewise, some ELT researchers in Bangladesh found that student's proficiency in reading is very poor. Rahman (2004) found out that students' proficiency in almost all the sub-skills of reading is below average.

Reading comprehension is a cognitive process that is a necessary skill in learning applied in the expository text (De Jonge & Kemp, 2012). To become a

good reader, a student must learn to comprehend to understand the content of the passage. The student's ability to understand the complex material expressed in textbooks is indeed suffering (Graesser et al., 2004). In like manner, students must have awareness on how to organize and present information through different expository text structures. Understanding text structures provides a way of identifying which information is most important and which presents supporting details because it will help improve their reading comprehension skills (Van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983).

Additionally, expository text structure is a form of the diagram wherein the students will be able to identify the different parts of the story. It is a process in which it enables the students to comprehend by taking down the important parts of the story through expository text structure. According to the book of Moss (2004), expository text structure is defined as an organization of framed incorporate with different patterns that are accomplished through locating the important key terms, phrases, and definitions taken from a printed text or other textbooks.

Singer and Donlan (1982) proclaimed text structure as text organization, refer to (a) the order of sentences, paragraph, and the passage in total (Dymock, 1998); (b) the interconnection of the wisdom of the text to express the message to the readers (Meyer, et. al. 1980); and (c) the logical relations among ideas in the text and the subordination of some ideas to others (Dickson, Simmons, & Kame'enui, 1995a; Dickson, Simmons, & Kame'enui, 1995b). By the same token, students gain more information from the expository text than from other media when the text is assigned as a primary source of information and the teacher instructs how to comprehend the text (Chall, Jacobs & Baldwin, 1990).

Students must know how information is organized and presented through different expository text structures. In this way, they can easily identify which information is the most important and which presents supporting details (Van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983). Text features can help readers locate and organize information in the text. For example, headings help introduce students to specific bits of information. Presenting information in this manner helps students hold each bit of information in their short-term memory. Students then can process it or connect it to background knowledge and store it in their long-term memory. Without headings, information would be overwhelming, making it difficult to be processed effectively (Akhondi, et. al., 2011).

The literature discussed the importance of expository text structure towards the comprehension skill of the student and its effectiveness by the use of its organizational materials. Despite the development of students' comprehension skills, it also improves their retention skills as well as sharpens their minds (Brown & Cambourne, 1987). As Pyle et al. (2017) stated, Expository texts include a broad range of texts across grade spans.

Other studies indicated that the application of expository text structure does not affect the reading comprehension of the students. In the study of Bradley (2010), there are two experimental groups exposed to teaching text structure strategy showed different kinds of results. The first experimental group showed an increase in comprehension but the second group did not. On the other hand, the group of students who receive text structure strategy instruction on the problem-solution text structure recalled more information on the assessment and write summaries containing more ideas than the control groups. However, when a problem/solution text structure was used as a skeleton for class discussions, the study determines that this particular strategy did not facilitate students' recall of information (Bradley, 2010).

Likewise, Slater and Graves (1989) claimed that expository text is a form of writing that has an intention to introduce to readers information regarding

persons, dates, predictions, facts, theories, limitations, specifications, generalizations, and conclusions. Equally important, better comprehension skill was obtained by the students who are taught to identify the structure of expository and narrative text rather than students who have not received such instruction (Taylor & Beach, 1984). The study of Hebert, Bohaty and Nelson (2016) aimed to free up students' cognitive resources by including in their instruction only what is essential for teaching planning and organizing—in other words, executive function. Students do not have to be concerned about what to write about, which is a complicating factor in most writing instruction. The authors provide students with short information frames, which eliminate the need to generate content; students learn to organize the frames according to the several text structures (Williams, 2018). Moreover, students who can use the organization and structure of informational texts are better able to comprehend and retain the information that is taught to them (Goldman & Rakestraw, 2000, Duke & Pearson, 2002).

In the Philippines, the Department of Education has reported several cases of children with learning difficulties. Its effect is not only limited to poor reading achievement because studies have shown that poor readers are at significantly greater risk than good readers for developing attention and behavioral problems (Adams & Snowling, 2001; Maughan & Carroll, 2006). Thus, stressing the notion and importance of assessing reading ability or achievement early is necessary to identify those children who would need intervention (Cayubit, 2015).

Therefore, reading comprehension skills is an important aspect of a reader to be able to provide understanding and retention in the reading text. Expository text structure has great use in improving the reading comprehension skills of the students. This comprises of categories of organizational tools that will assist the student in comprehending the text easier and recall faster. Analysis of results showed that the treatment had relatively large effects on the ability of students to identify expository text structures (Bohaty, 2015). Hence, the researchers were prompted to conduct a scientific investigation on the effectiveness of the expository text structure on the reading comprehension skills of the learners.

METHODS

The study tested the effectiveness of expository text structure on the reading comprehension skills of the students. Expository text structure includes the cause and effect, sequence, problem and solution, description, and compare and contrast categories. The quantitative research approach was appropriate for this study because its design was quasi-experimental (Macmillan & Schumacher, 2001). A quasi-experimental design was used in the study since the two groups were not randomly assigned. It was not practical and was unethical to place the groups in a true experiment because of limited financial resources, an insufficient supply of materials, and rigid schedules of classes of the students. Students were informed of the nature of the study for ethical consideration.

In an interview, the teachers pointed out the results of the National Achievement Test conducted in 2015-2016 that showed 24.06% of students in an elementary school in Mindanao, Philippines did not master the reading comprehension skills required for that grade level. Thus, the students from this particular school were chosen for the study based on the data given by the school. The researchers analyzed the data and categorized their scores to determine their sample. The total sample size for the study was composed of two heterogeneous sections which consisted of 30 students each with a total of 60 Grade V students. They were officially enrolled at Romana C. Acharon, Central Elementary School, General Santos City during the school year 2018-2019. One section used the Expository Text Structure strategy and the other group was exposed to the

traditional way of teaching. The researchers handled both sections and conducted 10 sessions.

To gather the data, the researchers created a reading comprehension test in English that consisted of 50 items. The test was subjected to content validation by three English Language experts with research degrees from Mindanao State University-General Santos City. The result of the validity test obtained a mean of 3.9 that indicates the questionnaire had a high level of validity. Thereafter, the instrument was pilot tested on students from a different school and the result obtained a Chronbach Alpha of 0.98 that indicates excellent reliability. This instrument served as pre-test and post-test of both treatment and control groups.

Before the gathering of data, the researchers wrote a letter of permission to the principal of Romana C. Acharon Central Elementary School. Upon approval of the letter of permission, the researchers coordinated with the advisers of the respondents. The research activity was done by informing the respondents about the research features to enhance the respondent's willingness to participate in the activity. The consent forms were given to the parents of the respondents and assent forms were given to respondents three days before the actual data gathering. This study used a pre-test post-test control group design. During the conduct of the research, the researchers administered a 50-item reading comprehension pre-test questionnaire to test the reading comprehension of both groups. Thereafter, the researchers applied the expository test structure to the experimental group while the traditional way of teaching to the control group following the flow of the Special Instruction Plan (SIP). At the end of the 10 sessions, a post-test was administered to the experimental and control group. The reading comprehension test questionnaires were retrieved and were subjected to statistical analysis and treatment.

The method used to accumulate the data in this research was quantitative research. The researchers analyzed the data using percentage rate, frequency count, percentage mean, and t-test for independent samples. It analyzed data through statistics and had a treatment group that was used to measure the impact of the reading strategies instruction. This study focused on using expository text structure (ETS) to the experimental group as a treatment strategy in enhancing the reading comprehension skills of the pupils, and without using (ETS) to the controlled group.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents the level of reading comprehension of the pupils in the experimental and control group during the pre-test. Shreds of evidence on the reading comprehension of the pupils in the control group show that 13.33% of the pupils have moderately mastered, 83.33% have less mastered, and 3.33% have the least mastered level of reading comprehension skills. None of the pupils have reached the "highly" and "very highly" mastered level in reading comprehension skills.

Table 1. Level of Reading Comprehension in Both Groups during the Pre-test

Indicator	Control		Experimental		Verbal Interpretation
	f	%	F	%	
86-100	0	0%	0	0%	Very Highly Mastered
71 - 85	0	0%	0	0%	Highly Mastered
40 - 70	4	13.33%	7	23.33%	Moderately Mastered
15 - 39	25	83.33%	23	76.67%	Less Mastered
0 - 14	1	3.33%	0	0%	Least Mastered
Mean	30.47		31.33		Less Mastered

On the other hand, pieces of evidence on the reading comprehension of the pupils in the experimental group show that 23.33% of the pupils obtained moderately mastered level, and 76.67% have less mastered level of reading comprehension skills before the intervention. None of the pupils are at least, highly and very highly mastered level in reading comprehension skills. The pupils in the control group generated a mean of 30.47 described as less mastered while the pupils in the experimental group obtained 31.33 described as less mastered.

This implies that the pupils in both groups have a low level of mastery in reading comprehension before the intervention. This result shows that most of the students have difficulty in comprehending the text they are asked to read. Most of the time, we observed that they are more into doing leisure time rather than reading. When presented with pictures, it only catches their attention in a short period until they did things irrelevant to the discussions.

In line with this, many of the pupils subjected to this study were Frustration Readers as indicated by the gathered data that the researchers acquired from the school. Also, more than 75% of the pupils in both the control and experimental groups are frustrated readers during the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory for pre-test oral reading in English S.Y 2018-2019. Most of the students can read but lack comprehension of what they are reading. Sometimes they did not know even the spelling or even the pronunciations of that particular word. Results indicated that students who received training in text structure and text cues could identify main ideas significantly better than those who received no training, included more idea units in their summaries, and demonstrated improvement in their comprehension of new passages. Utecht (2015) concluded that the strategies used to teach text structure awareness included clue word instruction and the use of graphic organizers appeared to affect student comprehension of expository texts based on post-assessment data. Awareness and use of text structure play an important role in the comprehension of expository text for students of all ages (Nealy, 2003).

Table 2 presents the level of reading comprehension of the pupils in experimental and control groups during the post-test. The evidence on the reading comprehension of the pupils in the control group show that 23.33% of the pupils have moderately mastered and 76.67% have less mastered reading comprehension skills after the application of traditional teaching methods. None of the pupils have the least, highly and very highly mastered level of reading comprehension skills.

Table 2. Level of Reading Comprehension Both Groups during the Post-test

Indicator	Control		Experimental		Verbal Interpretation
	f	%	F	%	
86 – 100	0	0%	0	0%	Very Highly Mastered
71 – 85	0	0%	0	0%	Highly Mastered
40 – 70	7	23.33%	8	26.67%	Moderately Mastered
15 – 39	23	76.67%	22	73.33%	Less Mastered
0 – 14	0	0%	0	0%	Least Mastered
Mean	33.33		36.93		Less Mastered

On the other hand, evidence on the reading comprehension of the pupils in the experimental group shows that 26.67% have a moderately mastered level and 73.33% have a less mastered level of reading comprehension skills after the application of Expository Text Structure. None of the pupils have the least, highly and very highly mastered level of reading comprehension skills. The pupils in the control group generated a mean of 33.33 described as less mastered while the pupils in the experimental group obtained 36.93 described as less mastered.

This implies that the pupils in the control and experimental groups have a low level of reading comprehension after the intervention. However, it can be inferred from the results that there is a change in the mean score of both groups before and after the intervention. The experimental group has an increase of 5.6% on the mean score while the control group increases by 3%. This only shows that there is an effect on the application of the intervention. Aside from the development of students' comprehension skills, it also improves their retention skills as well as sharpens their minds (Brown & Cambourne, 1987).

This is contrary to the result of a study conducted by Rahman (2004), whose findings revealed a good state of the present proficiency of the learners' reading and writing pedagogy. Students' performance concerning major sub-skills of reading is relatively good, and they face no difficult problems that may bar their reading activities. They also have a high opinion about their teachers and seem to be satisfied with their teaching methodology.

Furthermore, the researchers also looked into the difference in the pre-test and post-test scores of the control group and the experimental group (Table 3). The t-computed value during the pre-test of the control group and experimental group is 1.34 with a p-value of 0.19 while the t-computed value during the post-test is 4.99 with a p-value of 0. The result shows no significant difference in the pre-test of the control group and the experimental group. On the other hand, values show a significant difference between the scores of the pupils in the control and experimental group during the post-test.

Table 3. The difference in the Pre-test and Post-test Scores of Control and Experimental Groups

	Pre-Test	Post Test
Control	(30.47) 9.74*	(33.33) 6.89*
Experimental	(31.33) 8.75*	(36.9333) 4.05*
t- computed	1.34	4.99
p-value	0.19	0.000
Remarks	Not Significantly Different	Significantly different at 0.01

The result implies that there is no significant difference in the reading comprehension of the students in the control and experimental group before the intervention and after the application of the study, the result shows significantly different in both groups. It can be observed that there is a difference in the mean of the reading comprehension of the students in the experimental group than the control before and after the intervention. This result is supported by the study of Bradley (2010) which she cited that the results of only two studies consistently showed that providing students some explicit instruction on text structures helps them recall more information from texts (Taylor & Beach, 1984; Williams, et al., 2005). According to Taylor and Beach, (1984) cited by Bradley (2010), the experimental group had significantly higher recall scores and post-test writing scores than the control group. The results of this study suggest that text structure instruction is effective in enhancing recall of content area materials.

The effect of the traditional teaching method and Expository Text Structure in enhancing the reading comprehension skills of the students is as shown below (Table 4). Results revealed that the t-computed value of the test scores of the pupils in the control group before and after the intervention is -3.97 with a p-value of 0.00. While the reading comprehension test scores of the pupils exposed to Expository Text Structure obtained a t-computed value of -7.58 with a p-value of

0.00. The results imply that there is a significant difference between the pre-test scores and post-test scores of the control and experimental group. This only means that there is a significant change in the reading comprehension level of the pupils in both the control and experimental group.

The expository text structure is important in improving the comprehension skills of the students (Meyer, et. al. 1980). It can also allow children to recall information in the text and not just the main points. It also helps them to master the summarization skill of the student both in oral and in written (Moss, 2004).

Equally important, the students can develop their reading comprehension skills through the use of the expository text structure by providing the students simple ways to analyze and comprehend visual representation of a text which creates an understanding of the basic part of the expository text (Fletcher, 2006). Not only the comprehension skills of the students are enhanced and improved but also their retention skills as well as it sharpens their minds (Brown & Cambourne, 1987).

Table 4. Difference in the Reading Comprehension of the Control and Experimental Group

Control Group	Pre-test	Post-test	Experimental Group	Pre-test	Post-test
	(30.47)	(33.33)		(31.33)	(36.9333)
	9.74*	6.89*		8.75*	4.05*
t-computed	-3.97		t-computed	-7.58	
p-value	0.000		p-value	0.000	
Remark	Significantly different at 0.01 level.		Remark	Significantly different at 0.01 level.	

Additionally, most of the students can read fast but not all of them understand what they are reading. For instance, in compare and contrast lessons, the researchers asked them to read a story posted on the board, they read it loud and fast. However, when the researchers asked questions, they do not know what would be the possible answer. Some students lack vocabulary words and they tend to repeat the answers. An example was when they were asked to describe what they see in the picture, one student asked what was the English term for that particular word, and also one of them did not know the spelling of that word.

According to Meyer, Brandt, and Bluth (1980) and McGee (1982), the majority of the studies showed at least some degree of relationship between text structure awareness and recall of ideas. Furthermore, the researchers observed that they can learn fast as long as they practice it from time to time, same through with the sequence and order that when questions were asked related to a real-life situation, they would like to share it in the discussion. It was easier for them to answer the questions because those were part of their experiences. Even though the result is significant, most of the students are still poor readers. Time is also relevant to the study. It will cause a huge impact on their comprehension skills if the researchers would have much time for them to master the Expository Text strategy.

Moreover, the table below presents the difference in the mean gain score of the control group and the experimental group (Table 5). The result shows that the mean gain score of the control group is 2.87 while the experimental group is 5.60. As shown in Table 5, the computed t-value is 2.32 with a p-value of 0.03. This result indicates that there is a significant difference in the mean gain scores of the pupils in the control group and experimental group after the application of the intervention.

Table 5. Difference between the Mean Gain Scores of Control and Experimental Group

Group	Mean Gain Score	Sd	t-computed	p-value	Remark
Control	2.87	3.95434	2.32	0.03	Significantly different at 0.05 level
Experimental	5.60	4.04799			

This implies that the change between pre-test and post-test scores of both groups is significantly different at the 0.05 level. Through the intervention, students can be able to recognize and identify different situations, solve problems, describe and determine the cause and effect of the given context. Its effectiveness in reading comprehension gives a higher tendency for students to easily understand and comprehend the text. The result is supported by the study of Newman (2007), on the graphic organizer measure, students improved from an average of 2.24 on the pre-test to 4.47 on the post-test. This high post-test score appeared to indicate that students were aware of text structure and could accurately represent the information in a topical net organizer. Likewise, a better comprehension skill was obtained by the students who are taught to identify the structure of expository and narrative text rather than students who have not receive such instruction (Taylor & Beach,1984).

For the students to gain comprehension skills or be able to understand the text or information, they primarily need to know how to organize text through the use of expository text structure because it plays a great role and important in the development of the reading comprehension skill of the students. It may help them to assist the development of the children's reading comprehension skills as well as critical thinking skills (Alvermann & Phelps, 1998; Goldman & Rakestraw, 2000; Duke & Pearson, 2002).

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of using Expository Text Structure in enhancing the reading comprehension of Grade V pupils. Expository Text Structure may provide guidelines for the students a simple way to analyze and comprehend visual illustration of a text which creates an understanding of the basic part of the expository text.

Based on the findings of this study, the students in both groups had a low level of mastery in reading comprehension before and after the intervention. The findings also revealed that there wa a significant difference in the reading comprehension of the pupils in the control and experimental group before and after the intervention. The students in the control group improved due to the conventional method of teaching reading comprehension, while the students in the experimental group also improved because of the exposure to the Expository Text Structure strategy.

Moreover, there was a significant difference in the reading comprehension level of both groups but the students in the experimental group who had exposure to the Expository Text Structure performed better in the reading comprehension test based on the significant difference of both groups in the mean gain scores. Expository text structure aids the reading comprehension skills of the students and helps them to understand and analyze the meaning of the text or information easily.

Expository Text Structure can help students improve their reading comprehension skills. Thus, this study has pedagogical implications for the teachers to improve and enhance the reading comprehension skills of their pupils

by including the expository text structure as their guide and tool in the teaching-learning process. Teachers should teach Expository Text Structure to the early stage of the pupils so that they are more aware of this than only know about the narrative text. They may also develop effective teaching strategies to enhance the reading comprehension of the pupils. The practical implications suggest for the administrators to conduct training and seminars for teachers about Expository Text Structure to better implement this reading comprehension strategy.

LIMITATIONS

Despite this result, the study has limitations such as the time frame. The strategy was only conducted in 10 sessions so this should be implemented over a longer period with an appropriate schedule to validate the effectiveness of Expository Text Structure in enhancing the reading comprehension skills of the students. Second, the subject of this study was determined through purposive sampling. Future research incorporating a larger number of students is needed to determine whether there are practical effects for accurate measures of reading comprehension. Lastly, this only focused on Grade V students. Future research may conduct the Expository Text Structure to the other grade levels.

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