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Editors

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Improving L2 reading and summarizing skills through explicit instruction in text structure

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Abstract

This study investigates whether teaching text structure as a post-reading and pre-writing strategy results in improved reading comprehension. First-year college students (n=41) from two intact English One classes participated in the study, with the experimental group receiving strategy training exercises. Independent raters rated the students' summaries and the scores of the two groups were compared by means of t-tests. The results show that the post-test summaries of the experimental group were rated significantly higher, while no change was observed in those of the control group. This suggests that teaching outlining and raising L2 learners' awareness of text structure results in improved comprehension and more detailed and organized summaries.

Keywords: L2 reading, summarizing, explicit instruction, text structure, strategy training.

Résumé

Cette étude examine si l'enseignement de la structure du texte comme une stratégie poste-lisante et pre-écrivante a pour résultat une amélioration de la lecture. Des étudiants de collège (n=41) de la première année de deux classes d'anglais ont participé à cette étude, le groupe expérimental a reçu des cours d'entraînement de stratégies. Des évaluateurs indépendants ont évalué les résumés des étudiants et le t-test a comparé les notes des deux groupes. Les résultats montrent que les résumés de posttest du groupe expérimental ont été significativement évalués plus haut, pendant qu'aucun changement n'a été observé dans ceux du groupe de contrôle. Cela suggère que le fait d'enseigner à esquisser et élever la conscience de la structure textuelle de la L2 peut avoir pour résultat une amélioration de la compréhension et des résumés plus détaillés et mieux structurés.

Mots réserve: lire dans la deuxième langue, résumer, instruction explicite, structure de texte, entraînement de stratégie.

1. Introduction

Learning strategies are the steps that learners take in order to facilitate the acquisition, storage, retrieval or use of information (Oxford, 1987). They are the behaviors, techniques or actions used by students to enhance their learning and progress in internalizing, storing, accessing, and using the second language (L2) (Oxford, Crookall, Cohen & Lavine, 1990). Research on L2 literacy has thus recognized the importance of investigating the effects of explicit instruction in learning strategies (Carrell, 1989).

Second language learners have two sources for developing literacy-related skills in the target language. One is their literacy ability in the mother tongue and another is through the target language literacy-related activities (i.e., reading and writing) in which they are engaged. Research in L2 literacy has shown that learners transfer literacy-related skills from the first language (L1) context to the L2 context. However, the transfer of skills-related abilities, unlike transfer of surface grammatical structures, is not operative across the different stages of language acquisition. Rather, transfer of literacy-related skills seems to require a threshold of second language proficiency for it to operate.

Several researchers have investigated the possibility of L1-L2 transfer of reading skills but they maintain that transfer of strategies cannot be viewed without simultaneously considering language proficiency. They also suggest that there are similarities in L1 and L2 reading strategies. For instance, Lapkin and Swain (1977) claimed that L1 and L2 reading strategies differ at lower levels of proficiency, but as the proficiency level increases, the strategies approximate each other. In another study of second language reading among children, Alderson (1984) found that there are only moderate to low correlations between reading ability in the L1 and in the L2. He concluded that L2 reading involves both language proficiency and reading strategies.

A study by Calero-Breckheimer and Goetz (1993) investigated the use of reading strategies among 32 biliterate third and fourth grade students reading in Spanish and English. The students read one story in English and another in Spanish. They were presented with one sentence at a time on a computer that recorded their reading times. They were then interviewed and given a checklist to determine what reading strategies they used. It was found that the students tended to report the same number of strategies for both tasks and used the same types of strategies in both languages. Reading times and main idea recall did not differ for the two languages. Furthermore, the results of the study showed that reported strategy use was related to comprehension in both languages and that bilingual students could transfer reading strategies between languages.

Thus, if good L1 strategies could be used in the L2 context, it becomes important to determine whether strategy training could facilitate such a transfer. The results in such studies indicate that reading strategies can be effectively taught. Al-Rufai (1970) examined the effects of “coaching” Arabic students in reading English. Students were taught inferencing skills and getting the implied meaning from the English passages they read. Al-Rufai found that the students showed a significant improvement in their reading comprehension in both Arabic and English.

Results from other studies (Hamp-Lyons, 1985) also show that the teaching of reading strategies results in larger reading gains and better comprehension even among learners who are less proficient in the target language. A study by Kern (1989) showed that reading strategy instruction was most beneficial for those students who had lower L2 proficiency. In the treatment group, reading strategy instruction was integrated into the normal course curriculum. The experimental group, which consisted of intermediate level French students, received instruction in a variety of strategies, from word level analysis to discourse analysis. One strategy that was taught and produced improved reading comprehension in the L2 was inferring the meaning of unfamiliar words from the context. The subjects in the experimental group that showed most gains in reading comprehension were those who had the greatest difficulty in reading L2 texts. Thus, the low intermediate students benefited the most from the strategy instruction. Such results suggest that reading strategy instruction is pedagogically advantageous.

Padron and Waxman (1988) investigated monolingual students’ perceptions of cognitive strategies. The study involved 82 Hispanic ESL students in the third, fourth, and fifth grades in a public elementary school. To determine the relationship between the strategies specified by the students and their reading achievement, the researchers administered the reading comprehension section of the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test and the Reading Strategy Questionnaire (RSQ). Hahn (1984) found that the following strategies from the RSQ negatively correlated with the students’ reading achievement: thinking about something else while reading; writing down every word; skipping parts one does not understand; reading as fast as possible; saying every word repeatedly; looking up words in the dictionary; and repeating the main idea over and over.

On the other hand, the following strategies on the RSQ positively correlated with the students’ achievement: writing summaries; underlining important parts; asking self-generated questions; checking recall; asking questions when one does not understand; taking notes; and using one’s imagination (Hahn, 1984).

Padron and Waxman found that the students' perceptions have predictive validity for their reading comprehension. The results of their study showed that students who used less sophisticated and incorrect cognitive strategies also showed lower gains in reading, and that the use of negative strategies, as well as low L2 English proficiency, interfered with L2 students' reading achievement. The study also showed that self-report measures are useful in assessing students' cognitive strategy use in reading and fostering awareness of strategy use.

Earlier studies have examined the strategies of successful and less successful readers. For example, Golinkoff (1976) compared the reading comprehension strategies of poor and good readers and found that good readers have rapid and accurate word recognition and automatic decoding skills. They read in phrasal units, are flexible in their reading pattern, vary their eye movements, and shift the size of their processing units. They also make use of contextual information in the text and pay attention to information relevant to their purpose, while ignoring information that has no utility for the task. On the other hand, poor readers are slow decoders and are less able to organize texts, which they read word by word. They are inflexible when it comes to variations in task demands.

Similarly, Hosenfeld (1977) reported that good readers keep the meaning of the passage in mind as they read and skip words that they view as unimportant to the total meaning. They use context cues as aids in decoding meaning of unfamiliar words and look up words only as a last resort. They also have a positive self-concept of themselves as readers. The viability of teaching reading strategies exhibited by good readers to improve L2 reading comprehension was also investigated by Carrell, Pharis and Liberto (1989). They found that metacognitive strategy training enhanced ESL reading. In fact, strategy training and metacognitive awareness that entail reader self-control and following reading guidelines were found to be useful in English for Specific Purposes courses, where students deal with technical texts which require specific processing skills (Lundeberg, 1987; Rusterholz, 1987).

Moreover, prior research shows that training in text organization can facilitate reading comprehension, that readers' background knowledge about text structure affects their reading comprehension (Carrell, 1984a, 1984b, 1985, 1992), and that the organization of expository text may be used to familiarize students with text structure (Tang, 1992). For example, Carrell (1991) found that learners who were trained to use the structure of a passage to organize recalls got qualitatively and quantitatively superior results compared to learners who did not receive the same training. Working with reading strategies has also been shown to foster the metacognitive awareness that students need to engage in autonomous learning (Kuhrt & Farris, 1990).

Prior research has established that good readers monitor their reading, plan their strategies, adjust their efforts according to the text, and evaluate their comprehension in order to ensure their understanding (Brown, Armbruster & Baker, 1986). In short, metacognition, or the reader's knowledge of strategies for comprehending a text, and the control that the reader has of his/her own actions when reading different texts and for different purposes, plays a vital role in the reading process and in achieving comprehension. Learning strategy research has also shown that less successful learners can benefit from being trained to use strategies that successful learners use (Brown & Palincsar, 1982).

The link between strategy use and reading comprehension (Cotterall, 1993; Young, 1989), both in the L1 and the L2 (Calero-Breckheimer & Goetz, 1993) provides the impetus for investigating the question of whether L2 learners will significantly benefit from strategy training and manifest improvement in their reading comprehension and written outputs. This makes research on strategy training relevant and pedagogically useful.

Specifically, training learners on how to use the structure of the text to improve their reading comprehension is the focus of the proposed study. This involves self-regulation, metacognition in reading, and the feasibility of improving strategy use through direct training and instruction. Although reading strategy instruction has been found to be successful in first language reading (Brown & Palincsar, 1982), such claims of success in L1 environments need to be validated in L2 contexts to determine their generalizability to L2 readers.

The present study focuses on the area of metacognitive strategy training, specifically *outlining*, in L2 reading by investigating whether teaching text structure as a post-reading and pre-writing strategy results in improved reading comprehension as measured by the quality of students' summaries. Outlining teaches students to organize and see the relationship between and among the main ideas and supporting details of a text and it is an important reading and writing skill that college students need for their academic work. Hence, the present study investigates whether strategy training in recognizing text structure through outlining improves the reading comprehension of L2 learners. Specifically, the study answers the following research questions:

1. What are the good and poor reading strategies that L2 learners use?
2. Does explicit instruction in text structure result in improved levels of reading comprehension and writing among L2 learners?
3. Do well-written summaries reflect the main and supporting ideas contained in the outline of the given text?

2. Method

2.1 Participants

The participants in the present study are 41 first-year college students from two intact English One classes in a private university in Manila, Philippines. The students in the experimental group (N=22) were taught by the researcher, while the students in the control group (N=19) were handled by another teacher. Both English teachers have taught reading and writing for more than six terms.

2.2 Design

The study is based on a pretest-posttest quasi-experimental design. It consists of a pretest, a two-week strategy training period, and a posttest. Intervention involved providing the students in the experimental group with additional and supplementary exercises and strategy training on how to use text organizers, such as the outline, as a post-reading and pre-writing strategy to improve their comprehension and aid them in writing summaries. Comprehension was measured by having independent raters read and rate the students' summaries using a seven-point rating scale, with 4.0 as the highest and 1.0 as the lowest, with 0.5 increments in between. *T-tests* compared the scores obtained by the experimental and control groups in the two summarizing tasks and measured the effect of explicit instruction on strategy training.

2.3 Materials

The students completed a self-report questionnaire similar to that designed by Padron and Waxman (1988) and used by Calero-Breckheimer and Goetz (1993) to determine whether or not they were familiar with the outlining strategy, whether they used it, and if they employed other strategies to aid their reading comprehension. The questionnaire lists 15 strategies and the students used a five-point scale to rate how frequently they used the given strategies in reading. The questionnaire ends with an open-ended question to elicit other strategies that the students may use but were not in the questionnaire.

The texts that were used in the present study were adapted from Oshima and Hogue (1991) and were chosen because they illustrate different types of rhetorical patterns – cause-effect, process description, exemplification, and comparison-contrast – that the students encounter in their course readings throughout their academic study. The pretest text contained fewer words than the post-test one but the difference was not statistically significant. In fact, the two texts are structurally similar in terms of the main and supporting details they contain.

The pre-test text entitled *Women's Liberation* (590 words) discusses the three main causes of women's liberation, namely, the development of effective birth control, the invention of labor saving devices and the arrival of World War II, and the effects of women's liberation on the family, business and government. Two texts were used in the treatment phase using explicit instruction in text structure. The first text, *How a Solar Hot Water System Works* (346 words), describes the materials and processes involved in trapping solar energy to heat water for household use. The second text used for treatment, *The Problems of Metropolitan City* (414 words), describes the three major problems of a metropolitan city, namely, the unreliable public transportation system, congestion, and shortage of affordable housing, and the proposed solutions to the problems mentioned. The text for the posttest, *Japan and the United States* (708 words), compares and contrasts the two countries in terms of their form of government, cuisine, sports, people, transportation, and customs.

2.4 Procedure

Before carrying out the study, the La Salle University's Institutional and Testing and Evaluation Office (ITEO) administered the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test, which is the test that was used by Padron and Waxman (1988) in their study. The students were given 30 minutes to answer 60 multiple-choice items. The test was administered during the first week of classes, and the same test was given to the students at the end of the term as a post-test to determine whether their reading skills improved after taking English One.

Both teachers of the experimental and control groups used the prescribed English One Manual as their main text, supplemented by other materials of their choice. As part of the English One syllabus, both the experimental and control groups received instruction on identifying the keywords in a text, guessing meaning from context clues, extracting the main idea and supporting details in an essay, formulating the thesis statement, identifying topic sentences, outlining, paraphrasing, and summarizing. Both teachers used the same exercise on outlining from *Assignments in Exposition*, 11th edition, to introduce the aforementioned academic skills to the students.

2.5 Pretest

The pretest consisted of a summarizing task based on the *Women's Liberation* passage. It was administered in the first week of the term, prior to any discussion of outlining or summarizing for either group. The students filled out the self-re-

port questionnaire (5 mins.), read the essay (15 mins.) and then returned the copy, answered a 12-item identification test (10 mins.), and then wrote a 100-word summary of the text (30 mins.). The pretest took 60 minutes to complete.

2.6 Treatment

Both the experimental and control groups attended English One class four times a week, one-and-a-half hours each meeting, and were taught various pre-writing skills that included brainstorming, semantic mapping, and free writing. The strategy training in text structure and additional exercises on outlining were given to the experimental group over a two-week period. The main difference between the two groups is the more intensive training in outlining undergone by the experimental group to enhance the students' awareness of text structure and how it may be used as a post-reading and pre-writing strategy.

2.7 The Experimental Group

The researcher guided the students as they identified the main ideas in the two treatment texts. The content of the text was discussed and new vocabulary words were introduced and explained through context clues and morphological analysis. The keywords that the students identified from the passage were written on the board and the class identified or formulated the thesis statement of the essay. When disagreements occurred as to whether or not a given statement was indeed the main idea of the paragraph, students were asked to explain why they considered their contribution to be an important idea. The first session in intervention ended with the entire class producing a list of keywords and phrases from the text, identifying topic sentences, and formulating the thesis statement of the essay.

During the second session in intervention, the students grouped together related ideas from the list of keywords from the previous meeting and provided each grouping with a main heading, resulting in an outline. This was followed by a lecture on the principles and format of outlining. The lecture-discussion emphasized the usefulness of outlining both as a post-reading and pre-writing strategy to facilitate comprehension. Topic and sentence outlines were differentiated as well. Students learned that an outline serves as a blueprint or guide that provides the needed scaffolding on which to hang main and supporting ideas. After introducing the students to how awareness of text structure aids comprehension, they were then asked to write a summary of the passage that was discussed based on the outline that they constructed. Thus, treatment consisted of drawing stu-

dents' attention to the main ideas and structure of the text and showing them how to use outlining as a strategy to facilitate reading comprehension and as a prewriting step in summarizing the passage.

Following Brown, Armbruster and Baker (1986), the experimental group received explicit instruction, extensive modeling, and repeated practice during the two-week treatment period. They were also reminded that the activities they engaged in were designed to improve their reading comprehension and to raise their awareness regarding the significance of the lesson. In short, the students were informed about the rationale behind the lesson.

Attention was given to the process of organizing the list of key words and phrases by deciding which ones were related and how they were connected. In outlining the text on process description, *How a Solar Hot Water System Works*, the students worked in groups of three and decided on the most appropriate way to group the list of ideas. The next session involved discussion of the best way to present the main and supporting ideas in the text using the outline presented. Afterwards, the overall structure of the text was revealed to the students who were then asked to individually write a summary of the text using their outline. Succeeding class meetings during the two-week treatment period consisted of the same pattern of activities involving the second text for strategy training, *The Problems of Metropolitan City*.

2.8 Post-test

The post-test was given to the experimental and control groups immediately after the former finished the two-week treatment period. The post-test consisted of a summarizing task based on the passage *Japan and the United States*. Copies of the test passage were given to the students who were free to mark the page as they read. The procedure for administering the posttest summarizing task followed that of the pre-test. Both groups read the passage, answered a 12-item identification test, and then wrote a 100-word summary of the text they had just read. Two independent readers blindly rated the pretest and posttest summaries using a seven-point rubric for rating students' written outputs.

3. Results and Discussion

To answer the first research question posed at the outset of this study, i.e., what the good and poor reading strategies used by the students are, their responses to the reading strategy self-report questionnaire were tabulated and compa-

red. Results are shown in Tables 1 and 2. Note that 5 corresponded to *Always* and 1 to *Never*.

The students' answers to the questionnaire revealed that they used reading strategies in comparable frequencies. Both groups reported that they often imagined as they read, often read silently, and seldom made an outline. Students in the control group seldom wrote notes, seldom used the dictionary, seldom pronounced what they were reading, and seldom read as fast as possible. A *t-test* was then used to compare the two groups' responses to the self-report reading strategy questionnaire, and results showed a significant difference in how often the two groups used 4 out of 15 strategies.

Table 1. Results of *t-test* comparing frequency of use of self-reported reading strategies.

Strategy	Mean		Mean Difference	F
	Experimental	Control		
underline important parts	4.0455	3.2632	.7823	.124
self-questioning during reading	3.3636	3.0000	.3636	.447
self-questioning when I don't understand	3.8636	3.2632	.6005	1.144
write notes	3.1364	2.6316	.5048	2.612
imagine what I am reading	4.3182	4.3158	.0024	1.746
use dictionary	3.2727	2.7368	.5359	.707
read word by word	3.8636	3.4737	.3900	1.753
read silently	4.3182	4.5263	-.2081	.029
make an outline	1.9545	1.9474	.0072	.670
pronounce words as I read	3.0455	2.5789	.4665	2.907
guess meaning from context	3.5000	3.3684	.1316	.257
attend to title, diagrams, etc.	3.4545	3.1579	.2967	.452
skip hard words	2.8182	2.0526	.7656	.002
skip unimportant parts	3.1818	2.4211	.7608	.001
read as fast as I can	3.0455	2.7368	.3086	.077

The results of the *t-test* displayed in Table 2 show that both groups often pictured what they were reading, often read silently, sometimes tried guessing meaning from context, sometimes took down notes while reading, sometimes used the dictionary, and sometimes attended to the titles, diagrams and subheadings in the text. However, they differ in how frequently they underline what they consider to be important parts of the text, ask self-directed questions when they

don't understand what they are reading, and skip hard-to-understand words and parts of the text that they believe to be unimportant.

The experimental group more often underlined and asked themselves questions when they encountered reading difficulty (good reading strategies), and at the same time, more often skipped parts of the text they considered difficult or unimportant (poor reading strategies). This means that the good reading strategies that the experimental group used more frequently may have been evened out by their more frequent use of poor reading strategies, thereby rendering both groups comparable. The students' responses to the questionnaire also showed that they almost never used outlining during or after reading. This implies that text structure was not used to aid their comprehension and reveals a gap in their repertoire of reading strategies.

Table 2. t-test for Equality of Means.

Strategy	Variances		t-value	2-tail Sig.
	Equal t-value	Unequal 2-tail Sig.		
underline important parts	2.73	.009*	2.72	.010*
self-questioning during reading	1.34	.187	1.35	.183
self-questioning when I don't understand	2.34	.025*	2.32	.026*
write notes	1.65	.106	1.62	.115
imagine what I am reading	.01	.992	.01	.992
use dictionary	1.57	.123	1.59	.119
read word by word	1.31	.198	1.28	.208
read silently	-.89	.376	-.89	.379
make an outline	.02	.981	.02	.981
pronounce words as I read	1.38	.176	.134	.188
guess meaning from context	.48	.634	.48	.272
attend to title, diagrams, etc.	1.05	.302	1.04	.306
skip hard words	2.98	.005*	2.97	.005*
skip unimportant parts	2.77	.008*	2.79	.008*
read as fast as I can	1.24	.222	1.24	.224

Note: *p<.05

In response to the open-ended question *What other things do you do when you are reading the text?*, 10 students reported that they went back and re-read the text if they had time. Three students said that they asked others about a text they had trouble with comprehending. A few reported thinking about the writer's feeling, writing notes, recalling, reflecting and imagining what was being read. Other strategies that the students engaged in included relating the current text to other topics, memorizing parts of the text, analyzing the reading material, and proofing for grammatical errors. The students' answers to the open-ended question again revealed that the text's macrostructure was not tapped to aid in unlocking the text's meaning.

After comparing the two groups' responses to the self-report questionnaire on their reading strategy use, their scores in the 12-item identification test, and their scores in the pre-and posttest summarizing tasks were compared. A significant correlation was found between the ratings given by the independent raters to the summaries ($r = .65$, $r^2 = .42$, $p = .01$). Discrepancies in the ratings were resolved through discussion until 100% agreement among the independent raters was reached. Tables 3 and 4 show the results of the *t-test* that compared the scores in the identification test and pre- and posttest summarizing tasks.

Table 3. Results of *t-test* comparing scores in pre-test and posttest summaries.

Variable	Mean			
	Experimental	Control	Mean Difference	F
Identification Test	9.8182	8.9474	.8708	.106
Pre-test	2.3182	2.4737	-.1555	1.645
Post-test	3.0455	2.5000	.5455	.0040

Table 4. Results of *t-test* for Equality of Means.

Variable	Variances			
	Equal		Unequal	
	t-value	2-tail Sig.	t-value	2-tail Sig.
Identification Test	1.45	.156	1.44	.158
Pre-test	-.81	.421	-.80	.431
Post-test	2.97	.005*	2.96	.005*

Note: * $p < .05$

Table 4 shows that there was no statistically significant difference in the mean scores of the two groups in the 12-item identification test (t value = 1.45,

1.44; $p = n.s.$), or in their scores in the pre-test summary (t -value = $-.81$, $-.80$; $p = n.s.$). The experimental group scored an average of 2.3182 out of 4.0, while the control group scored an average of 2.4737, which means the pre-test summaries were rated between Fair and Average based on the rubric used by the raters. This suggests that at the start of the term, the two groups were comparable in terms of their level of reading comprehension and summarizing skills as measured by the summarizing task. Below is an example of pretest and posttest summaries from the same student from the experimental group.

Student 4's Pre-test Summary (Experimental Group)

Rating: 1.0 (Very Poor)

In United States today, women's liberation movement is now present. Women now enjoy freedom and independence. Women became conscious in their career and education. Though we still do some house work, women do not spend time just doing the house work but they now have leisure time. They now have a choice with what work or career they would like to take, like in the factories, putting up some businesses, using some machines. Some women like to take jobs that has a big demand on labor force especially in the factories. In the present, traditional roles for women are somewhat not practiced because of the labor-saving devices that some women want to work that has a lot of vacancies. Women now ask for equal salaries and equally responsible positions. As I have read even though U.S. still don't accept women president they open some slots in the public office.

After treatment, the same student produced the posttest summary, which appears below.

Student 4's Post-test Summary (Experimental Group)

Rating: 3.0 (Good)

Japan and United States of America have something in common. For Japan they have Diet to come up with the Constitution and America has US congress to come up with the constitution. Both Japan & America are democratic countries. They both exchange cuisines, for USA they sell sashimi, tempura & noodles & in Japan they are operating fast food chains like Mcdonald's, KFC & Mrs. Fields. Both countries share the same sport, baseball. If America has their own major leagues, Japan has their own version of major league.

Though the 2 countries have something in common, they have a lot of differences. Japan is known to be a homogeneous society meaning majority of the people who live there are Japanese. While America has multicultural population. They differ in transportation. If Japan encourages the Japanese mass to have the pleasures of commuting, Americans, however, they have their own cars or ride in carpools. The Americans usually do their errands by car and uses bikes

for exercise/pleasure but Japanese do their shopping by motorized scooters/bikes. Finally they differ in traditional customs. Japanese women prefer arranged marriage but Americans seek their own partners. American couples also have democratic approach, they make decisions together and they are 50/50 relationship with their partners. Although Japanese couples have their own roles. For example the Japanese wife is the disciplinarian & she makes decisions for her to keep the household okay and the husbands are the breadwinners & focuses more on their careers.

While the short 12-item identification test may not have been sensitive enough to reveal differences between the two groups, post-test scores in the summarizing task show that the experimental group scored significantly higher than the control group. The experimental group scored a mean of 3.0455, while the control group scored a mean of 2.50 (t -value = 2.97, 2.96; p = .005). This means that the post-test summaries of the experimental group were rated Good, indicating an improvement from the Average rating in their pre-test summaries, while those of the control group remained Average. In fact, the sample post-test summary presented above contained 80% of the main and supporting ideas of outline in the correct order, whereas the sample pretest summary contained only 50% of the total number of ideas in the outline and in random order. This implies that prior to explicit instruction in text structure and outlining, the students may not have comprehended the text as well and they produced summaries that lacked sufficient details. After the two-week strategy training session, the experimental group's reading comprehension as measured by the quality of their summaries improved significantly. Their posttest summaries included main ideas and supporting details in proper order and were rated significantly higher by the independent raters.

The fact that the experimental group obtained significantly higher post-test scores suggests that teaching L2 learners outlining and raising their awareness of text structure may result in improved comprehension and more detailed and organized summaries. This finding is encouraging, given the relatively short duration of the treatment period, and bears pedagogical implications on the benefits of instructing students to use structural and graphic organizers as aids in making the text more accessible, facilitating comprehension, and improving writing. By providing students with intensive exercises in outlining that reveal how the different parts of the text are connected and form a coherent and cohesive whole, we equip them with the necessary learning skills that can be applied throughout their academic life as they grapple with different text types.

The results that have been presented and discussed so far have shown that the two groups used certain reading strategies with comparable frequency and that both groups reportedly employed reading strategies that mark reading achie-

vement. In addition, the results also showed that the two-week treatment markedly improved the reading comprehension and summarizing skills of the experimental group. It also upholds previous findings on the usefulness of metacognitive strategy training in general (Carrell, Pharis & Liberto, 1989; Kuhrt & Farris, 1990), and teaching text structure to facilitate comprehension, in particular (Carrell, 1984a, 1984b, 1985, 1991, 1992; Tang, 1992). More importantly, the results show that reading strategy instruction is beneficial not only for L1 learners (Brown & Palincsar, 1982), but also for L2 learners.

The effectiveness of intervention in the form of explicit instruction in text structure bears two important implications. The first is that even minimal explicit instruction in text structure enhances reading comprehension and improves summarizing skills. The second implication, however, may pose a dilemma, as it implies that the students in the control group may have lost out because they did not receive additional instruction and practice in outlining. To determine whether this was the case, a *t*-test was used to compare the students' overall pre-test and post-test scores. Table 5 shows the results of the comparison.

Table 5. Results of *t*-test comparing scores in the pre-test and post-test summaries.

Variable	Mean	SD	t-value	df	2-tail Sig.
Pre-test	2.3902	.607			
Posttest	2.7927	.642	-3.59	40	.001*

Note: **p*<.05

Table 5 shows that overall, the post-test summaries received significantly higher scores (2.7927) compared to the pre-test summaries (2.3902). This suggests that the English One course improved the students' reading comprehension and summarizing skills, and that the reading and writing objectives of the course were being achieved. The results also provide evidence that the materials and methodology employed in the two classes helped enhance the students' literacy skills. More importantly, the results also imply that the six-hours-a-week sessions that allow individualized instruction and more varied reading and writing activities promote greater learning. Below is a sample pretest summary from a control group student:

Student 18's Pre-test Summary (Control Group)

Rating: 1.0 (Very Poor)

You may have noticed that for the past years, there has been a drastic reversal of traditional roles of husbands and wives all over the world, especially in the United States. Back then, women takes care of the house work while men

work for a living for their families. These days, it may seem to have an interchange of traditional roles among husbands and wives. But what could have cost these changes? Firstly, birth controls were introduced to women. This means women got the chance to decide when and if they want to bear a child. In effect, they had more leisure time for themselves and had interest outside of the home instead of taking care of their babies. Secondly, machines, such as vacuum cleaners, were introduced to the public to help out and make house work much easy.

The same student then produced the posttest summary, which appears below:

Student 18's Post-test Summary (Control Group)

Rating: 3.0 (Good)

Japan and the US are both highly industrialized nations in the world. Both have their own cultures and traditions. Although they obviously have differences from each other, there are also similarities as well.

For example, the two nations have similarities in their Diet. Both nations have exchanged cuisines. As a result, Americans now enjoy Japanese cuisine as well as Japanese enjoy American fast foods. They're also similar in their love for baseball. Baseball is important to American fans as well as Japanese spectators.

Of course there are differences from them as well. These nations differ from their people, transportation, and also traditional customs. While the Americans have a multicultural society because they are more open to immigration, the Japanese on the other hand have a homogeneous society because of their nationalism. Also, the Japanese often opt to commute riding trains or subway, but the Americans would prefer to drive their own cars whenever they want to go somewhere. Last, the Japanese, despite of the modern times, are still inclined with their traditional customs. The husband and wife relationship is bound with their definite roles. The husband provide and the wife handles the household. On the other hand, Americans have a more democratic approach in relationships. They prefer to look for their own marriage partners and the husband and wife relationship have a 50/50 role in making decisions and providing for the family. The husband can help in the household while the wife can have her own job.

Finally, the results also indicate that although the experimental group performed better in the post-test, both groups emerged from their English One class equipped with the reading skills and strategies that improved their reading comprehension, as shown by overall higher posttest scores. In fact, the ITEO reported that English One students scored significantly higher in the Stanford Diagnostic Reading posttest. Let us now compare how the two groups fared in the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Pre-test administered by the ITEO at the start of the term.

Table 6. Results of *t*-test comparing scores in ITEO Diagnostic Reading Test.

Variable	Mean		Mean Difference	F
	Experimental (N=22)	Control (N=19)		
ITEO Diagnostic Reading Pre-test	43.7273	47.8947	-4.1675	2.316

Table 7. Results of *t*-test for Equality of Means.

Variable	Variances		t-value	2-tail Sig.
	Equal t-value	Unequal 2-tail Sig.		
ITEO Diagnostic Reading Pre-test	-1.67	.103	-1.74	.091

Table 6 shows that the experimental group correctly answered 43.7273 out of the 60 items (73%), while the control group answered 47.8947 (79%) of the items correctly. A *t*-test compared the scores of the two groups (Table 7) and revealed that the difference between the two means is not statistically significant. This means that the two groups were comparable at the outset of the present study. At the end of the term, the ITEO again administered the Stanford Diagnostic Reading test to the students and summarized the results of this post-test. The results showed that the experimental group obtained a mean score of 44.59 (SD=12.72), while the control group had a mean score of 50.80 (SD=7.29). This means that the experimental group answered 74% of the 60 items correctly (one percentage point higher than their pre-test score), while the control group answered 85% of the items correctly (five percentage points higher than their pre-test score). In short, the English One class proved to be a win-win situation for all students, as both groups registered gains both in the reading and summarizing post-tests, and that explicit instruction in text structure appears to have significantly improved the reading comprehension and summarizing skills of the learners.

4. Conclusion

The present study was prompted by the need to empirically demonstrate how successful strategy training can be in an L2 learning environment. The results show that explicit and informed instruction in text structure, in outlining, in particular, brings about significant gains in students' reading comprehension

and marked improvement in their summarizing skills. Moreover, the fact that findings showed that strategy training works, has important pedagogical implications for teacher training and classroom instruction, especially in the context of the English One class. The results also lend further support for the use of outlines and other graphic organizers that highlight text structure to improve L2 learners' reading comprehension and writing skills.

Certain limitations, however, impinge upon the findings of the present study. The limited period of strategy training that the experimental group underwent may be regarded as being too brief to make the results generalizable and conclusive. Future studies on strategy training should involve a longer intervention period as well as a delayed posttest to test the durability of the treatment. A second self-report reading strategy questionnaire may also be administered to determine whether students' metacognitive knowledge of other reading strategies was enhanced after treatment.

Outlining as a post-reading and pre-writing activity helps students determine the formal schemata of the text, and emphasizes the main ideas and supporting details presented in a passage. An outline also aids in the organization and recall of pertinent information because a summary of the given text can be written based on the outline constructed. Therefore, the goal of training students to use this strategy enables them to use this skill on their own as they tackle the demands of their academic work.

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Blakemore, D. 1987. *Semantic Constraints on Relevance*. Oxford: Blackwell.
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