

Controlled Film Viewing: Alternative Pedagogical Tool in Reading Comprehension and Writing Proficiency

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Abstract: This study aimed to determine if integrating the Controlled Film in the classroom is effective as an alternative tool in improving the Reading Comprehension and Writing Proficiency of the Freshmen Engineering Students.

The researcher utilized an experimental design to distinguish the difference in students' levels of reading comprehension and writing proficiency in students who were taught traditionally, and in the class who followed the lesson design which integrated the controlled film viewing. The scale by Barrett (1980) and Lumley (2009) were used to determine the students' levels of Reading Comprehension and Writing Proficiency through the Pre and Post Test results of the respondents.

The results revealed that there was an improvement in the Reading Comprehension and Writing Proficiency when the Controlled Film was employed. The Experimental Group got an overall mean score of 1.9 (low) for Reading Comprehension and 1.9 (low) for Writing Proficiency during the Pre Test and it increased to 2.3 (average) for Reading Comprehension and 2.1 (Average) for Writing Proficiency after the Controlled Film was administered. On the other hand, the Control Group improved their Reading Comprehension but not as successful as the Experimental Group. Through the use of Traditional Teaching, the Controlled Group recorded a mean score of 1.8 (low) in the Pre Test to 2.1 (average) in the Post Test, also there was a slight increase in the Writing Proficiency because they got a mean score of 1.7 (low) from Pre Test to 1.8 (low) in the Post Test.

It was proven that integrating Film in the classroom is effective as an alternative tool in teaching Reading Comprehension and Writing Proficiency to the Engineering students. Therefore, it is a good strategy which the teachers could complement in existing strategies in teaching the English language to students.

Keywords: Film, Reading Comprehension, Writing Proficiency

Introduction

For many years reading and writing are taught separately. Though the two have almost always been taught by the same English teacher during her English class, educators rarely made explicit connections between the two for their students. However, research has shown that reading and writing are more interdependent than what people thought. The relationship between reading and writing is a bit like that of the chicken and egg, which came first is not as important as the fact that without one the other cannot exist. Many researchers have noted the similarity of comprehending and composing and how doing one increases the ability to do the other.

There are limited studies regarding the relationship of reading comprehension and writing proficiency, thus, there is a need for studies that examine the impact of reading comprehension on writing proficiency and improvement of both skills for students. Since viewing could increase critical reasoning and portraying information that will be used in comprehending a message and develops creativity in writing, the researchers would like to prove that film viewing can be an alternative tool in

improving reading comprehension and writing proficiency. As Tatsuki (2006) narrates, "If a picture speaks a thousand words, then motion pictures must express millions."

According to the Center for Media Literacy, the literate reader, however, does not stop with converting printed words into ideas. He/she contemplates those ideas, and carries on an internal dialogue with the author, congratulating the latter for brilliant insights. At this point, reading and critical viewing, literacy and television literacy, become synonymous. Both the reader and the viewer learn to be active - to challenge, analyze, react, explore, and understand the medium, whether it is a printed page and an illuminated TV set. A closer analysis, however, reveals one underlying problem: many teachers have had little training in using video (captioned or uncaptioned) for language teaching purposes, and in some cases, have resorted to a "push-the-button-and-watch" teaching methodology. Specifically, teachers often rely too heavily on the video to teach, stimulate interest, and enhance comprehension without focused and controlled teacher involvement in preparing students to receive the message.

The purpose of this study was, hence, to examine and explore the relationship between reading comprehension and writing proficiency. It would also see if film can be an effective alternative tool in teaching reading comprehension and writing proficiency.

Literature Review

Viewing

While there are traditional ways in teaching reading and writing such as; Reading Aloud, Comprehension Questions, Shared Reading and Guided Reading, Story Grammar, Writing, Build Word Knowledge, Teach Words Conceptually for vocabulary and most common is Classroom Visual Aids. Davis (1998) points out, teaching with video can be a great help in improving writing proficiency of the students. Research on educational technologies--ranging from motion pictures to computer-based tutoring systems--documents a disappointing history in which strong claims for a new technology are followed by large-scale implementations which eventually fail (Cuban, 1986; Mayer, in press). For example, in 1922, the famous inventor Thomas Edison proclaimed that "the motion picture is destined to revolutionize our educational system and that in a few years it will supplant...the use of textbooks" (cited in Cuban, 1986, p. 9). Yet, in reviewing the role of motion pictures in schools over the decades since Edison's grand predictions, Cuban (1986, p. 17) concluded that "most teachers used films infrequently in classrooms." Similarly, fifty years later in the 1970s, the game-like computer-assisted instruction (CAI) programs that were touted as the wave of the future in education eventually proved to be no more effective than teacher based modes of instruction (Cognition and Technology Group at Vanderbilt, 1996). Today, similarly strong claims are being made for the potential of multimedia learning environments.

Multimedia is most commonly defined as the use of at least two of these elements: sound (audio), and text, still graphics, and motion graphics (visual) (Tannenbaum, 1998).

The key to using video effectively still lies in the teacher's ability to not only **deliver** the message, but to empower students to **receive** it; a basic concept that is not new. However, although the technology has evolved, simple yet effective techniques of preparing students to receive the language still lies at the crux of language learning and should not be neglected. In the end, captioned video serves to complement, not replace, a balanced combination of previewing, viewing, and post viewing (application) exercises as key components of effective learning (Davis, 1998). Video can provide

models for target performance. Video is also a versatile information resource. Finally video is a context for language use; it can stimulate production of language by learners (Tatsuki, 2000). A long action scene can be used to encourage reading (order a series of descriptive sentences (Tatsuki, 2000). Learners are generally enthusiastic about incorporating video in their learning but they are less articulate about how they want to go about it. The challenge to the teacher/material developer is how to match learner needs lacks and wants to the teacher's own orientations to teaching and to the situation (Tatsuki, 2000).

Putting captions to movie is a great help in developing reading comprehension but if students still do not seem to benefit from the captions, a teacher should not attribute the failure only to low student motivation, poor video quality, or equipment, not to the way we are actually using the video. In other words, the essential obstacle to improved teaching has been that educators have been unaware of the real amount of work involved in implementing video technology in language teaching. (Davis, 1998)

In teaching with video it is not a simple matter of pressing “Play” and telling students to watch. A significant amount of careful preparation is required to exploit the rich potential video can offer. The good news is that well-designed video-based activities can be successfully reused for years without ever becoming obsolete.

However, there is a question that needs consideration: Can the students understand the language of the film? The teacher must not be afraid to challenge students with natural language. With a certain amount of written explanation and vocabulary instruction, along with contextual clues, students can understand far more than a teacher (or they) might expect. When comprehension is exceptionally difficult, judicious use of English subtitles can be helpful, especially since listening comprehension is not the primary objective for the activity.

The movie must be appealing and engaging to the students: motivation is the key element in this activity. In addition, as Tatsuki (2000) points out, the teacher should like the film as well. Enthusiasm is infectious; the teacher must choose a film which he/she can wholeheartedly share with his/her students. For the past several decades, teachers have been continually trying to exploit and manipulate video to enhance classroom teaching and language learning. When captioned technology emerged to the forefront more than 15 years ago, many educators quickly recognized its potential in helping student’s process language differently via this additional modality: the printed word Goldman, 1996; Holobow, Lambert & Sayegh, 1984; Koskinen, Wilson, Gambrell, & Neuman, 1993; Parks, 1994; Vanderplank, 1993).

Meyer revealed in his study five design principles of multimedia with the implication that is contributed by the Cognitive Theory on Multimedia Learning to help students understand a scientific explanation: **Multiple Representation Principle:** It is better to present an explanation in words and pictures than solely in words. The first principle is simply that it is better to present an explanation using two modes of representation rather than one. **Contiguity Principle:** When giving a multimedia explanation, present corresponding words and pictures contiguously rather than separately. **Split-Attention Principle:** When giving a multimedia explanation, present words as auditory narration rather than as visual on-screen text. **Individual Differences Principle:** The foregoing principles are more important for low knowledge than high-knowledge learners, and for high-spatial rather than low-spatial learners. **Coherence Principle:** The fifth principle is that students learn better from a coherent summary which highlights the relevant words and pictures than from a longer version of the summary.

The study “Multimedia Use in Higher Education; promises and pitfalls” by Gregory Krippel (2010) emphasizes of what constitutes educational “multimedia” and presents research evaluations of their effectiveness, its promises and pitfalls. Since typical undergraduate student of today is accustomed to receiving information on a daily basis in a variety of formats, i.e. multimedia channels. This can present a challenge to educators wishing to engage students in the classroom while still providing required content in order to enhance learning outcomes. These research findings consider not only the educational content being delivered, but also variables associated with the receivers, i.e., the student audience. The promise of revolutionizing education through the use of multimedia can be found as early as 1922 when Thomas Edison proclaimed that the Motion picture is destined to revolutionize our educational system and that in a few years it will supplant...the use of textbooks. Fifty years later the game-like computer-assisted instruction (CAI) programs that were touted as the wave of the future in education proved to be no more effective than teacher based modes of instruction (Cognition and Technology Group at Vanderbilt, 1996). Schrand (2008)notes that when technology enabling distance learning first appeared claims were being made that it would replace face-to-face instruction and that digital technology would lead to education customized to the needs of learners (Taylor and Schmidlein, 2000). However, there are researches presently that support the effectiveness of multimedia in increasing learning outcomes of the students.

Reading Comprehension

The International Reading Association (IRA) magazine, lists reading fluency as one of fourteen “very hot” topics in the field of education for the second year in a row (Cassidy & Cassidy, 2005-2006). The National Reading Panel (NRP) *Teaching Children to Read* (NICHD, 2000) determined reading fluency as one of five essential components of effective reading comprehension and recommended that fluency should be assessed formally on a regular basis. An assessment to test reading fluency, Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS; Good & Kaminski, 2002) was based upon the essential early literacy domains from the National Reading Panel (NICHD, 2000). They describe a fluent reader as one whose decoding processes are automatic, requiring no conscious attention, thus enabling readers to allocate their attention to the comprehension and meaning of the text. Samuels concluded, “To summarize the differences between beginning and fluent readers, one may say that beginning readers cannot simultaneously decode and comprehend a text, whereas fluent readers can do both tasks at the same time” (Samuels, 2002, p. 171).

While accuracy in word recognition (decoding) and automaticity in word recognition are important, Rasinski (2000) warns that fluency is not just about the speed of reading, as he says reading is not a NASCAR race. He feels the definition of fluency must include prosody: interpretive and meaningful reading.

Stanovich (1986) describes the cumulative effect of poor reading and vocabulary skills. Children who are poor readers usually also lack a wide vocabulary. When young children struggle with reading, they quite naturally read less than their more able classmates, and therefore are exposed to fewer new words. This restriction on their vocabulary growth, in turn, makes progress in reading even harder. The effect of these deficits makes learning in general more difficult, and as children progress through the grades, the gap between skilled and less skilled readers becomes increasingly pronounced.

Writing Proficiency

The direct test of writing “where test takers produce a sample of writing” (Weigle, 2002, p. 58) has

remained a standard component in many international English language assessment instruments in spite of concerns about its value in accurately reflecting test takers' real writing proficiency levels. Milanovic, Saville, and Shen (1996) reiterate "the faith in their validity and good impact on their teaching" that has seen direct written tests used as central components in international examinations at both L1 and L2 levels, including the Cambridge examinations. Perhaps, concerns over the extent to which ratings reflects the raters' subjective interpretations of test takers' writing ability rather than their actual writing competency (Lumley, 2000) are best summed up by Cumming, Kanto, and Powers (2001, p. 3).

In 2005, Dorothy Leal created an assessment to help teachers objectively evaluate their students, word-writing ability for fluency, accuracy, and complexity. She called her assessment the Word Writing CAFÉ (Complexity, Accuracy, and Fluency Evaluation). Although this assessment is for all grade levels and can be given whole class, it only assesses students' fluency in writing words. It is not designed to assess students' sentence writing ability (Leal, 2005). In *Interactions: Teaching Writing and the Language Arts*, Fearn and Farnan develop a writing system called Power Writing. "Power Writing is designed to promote fluency" (Fearn & Farnan, 2001, p. 195). The writing assessment used in this study is based on Power Writing. Students are instructed to write as much as they can in one minute and then the number of words is counted. Unlike the Word Writing CAFÉ system, in Power Writing students write in sentences.

Langan (1987) and Gunning (1998) agreed that writing is difficult when they stated that writing is both more complex and more abstract than talk. Moreover, Parker (1993) supported this view when he stated that writing could be a torment to students. In addition, Pearsall and Cunningham (1988) and Emmons (2003) advocated that writing is definitely a hardwork. Therefore, it is evidently true that writing poses a number of problems to the students, as it is a skill that is difficult to master. It is believed that writing demands a great deal of skills and conventions such as writing readiness and grammatical rules for the students to become proficient.

Writing therefore is not just putting pen to paper or writing down ideas but it is how these ideas are presented or expressed effectively. Writing demands the writer to have careful choice of vocabulary and understand grammatical patterns and to be able to write sentence structures that is appropriate to the subject matter.

It is evidently true when Freedman, Pringle and Yalden (1996:186) agreed that, "...writing, and until recent years has been neglected child in the family of the four skills': listening, speaking, reading and writing."

Hall (1982) states that a good essay are exhibited through its content: an understanding of events theories, actions, findings and views. For example strong persuasive writing is achieved by the writer's ability to organize and articulate ideas or events very vividly.

One important criterion of a good essay is the structure, this means that a good essay is clearly structured, with a beginning, middle, and the end or normally termed as introduction, body and conclusion. Other than that, the next criterion for a good essay is presentation, which means that the essay is clearly laid out, articulately and grammatically written with original ideas. Another is handwriting, it is found out that untidy handwriting impede communication (Rafidee, et.al 2010). In addition, a good essay also brings discovery' to the reader. According to Hall (2010) "A good writer provides pleasure that carries knowledge with it. The pleasure –carrying knowledge comes from self-

understanding, and creates understanding in the minds of the reader(s). a good contact to the audience or avoids cliches. Cliches are little cinder blocks of crushed and reprocessed experienced which when writers use them in writing, they violate the agreement to construct sentences in order to reach someone”. Therefore cliches prevent true contact by making false contact in its place. In other words, a good essay is able to make contact with the reader or audience without using cliches.

Language use includes mastery of sentence construction, agreement, tenses, word order, articles, pronouns, nouns and prepositions are very difficult for students to acquire and master. Even though, their qualification in English Language paper is good, they are incapable of using Language appropriately and effectively in their writing performance. We can assume that mastering a language is not an easy task especially English Language that is a second language to the students. Moreover, the skills in writing, particularly writing in L2 is difficult. Raimes (1983), stated that non-native students needed more than just creativity to form ideas in English. These students needed teachers’ great concerns of grammar and syntax. This means that students have to acquire the basic rules of grammar and know the correct syntactic structures to compose and write their essays proficiently.

According to Langan (1987), a good piece of writing must also has a strong idea, (thesis) that is related to the topic discussed. In other words, the essay has a clear, logical organization with well-developed major points that are supported with concrete and specific evidence. Besides that, there are effective transitions between ideas.

The use of appropriate words in the essay exhibits an admirable style with sentences that are sophisticated. Grammatical patterns and science structures to create a style, which is appropriate to the topic, are also important for effective writing (Hedge 1990). Hedge (1990) also talk about content which has the descriptors as knowledgeable, substantive, thorough development of thesis and relevant to the assigned topic. “knowledgeable” includes understanding of the subject and the facts or information used by the writer. “substantive” means that several points are discussed and sufficient details. There is also originality with the concrete details to illustrate, define compare and contrast factual information used in supporting the thesis. Relevant to the assigned topic: is described as all information is clearly pertinent to the topic discussed.

Hedge (1990) stated that effective writing requires a number of things: a high degree of organization in the development of ideas and information; a high degree of accuracy so that there is no ambiguity of meaning; the use of complex grammatical devices for focus and emphasis and a careful choice of vocabulary.

Vocabulary knowledge is one of the best predictors of reading achievement (Richek, 2005). Bromley (2004), in a comprehensive review of research on vocabulary development, concludes that vocabulary knowledge promotes reading fluency, boosts reading comprehension, improves academic achievement, and enhances thinking and communication.

Spelling is also an important consideration in reading comprehension. The concepts about sound patterns that children learn in the early years through invented spelling and direct spelling instruction help them to decode new words in their reading. As they mature and begin to spell longer and more complex words, children apply the concepts of base words, prefixes, and suffixes to their spelling. This knowledge of morphology, in turn, helps them to deconstruct longer words encountered in their reading. Templeton (2004) argues that spelling knowledge provides the basis for explicit awareness and understanding of morphology, which, in turn, may guide the systematic growth of vocabulary

knowledge. Considering the strength of vocabulary knowledge in predicting reading achievement, the complex interrelationships among these areas are significant.

Reading Comprehension and Writing Proficiency

Many researchers believe in the reciprocity of learning to read and write: helping a student to read can help a student write (Brand & Brand, 2006; Clay, 2001). Research has shown a significant positive relationship between reading fluency and reading comprehension (Dowhower, 1987; Kuhn & Stahl, 2003; Rasinski, 2003). However, little is known about writing proficiency and its connection with reading comprehension. Chomsky (1978) suggested that writing might be a way into reading. Over 35 years of research has shown the importance of the writing-reading interaction and writing beneficial effect on reading development (Farnan & Dahl, 2003). Fearn and Farnan (2001) noted the similarities of reading and writing: Reading and writing demand enormous information about language and how language works, how to manage or control language, and how to use language to make meaning. Reading and writing are natural and critical interactions within the language arts (Fearn & Farnan, 2001, p. 17).

In their book *Practical Fluency*, teachers Max and Gayle Brand (2006) explain how their fluency instruction includes both reading and writing. They are inspired by Frank Smith's words, "They must read like a writer in order to write like a writer" (Smith, 1988, p. 23). Not only do the Brands believe reading and writing are intertwined, but they have a reciprocal relationship. "While we are teaching kids to read, we are also teaching them to write, and while writing, our students are learning about reading" (Brand & Brand, 2006, p.3). Studies have shown that the speed of oral reading is positively related to comprehension (Daane et al., 2005). Many researchers and teachers believe improving a child's reading fluency can improve their reading comprehension (Fuchs et al., 2001). Some research has shown reading and writing to be reciprocal skills (Clay, 2001). If reading and writing are related, could there be a connection between a student's writing skills and their reading comprehension? If increasing students' writing skill does increase their reading comprehension, this gives us another avenue to improve reading comprehension.

While research has shown high fluency results in high reading comprehension scores (Fuchs et al., 2001), studies have also shown the reverse: students who were low in fluency also showed difficulty comprehending what they read (Pinnell et al., 1995)

Related Studies

In the study "The relationship between reading fluency, Writing Fluency and Reading Comprehension in Suburban Third Grade Students" by Mary Leonard Palmer (2010). The study examines the relationship between reading fluency, writing fluency, and reading comprehension. It also sought to answer if writing fluency is associated with reading comprehension and vice versa. Palmer found out, almost without fail, if a student read aloud a selected passage fluently without errors, the student would have a perfect score on the comprehension questions. There was a statistically significant increase in the average reading comprehension, reading fluency and writing fluency score from their pre to post test. The average (standard deviation) reading comprehension score was 2.56 (0.74) versus 3.28 (0.62) for pretest and posttest respectively, in reading fluency score was 103.5 (34.8) versus 124.6 (36.6) for pretest and posttest respectively, and in writing fluency they got an average score of 17.8 (6.1) versus 22.8 (5.5) for pretest and posttest respectively. This happened time and time again, regardless of the

grade level she taught. The study emphasizes that writing fluency may have an impact on reading comprehension. While much research has been done on reading fluency, little is known about writing fluency. The study includes answering the link between reading fluency and reading comprehension.

The previous study is related to the present study because it both studies the relationship between reading comprehension and writing proficiency. However both studies differ from the scope and limitation and participants. The previous study undertake the utilization of reading fluency as a tool in cultivating reading comprehension of the Suburban Third grade students, while the present study is proving film (as viewing) could be helpful to the Writing Proficiency and Reading Comprehension of the Engineering students.

The study “A cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning: Implications for design Principles” by Richard E. Meyer and Roxana Moreno (2007) examines the implication for design principles in multimedia learning in reference to the Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning.

The study is related to the present study because both studies examines about the effectiveness of multimedia as an instructional technology for the advancement of students to learn. Apparently, the previous study presented five design principles in multimedia learning, and some of those analyzed how motion pictures helps to develop student’s critical thinking skills, including how captioned illustrations help the students improve their reading comprehension, and how this can be a highly effective in eliciting creative, fluent and remarkably expressive writing from otherwise recalcitrant and unmotivated students. However, both studies differ from the scope and limitation. The previous study referred from the Cognitive theory of multimedia learning in yielding five major principles on how to use multimedia in classroom teaching, while the present study is utilizing film (a form of multimedia) as an alternative tool in teaching reading comprehension and writing proficiency.

The study of Grant S. Wolf (2006) entitled “Using Video to Develop Writing Fluency in Low-Proficiency ESL Students” found out that following activity using engaging and popular video materials, are highly effective in bringing out creative, fluent and expressive writing from students. The study promotes the significance of careful preparation in integrating video to exploit its’ full potential that would offer development to writing proficiency. The study suggests that video can be used as stimulus in writing genres, styles and persuasive forms. Teacher must prepare pre-viewing questions and post-writing exercises. In addition, Wolf also advice the careful preparation needed in choosing a video that a teacher must consider, this includes; Intelligibility, it is considering the learner’s comprehension of the language of the film. Appeal, the movie must be appealing and engaging to the students, motivation is the key element in the activity. In addition, the teacher should like the film as well to promote enthusiasm.

Language Objectives, it is the teacher’s prerogative to choose films which emphasize particular grammatical, curricular, or thematic objectives. Length is the limitation of length to fit available class time. Lastly, familiarity, it is considering whether or not students have already seen a highly popular film.

The previous study is utilizing video to develop the writing fluency of the Low-Proficiency ESL Students, while the present study similar to the previous is utilizing video not to develop writing fluency but writing proficiency. Additionally, both studies also differs from their participants, the previous study’s aim is to develop the writing fluency on ESL students who have low-proficiency, while the present study is utilizing film as an alternative tool in teaching reading comprehension and writing proficiency on Freshmen ECE students in the University of Southeastern Philippines.

The previous study is similar to the present study because both study aims to prove the effect of multimedia learning on students in higher education. However, the previous study is more general in scope and limitation because it includes all kinds of multimedia, while the present study aims to prove only film (as a form of multimedia) if this is an effective alternative tool in teaching Reading Comprehension and Writing Proficiency. Another, the previous study presents the promises and pitfall or danger in using multimedia in teaching, while the previous study assumed film as a helpful pedagogical tool in teaching reading comprehension and writing proficiency and needed just to orient teachers how to conduct careful preparation in implementing film in class so it will be effective.

The study “Captions and Subtitles in EFL Learning: an investigative study in a Comprehensive computer environment” by Francesca Bianchi and Tiziana Ciabattini (2011), concluded that captions and subtitles’ impact on vocabulary learning was found effective in increasing comprehension and language memorization in advanced FL learners. Similar results were reported by Neuman & Koskinen (1992): in an experiment with advanced EFL students, those who were shown captioned video had better results in vocabulary recognition and acquisition exercises. Captions and subtitles significantly improved performance on comprehension regardless of language background. Similar results were obtained also by Markham (1989).

The previous study is related to the present study because both of them examine the effectiveness of captions and subtitles in multimedia learning. Captions and subtitles are useful in the present study. These factors are helpful in improving student’s reading comprehension and writing proficiency through integrating it to the film. However, the previous study focuses more on the effect of captions and subtitles in a Comprehensive computer environment, while the present study only would utilize captions and subtitles in the film to improve reading comprehension and writing proficiency.

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