

MASTER'S THESIS

Background knowledge in story retelling

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BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE IN STORY RETELLING

BY

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Abstract

Reading Comprehension involves the interaction of the reader and the written text. Previous research shows that readers use their background knowledge to facilitate reading. This paper reports the findings of a study which was designed to investigate the effect of background knowledge in story retelling.

Chapter One is a brief introduction pointing out the importance of reading in education.

Chapter Two introduces the 'Bottom-up' and 'Top-down' reading processes, the Schema Theory and the model of text comprehension proposed by Kintsch (1978). Previous research studies have been reviewed and the limitations of these studies have been discussed.

Chapter Three deals with the experimental design. The study employed a 2X2 mixed model. The subjects of the study came from two religious secondary schools. The materials employed were two religious stories. Both stories were analysed based on the Kintsch model (1978). The measuring parameters were : i) no. of propositions recalled; ii) no. of semantic units recalled; iii) incidences of stuttering during story retelling; and iv) reading rate.

Chapter Four reports the findings and statistical analyses. It was confirmed that both the reading levels of the two groups

of students and the degree of difficulty of the two passages were comparable. The findings showed that students recalled the passage of their culture better. Seven tables and four figures were used to illustrate the findings.

Chapter Five is a detailed discussion of the results. It was found that lack of background knowledge about a topic can affect the comprehension of a passage. The coherence of the reading passage is also important. No elaboration was found in story retelling of Chinese students due to their culture.

Chapter Six studies the implications and limitations of the study. It is suggested that the subjects should do a standard reading text before the experiment in order to minimize the between-groups variation. Volunteers are to be used as subjects to ensure their co-operation. Modification and control of the culturally specific items are recommended in similar future studies. Educationalists are advised to take into consideration that background knowledge is crucial to reading comprehension.

The results of this study are consistent with those of the previous studies. Background knowledge can facilitate the comprehension and the retelling of stories.

Table of Content

Chapter 1 :	Introducation	P. 1
Chapter 2 :	Literature Review	
	2.1 Bottom-up and Top-down Processing	P. 3
	2.2 Schema Theory	P. 4
	2.3 A Model of Story Comprehension & Production ..	P. 5
	2.4 Previous Research	P.12
	2.5 Limitations of the Research	P.16
Chapter 3 :	Experimental Design	
	3.1 Purpose of the Study	P.20
	3.2 Research Hypothesis	P.20
	3.3 Experimental Design & Assumption	
	3.3.1 Measuring Parameters	P.21
	3.3.2 Statistical Model	P.23
	3.4 Subjects	P.24
	3.5 Materials	P.26
	3.6 Procedures	P.29
Chapter 4 :	Results & Statistical Analyses	
	4.1 Descriptive Statistics of the Measured Parameters	P.31
	4.2 Statistical Analysis & Interpretation	P.33
	4.2.1 First Reading Time	P.33
	4.2.2 Recall of Identical Propositions	P.34
	4.2.3 Recalling of Semantic Units	P.36
	4.2.4 Stutterings in Story Retelling	P.38
	4.3 Correlation Among Different Measuring Parameters	P.39
	4.4 Summary	P.41

Chapter 5 :	Discussion	
5.1	Education Background	P.42
5.2	Story Content	P.42
5.3	Background Knowledge and Story Comprehension ..	P.44
5.4	Measuring Parameters	
5.4.1	First Reading Time	P.46
5.4.2	Propositions Recall	P.47
5.4.3	Semantic Units Recalled	P.47
5.4.4	Occurrence of Stuttering	P.48
5.5	Conclusions	P.48
Chapter 6 :	Implications and Limitations	
6.1	Implications for Further Study	P.51
6.2	Pedagogical Implications	P.52