Narrative Structure in Reading Engagement of Senior High School Students

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Abstract: The purpose of this study is to determine the students' perceptions of the roles of narrative structure in reading engagement of senior high school students. This study used qualitative method of research and descriptive approach as its research design, in addition to a set of structured interview questions to gather data from senior high school students of Pinagtongulan Integrated National High School, located at Lipa City, Batangas. These structured interview questions were carefully designed to cover various dimensions of the study, including the roles of narrative structure in the reading engagement of the students, how narrative structure affects the reading engagement and proposed activities to engage other students in reading using narrative structure. The results revealed that students perceived narrative structure as a crucial role as it serves as an organizer and backbone of each literature and through this, it helps the readers to easily understand the story in a more comprehensible way. It also allows reader to decode the information given and shows the sequence, organization and the flow of the story. This study also showed how narrative structure affects the reading engagement of the students as it enhances comprehension and gives students drive to learn more. Furthermore, it also affects reading engagement of the students in terms of motivation, character development and creates impact with their emotion. Lastly, students also concluded varied activities to engage other students to read using narrative structure. These includes activities like alternating/rewriting ending and making predictions, creating story boards and interactive materials and sharing experiences through reading, visualizing and group storytelling. By integrating these approaches, students concluded that other students will be more engaged to reading and it can help them to express themselves.

Keywords: Narrative structure; Reading engagement; Motivation; Character development; Emotional impact

1. Introduction

Reading is one of the macro skills aside from speaking, listening, writing, and viewing. It pertains to one's ability to look at a series of written symbols and convert them into words, sentences, and paragraphs. An individual can be able to improve his or her communication skills through reading by building vocabulary, grammar, and comprehension which enhances both verbal and written communication.

Reading is the process of understanding written symbols, like letters, punctuation, and spaces, to construct meaning. It is a fundamental language skill that helps people learn, communicate, and enjoy stories.

Reading involves people's full attention, their own interests, and feelings to comprehend what they are reading. For instance, students who are fond of literature may most likely read the text to understand what it is all about, while those who are not, might just flip the pages right away. Proficiency in reading is very essential to students as they need it not just inside the four corners of the classroom but in the real world.

Moreover, students are engaged in reading if they are interested in the topic or stories being presented. According to Ho, reading engagement is important for developing students' reading literacy [1]. Children who enjoy reading and are engaged in reading activities are more likely to become fully skilled readers which in turn perform well in reading assessments. Students' reading engagement primarily lies on how good a certain work is or depends on the student's preferences. On top of that, narrative structure plays an important role in the reading engagement of the students. Narrative structure is the way a story is organized, including the order of events and how the plot is presented. It helps the readers to understand what is happening and to keep them engaged, page after page. Furthermore, this research will focus on understanding the roles of narrative structure in students' reading engagement.

2. Research questions

This study aims to determine the roles of narrative structure in reading engagement of senior high school students. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

(1) What are the students' perceptions about the role of narrative structure?
(2) How do the roles of narrative structure affect the reading engagement of the students?
(3) What activities can be proposed to engage other students in reading using narrative structure?

3. Significance of the study

This study explores the roles of narrative structure in promoting reading engagement among senior high school students. Findings from this study will contribute insights into how narrative elements impact student interest and comprehension, with great implications for educators, curriculum developers, and future researchers on the promotion of effective reading practices.

(1) Teachers: This study will enable teachers to understand how different narrative structures affect student's reading engagement. Knowing which structures foster greater interest and comprehension will enable educators to design lessons and select texts that motivate students and promote deeper engagement with reading materials. This knowledge can also guide teachers in developing strategies to make reading more enjoyable and meaningful.

(2) Students: The findings will benefit students by making them realize the types of narratives that make them more attentive and interested in reading. In this way, through increased awareness of how the

elements of a narrative impact their reading, students will learn to concentrate and pay attention to texts, thus leading to better academic performance and lifelong interest in reading.

(3) Researchers: The findings would be useful for education and literacy studies researchers in understanding how the structure of a narrative may influence reading engagement. The insights from these findings can help shape new instructional approaches and interventions aimed at improving student engagement and learning outcomes.

(4) Future researchers: The study will provide a base for future research that studies the narrative structures and the way they affect student engagement. The findings and recommendations might inspire further investigations and help develop a basis for researching other factors that contribute to reading motivation and comprehension to promote the advancement of effective literacy practices.

4. Scope and limitation

This study specifically focused on determining the role of narrative structure in reading engagement of students. The researchers employed the qualitative method of research and interviews as the major data gathering instrument. The respondents of the study are composed of five senior high school students of Pinagtongulan Integrated National High School at Lipa City, Batangas.

5. Literature review

This literature review presents key related literature and studies relevant to the paper that provide the researcher with sufficient ideas and insights that served as a frame of reference and the insights that led to the conceptualization and formulation of the research.

5.1. Narrative structure

Narrative structure is a cornerstone of storytelling, influencing how readers engage with and interpret a text. This chapter explores the idea of narrative structure and looks at how it helps readers follow a story's plot, characters, and ideas. Readers can better appreciate the deliberate design of a story and its influence on both emotional and intellectual engagement by comprehending the narrative framework, which includes components such as exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution.

Taylor considered narrative structure as the foundation that keeps the story strong [2]. This can be also used by planners, by planning an outline or to have a fully written manuscript and to know what the next step are, then narrative structure can be a guide. She also gave six types of narrative structure.

(1) The three act narrative structure: The three-act structure begins with exposition followed by an inciting incident and ends act one with a turning point. Act two continues the journey through complications and ends on a second turning point. Finally, the act three builds to the climax and ends with the denouement as the writer ties together all the strands of the story.

(2) Linear plot structure: A linear plot is one that's presented in chronological order. This is a traditional plot structure and easy for the reader to follow.

(3) Non-linear narrative story structure: In a non-linear story, the plot is not tied to chronological order. The last scene chronologically may be presented first. This can be confusing for the reader but can offer a sense of satisfaction when the plot is finally tied together.

(4) Parallel narrative writing structure: Parallel narrative structures have more than one plot presented simultaneously. These may, or may not, intersect.

(5) Circular narrative: In a circular narrative, the plot ends where it begins. This is a common structure for children's stories.

(6) Interactive narrative plot: The story adjusts to the whims of the reader. An example of this is a "Choose your own Adventure" books. These book types are popular with chapter books for middle-grade children.

In addition, the Reedsy Editorial Team defined narrative structure as the sequence in which the events of a story are told [3]. In order to maximize suspense, interest, excitement, or mystery, a writer can hang various scenes and story pieces on this framework. Majority of stories often begin at the beginning of the story ("once upon a time") and end at the end ("and they lived happily ever after"). In theory, though, a story can be recounted in any sequence. For instance, by leaving out specific facts or releasing information out of order, authors might set up their story elements to build suspense. Storytellers occasionally start in the middle and "cut to the chase" before giving away the backstory. In summary, if used carefully and thoughtfully, narrative structure is a potent instrument that authors can use to great effect. They also mentioned four types of narrative structure.

(1) Linear: Linear narrative structure is exactly what it sounds like — when a story is told chronologically from beginning to end. Events follow each other logically and you can easily link the causality of one event to another. At no point does the narrative hop into the past or the future. The story is focused purely on what is happening now. It's one of the most common types of narrative structures seen in most books, movies, or television (TV) shows.

(2) Nonlinear: On the flip side, a nonlinear narrative is when a story is told out of order — where scenes from the beginning, middle, and end are mixed up, or in some cases, the chronology may be unclear. With this freedom to jump around in time, new information or perspectives can be introduced at the point in the story where they can have maximum impact. A common feature of this type of narrative is the use of extended flashbacks.

(3) Parallel: A parallel narrative is where two or more stories are told concurrently, though they may not always be happening at the same time. This is common in stories with multiple lead characters and viewpoints. They tend to be interconnected, though how they relate may not be immediately obvious. Eventually, the story threads in a parallel structure will dovetail, resulting in some kind of plot twist or revelation. As a result, parallel structures are often used in thrillers or historical fiction novels.

(4) Episodic: You can think of episodic narratives as interconnected short stories that contribute to a larger story arc. Each individual story has a beginning, middle, and end, but the larger arc unites them in some way. Usually, this type of structure follows the same set of characters in a specific setting or situation. You'll recognize this type of narrative in TV programs like sitcoms and medical dramas, where episodes can, broadly speaking, be watched in any order.

5.2. Roles of narrative structure that affect reading engagement of the students

Motivation is a crucial factor in reading engagement, and narrative structure has a great influence on it. As pointed out by Mandler and Johnson, the coherence and predictability that are derived from well-structured stories containing clear beginnings, climaxes, and resolutions attract the reader's interest [4]. Thus, this

structural integrity guides the reader to understand a story while enjoying it so that they do not derive their attention. Moreover, Gerrig and Egidi underlined suspense and pacing within a story [5]. They found that suspenseful storylines enhance curiosity and sustain attention, making readers eager to discover the outcome.

According to Reeve, intrinsic motivation is typically elicited by stories that present problems or mysteries since these motivate readers to become more interactive in reading to solve the puzzle [6]. The same goes for the use of cliffhangers and plot twist. These make the structure engaging because they stimulate cognitive engagement and emotional investment.

Another important feature of narrative structure that affects the reading engagement is character development. According to McAdams, for the story to have a connection with the reader, it must be present believable and complex characters [7]. It is through the transformation and growth of characters within the text that readers feel themselves being transformed vicariously and hence become more deeply invested in the text.

Busselle and Bilandzic suggested the concept of "transportation," in which the reader becomes more involved in the story that they start feeling as if they belong to the world in the story [8]. This is much more powerful when characters are better developed, so readers can sympathize with hardships, triumphs, and feelings that characters have to experience. In the process of watching characters facing problems, readers often start thinking about their own experiences, which further increases the involvement level and the meaning-building process.

The affective impact of a narrative is inextricably found to its structure and plays a major role in the retention of the reader's interest. According to Oatley, "narratives can be considered as emotional simulations, allowing readers to travel through a vast range of emotions in a safe, controlled environment" [9]. For example, the use of flashbacks, non-linear storytelling, and dramatic irony always evoke highly emotional feelings of sympathy, amazement, or catharsis, so keeping the reader interested in the story.

Brewer and Lichtenstein probed the structural elements-conflict resolution-which formed the basis of emotional involvement in an individual [10]. Evidence indicates that the more there is an emotional trend of the stories, the higher their chances of being remembered. Thus, better memorability and higher enjoyment for such stories as opposed to the ones without much emotional involvement are ensured. Therefore, the effect of the resonance is stronger when the stories portray themes common in humans that are common across all human beings.

5.3. Activities proposed to engage other students in reading using a narrative structure

Reading engagement activities are essential for fostering a love of reading and improving literacy skills in students. These activities can include interactive read-aloud sessions, where students actively participate by predicting story outcomes or discussing characters' motivations. By providing diverse and dynamic opportunities, educators can help students connect with books in meaningful ways, promoting both enjoyment and comprehension.

Unlacay concluded that students can enhance their writing and reading comprehension skills as well as their critical thinking and analytical abilities by studying text structures [11]. It has five main categories of informative structures—comparing and contrasting, sequencing, description, problem and solution, and cause and effect—are covered in this compilation of highly engaging and interesting materials. The author also mentioned 16 different engagement activities in reading. These include comparing and contrasting, scavenger

hunt text structure resource, making flipbooks and the like.

6. Research design

The study employed a descriptive research design as chosen by the researchers. The descriptive method involves observing, documenting, and analyzing behaviors, events, or phenomena without manipulating them. According to McCombes, a descriptive research design can use a wide variety of research methods to investigate one or more variables [12]. Therefore, the flexibility of descriptive research design is vital for producing valuable insights in a wide range of disciplines and research situations. It proves to be a valuable tool for collecting students' perceived ideas about the role of narrative structure in reading engagement.

7. Data collection

In this study, data were collected to know the roles of narrative structure in the reading engagement of the students. The researchers utilized a set of structured interview questions to gather insights from the respondents. These questions were carefully designed to cover various dimensions of the topic, including the roles of narrative structure, how does it affect the reading engagement of the students, and possible activities to help other students to be engaged into reading. Generally, the interviews serve as an efficient and flexible data collection, allowing students to respond at their convenience. This method also ensured a streamlined process for compiling and analyzing the responses, enhancing the accuracy and reliability of the data collected.

8. Data analysis

After the researchers gathered all the answers of the respondents through interview, all the contents of the interviewees' statements were translated into words, sentence by sentence, classified, and inferred. Colaizzi's 7-step analysis method was adopted to summarize the common concepts as the theme of this study [13]. The details were as follows.

 (1) thoroughly understanding the interview data of this research.
 (2) extracting meaningful viewpoints from the data.
 (3) encoding ideas that repeatedly occur and conform to the phenomenon of this study.
 (4) clustering the views after coding.
 (5) providing a detailed description of the clustered views without omission.
 (6) identifying similar viewpoints and forming theme concepts.
 (7) returning the data to the interviewees for verification.

 During the analysis, new data were divided or generated as a new topic. The entire data analysis process was completed by two researchers and verified throughout the process of this study.

9. Discussion

This study presents the discussion and interpretation of data gathered from the respondents through structured interview questions.

9.1. Students' perception about the role of narrative structure

Three participants perceived that narrative structure has crucial role that plays as an organizer and backbone of each literature and through this, helps the readers to easily understand the story in a more comprehensible way.

"As a student, I perceive that narrative structure has a crucial role for everyone who writes and reads, especially to those who are involved in literary writing or storytelling. It plays as an organizer that helps us construct pieces and have a comprehensible output or literary piece."

-Participant 1

"In my own understanding, narrative structure is the way a story is told. It is the order and organization of events in a story. It is more like the story's beginning, middle, and end, it's like the backbone of each literature like story, it's the pattern and the most easiest way to understand a story."

-Participant 2

"My perception about narrative structure is that it is a comprehensible way to tell a story to make the scenarios organized."

-Participant 3

Additionally, one of the participants mentioned that narrative structure allows the reader to decode the information given.

"My perception of narrative structure is that, it is important if we want to create an organize set of information, it allows reader to decode the information given, allowing them to follow the pattern given by the author/writer of a narrative."

-Participant 4

Plus, one of the participants stated that narrative structure shows the sequence, organization, or flow of the story.

"Narrative structure is the way of telling a story. It shows the sequence and organization presented to the readers or audience. It is used to have a guide for how the story happened or to easily identify the flow of the story."

-Participant 5

9.2. How narrative structure affects the reading engagement of the students

One of the participants emphasized that the role of narrative structure enhances comprehension and gives the drive to learn more.

"Students nowadays mostly understand something when an activity is interactive. The roles affect their reading engagement in many ways. Specifically, it enhances their comprehension and gives them the drive to learn more."

-Participant 1

On the other hand, four participants answered that narrative structure affects the reading engagement of the students in terms of motivation and character development, and creates an impact on their emotions. Motivation keeps the students reading more. Also, students were able to connect with the characters, and with that, they were able to relate their emotions with them.

"Narrative structure plays a big role in keeping students engaged while reading. Motivation drives their curiosity as they follow the story's goals or mysteries which I find so exciting. Through character

development, students can connect with the characters, making the story more personal and relatable to themselves. The emotional impact also hooks them by stirring feelings like joy, sadness, or even suspense. By combining these elements, I believe stories become more meaningful and enjoyable, encouraging students to stay focused and interested."

-Participant 2

"These roles make stories more engaging for students by keeping them interested. Motivation will keep readers curious and listen attentively. Character development helps them connect with the changes that happened to the characters. Emotional impact makes the story memorable and relatable since the story can reflect the readers own experience. Together, these will keep students hooked and eager to read more."

-Participant 3

"*The following roles affect students' reading and engagement. First, motivation. The narrative structure should motivate students to continue reading. The story should be captivating, with an interesting and relatable plot that draws students' attention. Next is character development. Students should connect with the characters, observing noticeable changes that contribute to the characters' purpose in the story. Lastly, creating emotional impact has a huge effect. The emotions students feel while reading can deeply engage them, prompting them to read more. Every emotion they experience is important, determining the narrative's effectiveness."*

-Participant 4

"Motivation encourages students to understand and also relate their own experiences and emotions. Because of character development, students become more attached to the characters and it help them to reflect on their own personal development. Lastly, through creating emotional impact, students develop interest in reading and most of them are likely to share their thoughts and opinions about the stories."

-Participant 5

9.3. Effective activities to engage other students to read using narrative structure

Three participants believed that activities like alternating/rewriting ending and making predictions will help students to be engage in reading.

"The activities like writing alternate endings to make the story unique then group discussions after the narrative. So that we can assess the students' insights about the story."

-Participant 3

"I'd suggest rewriting the ending of the narrative activity where the reader is given a chance to change the ending of the narrative as what they want it to end. By having this activity, the reader is motivated to read the whole narrative in order for them to create a mindful ending based on what they have read."

-Participant 4

"I will go with rewriting the ending and making predictions, these are great ways to get students into reading. When they rewrite the ending, they can be creative and see how different choices change the story. Asking them to guess what happens next keeps them curious and excited to read more. It also makes them think deeper about the characters and what might happen. These activities turn reading into a fun and interactive experience, not just something they have to do, in that way, they will enjoy plus they will learn too."

-Participant 2

On the other hand, one of the participants stressed that activities such as creating story boards and interactive materials will be a great help for the students to be more engaged to reading.

"Realistically speaking, activities such as creating story boards and interactive materials (big books, flipbooks, scrapbooks, pop-up books) can help students in reading using narrative structure."

-Participant 1

Moreover, one participant mentioned that sharing experiences through reading, visualizing and group story telling can boost their confidence and imagination. Also, it can help them to express themselves.

"The activity that I think of is sharing experiences through reading, giving them advices or experiences might help them engage in reading. Visualizing can also help students to improve their reading comprehension. I can also suggest the group storytelling, in this activity, it can help students to boost their confidence and imagination."

-Participant 5

10. Conclusion

The following conclusions were drawn based on the findings.

(1) This study revealed that students perceived narrative structure as a crucial role as an organizer and backbone of each literature and through this, it helps the readers to easily understand the story in a more comprehensible way. It also allows reader to decode the information given and shows the sequence, organization and the flow of the story.

(2) The narrative structures affect the reading engagement of the students as it enhances comprehension and gives students drive to learn more. Furthermore, it also affects reading engagement of the students in terms of motivation, character development and creates impact with their emotion. Addressing these effects, it can be seen that narrative structure positively helps students to be engaged into reading.

(3) The students concluded varied activities to engage other students to read using narrative structure. These includes activities like alternating/rewriting ending and making predictions, creating story boards and interactive materials and sharing experiences through reading, visualizing and group storytelling. By integrating these approaches, students will be more engaged to reading and it can help them to express themselves.

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Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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