

Running Head: HOW STORY GRAMMAR AND STORY MAPPING AID THE READING COMPREHENSION
OF ESL STUDENTS ACROSS CLASSES

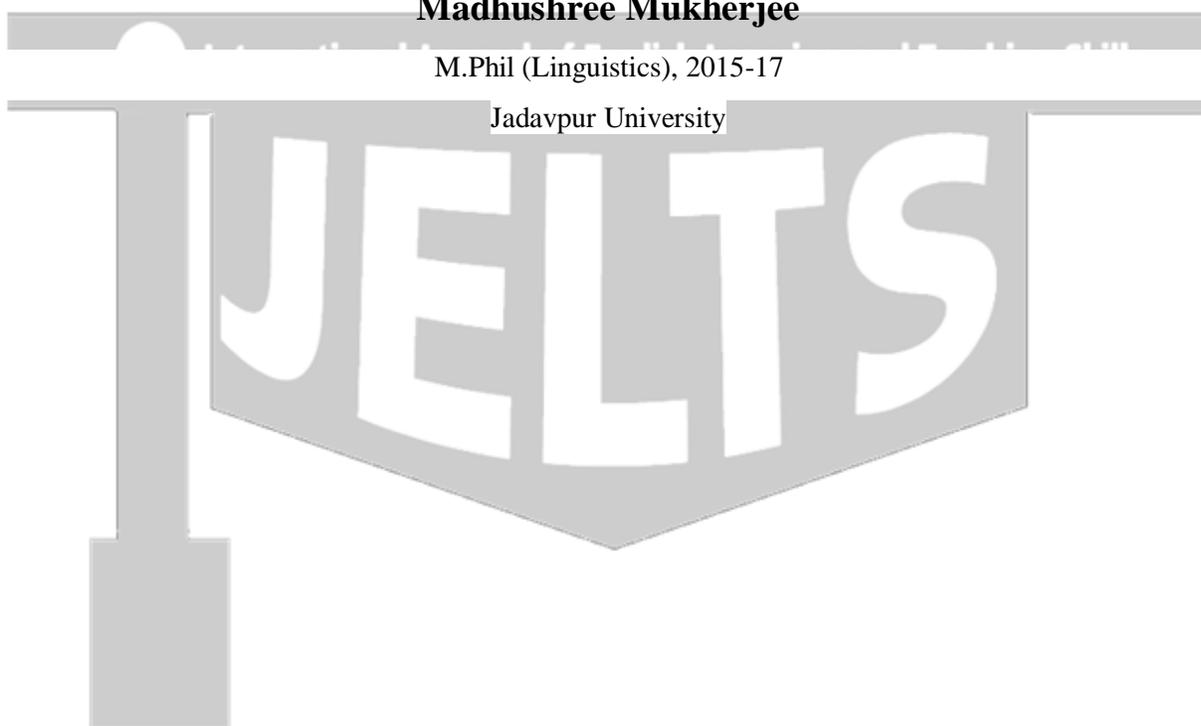
1

**How Story Grammar and Story Mapping aid the Reading Comprehension of ESL
students across classes**

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Running Head: HOW STORY GRAMMAR AND STORY MAPPING AID THE READING COMPREHENSION
OF ESL STUDENTS ACROSS CLASSES

2

Introduction

Reading Comprehension is a critical learning skill for all students (P.Clarke, 2013), as it is “the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language” (Reading Study Group, 2002). Understanding words’ meaning, analyze the author’s point of view and aim for writing and gaining knowledge of new words are all very important reading skills that support reading comprehension (Ruiz, 2015). Students need reading comprehension skills to successfully accomplish their educational goals and expectations, which are required in classroom settings. For example, having the ability to understand textual information plays a critical role in helping learners to quickly locate information that is

pertinent to the text, exclude information that is irrelevant to the text, and identify the important information to focus on. Academic success also requires students to be able to understand, analyze, and apply information they gathered through their reading (P.Clarke, 2013). The importance of being able to written material increases significantly in all academic areas as students move from one grade to another (P.Clarke, 2013).

In contrast, not being able to successfully read can prevent students from learning, retaining information that they read, and after passing school leaving examination when they go for higher studies then it will have a negative impact on different aspects students’ lives, including their educational progress, self-esteem etc. It will also have an impact on their attitudes to reading and learning, motivation to read, career choices, socio-economic status and expectation for future reading success (Sloat, 2015).

The most common problem that the students face during reading comprehension is that they have difficulties to understand the context and get the information of the text in longer reading materials such as stories. Secondly, most students tend to translate the individual words without grasping the message that the author extends. A teacher should find out an alternative way to minimize the reading difficulties and to maximize the reading comprehension. Story Grammar through Story Mapping can be a suitable and interesting strategy related to students’ condition. This strategy is expected to motivate the students to their lessons thereby enhancing their comprehension while reading.

Story Grammar is a technique which classifies the components of a story and specifies relationships among its parts. It is a type of strategy for cognitive literacy for elementary school students. It aims to improve students’ comprehension by giving them a framework they can use when reading stories. The components of a story

Running Head: HOW STORY GRAMMAR AND STORY MAPPING AID THE READING COMPREHENSION
OF ESL STUDENTS ACROSS CLASSES

3

grammar are: Setting, Theme, Plot, and Resolution. It is an effective strategy to build students' cognitive ability at independent learning in reading comprehension. Story maps are a visual representation of story grammar. Beck and McKeown (1981) defined story map as a "unified representation of a story based on a logical organization of events and ideas of central importance to the story and the interrelationships of these events and ideas".

Hypothesis 1: Story Grammar with story mapping can be implemented as a tool to minimize the reading difficulties and to maximize the reading comprehension.

Then, there is a real concern that if children do not fully acquire their first language, they may have difficulty later in becoming fully literate and academically proficient in second language. (Collier, A synthesis of studies examining long-term language minority student data on academic achievement, 1992); (Collier, A synthesis of studies examining long-term language minority student data on academic achievement, 1992). The interactive relationship between language and cognitive growth is important. Cognitive development will not be interrupted when children and parents use the language they know best. Experience and ideas must be familiar and meaningful to the child to be learned. Everything acquired in the first language (academic skills, literacy development, concept formation, and learning strategies) will transfer to the second language. As children are learning the second language, they are drawing on the background and experience they have available to them from their first language. Collier believes that the skills children develop in their first language form the foundation they must have to be academically successful in their second language.

Hypothesis 2: If the ESL learner is taught Story Grammar first in L1, she will be able to transfer the strategy to L2.

Children who are literate in their first language may experience cognitive difficulties as they acquire a second language. Literacy not only transfers across languages, it facilitates learning to read in another language even when the language and writing system appear to be very different. Reading in all languages is done in the same way. The common linguistic universals in all languages mean that children who learn to read well in their first language will probably read well in their second language (E. Bialystok, 1994); (Collier, 1995a). "When we learn a new language, we're not just learning new vocabulary and grammar, we're also learning new ways of organizing concepts, new ways of thinking, and new ways of learning language. Knowing two languages is much more than simply knowing two ways of speaking" (E. Bialystok, 1994).

Running Head: HOW STORY GRAMMAR AND STORY MAPPING AID THE READING COMPREHENSION
OF ESL STUDENTS ACROSS CLASSES

4

Hypothesis 3: Instruction of story grammar strategy will enhance students' cognitive ability at independent learning in reading comprehension.

Research Questions

RQ1. Can Story Grammar (and Story mapping) be employed as a valid tool for improving reading comprehension in ESL learners across grades (V, VII, IX)?

RQ 2. Can the Story Grammar strategy be transferred from L1 to L2?

RQ 3. Assessing cognitive development for independent learning in reading comprehension?

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