

**INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES FOR NON-TRADITIONAL TEXT:
A LOOK AT ALTERNATIVE EXPOSITORY TEXTS**

by

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CERTIFICATION OF THESIS WORK

We the undersigned certify that this thesis by Kyle N. Stern,
candidate for the Degree of Master of Science in Education, is acceptable in form and content
and demonstrates a satisfactory knowledge of the field covered by this thesis.



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ABSTRACT

To answer the question of whether an adolescent student may comprehend a non-traditional form of expository text just as well as a traditional form of expository text by using the appropriate reading comprehension strategy, this researcher conducted an empirical study. The Literature Review addressed three aspects of the research question: adolescent comprehension struggles, adolescent comprehension strategies, and non-traditional modes of expository text. The quantitative experimental methodology of this study made use of a visual reading comprehension strategy and compared test results when students were asked to read and apply that strategy to both a traditional expository text (the *US Constitution*) and its non-traditional graphic novel counterpart. Findings indicate that a comprehension strategy shown to be beneficial on a traditional text can be applied to a non-traditional text and also produce positive results. Findings further indicate that some adolescent students increase their comprehension when applying a strategy to a non-traditional mode of text, while others actually decrease their comprehension of the expository content when using the strategy on a non-traditional text.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

The topic to be explored with this capstone project is how non-traditional modes of text can be used within an expository setting (*i.e.*, social studies or science classes). The Common Core State Standards (2010) do recognize the use of digital, print and online resources within their standards as a means to gain understanding or comprehension from a text, but this then raises the question, are there instructional strategies to teach students how to comprehend that work well with both traditional and non-traditional modes of texts? This question then moves the issue a step further, are there instructional strategies that lend themselves more towards comprehension of texts in non-traditional modes? After contemplating these questions combined with knowing mandated State Standards, I have developed my research question: what are instructional strategies that will enable an adolescent student to read a non-traditional mode of expository text for comprehension? This question will be explored by conducting empirical research.

Background

My reason for selecting this topic is quite personal. I originally had a difficult time deciphering the author's message in all forms of literature which included both fiction and non-fiction works. This was a plaguing frustration for me all through my time in school until late into my middle school years. Then I discovered manga (translated Japanese graphic novels). Using these non-traditional modes of text, I was able to understand the stories, able to grasp the author's message and further enjoy the stories being told. Later this new ability to grasp the author's message moved to reading non-fictional texts for the same purpose -- to better understand topics I had an interest in that were being taught in my expository-based courses. Through the pages of the graphic novel *Maus* by Art Spiegelman (1986), I was able to gain a better understanding of the Holocaust, which I had not been able to obtain through simply reading a "traditional text". Now that I am learning to be a reading specialist, I wish to be able to provide my own future students with the opportunity to use these non-traditional modes of text in related lessons. In order to do that, I will need to find instructional strategies that would be suitable for teaching comprehension of texts in these non-traditional formats. This brings me to the topic of my thesis: to conduct research into determining instructional strategies that are beneficial for working with adolescents and non-traditional modes of expository text.

Terminology

There are a few key terms that will require clarification for understanding how they are used in this thesis. Looking at the first key phrase “expository text,” it is important to distinguish the difference between “narrative” and “expository.” Within this thesis, the term “narrative” will be recognized as text that contains fictional material. This can include creative stories, drama and poetry (Common Core State Standards, 2010). Multiple studies have found that narratives are the common genre of text used within adolescent English classrooms (McCormick, Hafner, & Germain, 2013; Wake, 2009). The term “expository text” will be used in this thesis to refer to and include informational text (Common Core State Standards, 2010; Wake, 2009) and informational non-fiction (Knickerbocker, Brueggeman & Rycik, 2012). An expository text will also be understood to include topics and content that is most often found within social studies and science classes, and include both primary sources (original documents) and secondary sources (textbooks). Continuing to look at the key phrase “expository text,” it is important to distinguish between traditional and non-traditional texts. For this thesis, “traditional text” will be the term to represent content presented in paragraph prose printed on paper. These texts in a school context include novels, poetry books, short story collections, and textbooks. The term “non-traditional text” represents content presented in non-paragraph form and also content presented in non-paper form; these non-traditional texts include digital text and online sources (International Reading Association, 2010), and specifically for this research, graphic novels. The definition of “graphic novel” adopted for this research is, “juxtaposed pictorial and other images in deliberate sequence, intended to convey information and/or to produce an aesthetic response” (McCloud, 1993, p. 9) in the reader. Although a graphic novel may convey information to the reader, the task of the reader is to comprehend the information. A succinct definition of the term “comprehension” and one suitable for this research is from Kucer (2005) who recognizes comprehension as “the reader’s ability to capture the message that the author is attempting to convey” (p. 113).

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical stance associated with this topic of comprehension of non-traditional expository text is based on a combination “top-down” reading process (Kucer, 2005), where the reader seeks the author’s meaning by first looking at the text as a whole rather than a collection of smaller details, and the “interactive” reading process (Adams, 1990) where the reader begins the process by activating his or her prior knowledge related to the text to be read. Kucer (2005) also discusses interactive reading when he

explains that comprehension of a text can be obtained through the “use of the reader’s schema” (p. 113), where schema refers to the reader’s prior knowledge.

Rationale

The value of research into this topic of instructional strategies for teaching comprehension of non-traditional expository texts is that research may provide educators with instructional strategies that are effective in using non-traditional modes of expository text, thereby helping students to make better use of the visual information in a graphic novel or video in order to comprehend the expository content. There appears to be little research into the question of instructional strategies that work well with the use of non-traditional modes of expository texts, especially for the development of reader comprehension. Comprehension of content is the primary goal for reading; therefore research that seeks ways for teachers to help their students reach that goal is worth undertaking. As a male reading specialist candidate, my own experience of struggling to find the author’s message in paragraph style texts parallels the well-known problem of boys not wanting to read. Therefore my successful resolution to my problem, by finding that graphic novels carry expository content, enables me to pursue with confidence and understanding this research into possible instructional practices for comprehending expository content area information in graphic novels.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction to the Review

In order to address the research question of what instructional strategies might enable a student to read a non-traditional text for comprehension, a review of the literature will be helpful. I began this literature review by searching the leading education databases for empirical research studies on reading comprehension strategies, and expository comprehension related to my research topic. Key words include *expository text*, *comprehension strategies*, *non-traditional texts*, *expository comprehension*, and *graphic novels*. From an initial review of the many studies found relevant to this research emerge three categories: adolescents' comprehension struggles, adolescents' comprehension strategies, and non-traditional texts in the classroom. The first category contains studies broadly related to the topic of reading comprehension but specifically focused on the struggles of adolescent students in reading comprehension of expository texts. The next category focuses on adolescent reader strategies for comprehension of expository texts. The third category contains studies about how students and teachers view the use of non-traditional texts in the classroom.

Adolescents' Comprehension Struggles

The purpose behind this research study is to find a way to help adolescent readers who struggle with comprehending expository texts in traditional form -- in lengthy paragraphs where the meaning is carried in the words only. The studies reviewed in this category explore some of the struggles that adolescent readers encounter when trying to comprehend a text in traditional form. The study by Pitcher, Martinez, Dicembre, Fewster and McCormick (2010) examines the struggles as the students perceive them. The researchers investigate the concerns of struggling adolescent students regarding literacy. Within this qualitative study, they interviewed seven students, four males and three females, in grades 6 and 8 from the Baltimore metropolitan area. These seven students were chosen based on their involvement in the local university's reading clinic. Data analysis of the interviews reveals that the participants were "most concerned" (p. 643) with comprehension skills and strategies, and most specifically with their comprehension of expository texts. Most of the participants attended schools that followed a traditional instructional method of comprehension: reading literature anthologies and answering questions after each reading. Findings show that the participants "all expressed concerns that they had the most problems reading in content area classes and received no help with strategies on how to understand those materials" (p. 643). The researchers also find that these students felt that teachers

“focused too much” (p. 643) on phonics and fluency and not enough on comprehension strategies. This study indicates that adolescent students themselves may often be aware of their lack of their ability to comprehend content area expository texts.

Rather than ask adolescents about their reading struggles, Dennis (2012) takes a quantitative approach and uses assessments to determine areas of reading struggles for adolescent readers. The participants were 94 adolescent students (60% male, 40 % female) between the ages of 11 to 14 years. Participants were selected based on two criteria: enrolled in grades 6 to 8, and “scored below proficient” (p. 7) in reading on the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP). Dennis collected data from the results of five different assessments to measure phonemic awareness, phonics, decoding, fluency, spelling, vocabulary, and comprehension. Data analysis revealed that most of the participants who struggled with reading “struggled most” (p. 19) with reading comprehension. This study indicates that comprehension appears to be the main reading skill that causes adolescent students to struggle as readers.

Specifically examining comprehension by adolescent readers, Hite (2004) explores whether cognitive style and gender affect reading comprehension. The participants of the study were 90 university juniors and seniors from a large public university in the southeastern United States. The data in this study were collected through a Group Embedded Figures Test (GEFT). The findings of this study reveal that “neither gender nor field orientation were significantly related to comprehension scores on social content passages” (p. 51). Hite concludes that when reading expository texts on “social topics” such as cultural groups and social issues, both male and female participants “performed on similar levels” (p. 51). When reading expository texts on “non-social topics” such as animals, planets or machinery, “male students tend to out-perform female students” (p. 58). These findings indicate that comprehension of expository texts may cause struggles for adolescent readers depending on reader gender and topic of the text.

Another study with the focus on adolescents’ use of reading comprehension strategies is by Smith and Swinney (1992), who attempt to uncover how readers process text based on their individual schema. The researchers developed a quantitative study with 40 college students. They collected data by asking each student questions after reading “vague story passages” (p. 308). Findings indicate that “the average reading time for a sentence was substantially less” (p. 310) when the reader had prior knowledge of the content of a text. From the findings, the researchers conclude that readers appear to “have a harder time” (p. 313) comprehending a text if they have a limited schema pertaining to the content in a narrative text. Readers also appear to have a difficulty recalling the information provided in the text when the reader has limited prior content knowledge.

Moving from struggles with reading to classroom relationships, Moje (1996) examines how the relationship between the teacher and the students may drive students to take part in literacy activities. In

this qualitative study, Moje collected data from interviews and observations with a grade 9 classroom teacher and her interactions with her classes over a two year period. The first year the class consisted of 21 students (15 female and 6 male), and the second year consisted of 22 students (8 female and 14 male). Most of the data for this study was generated during the second year. Moje finds that when the teacher “took an interest” (p. 190) in the students’ interests and the students themselves, the students were more likely to take part in classroom literacy activities independently. Therefore, this research suggests that adolescents’ struggles with the reading activity of comprehension may be eased when their teachers take an interest in the students.

Adolescents’ Comprehension Strategies

The studies in this category report on comprehension strategies used by adolescents when reading expository texts. Chambliss (1995) has researched three reading comprehension strategies: the “Argument Model,” the “Comprehension Model” and the “Text Design Model” (p. 778). This quantitative study used the findings of three experiments as data. One experiment involved 71 high school students from the San Francisco Bay area, who were members of their school’s Advanced Placement (AP) English program. The second involved 60 participants from the first experiment, and the third involved 51 participants from the second experiment. In the first experiment, participants were given expository texts about “types of animals from natural history books and magazines” (p. 786) to read and practice their use of one of three reading strategies. The participants were then asked to complete a survey based on their reading of the text using the Argument strategy. In the second experiment, participants completed two more surveys based on their use of the Comprehension model strategy. In the third experiment, participants completed surveys based on their use of the Text Design model strategy. Findings indicate that “competent” (p. 802) readers employ all three reading strategies and use specific text cues. Chambliss concludes that “identifying text structures” in the Text Design model influenced students’ comprehension responses the most. Based on the results of this study, the Text Design Model helped influence the chosen reading strategy for use in the empirical research in this study.

Elmianvari and Kheirabadi (2013) explore a reading strategy explicitly for expository texts. They ask the question of whether the use of a “text structure strategy” (p. 279) would enhance a student’s comprehension of expository texts. Their quantitative study involved the use of the T-test to collect and analyze the results of assessments given to 56 intermediate level (middle school) students. The assessments were used to measure student comprehension of reading passages from expository texts after students were taught to use the text structure strategy. The findings indicate that students who used the text structure strategy showed “more progress” (p. 287) than students who did not use the strategy.

Elmianvari and Kheirabadi conclude that the awareness of text structure “does facilitate” (p. 287) an adolescent student’s comprehension.

Gambrell, Koskinen and Kapinus (1991) explore another reading comprehension strategy and its impact when applied to expository texts. Their quantitative study examines what impact the retelling of prose has on the reading comprehension of students. Participants were 48 grade 4 students from one school in the American mid-west. Participants formed two groups: “proficient and less-proficient readers” (p. 357). All participants took part in four sessions of oral retelling assessments. The researchers measured comprehension “through the implicit and explicit details students were able to provide” (p. 358). Findings show that the comprehension of both proficient and less-proficient readers “improved significantly” (p. 362) as a result of using the retelling strategy. The researchers conclude that practice in retelling “helps significantly improve” (p. 362) comprehension by grade 4 students. This impact may also apply to adolescent readers.

In addition to an oral retelling, adolescents use a visual strategy to increase their comprehension. Wang and Dwyer (2006) study the visual organizer of “concept mapping” (p. 136) and its effectiveness for increasing comprehension of expository text. Participants were 50 college students who were taught how to concept map using three methods: concept matching map, proposition identifying, and student-generated concept mapping. Participants then applied that strategy to the reading from a website. Data were collected through work packets given to participants within a university computer lab. Students were to complete the packets and concept maps, after which they completed “online criterion-referenced tests of identification, terminology and comprehension” (p. 139). The findings indicate that “different concept mapping strategies” (p. 144) have different effects in “facilitating achievement” (p. 144) by students. Wang and Dwyer conclude that the concept matching map was the “most effective” in “facilitating student comprehension” (p. 148), compared to the other two strategies practiced in this study.

Another study conducted with college students is by Yayli (2010); it focuses on the think-aloud strategy for reading comprehension and to monitor adolescent student thinking during the comprehension process. This is a qualitative study where Yayli drew his data from interviews and observations with 12 students (average age of 19.5 years) that participated in this study. The data collected in this study came through think-alouds and from participants being asked to be “retrospective about their thoughts” (p. 239) while reading. The students were given both expository and narrative texts to read and think-aloud on during their reading. Findings show that “proficient and less-proficient readers naturally used similar cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies when reading for comprehension” (p. 244).

Still another reading comprehension strategy was researched by Schorzman and Cheek (2004). The researchers measured the effectiveness of Directed Reading-Thinking Based Instruction (DRT-BI). Participants in this quantitative study were three teachers and 103 sixth grade students. The participants

were asked chose a reading from a selection of 16 short stories, and were asked to use the DRT-BI as they read. The teachers would then administer both a formal and informal post-test to measure the participants' reading comprehension. Findings of this study indicate that "the differences between the groups according to the cloze procedure were significant, but the findings of the standardized test were not" (p. 47). The researchers conclude that "with formal testing, the strategy [of DRT-BI] has little effect, but there is a significant difference in comprehension of students when using informal assessments" (p. 50). However, these results are based on the reading of only fiction texts. Schorsman and Cheek "encourage the idea" (p. 52) of exploring the use of these strategies in other forms of literature, especially expository texts.

One study that demonstrates the results of strategy instruction for middle school students is Quiocho (1997). In this qualitative study, Quiocho observed 90 students at a middle school campus over the period of 12 weeks; the study does not indicate how these 90 were selected nor their reading ability. Data were gathered through in-class observations and survey results where students described how they had benefitted from the strategies Quiocho had taught them. The findings of this study indicate that students "seem to be more engaged when involved in interactive activities in which they can discuss, debate, and construct meaning" (p. 454). Quiocho concludes "the need for student involvement, in any kind of instructional change" is necessary in developing an instructional strategy to benefit student comprehension of expository texts.

Moving from specific reading strategies to whole-classroom instruction for expository readings, the study by Reisman (2012) is a qualitative study investigating whether the "Document-Based Lesson (DBL)" (p. 235) strategy was a viable alternative to the traditional approach to instruction. The participants of this study were high school history students. Data for this study were collected from surveys developed by Reisman. The findings of this study indicate that even though students initially struggled with comprehension, they "gleaned the lesson's core message" (p. 256). Reisman concludes that this curriculum helps address the literacy struggles of adolescents by providing multiple ways to approach a problem, other than just "simply answering reading questions" (p. 258).

Park (2012) explores the use of visualization as a strategy for obtaining comprehension when reading expository texts. Park (2012) conducted a quantitative study to determine whether the use of visualization (i.e. the students interpretation of the text) could help with reader comprehension. Park collected data through interviews with 23 female students (14 in seventh grade & 9 in eighth grade) and through anecdotal notes and observations. The findings of this study indicate that "visualizing was the third most common type of text-based" (p. 633) strategy referenced. Park concludes that visualization "can help students grapple" (p. 638) with difficult issues and topics when reading.

Non-Traditional Texts in the Classroom

Studies reviewed in this category deal with expository texts in non-traditional forms. Cirigliano (2012) focuses on the non-traditional text of “edutainment” (p. 29) which is “media designed to both entertain and educate” (p. 29); the research purpose is to understand how college students react to and feel about edutainment. The participants of this quantitative study were 49 individuals between the ages of 18 and 21 (12 male and 37 female). Data for this study were collected through a survey after students participated in an “edutainment” lesson. The survey asked the students how they felt about the use of the non-traditional mode of expository text in the lesson. The findings of this study indicate that “edutainment” received a “majority of positive comments” (p. 34). Cirigliano concludes that “these edutainment strategies will maximize both the educational and entertainment values to each specific factor, resulting in the most effective product” (p. 35).

Another expository reading study is by Wake (2009), who focused on expository text structures to determine the effectiveness of a new curriculum developed to help aid preservice teachers in teaching and understanding expository structures. Wake used non-traditional modes of text (storyboards, graphic novels and digital storytelling). The participants of the study included 10 undergraduate preservice teachers from a small, rural university in the American South. Within this mixed-method study, Wake collected data through a pre/post assessment designed by Wake to assess teacher knowledge of expository text structure, and a final independent assignment created by the participants, for the participants to present their understanding of their newfound knowledge of non-traditional modes of text. The findings of this study indicate that all preservice teachers had improved their reading comprehension by the end of the study (from 0.7/8 to 7.5/8 average), and all of the final projects demonstrated a significant understanding of non-traditional texts (average score of 18.2/20). Wake concludes that “deep involvement and the integration of multiple modalities and technology may be one way” (p. 182) to help teachers and their students understand expository text structure especially of non-traditional modes of text.

Another study that focuses on expository comprehension strategies for nontraditional forms of expository texts is Ramsay, Sperling and Dornisch (2010). These researchers conducted a quantitative study to determine the benefits of the “elaborative interrogation strategy” (p. 553) and the main idea strategy when reading a digital expository text. The participants of this study were 296 female and 57 male first year and sophomore students of a Mid-Atlantic university. The data in this study were collected through a multiple-choice recognition test. The findings of this study indicate that students of varying prior knowledge levels “scored similarly” (p. 562) on the recognition assessment after completing the elaborative interrogation strategy. Researchers conclude that the two strategies focused on in this study

“worked best” (p. 566) with shorter texts ranging from a couple sentences to a couple paragraphs, but had little effect on the reader on longer texts.

Another form of non-traditional text is the graphic novel. Moeller (2011) explores how different genders view graphic novels, Moeller’s qualitative study was an investigation of whether graphic novels and comic books were viewed by adolescents as a “single sex text” (p. 477), or as of interest to both male and female adolescent students. The participants were 15 high school students (8 females and 7 males). Data were collected through individual and group interviews that asked about specific graphic novels. The findings indicate that students showed “various levels of interest in this sample of graphic novels, depending on the extent to which they identified with characters from the stories” (p. 479). Moeller concludes that “with a topic that students can relate to, both male and female students could enjoy a graphic novel or comic book” (p. 483).

Beyond the research into adolescent attitudes towards some non-traditional texts is the issue of reading strategies adolescents use when reading non-traditional texts. Davis and Neitzel (2011) studied the use of digital expository text as they attempted to explore how students’ sense-making behaviors were engaged while engaging with both online hypermedia and linear print. The participants of this quantitative study were from two public schools. A total of 92 students participated, where 48 were sixth graders, and 44 were seventh graders. Data were collected through a multiple-choice comprehension measure administered to students after they used the “collaborative reading strategy” (p. 834) to read one of two *National Geographic* texts. The findings of this study indicate that “students were generally more strategically active in the digital environment” (p. 846). Davis and Neitzel conclude that students “use similar strategies and score similarly between the two, if not better using the hypermedia text” (p. 852).

Summary of the Review

From this literature review, multiple important pieces of information emerge. First, in the category of adolescent comprehension struggles, research shows that many adolescent students, both male and female (Hite, 2004), struggle with reading comprehension, sometimes because of a lack of direct instruction in reading strategies for comprehension (Dennis, 2012; Pitcher et al., 2010), or sometimes because teachers do not make explicit connections between their instruction and student interests (Moje, 1996). In the category of adolescent comprehension strategies, research shows that adolescent readers can be strategic readers (Smith & Swinney, 1994; Yayli, 2010). Several research studies determine that the use of a comprehension strategy does positively impact reader proficiency (Gambrell, Koskinen & Kapinus, 1991; Quioco, 1997).

Research also shows that certain comprehension strategies produce more positive results with specific topics (Elmianvari & Kheirabadi, 2013; Ramsay, Sperling & Dormisch, 2010; Schorzman & Cheek, 2004), while certain topics do not require specific comprehension strategies (Beck & Blake, 2009). Specific comprehension strategies used by adolescent readers and that have shown to be beneficial for them include discussion (Reisman, 2012; Wake, 2009), the Text Driven Model (Chambliss, 1992), and the use of visuals such as graphic organizers (Park, 2012; Wang & Dwyer, 2006).

Chapter 3: Methodology

The question that drives this research study is, what are instructional strategies that might enable a student to read a non-traditional mode of expository text for comprehension? I answer this question of instructional strategies by conducting empirical research. The empirical study examines whether students perform as well or better on comprehension of a non-traditional expository text as on a traditional expository text. This is a quantitative study that made use of two researcher generated quizzes and two excerpts from Hennessey and McConnell's (2008) *The United States Constitution: A Graphic Adaptation*.

Design of Study

The design of the study emerged in part from information obtained in the literature review. Research shows that adolescents can be strategic readers, that non-traditional modes of expository texts are becoming more accepted in school curriculum and are producing positive results in comprehension, and the non-traditional text mode of graphic novels is gaining acceptance among both male and female students. The study itself is an experimental design where all participants are taught the same comprehension strategy, the Critical Analysis Visual Strategy (CAVS) (Sejnost & Thiese, 2010), but the control group applies the strategy to an expository text in traditional mode while the experimental group applies it to an expository text in non-traditional mode -- in this study, a graphic novel.

Subjects.

Participants were suburban middle class high school students from the great lakes region of New York State. The school district includes students bused in from the local urban areas as part of an urban outreach program. The classroom where the research was conducted was chosen based on the selection by the school administration. The researcher was given access to a Regent's level United States History classroom. From a pool of 22 students, 11 students agreed to participate. Of the 11 participants, five were female students, and six male. No participants of the study received additional help from teacher assistants or received extra time for completion of the assessment quizzes. Although only 11 students volunteered to participate, all students in this History class were taught the comprehension strategy, the CAVS.

Procedures.

To begin the study, the researcher conducted a 25 minute lesson explaining and modelling the Critical Analysis Visual Strategy (CAVS) to all students in the class. Students were allowed to ask questions to clarify any confusion they had in utilizing this strategy. After the lesson, students were divided into two groups. One group was the control group and the other was an experimental group. Participating students were divided equally between the two groups. All students were asked to read the provided text while using CAVS, and then complete a researcher generated reading quiz. The difference between the control group and the experimental group in this study was the text that they were provided. The control group was provided with an excerpt from the traditional version (printed on a sheet of paper) of the *United States Constitution*, and the experimental group was provided with the same excerpt from *The United States Constitution: A Graphic Adaptation* (Hennessey & McConell, 2008). All participants were given the same amount of time to complete their reading tasks. To assure that the outcome of the first class period was not just chance, the control and experimental groups were switched during the second class period, and given a different excerpt from the *Constitution*. There was a brief review of CAVS at the beginning of the second class period, and all students were then given a second researcher-generated reading quiz. The first excerpt provided was “Article II” and the second excerpt was “Article IV” of the *Constitution*. The researcher-generated reading quizzes were questionnaires that contained five short answer questions. All materials were collected at the end of each period.

Data collection.

Data consisted of the participants’ responses to the two five-question researcher-generated reading quizzes. Data were collected at the end of the first class lesson period and again at the end of the second class lesson period. The participants were given 25-minutes to complete the quizzes while reading their assigned text. When the assigned quizzes were complete, the researcher collected the quizzes, which were then reviewed and graded by the researcher. The data from this study were then group and analyzed.

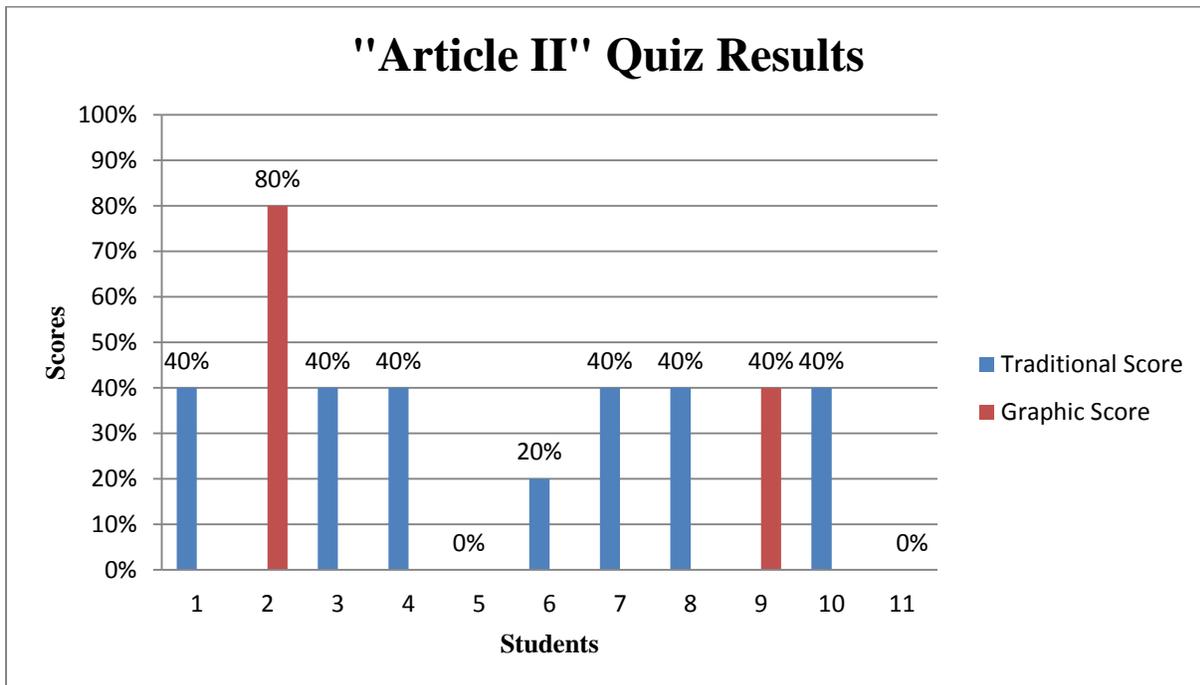
Data Analysis

The purpose of this study was to see how students performed in reading comprehension when using a given reading strategy on both a traditional and non-traditional mode of text. Data consisted of the participants’ responses to the two five-question researcher-generated reading quizzes. Responses were graded as either correct or incorrect for each question, depending on whether the response matched the

information in the expository text content. The quiz scores were then used to create quantitative data to measure the comprehension of the students between the two types of texts. Analysis of the data involved grouping quiz results according to the day they were completed, and the mode of text the participant read to learn the content response.

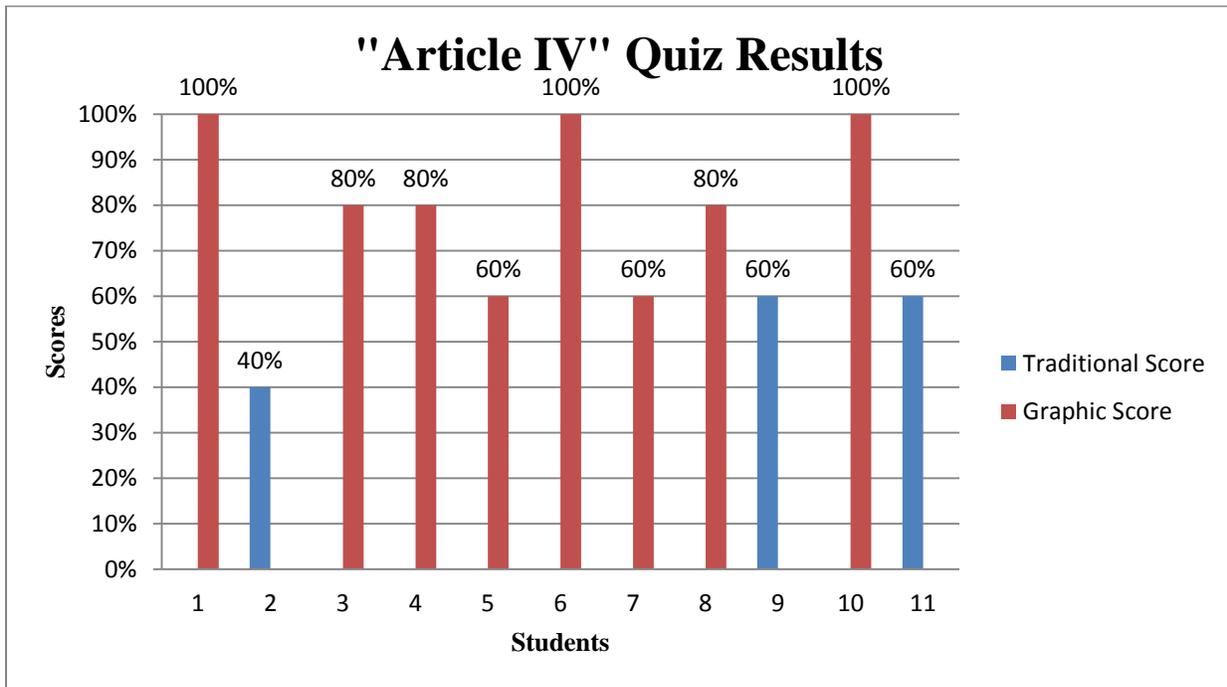
The two sets of quizzes were separated into “Quiz 1” from the first day of the study, and “Quiz 2” from the second day. All quizzes completed with a non-traditional text were marked with an A (e.g., Quiz 1.A), and quizzes completed with a traditional text were marked with a B (e.g., Quiz 2.B). On Quiz 1, participants were asked to answer five questions pertaining to “Article II” of the *US Constitution*. They were to answer each question in short answer form. Two of the 11 participants completed Quiz 1.A; the average score was 40% with a range of 0% to 80%. Seven of the 11 participants completed Quiz 1.B; the average score was 32.5% with a range of 0% to 40% (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Quiz Scores for First Lesson



On day two, of the eight participants that completed Quiz 2.A, the average score was 82.5%, with the scores ranging from 60% to 100%. The three participants who completed Quiz 2.B had an average score of 53% with a range from 40% to 60% (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Quiz Scores for Second Lesson



Data reveals that Quiz 1 with non-traditional averaged 40% compared to Quiz 2 with 82.5%, while Quiz 1 with traditional texts averaged 32.5% compared to Quiz 2 with 53%.

Further analysis of the data shows the resulting scores for the individual participants (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Quiz Scores for Individual Participants

Participant	Quiz 1 % Score T-traditional mode NT-non-traditional	Quiz 2 % Score T-traditional mode NT-non-traditional	Diff (NT-T)
1	40% T	100% NT	+60
2	80% NT	40% T	+40
3	40% T	80% NT	+40
4	40% T	80% NT	+40
5	0% T	60% NT	+60
6	20% T	100% NT	+80
7	40% T	60% NT	+20
8	40% T	80% NT	+40
9	40% NT	60% T	-20
10	40% T	100% NT	+60
11	0% NT	60% T	-60

Nine of the eleven participants showed improvement when switching from traditional to non-traditional format of an expository text, while six participants showed a decrease in scores when switching from non-traditional. For those nine participants who improved, the change was an average of +49%. For those two who did not improve, the change was an average of -40%.

Analysis of these results appears to indicate that using a comprehension strategy shown to be beneficial on a traditional text can be applied to a non-traditional text and also produce positive results. In addition, analysis seems to indicate that for some students, the use of a comprehension strategy on a non-traditional text does improve comprehension, while for others, it appears to have a negative impact on comprehension. Results are still unclear whether these lower score are caused by applying that particular strategy to another form of text, or from these students' lower ability to read a non-traditional form of text, or from an increased degree of difficulty between the two chosen texts.

Analysis further reveals that all but one participant improved their score between the two quizzes. The use of the strategy twice may have allowed the participants additional practice with the strategy, and thus improve the score whether the student was given the traditional or graphic version of the text. This relates to the possibility that even when taught an appropriate strategy, student comprehension will likely improve the more they use that strategy regardless of mode of text.

Chapter 4: Results and Interpretation

Results

The research study offers a view into how a comprehension strategy might affect the reading comprehension of adolescent students when applied to the reading of an expository text in a non-traditional mode. Using an experimental design, this research study had adolescents apply the same reading strategy to two modes of an expository text: traditional and non-traditional. Findings from this study indicate that at least one research-based strategy for comprehension can be used effectively on non-traditional expository texts. As well, findings show that some adolescent students increase their comprehension when applying strategy to a non-traditional mode of text, while others actually decrease their comprehension of the expository content.

Reliability of Data

To keep the data as reliable as possible, there were two rounds of quizzes. The first round had the participants divided into two groups based on the different modes of texts they were given to read. For the second round, care was taken to see that individual participants were given the text in the mode not read previously. For further reliability, the researcher scored both sets of quizzes on both days.

Interpretation of Data

Data analysis generated a few findings for this research. The main finding is that a comprehension strategy shown to be beneficial on a traditional text can be applied to a non-traditional text and also produce positive results. In addition, findings indicate that some adolescent students increase their comprehension when applying a strategy to a non-traditional mode of text, while others actually decrease their comprehension of the expository content when using the strategy on a non-traditional text. Analysis shows that the strategy instruction and use did have an effect on the participants' scores. Though the sample size is small analysis still shows that 73% of the adolescent participants improved their comprehension scores when they used a comprehension strategy on a non-traditional mode of expository text. On average those participants increased their scores by 50 points. The point of this study was to determine whether a strategy for comprehension of a traditional mode of expository text could also be applied to comprehension of a non-traditional mode of text. Findings indicate the answer appears to be

“yes.” In some cases, the application of that strategy appears to be not only successful, but also result in increased comprehension.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

Overview of Study and Findings

To answer the question of whether an adolescent student may comprehend a non-traditional form of expository text just as well as a traditional form of expository text by using the appropriate reading comprehension strategy, this researcher conducted an empirical study. The Literature Review addressed three aspects of the research question: adolescent comprehension struggles, adolescent comprehension strategies, and non-traditional modes of expository text. The quantitative experimental methodology of this study made use a visual reading comprehension strategy, and compared test results when students were asked to read and apply that strategy to both a traditional expository text (the *US Constitution*) and its non-traditional graphic novel counterpart. Findings indicate that a comprehension strategy shown to be beneficial on a traditional text can be applied to a non-traditional text and also produce positive results. Findings further indicate that some adolescent students increase their comprehension when applying a strategy to a non-traditional mode of text, while others actually decrease their comprehension of the expository content when using the strategy on a non-traditional text.

Significance of the Findings

Findings for this study have some significance for classroom practice. Results that show some comprehension strategies for traditional mode expository texts may also be applied to non-traditional modes of texts offer some evidence that may support the use of non-traditional modes of expository in a classroom. In addition, results that show comprehension improvement for some adolescent readers when they use the strategy on a non-traditional text offer some evidence for the use of non-traditional modes of expository texts as possible alternative texts to assist with differentiating instruction in a classroom. The findings of the study may also support the use of differentiated instruction within the classroom.

Limitations of the Findings

There are some limitations to this study. First is the small number of participants. With only eleven participants, this study does not nearly represent the diverse make-up of the school district, nor of adolescents generally. Thus the generalizability of results is not possible. Another limitation is the restricted time allowed for the study to take place. Due to the needs of the classroom teacher to assure that her students were able to cover all content necessary for their Regent's exams, the researcher was only

able to conduct his research within the allotment of two 50-minute periods. Thirdly, in hindsight a number of variables were not taken into consideration in the design of this study. For example, the prior knowledge and experience of the participants with reading graphic novels; the gender of the participants; their prior degree of familiarity with the US Constitution; and the equivalency of the two reading passages in terms of vocabulary and content complexity.

Conclusion: Answer to the Research Question

This empirical study began with the question, what are instructional strategies that will enable an adolescent student to read a non-traditional mode of expository text for comprehension? Despite the limitations of this study, results from this experimental research show that adolescents may be able to comprehend non-traditional modes of expository when taught a reading comprehension strategy to apply to the text. Findings indicate that a comprehension strategy shown to be beneficial on a traditional text can be applied to a non-traditional text and also produce positive results. Findings further indicate that some adolescent students increase their comprehension when applying a strategy to a non-traditional mode of text, while others actually decrease their comprehension of the expository content when using the strategy on a non-traditional text. Therefore an answer to this research question is that the instructional strategies may be many of those already available to adolescents for increasing their comprehension.

Recommendations for Future Research

Additional research in this area should make an attempt to address all limitations in this study, the use of additional strategies, and creating more productive work environments for the participants. Future studies should also attempt to see how this same study may conclude with a more diverse group of students, both in ethnicity, socio-economic class and students who may receive special services. It may also be beneficial to this field of study to see how strategies may affect student comprehension in other expository based subjects, such as math and science. After seeing the evidence of the study, one recommendation is also that future research further consider why students may perform poorly with the use of non-traditional forms of expository text. A final recommendation for future research is that the researchers to allow sufficient time for conducting the study so that participants do not feel rushed..

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