

Using Outline to Enhance Reading Comprehension in a High School English Language Classroom

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Received October 19, 2014; Revised March 25, 2015; Accepted June 17, 2015

Abstract Reading has always been a key to successful learning. In every facet of human lives, reading plays an important role be it in sports, business, leisure or academe. In language learning for example, reading is undeniably a tool for learning. This has become an important part of learning a language. With the changing fortune of time, modern technology has taken its toll. The i-pod and x-box have probably overtaken great stories of the old times. As a result, today's learners spend less time reading authentic texts. Studies have shown that it is common for students in high school to have difficulties with reading comprehension. Situations like this may jeopardize the development of learners' language skills and strategies necessary for them to become proficient readers. Things must be considered in this changing time. Hence, a language teacher is faced with the burden to deal with classroom scenarios where reading comprehension is of vital interest. On this ground, one innovation is the use of outlining to enhance reading comprehension. The researcher envisions through this research to widen approach to a meaningful reading comprehension.

Keywords: *effects of outlining, outlining, graphic organizer*

Cite This Article: Prof. Jose G. Tan Jr., "Using Outline to Enhance Reading Comprehension in a High School English Language Classroom." *American Journal of Educational Research*, vol. 3, no. 7 (2015): 893-896. doi: 10.12691/education-3-7-13.

1. Introduction

Accordingly, the type of instruction that a student receives will affect reading comprehension. Hence, every language teacher should find ways to maximize meaningful language learning especially when it comes to reading comprehension. What is then the importance of reading in one's life?

Reading in its sense opens the mind to new horizons and exposes one to new experiences. Experts from Oxford University concluded that reading is beneficial for individuals as it increases intellectual ability of people. To understand this better, Pam Marshall, a literacy expert argues that reading is a multifaceted process. She further expressed that fluency and word recognition as aspects of reading can be learned easily. These rudimentary elements must be mastered with the emphasis of reading comprehension. Learners can read words on a selection but if they don't have the necessary comprehension skills, they will face confusion and trouble in understanding the text. This is a reality in some classroom situations. A language teacher in this note should see to it that reading comprehension is reinforced as the teacher varies his instruction. One way to vary instruction is using outlining as a tool for a meaningful comprehension.

2. Literature Review

Outlining as a graphic organizer is a high level skill which involves identifying relationships between concepts and arranging those concepts in an orderly manner [1]. It presents a picture of the main ideas and the subsidiary ideas of any subject [5]. Outlining strategies in relation with reading comprehension are intended to include a variety of metacognitive strategies for explicitly representing text. Sinatra and Pizzo [12] aptly recognized outlining as a mapping tool. They expressed that it can be an important instrument for reading comprehension. Alvermann argued that there is a strong evidence that using such tool improves reading comprehension. Researches also claim that outlines and graphic organizers are fundamental because they provide information and opportunities for understanding [8]. Furthermore, outlining serves as a visualization of the ideas and information in an orderly manner [1]. On this milieu, Bianco and McCormick [3] identified five functions of outlining. These are (a) let the learners focus on important ideas; (b) improves familiarity with the structure of materials; (c) helps retention; (d) produces alternative materials to supplemental material; and (e) encourages learners to participate in learning.

On this account several cognitive theories became salient in the use of graphic organizer in helping students process and retain information. These theories include schema, dual coding and cognitive load theories. First, is the schema theory. Accordingly, concept memory is composed of a network of schemas. A schema as defined by Winn and Snider is a knowledge structure that

accompanies or facilitates a mental process. Dye further expressed that the graphic organizer has its roots in schema theory. He said that when students learn something new, they must be able to retain the information for later use. Hence, information that fits into a student's schema is more easily understood, learned and retained than information that does not. Second theory is the dual coding. As Paivio noted, dual coding theory assumes that memory consists of two separate but interrelated systems for processing information. One system is specialized in processing non-verbal imagery and the other is specialized in dealing with language. Accordingly, while each system can be activated independently, there are connections between the systems that allow for the dual coding information. The theoretical foundations of dual coding theory have definite implications on the values and use of graphic organizers with which outlining is one of its types. Marzano, Pickering and Pollock state that graphic organizers enhance the development of non-linguistic as well as linguistic representations in students and therefore, enhance the development of content. They further argue that graphic organizers as a visual tool help students process and remember content of the given text. The last theory is the cognitive load. The term cognitive load means the amount of mental resources necessary for information processing. As a theory, it maintains that working memory can deal with a limited amount of information. Accordingly, the information is likely to be lost, if its capacity has exceeded its limits. Cooper also expressed that working memory has a capacity of between four to ten elements depending on the student's existing schemas. On this ground, visual learning tools such as graphic organizers can reduce the cognitive load. This situation allows more of the working memory to be able to attend to learning new materials. As a result, content can be addressed at more sophisticated and complex levels through the use of graphic organizers.

Only few studies on outlining have been conducted. In one study stated, Slater, Grave and Piche [13] compared four conditions related to outline grids and structured organizers. The result of the comprehension and recall tests suggested that the use of structural organizers with the outline grid facilitated the respondents' comprehension and learning. Moreover, the study of Tuckman [15] also supported the effects of outlining. He studied the effect of the coded elaborated outline (CEO). The respondents were required to make outlines and to code and elaborate on the information from book chapters for a Psychology class. This was done through five conditions: required CEO, voluntary CEO, CEO instruction only, standard outlines and no outlines. Result showed that the students in the required CEO group performed the best in the retention of ideas and information.

Some studies were also conducted which compared the effect of outlining and that of graphic organizer. This includes the study of Bean, et al., [2] as cited by Mayumi & Nakayama [10]. Tang [14] in his study explicitly described graphic organizers as graphic techniques which included flowcharting, flow diagram, picture-word, block-word, networking, mapping and semantic mapping. Another study was conducted by Ivino [7] which looked into the effects of outlining and networking. The pretest and posttest scores of the academically underprepared L1

college readers as respondents showed that outlining significantly helped them to achieve better comprehension as compared to that of networking, a kind of graphic organizer.

3. Null Hypothesis

There is no significant difference between the means of scores in the control and experimental group.

4. Method

4.1. Respondents

The respondents of this study were the fifty-three (53) third year students of the MSU- Science High School, Marawi City. They were chosen with the assumption that they possessed a minimum required skills and knowledge of English. They were of two (2) sections of equal treatment. But in this study, Section Fleming served as the control group while Section Landsteiner served as the experimental group.

4.2. Materials

Reading passages from Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) Reviewer were used as instrument in this study. The SAT is a standardized test which is often used as a predictor of how a student is likely to perform in college-level studies (SAT College Board, 2013). This kind of reviewer assesses learners' ability to decode the writer's words and use their background knowledge to construct understanding of the writer's message. Reading comprehension questions (RCQs) from SAT test the learners' ability to understand a passage and answer questions on the basis of what is stated and implied. To further examine the reliability and validity of the passages, they were evaluated by experts of reading process. Another factor in choosing these passages was based on Bloom's Taxonomy [4], the higher order thinking skills (HOTS).

There were three reading passages used in this study with corresponding reading comprehension questions. Passage 1 was an extract taken from a book written sixty years ago by a British scientist in which he considers the relationship between science and society; Passage 2 was taken from a description of the life of certain Pacific islanders written by a pioneering sociologist and; Passage 3 was an extract taken from Darwin's book "*The Voyage of the Beagle*," which he described his voyage around the world as a ship's naturalist.

4.3. Procedures

Weeks before the experiment, everything was planned out. The reading passages were ready so with lessons and supplemental materials. The respondents were divided into control and experimental groups; Section Fleming as the control group while Section Landsteiner as the experimental group. Assigning of the group was done through draw lots.

During the proper experiment, the control group on the first day was given the reading passages to read without

inputs on outlining. Sufficient time was given to them to read the passages and answer the corresponding RCQs. In the experimental group, before giving the same reading passages, the respondents were immersed with the lesson on outlining. They were taught the basic of it through detailed instruction, teacher modeling and examples, teacher and peer evaluation techniques and group and peer discussion and activities. After the inputs made by the researcher, on the second day, they read the reading passages and asked to make an outline in each passage to better understand the ideas presented. They answered the RCQs after reading and making outlines.

5. Results & Discussions

Table 1. The Descriptive Analysis between the Control and Experimental Groups

Group Statistics			
Group	N	Mean	Std Deviation
Fleming	27	13.6296	2.70538
Lansteiner	26	17.8462	3.39048

The table shows that Fleming as the control group has 27 number of respondents with a mean of 17.8362 and a standard deviation of 3.39048 while Landsteiner as the experimental group has 26 respondents with a mean of 13.6296 and a standard deviation of 2.70538.

The data implies that the experimental group has a greater mean and a standard deviation compared to the control group. This means that the experimental group shows better performance in terms of reading comprehension. This may be attributed to the fact that the experimental group was immersed with the lesson on outlining. They were taught the basic of outlining through detailed instruction, teacher modelling and examples, teacher and peer evaluation techniques and group and peer discussions and activities.

This result confirms the idea of Sinatra and Pizzo [12] which states that outlining can be an important instrument for reading comprehension. Moreover, this is supported by Alvermann who argued that there is a strong evidence that using such tool improves reading comprehension.

Levene’s Test as shown in Table 2 was used in order for us to say that (we have the basis for comparison) the two groups are comparable in relation with the null hypothesis (for Levene’s Test) **Ho: Variances of the two groups are the same**. Based on the mean scores between the two groups, Ho is **NOT rejected**. The test statistics used in not rejecting Ho is the F-test and has a value of 0.784 and *p-value* of 0.380 which is greater than 0.05 level of significance. The result is **NOT significant**. Thus, we can conclude that the two groups have the same variance, and the two groups are comparable.

Table 2. t-test Independent Samples

		Levene’s Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	p-value Sig.	t	df	p-value Sig. (2-tailed)
Data	Equal variances assumed	.784	.380	5.014	51	.000
	Equal variances not assumed			4.993	47.782	.000

In comparing the means of the two groups, it can be seen from the Table that the *t*-value is 5.014 and the *p-value* of 0.00 which is less than 0.05 level of significance, thus **Ho: There is no significant difference between the means of scores in the control and experimental group is Rejected**. Therefore, the result is **significant**. This means that on the average, means of scores in *the control and experimental group* are **NOT** the same.

Furthermore, *t*-test independent samples were used to determine the significant difference between the mean responses of the respondents. If the *p-value* of the test statistic is less than $\alpha = 0.05$ level of significance, then the formulated null hypothesis is rejected; hence the result is significant.

This clearly implies that the experimental group with the respondents thoroughly immersed in the lesson of outlining had a better reading comprehension compared with the control group without inputs on outlining. This definitely supports the contention of Jones, et al., [8] who noted that outlines provide information and opportunities for understanding. The present investigation proves that outlining is a tool for the visualization of ideas since it presents information in an orderly manner [1]. It further strengthens the ideas of Bianco and McCormick [3] on the functions of outlining. Hence, we can therefore deduce that outlining is a salient strategy to achieve better reading comprehension. As earlier pointed out that reading is a key to a successful learning has been reinforced by the result of this present investigation.

In general, the result of the study is in cognizant with the studies mentioned in the literature review of the present investigation.

6. Implications and Conclusions

The findings in this study explicitly support the studies of (a) Slater, Grave and Piche [13] which suggested that the use of structural organizers with the outline grid facilitated the respondents’ comprehension and learning and (b) Tuckman [15] which also supported the effects of outlining with the result of his study showing that the students in the required coded elaborated outline group performed the best in the retention of ideas and information. These findings indicate following implications: Students learned better if they are involved in the learning process and students learned the most if there is a hands-on learning as they themselves are immersed in group discussions, interactions and activities.

With these findings, we can therefore conclude that outlining can enhance the reading comprehension of students. Hence, it is a tool for enhancing reading comprehension. Teacher may implore it to help students better understand reading selections. As a matter of fact, the experimental group managed to easily answer the RCQs compared that of the control group. This implies that since respondents in the experimental group were

already immersed in outlining, they better understand well the reading selections.

Acknowledgement

The researcher would like to thank Prof. Ma. Luisa R. Colina for her guidance in the making of this research; Dr. Eugene F. Torres, Jr for his comments and Prof. Sonny M. Magno for the help with statistics.

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