

Students' Strategies in Understanding Non-Literary Texts

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Abstract — This descriptive-survey study determined the extent to which the respondents employed different comprehension strategies in reading non-literary texts. Two hundred sixteen respondents were chosen using stratified random sampling to read an adopted non-literary text and fill out the researcher-made Comprehension Strategies Questionnaire. Visualizing is the most frequently employed comprehension strategy with a verbal description of "often," followed by monitoring and predicting. Setting a Purpose is the least employed comprehension strategy among the study respondents with a verbal description of seldom. Respondents have a diverse set of comprehension strategies that they utilize while reading non-literary texts. Although diverse, only a few of these strategies were often used by the study respondents, and none of these strategies were not used by the respondents. Creating learning activities that enhance students' reading comprehension, especially their use of the different comprehension strategies, is highly suggested since it is evidenced in the study results. It is also encouraged that teachers explicitly teach how to use the different comprehension strategies so that learners can use them effectively when reading. Topics such as defining and using these comprehension strategies are highly encouraged to be presented explicitly in learner's materials and books with embedded texts so that students will have strengthened cognizance of the proper use of the comprehension strategies.

Keywords — *Comprehension Strategies, Non-Literary Texts, Descriptive Design*

Introduction

Reading is a complicated cognitive process that involves comprehending a written linguistic message. Learners read a wide range of reading materials, including non-literary and literary works. The reader may analyze a text to learn about the topic, hunt for specific information offered in the text, or simply entertain oneself.

When reading in a foreign or second language (L2), a learner may process a text to acquire the language used to construct the text and the content of the text. Following the reading, the L2 reader may employ what he has learned from the book in tasks such as recalling or recounting.

Deriving meaning implies that there is meaning in writings that must be comprehended. Constructing meaning implies that readers frequently go beyond the apparent meaning provided

in the text and add to it based on their own experience and ability to infer additional or more profound meaning. Thus, reading comprehension entails far more than comprehending individual words and understanding what they imply. To comprehend what one reads is to comprehend the author's meaningful message.

When a student reads a material written in the L2, there is a greater chance that the reader may experience specific processing issues that will jeopardize his or her reading goal. The most likely source of the problem is unfamiliarity with the text's language and a reader's inadequate language proficiency. Other potential factors include unfamiliarity with the topic or content of the text and a lack of (access to) relevant general information. There is a mix of linguistic and topical unfamiliarity. Furthermore, the difficulty brought on by these linguistic and topic-related elements may impair readers' capacity to monitor and manage goal-oriented text processing.

There have been few studies in the Philippines on how second language learners understand non-literary texts using various reading comprehension strategies. As a result, most teachers lack basic knowledge and teaching ideas for how they will get through teaching non-literary texts, especially since non-literary texts are embedded in every lesson in the English curriculum and across subject areas in the Department of Education's newly presented and implemented curriculum.

This lack of basic information will impede how teachers in the Philippines implement comprehension instruction in the classroom. Understanding and applying different comprehension instruction to maximize the learning potentials of the learners in reading and comprehension will help teachers understand and apply different comprehension instruction to maximize the learning potentials of the learners in reading and comprehension. Furthermore, the researcher was compelled to focus on reading comprehension strategies as one of the factors in the study due to learners' low performance in English, notably in reading and reading comprehension, in both standardized examinations administered by PISA and the Department of Education.

As a result, this study investigated the various comprehension strategies used by learners to comprehend non-literary texts. It concentrated on the extent to which various comprehension tactics were used.

Research Questions

1. How often do the respondents employ the different comprehension strategies?
2. Which comprehension strategy is primarily and least used by the respondents?

Literature Review

For many years, reading education was predicated on the premise that reading was a collection of different skills such as identifying words, locating primary concepts, establishing cause and effect links, comparing and contrasting, and sequencing. The mastering of these skills was considered as comprehension.

In order to learn English, pupils must be able to grasp the four basic abilities of English, which are speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Reading is regarded as the most crucial of the four fundamental talents. It has garnered the most attention of any component of education. Reading falls under the category of sensory abilities like listening. This means that it entails responding to text rather than creating it.

The ever increasing demand for high literacy levels in today's modern culture exacerbates the situation (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998 as cited by Kucukoglu, 2013). According to Pourhosein, Gilakjani, and Ahmadi (2011), the primary purpose of reading is to obtain the proper message from a text that the author intended for the reader to acquire.

Variables such as reading attitude, reading goal, prior information of the text, textual structure, and vocabulary knowledge impact the success of the reading process; comprehension is determined by the reader's interaction with the text (Yldrm, 2010).

Reading is critical in EFL language use. Because it is an effective method of second and foreign language acquisition, its development as a skill should be prioritized in education. The selection of EFL reading materials is very critical. Teachers have gone out of their way to use prescribed reading materials that assess language learners' comprehension of primary components of reading passages, such as structure, coherence, and certain other direct parts (Mokhtari, 2014).

Many researchers have defined the term "non-literary texts" in a variety of ways. Non-literary writings, according to Gibbova (as mentioned in Elhabiri, 2014), are many forms of texts used to portray events and topics and explain, analyze, argue, and encourage readers to understand what they read. According to Newmark (2004), non-literary writings are intended to present readers with the world of events and facts, as well as the world of reality.

Non-literary texts were defined by Nurrohmah et al. (2015) as documents, papers, scientific texts, issues, etc. Non-literary texts, according to Mahdi and Ibraheem (2013), include "a vast spectrum of texts ranging from administrative, legal, and other official papers, to economic and business texts, scientific, technical, and publicist texts." Articles, news reports, scientific texts, memoirs and autobiographies, film reviews, instruction manuals, and so on are examples of non-literary texts.

Many studies have identified the qualities of non-literary writings. Non-literary texts, according to Newmark (2004), focus on the world of facts for readers. He claims that these books are written in regular English to communicate information and that they are frequently written in

the third person. He also believes that the sounds of non-literary writings are frequently scanned and that the language is simple to understand. Khosravishakib (2012) also found that non-literary materials are written in common or easy-to-understand language.

Students can demonstrate their comprehension of texts in a variety of ways. They locate and recall information, use text structure and text organizer knowledge to write short reflective responses, complete multiple choice questions, think deeply and express ideas verbally, complete descriptions, recognize causal relationships, make logical connections, interpret graphics and images, and identify multiple points of view and specific details.

There is a link between learners' reading techniques and their reading comprehension ability. According to Ahmadi and Pourhossein (2012), reading strategy positively affects readers' reading comprehension skills. Reading method improved both proficient and less proficient readers' reading skills. Readers used several reading methods and were aware of when, how, and why they should be used in their reading comprehension process. They also noted that students who learn reading strategies try to identify the primary idea, comment on unfamiliar words, phrases, or sentences, and summarize their reading.

David Moore's paper, *Reading Comprehension Strategies on Best Practices in Secondary Education*, offers seven effective reading strategies:

Plan and Monitor: managing one's mental operations; metacognitive nature focuses on readers' awareness and control of their comprehension. When using this technique, adolescents are taught planning skills, such as how to preview materials, create a reading goal, and make predictions. They are also taught how to use fix-up tactics to clarify ideas and use context clues and other word-level fix-up strategies to clarify vocabulary.

Determine Importance: identifying key ideas and information This is the ability to distinguish between the wheat and the chaff in a text. Youth are taught to recognize stated and implied primary concepts, summarize texts, and note the personal relevance of ideas and facts.

Interrogate Texts: interrogating texts for a variety of goals, including confirming one's understanding, questioning the author about his or her writing, and determining relationships between ideas and information inside a text.

Make Inferences: connecting portions of texts that the writers did not link. Use what you already know to connect sentences and paragraphs. It is commonly referred to as "reading between the lines."

Make Connections: Using what is known to enrich the author's meanings; applying what has been learned from one's own life experiences, other texts, and cultural and global issues to improve understandings of what the author offers.

Synthesize: combining concepts from many sources; determining how ideas fit together in novel ways; determining how what one is reading and learning fits together in novel ways. Youth are taught how to draw inferences, establish generalizations, and make cross-text comparisons.

Visualize: create sensory and emotional images of literary content, particularly visual ones. This technique also contains an aspect tailored to kids who do not consider themselves to be readers: detecting when one is experiencing an emotional response while reading and determining what the author did to elicit that response.

Reading has long been considered one of the most crucial life skills. However, it should be remembered that reading is not the same as comprehending. It is critical to be able to derive meaning from writing. Nonetheless, many pupils struggle to understand what they read (White, 2012). The following articles and studies served as the foundation for this research.

Methodology

Because the objectives of the study necessitated it, the entire study used a quantitative technique and a descriptive-survey design. Using this methodology, the researcher was able to determine the frequency of usage of various comprehension techniques, as well as the most commonly used and least commonly used comprehension strategy among study participants.

Respondents and Sampling Procedure

Students from Cauayan City National High School-Main (CCNHS-Main) were the respondents since the researcher is a faculty of the said school. A stratified sampling procedure was done to get a representative sample for each grade level of the said curricular offering. Two hundred sixteen samples were taken from the total population.

Instrumentation

For the study, one non-literary text (informative text) was used. Morton's (n.d.) text was used as the basis for the non-literary text. The readability level of the text has been determined by the researcher. The material was subjected to the New Dale-Chall Readability Test, a commonly used readability method that determines a text's approximate reading grade level. The non-literary text utilized has a new Dale-Chall Readability Index of 7 with a final score of 6.3 a, indicating that it can be read and understood by Grade 7 children and above.

The Comprehension Strategies Questionnaire (CSQ) was a researcher-made instrument consisting of 50 declarative statements about the different comprehension strategies. It determined the extent to which the respondents use the said comprehension strategies. CSQ is composed of ten (10) comprehension strategies. Each strategy has five statements to create equal weight in the questionnaire and to avoid discrepancies in the results. All statements were jumbled and not categorized into each comprehension strategy. The questionnaire was statistically validated.

Data Analysis Procedure

For research questions 1 and 2, mean, frequency, and percentage were utilized. Mean was used to get the extent to which the respondents used the different comprehension strategies and to identify which among the comprehension strategies was mostly used and least used by the respondents.

Results and Discussion

The table below shows the extent to which the respondents employed different comprehension strategies while reading non-literary texts.

Table 1. Summary of the Extent to Which the Respondents Employed Comprehension Strategies in Reading Non-Literary Texts

Comprehension Strategies	Mean	Description
Making Connections	3.24	Sometimes
Monitoring	3.52	Often
Visualizing	3.57	Often
Summarizing	3.40	Sometimes
Questioning	3.33	Sometimes
Inferring	3.19	Sometimes
Evaluating	3.01	Sometimes
Setting a Purpose	2.47	Seldom
Predicting	3.51	Often
Using Prior Knowledge	3.43	Sometimes

It can be gleaned from the results above that all comprehension strategies were not always used by the respondents. Visualizing (3.57) is the most frequently employed comprehension strategy with a verbal description of "often," followed by monitoring (3.52) and predicting (3.51). Setting a Purpose (2.47) is the least employed comprehension strategy among the respondents of the study with a verbal description of seldom.

The respondents who read non-literary texts often used visualizing comprehension strategies, which has a mean rating of 3.57, indicating that they often imagined scenes and settings from the text to understand it, acted the scenes in the story/text to understand it better, described the text using their senses to clarify meaning, used shapes, figures, or any objects to enhance their understanding of the text and whenever they read texts, at times, they made pictures in their minds to make the text easier to understand. Similarly, the study conducted by Vianty (2014) reveals that

the respondents often use visualizing as one of their comprehension strategies in understanding the text.

For those who read non-literary texts, the mean rating of 3.52 revealed that they often checked their grammar when rewriting the text or paraphrasing it, regularly identified if they were reading too fast and too slow to know if they were still on the track of understanding the text and checked themselves often if they already understood part of the text and proceed. If they do not understand the text, they will reread it. Correspondingly, the study conducted by Vianty (2014) revealed similar results, which show that respondents who read non-literary text often use monitoring as one of their comprehension strategies. Duke and Pearson (2002) reveal in their results that the skilled readers in their study frequently used self-regulated processes such as monitoring the relevancy of online information for a particular reading purpose.

On predicting, the respondents often tried to understand why the author wrote this text/story, gave expectations to the events in the story to supplement their learning, tried to ask questions about what the text might be all about before they read the text, and occasionally asked questions like "what will happen next?" to enhance their understanding in the text they were reading. Comparably, the study conducted by Vianty (2014) revealed that respondents sometimes used predicting strategies when reading non-literary text. In consonance with the current result, predicting or guessing the content of the text appears to be one of the most used reading strategies of the respondents (Solak, 2014; Duke & Pearson, 2002; Magnusson et al., 2018).

On the other hand, the respondents seldom employed setting a purpose in their reading activity. This revealed that respondents seldom made goals before reading the text and usually seldom planned for their reading to systematize their reading process. This result is inconsistent with the findings of the study conducted by Vianty (2014), which revealed that respondents sometimes used setting a purpose when reading a non-literary text. Furthermore, the current results were in contradiction to the results of Solak (2014), which stated that having and setting a purpose for reading appeared to be one of the most used comprehension or reading strategies. Further, Duke and Pearson (2002) revealed similar findings with Solak (2014) and found that readers often used goal setting for a particular reading purpose.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were made:

1. Respondents have a diverse set of comprehension strategies that they utilize while reading non-literary texts. Although diverse, only a few of these strategies were often used by the respondents of the study, and none of these strategies were not used by the respondents.
2. Visualizing, monitoring, and predicting were the most frequently used comprehension strategies, while setting a purpose was the least used comprehension strategy.

3. Even though readers understand a text, the processes they use to explore and comprehend the text as well as how they respond to it varies. The use of the different comprehension strategies, especially so in reading non-literary texts, attests to this. Comprehension strategies have roles in the meaning-making process of readers.

Recommendations

In the light of the above findings and conclusions, the following are recommended:

1. Students are highly encouraged to read varied text types.
2. Teachers are recommended to teach students to make reading varied text types a habit to increase their awareness of the use of different comprehension strategies.
3. Creating learning activities that enhance students' reading comprehension, especially their use of the different comprehension strategies, is highly suggested since it is evidenced in the results of the study.
4. It is also encouraged that teachers explicitly teach how to use the different comprehension strategies so that learners will be able to use them effectively when reading.
5. Topics such as defining and using these comprehension strategies are highly encouraged to be presented explicitly in learner's materials and books with embedded texts so that students will have strengthened cognizance of the proper use of the comprehension strategies.
6. Follow-up studies or related studies may be conducted to provide updates on research results.
7. It is recommended that a reading component that is intensified and strategy-anchored for each content area subject across all grade levels be a part of the curriculum. This is in line with the perspective that learners' success, particularly on content-area subjects, largely depends on their ability to read and how they process the text they read.

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