

# Mnemonics Instruction for Enhanced Comprehension

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**Abstract**— Language learning strategies are getting so diverse. The epitome, as most educators would agree, is to maximize learning. This current study is geared towards determining the efficacy of Mnemonic Instruction as one of the strategies in enhancing the learner's memory and language comprehension. The 5th and 6th sections of the first year high school of MSU-Balo-i Community High School, S.Y 2013-2014, serve as the respondents. To answer the problems in the study, the quasi-experimental method was utilized. In gathering the data, the researcher uses the self-made questionnaire adapted from Balut and Araya to determine the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age, gender and parents' educational attainment. The modified English Language Proficiency Test which is focused on reading comprehension was also used. The findings show that majority of the respondents belonged to the 12 and 13 age brackets, mostly females; the father's educational attainment only finished elementary level while their mothers mostly finished high school. The findings further reveal that Mnemonic Instruction enhances the learner's comprehension as shown in the pre and post comprehension and proficiency tests. Mnemonic Instruction bridges the gaps as it enhances and provides meaningful connection between the unknown to known information. It builds the learner's comprehension and self-confidence in coping with the language learning task that requires memory repossession. Hence, it is recommended that Mnemonic Instruction be adopted in all English classes to make the ordinary classroom situation into a meaningful and enjoyable learning environment.

**Keywords**— Mnemonics, Comprehension, Instruction, Memory, and Language

## I. INTRODUCTION

**M**NEMONICS Mnemonics or the art of memory is considered to be an unfathomable intellectual interest. It is a self-help learning device designed to boost the confidence of learner's unconfident power of memory. It is a useful tool in storing and retrieving the limitless information that helps students strengthen their language learning skills.

Failure to retain or forgetting is one of the foremost culprits why students fail to achieve higher academic competence. Some students confess that they cannot remember many of the things being taught to them. What the students have learned today will be forgotten tomorrow.

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Thus, the first and ultimate way of improving memory is to find meaningful association in what the learners are trying to remember. To remember something new, it must be clearly inculcated in the brain. It requires time and effort to learn new concepts.

To let the learned information stick to the brain, a good language learner must learn how to use learning strategies to overcome any language barriers otherwise that learners will certainly fail. These strategies offer particular advantages and the use of an appropriate learning strategy can surely enhance success with any learning task (Sabuncuoglu, 2013).

Learning to use memory-improvement strategies effectively will reduce the risk of forgetting information that the learners had learned and studied and will help learners store and retrieve information in an orderly string. It will also reduce the amount of study time spent on memorizing information through sheer repetition. Hence, this will open-up more time for comprehension and higher forms of thinking.

Mnemonic device is a memory-directed tactic that helps a learner transform or organize information to enhance its "retrievability" (Snowman, 2000). This device comes in different form, style and complexities (verbal or visual) and it requires constant practice (Pillai, 2004).

Since most of the tests administered in school involve factual recall, memory strategies should be developed in every learner that can instantly help them to be more productive in school.

The use of mnemonic instruction as a learning aid makes students aware of how memory strategies work, why they work, when they work, and where they can be used. As Sousa (2001) affirms that through teaching learning strategies, students become better equipped to face future learning tasks and become independent lifelong learners.

It is unfortunate that many students with learning disabilities and those at risk of educational failure have consistently manifested to have particular difficulties of remembering academic content. This learning situation is clearly revealed in the 2012 NSAT results as stipulated in the DepEd order No. 72 dated September 20, 2011, where among the 5,600 secondary schools only one-third of the high schools made it to the upper score ranges (Quismundo, 2011). This result implied that some students still need to enhance their comprehension as this will serve as their ticket to maximum learning.

The disappointing result above is shared by our local education sector of which our educational institution had been a recipient of this unfortunate fate. Every enrolment period,

some students coming from the neighboring barangays and locality cannot be accommodated due to their Freshmen Entrance and Scholarship Examination (FEASE) result that doesn't reach the standard passing score set by the office of MSU-External Units. Their scores in FEASE were a clear proof and indicator of their Grade VI academic performance on how ill-equipped or inadequately prepared these products of feeder schools are. It only showed that their level of comprehension doesn't fit that of the expected incoming freshmen.

Thus, it is in this light, that this study was conducted to identify and address issues concerning the predicament of these first year high school students of MSU-Balo-i Community High School: What were the possible causes for not achieving higher level of proficiency and comprehension vis-à-vis what were the possible solutions to enhance their comprehension skill deficits in order to alleviate their academic performance in meeting the standards set by the Department of Education (DepEd) and the Mindanao State University..

## II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Man is considered superior among other God's creations because of his ability to acquire and learn language simultaneously and spontaneously. This can be sufficed by the different language learning theories conceptualized by the different linguists.

This study will be anchored on four theoretical approaches in language learning: B.F. Skinner's Behaviorism on Operant Conditioning; Ausubel's, Bruner's, Gagne's and Piaget's Cognitivism; Atkinson & Shiffrin's, R. Gagne's and U. Neisser's Information Processing theory; and Stephen Krashen's Comprehension Hypothesis.

## III. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

In line with the previously discussed theories, this study will focus on the impact of the mnemonic instruction as a memory learning aid used in the class for easy retrieval of information.

Figure 1 shows the relationship between the independent and the dependent variables. The Respondent's Profile, Mnemonic Instruction and the Traditional Learning Strategies are the independent variables. The comprehension level and proficiency level are the dependent variables taken from the respondent's pretest and posttest as its determining bases. The respondent's pretest and posttest results determine if there is significant difference in the introduction and implementation of the two methods employed. The Mnemonic Instruction and Traditional Learning Strategies as learning of instructions are illustrated with the arrows directly targeting proficiency level and comprehension levels. It is shown that the two methods employed aim at increasing the respondent's comprehension and proficiency level. As illustrated in Figure 1, the two-month English language learning performance of the respondents is dependent upon the student's utilization and application of the two teaching methods employed in the 5th and 6th section of the first year high school of MSU-Balo-i Community High

School.

It is deemed very necessary to assess student's level of proficiency and comprehension as this will serve as the predictors for their failure, development and success in English language learning particularly vocabulary, spelling, reading comprehension and grammatical structures. This was measured by the test given to them before (pretest) and after (posttest) the treatment. The line of analysis of this study is anchored on the paradigm illustrated next page.

## IV. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND STUDIES

This chapter deals on the discussion of literatures and studies analogous to the present study. It is important to note that these reviewed literature and studies come in two forms namely: 1) Literature which served as guidepost in understanding the factors and constraints in learning together with strategies that will be employed both by the teacher and learner to achieve enhanced comprehension, and 2) studies related to the variables involved in this study.

## V. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This study utilized the experimental method using the quasi-experimental pretest-posttest/control group design. The level of students' comprehension and proficiency of two learning environments, Mnemonic Instruction and Traditional Learning Strategies were compared. This is to determine the possible effects of the Mnemonic Instruction on the comprehension of the students in English class using mnemonic strategies as a memory learning aid. Mnemonic Instruction was used as catalyst or intervening strategy to a group of students that comprised the experimental or treatment group. The control or comparison group did not receive the same treatment; mnemonic strategies were not introduced to them. Activities administered to the control group were different from those adopted from the experimental group. A pretest was administered to both groups before the treatment and the posttest was given at the end of the two-month class instruction.

## VI. PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

This is a quasi-experimental type. On trial here is the use of Mnemonic Instruction in an English class. The subjects of the study consisted of two intact classes of MSU-Balo-i Community High School, Balo-i Lanao del Norte during the school year 2013-2014. Forty four (44) make up the control group (CG) and thirty eight (38) students make up the experimental group (EG). Tossing of coin was done in assigning the two sections to either the experimental or the control group.

The two groups were exposed to the same lessons and activities but differ in teaching methods employed to each group. The experimental group was exposed to the Mnemonic Instruction while the control group was taught using the Traditional Learning Strategies.

The researcher administered the modified English Language Proficiency Test (ELPT) focused on reading comprehension to the respondents to assess their level of proficiency and reading comprehension level of literal, interpretive, and evaluative. A self-made questionnaire adapted from Balut and Araya was utilized to determine the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of age, gender and parents' educational attainment.

The statistical analyses were performed on the data obtained from the demographic profile and the ELPT test given to the respondents of the study. The descriptive statistics such as frequency, percentage and mean were used to identify the respondent's demographic profile, comprehension and proficiency level. The p-value was used for the hypothesis testing to determine their pretest-posttest comprehension and proficiency levels of significant difference and so with the Control Group and Experimental Group's overall performance before and after the treatment.

## VII. FINDINGS

Based on the statistical analysis applied on the data, the study yielded the following findings:

1. The students belonged to the 12-13 age bracket. Aged 13 and above is considered to be "over-age" based on the DepEd's school age requirement. Female students outnumbered the male students. Majority of the respondents' fathers had finished only elementary level while the respondents' mothers had finished high school.

2. Comparing the pretest – posttest performance profile of the Control Group using the Traditional Learning Strategies, it is revealed that their comprehension level in terms of literal level had a great increase from poor to fair and few elevate to the level of good and very good; In terms of interpretive level, it had declined; and in terms of evaluative level, it had a little increase.

3. Comparing the pretest – posttest performance profile of the Experimental Group using the Mnemonic Instruction, it is revealed that their comprehension level in terms of literal level had a great increase from poor to fair and few elevate to the level of good and very good; In terms of interpretive level, it had improved significantly; and in terms of evaluative level, it had increased also.

4. With regards to the proficiency level of the Control Group, it has revealed that respondents' score has increased.

5. With regards to the proficiency level of the Experimental Group, it has revealed that respondents' score has a slight increase.

6. By analyzing the p-value of the comprehension levels of the Control Group using the Traditional Learning Strategies if there is no significant difference in their pretest – posttest performance profile; it is revealed that their comprehension level in terms of literal and interpretive levels has no significant difference while their evaluative level proves to be highly significant. With regards to their proficiency level, it exposes that it is highly significant. Their proficiency level elevated from high beginner to low intermediate.

7. By analyzing the p-value of the comprehension levels of the Experimental Group using the Mnemonic Instruction if

there is no significant difference in their pretest – posttest performance profile, it is revealed that their comprehension level in terms of literal, interpretive and evaluative levels had a high significant difference. This is a clear proof of the help of Mnemonic Instruction in enhancing their reading comprehension skills. With regards to their proficiency level, it discloses that it is not significant.

8. By matching the over-all comprehension level performance profile of the Control Group and the Experimental Group before the treatment, it has been found out that the two group's literal level has a significant difference. It shows that the Experimental Group performed better than the Control Group. In terms of their interpretive and evaluative level, both groups show that their performances have no significant difference. This only means that their comprehension level is very close. As to their proficiency level, it reveals that there is a highly significant difference. Results have shown that Control Group is a better comprehender than the Experimental Group and this is proven according to their class sectioning as the Control Group belongs to the 5th section while the Experimental Group belongs to the 6th section among the seven sections of the first year high school.

9. Finally, the epitome of this study which is to determine the significant difference of the overall performance profile of the Control Group and the Experimental Group after the treatment. Regarding their comprehension levels, the three comprehension levels of the Control Group and the Experimental Group coupled with their proficiency level are all highly significant. These only indicate that Experimental Group surpasses the performance level of the Control Group. The striking performance of the Experimental Group over Control Group can be justifiably attributed to the treatment - Mnemonic Instruction initiated in the Experimental Group's class. There are some detected variations in the scores on the test but these are negligible or insignificant.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

Generally, this study shows that Mnemonic Instruction is more effective in enhancing the learner's comprehension as compared to the Traditional Learning Strategies. It boosts their memory power in storing and retrieving information by finding a way to relate new information to information learners already have locked in long-term memory. Mnemonics bridges the gap and provides meaningful connections between the known to the unknown that are difficult to remember. It builds the learners self-confidence in coping with their language learning tasks and even other field of disciplines that require memory retrieval. It also develops their psychomotor, cognitive and metacognitive skills as they create their own mnemonics and apply it to their present learning situation. Thus, it can be concluded that students engaged in the use of mnemonic devices find their learning of English more meaningful and enjoyable.

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