



ANALYZING TEACHING HABITS AND PRACTICES: SCHEMA THEORY IN ESL TEACHERS' READING INSTRUCTION

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Abstract:

When reading, many researchers have theorized that readers construct information from a text by combining written information with their abstract knowledge structure called schema. Therefore, the reader's knowledge is considered an important component in fully understanding a text's meaning. Considering this, the paper sought to inquire about the everyday use of schema theory by teachers of English as a second language (ESL) in reading instruction. Specifically, this research study aimed to determine how reading teachers view schema theory, analyze their teaching practices based on ESL teachers' responses to schema theory, and gather opinions and perceptions about the effects of applying schema theory in lesson preparation and delivery. The objectives were achieved through an appreciative inquiry-based questionnaire that was provided to participants chosen through convenience sampling. Afterward, the data were then analyzed through descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. The results showed that activities that promote independent realization schema are preferred among ESL teachers since they believed students learn in their own ways. The researcher also discovered that the participants had overall positive perceptions regarding activating schema in students, noting increased recollection and relation of ideas. Finally, the participants mentioned that they required more improvement to create and apply better techniques for better reading instruction. The researcher thus recommended enhancing teacher education, strengthening their conceptual knowledge about schemata, and giving them opportunities to immerse in diverse classrooms for a better understanding and application of schema theory to fully use schemata that play a major role in the development of their students.

Keywords: English as a second language; reading instruction; schema theory; teaching habits and practices

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1. Introduction

The key concept of schema theory is that everyone uses rules or scripts in their minds to interpret their surroundings, resulting in processing new information according to how it conforms to those rules, called schema (Widmayer, 2004). In terms of reading, the reader tries to construct an interaction between the relevant schemata and the information of a text, ergo, the ingredients required to fill the slots of a message are not always found in the message itself but perhaps supplied by the person (An, 2013). Hence, this paper seeks to probe the everyday use of schema theory by English as a second language (ESL) teachers in reading instruction to identify good practices, suggest development ideas, and recognize their perspectives (Shuayb et al., 2009). This research study aims to analyze their teaching practices based on ESL teachers' responses to schema theory, determine how reading teachers view the effects of schema theory in ESL reading, and gather opinions and perceptions about the effects of applying schema theory in lesson preparation and delivery. Specifically, the paper answered the following questions:

- 1) How do reading teachers apply schema theory in their instruction?
- 2) How does schema theory influence the reading comprehension of ESL students?
- 3) How do reading teachers view the implementation of said theory in daily practices?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Reading Instruction and Concerns

Anderson (2012) described reading as the foundation for language and academic learning success, quoting Janzen's (2007) observation about the necessity of reading in the academic success of second language (L2) learners. The importance to learn how to read English is evident in the language's status as a lingua franca in a large part of the world (Pustika & Wiedarti, 2019). As a result, effective interventions have become important to identify since many adolescent students are yet to overcome their struggles in reading (Cantrell et al., 2015). Thus, the teacher's skills in reading instruction play a huge role, if not the biggest, in student acquisition of reading skills. Failure to implement research-based interventions can be traced to educators that did not receive enough training and/or perceive improving literacy as their job (Deshler et al., 2004, as cited by Davis et al., 2018). Knowledge from teacher preparation programs is also a prominent aspect of instructional competency as a result of complexities in English learning such as word recognition and spelling (Tortorelli et al., 2021). Aside from teacher education, language teachers' perceptions and notions of teaching affect their classroom practices and professional development, encouraging ESL teachers to help learners develop into strategic readers (Kuzborska, 2011). Teachers who understand the theoretical underpinnings of instructional practices are better able to select and modify interventions to meet the mixed needs of their students (Yang et al., 2018).

Some studies have raised concerns about reading teachers and their instructional prowess. Clark et al. (2013) discovered that novice teachers conveyed regard for their inexperience in making instructional decisions in some teaching contexts and desired guidance and advice from their teacher educators after securing full-time employment. Meeks & Stephenson (2020) discussed that Australian preservice teacher education courses had limited time allocated for early reading instruction, expertise insufficiency by some unit coordinators, and inconsistent focus of content on early reading education. In Pakistan, Muhammad (2013) listed curriculum deficiencies, absence of clear curricular goals in planning English courses, inefficient and inexperienced teachers, and deficient teaching techniques for unsatisfactory ESL learning in students, apart from insufficient learning materials, faulty systems, and an overall unfavorable learning environment. Finally, Wu et al. (2018) agreed that teachers' qualifications and experience are related to students' reading comprehension as teachers with good qualifications and experience taught more efficiently than those with low qualifications and experience. From previous studies about the impact a good teacher can have on a learner's overall ESL learning, not just reading, we can conclude that teachers' content knowledge and pedagogical skills influence students' reading comprehension growth (Kleickmann et al., 2012).

2.2. Overview of Reading Models

According to Liu (2010), three models can be extracted from reading processes: top-down, bottom-up, and interactive models.

The top-down approach, sometimes called the concept-driven model, is founded on the concept that reading comprehension requires more than simple linguistic knowledge and that schema theory application is crucial to achieving understanding, particularly for L2 learners (Oliver & Young, 2016). In other words, the approach's utilization includes setting a link between the reader's prior knowledge and the passage (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983). The model uses higher-level signals such as background knowledge, locating and skimming major ideas, information incorporation, inference and prediction recognition, and text structure identification (Abbott, 2005). It can be described as "*a psycholinguistic guessing game*" (Goodman, 1971), demonstrating that readers infer text meaning based on background or prior knowledge. When readers are tasked to formulate inferences and draw conclusions, or when they are required to evaluate the text's overall meaning or key concepts, they use the model (Nuttall, 1996).

The bottom-up model is a decoding process wherein meaning is transferred from the "bottom," such as letters or words, to the "top," such as phrases, sentences, and sentential links (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983). Readers start by decoding a text's letters, words, and syntactic features, in which they construct textual meaning. They rely heavily on the text but disregard the reader's prior or background knowledge (Suraprajit, 2019). Brown (2007) identified the bottom-up model as setting linguistic markers (letters, syllables, morphemes, words, discourse makers, and phrases) in order using a mental data-processing device. In addition, Eunjeon (2009) mentioned that this model emphasizes "*focusing on individual words, pausing for grammatical difficulties and repeated readings*". As a

result, this approach is built upon cognitive processes such as short-term memory, discernment, perception, and rationale, which leads to better comprehension (Jiang et al., 2012).

Finally, there is the interactive model. This model implies that all bottom-up and top-down processes are related to each other (Gamboa-Gonzalez, 2017). It employs concepts from the top-down approach by catching their inferences about the meaning of the text based on their prior knowledge, and from the bottom-up approach by leading learners through single-direction analyses of text from small parts like words or phrases (Nur & Ahmad, 2017). Rumelhart (2013) presented the interactive-activation model, which is a more in-depth view of the previous concepts. According to the model, from grapheme to word, each level of information is individually rendered in memory, and information, from one level, progresses to the other in both directions, which he refers to as interaction. Grabe (2008) mentioned the role of teachers in using the interactive model wherein they should consider academic desires, students' needs, and media constraints, emphasizing the importance of incorporating both bottom-up and top-down approaches in reading instruction.

The paper primarily focuses on the top-down approach or schema theory. Further readings about the model are listed next.

2.3. Schema Theory and L2/ESL Difficulties

Reading as an interactive process pertains to the engagement of several component skills, which may operate concurrently: the interaction of these cognitive skills results in competent reading skills (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). To understand this complex process more, researchers have formulated models, one of them being the top-down approach that utilized the concept of background knowledge whose role in reading is further explained and elaborated on with the creation of schema theory (Lally, 1998).

The schema theory bases itself on schema, the reader's abstract knowledge structure that he or she brings to the text. When people discover the world, their experiences are processed by the brain into concepts, relations, and so on, which are then stored in their memory (Liu, 2015). When reading, readers obtain data from both the outer visual text and the inner schemata to fully understand the text, followed immediately by the adjustment of the two as a single or new schema as the texts give readers hints to construct or generate new ideas (Zhao & Zhu, 2012). A schema is classified into three types: language schema mainly refers to simple knowledge of the language, or vocabulary, grammar sentence, and structure; content schema pertains to the cultural background knowledge, previous experience, related information of a text, etc.; and formal schema concerns itself with various genres and their corresponding structural organization, discursive composition, language structures, grammar, vocabulary, etc. (Li & Zang, 2016; Zhao & Zhu, 2012).

ESL learners usually encounter difficulties with the top-down approach to reading. Regarding content schema, the teacher should prioritize the accuracy and cultural relevance of the information to prevent misinterpretation of facts that can hinder

comprehension (Silva, 2019). Khataee (2018) had given an example wherein some Iranian English as a foreign language (EFL) students faced content difficulty despite being classified into a group of good comprehenders. As for formal and linguistic schemata, readers struggle to acknowledge how a text is constructed, what role every word has in a sentence, what words are synonymous with one another, and what they connote based on their relationship to the grammatical elements as a whole due to a lack of theoretical knowledge about elements and grammatical structures (Campos Serrano, 2019). Ekasary et al. (2022) confirmed that difficulties in vocabulary, lexical items, and other prior linguistic knowledge affected student comprehension of the text. In the case of Filipinos, Urbano et al. mention Pablo & Lasaten's (2018) explanation that students' difficulties in reading English are caused by their socio-cultural diversity and diverse linguistic backgrounds. They also noted that reading and writing skills have proven to be difficult for unready ESL/EFL learners due to the complexity of those skills. As a result, Pablo and Lasaten (2018) stressed that teachers should be urged to use a variety of activities and provide students with consistent academic writing practices and drills, as well as develop materials that address and minimize the identified ESL difficulties.

2.4. Perception of Teachers Towards Schema Theory as a Reading Instruction Model/Framework

Huyen & Trang (2020) investigated the perceptions of high school EFL teachers about schema, specifically content schema activation, and its effect on the pre-reading stage of their students. They mentioned that the Vietnamese teachers positively viewed schema activation but inconsistently used learning strategies to do so. The researchers conclude that the participants often overlooked schema activation while focusing on the content they'll teach. Al Asmari & Javid (2018) also explored the place of content schema in enhancing reading comprehension, emphasizing the activation of content schema in understanding a text. They deduced that teachers play an important role in improving Saudi EFL learners' reading skills by implementing before, while, and after reading strategies for activating prior knowledge in students. Maingi (2015) found that Kenyan ESL teachers had a set of belief systems concerning reading strategies. They had clear opinions about reading and reading comprehension and the importance of improving learners' proficiency. Despite that, the researcher found inconsistencies in the participants' practices as compared to their perceptions. Al-Jahwari & Al-Humaidi (2015) as well discovered that Omani EFL teachers saw prior knowledge as an important factor in reading comprehension. Nevertheless, inadequate training with the instructional implications and techniques regarding schema theory and insufficient teaching material that provide little help in dealing with prior knowledge hindered the progress of good teaching practices. On a different note, Ginsberg (2018) based the use of graphic novels to teach hesitant learners on schema theory. The teacher participants answered that graphic novels helped visual learners access their students' schemata. Finally, Gerber and Price (2012) showed practicing teachers and their eagerness to use games-based learning as a schema-building activity with their students, wanting to create appealing units of

study that use video games as a schema-building tool despite the belief that they will not receive proper funding to implement games-based instruction.

The literature suggested that ESL teachers perceive the idea of using prior knowledge or activating schema favorably. However, the issue lies in implementing these concepts and/or using schemata. As Al Asmari & Javid (2018), Al-Jahwari & Al-Humaidi (2015), and Maingi (2015), among others, found, inconsistencies in the application of schema in lesson preparation and delivery minimize the potential impact of schema theory in language learning. In addition, Campos Serrano (2019), Ekasary et al. (2022), and Pablo & Lasaten (2018) demonstrated that the absence of schema hinders the interpretation of meaning in the reading process. These papers highlighted the effect of teaching habits and practices on student schema creation and activation, further supported by Clark et al. (2013), Kuzborska (2011), Tortorelli et al. (2021), Wu et al. (2018), Yang et al. (2018), etc. To conclude, language learning does not solely depend on the ability of students to attain a language, especially their second or third languages (L2/L3). It is also important for teachers to polish their methods and techniques to effectively acquire a new language.

3. Material and Methods

3.1. Data Collection Techniques

The study made use of elements from an appreciative inquiry (AI) design. AI is an organizational development tool used to influence their strengths and build on those qualities, which changes the employee's mindset (Johnson, 2014). As a result, AI researchers seek to discover 'peak moments,' actively seeking out and recognizing people for their core achievements and contributions. The goal is to identify and base on the vitality and strength of behaviors observed and shared by accounting professionals, communities of practice, or institutions (Pill, 2014). Aside from AI, the mixed methods design, both quantitative and qualitative, was also employed for collecting and analyzing data because a research question is not always resolved using the qualitative and quantitative approaches themselves. Mixed methods aim to present a new approach, in which a researcher expects to utilize the advantages of both methodologies (Almeida, 2018). Mixed methods designs can give pragmatic strengths when investigating complex research questions. The data from qualitative means can impart a deep understanding of survey answers and data from the statistical analysis can provide a comprehensive evaluation of response patterns (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2014).

The questionnaire was designed and adapted from the works of Al-Jahwari & Al-Humaidi (2014), Huyen & Trang (2015), and Moore (2019). The questionnaire was composed of a demographic information section and a second section where the main questions are located. The first section introduced the focus statement of the study to the participants and established the confidentiality of the questionnaire. The section also gathered essential demographic information such as years of teaching experience and educational background to determine if they have experience in teaching ESL to students.

The second section included three parts, with the first aiming at gathering the participants' understanding of how reading teachers apply schema theory in their instruction, asking the participants to report their frequency of using habits and practices that they intentionally or unintentionally use to activate students' schemata in teaching English reading comprehension. The next part investigated how schema theory influences the reading comprehension of ESL students based on their observations and experiences. Finally, the last part consisted of open-ended questions that inquired about teachers' perceptions of schema theory utilization in lesson preparation and delivery. It also encouraged them to express how to enhance the perceived strengths they have listed about the theory. The finished questionnaire was then validated by a research expert.

The seventeen questions from the three parts that are classified as quantitative questions were based on the five-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree" or from "never" to "always". Descriptive statistics, specifically means and standard deviations of the overall summation of values assigned to each question (1 for strongly disagree/never and 5 for strongly agree/always), are used to analyze quantitative data for the paper. The means are classified according to the scales agreed as the following: 1.00 - 1.80: Level 1 (Never/Strongly Disagree); 1.81 - 2.60: Level 2 (Rarely/Disagree); 2.61 - 3.40: Level 3 (Sometimes/Neutral); 3.41 - 4.20: Level 4 (Agree/Often); 4.21 - 5.00: Level 5 (Always/Strongly Agree), calculated from this formula: $\text{distance} = (\text{Maximum} - \text{Minimum})/n = (5 - 1)/5 = 0.8$.

On the other hand, the researcher used thematic analysis (TA) to examine the remaining three open-ended questions. TA is a technique for recognizing, inspecting, and deciphering patterns (themes) in qualitative data. This type of TA is distinguished not just by theoretical flexibility and pragmatic applicability in research questions, sample size and composition, data collection technique, and strategies for the production of meaning (Clarke & Braun, 2017). Terry et al. (2017) divided the thematic analysis of qualitative data into six phases: data familiarization, code formulation, theme construction, review of potential themes, the definition of identified themes, and finally, report creation.

3.2. Data Sources

The researcher decided to select participants using convenience sampling. This is a method suitable for researchers with time constraints and limited resources as the samples are often close acquaintances that the researchers can contact immediately. In this method, the researcher looked for possible participants that fit practical criteria such as geographical proximity, accessibility, availability, and willingness to volunteer (Dörnyei, 2007, as cited by Etikan et al., 2015). The researcher identified thirty ESL teachers with 4-18 years of teaching experience and at least a bachelor's degree related to education. The participants are all English language teachers from secondary and tertiary schools located in selected provinces from Central Luzon in the Philippines, all of whom are contactable by the researcher. Regarding their highest educational attainments, seven participants have units for doctorate degrees, nineteen of them have acquired a master's

in an education-related course, and four teachers have at least a bachelor's degree. The participants are assured to have experience in teaching students how to better comprehend and analyze texts in English.

4. Results and Discussion

This chapter presents the results, findings, and discussions based on the paper's main objectives. The recorded findings were used to recognize the experiences and suggestions in utilizing schema theory in their everyday lesson preparation and delivery.

4.1. Reliability of the Likert-scale Items

Before starting, the researcher computed Cronbach's Alpha of the quantitative part of the questionnaire to determine the reliability of the items.

Table 1: The Reliability of Questionnaire Items

Cronbach's Alpha	No. of Items
.819	17

Table 1 shows that the Cronbach Alpha value was 0.819, which is greater than 0.8 and indicates that the result has a good consistency of reliability. This suggests that all the survey items can accurately measure the study's objectives.

4.2. How Reading Teacher Participants Apply Schema Theory

To identify how the participants apply schema theory in their lesson preparation and delivery, the questionnaire focused on identifying the activities they assign to their students for activating their schemata. The grand means and standard deviations of teachers' answers on what specific tasks they use that apply schema theory were calculated and summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Participants' Ways of Applying Schema Theory

N	Do you make your students:	Mean	SD	Descriptive Rating
1	Brainstorm about the text topic?	4.53	0.776	Always
2	Discuss topics with the class?	4.90	0.305	Always
3	Organize ideas on the board under headings to create connections?	4.43	0.728	Always
4	Pay attention to specific signal words, main ideas, sentences, highlighted phrases, headings, and subtitles?	4.57	0.626	Always
5	List some statements on the board that is related to the reading topic to guide students?	4.47	0.819	Always
6	Answer visual-based questions?	4.53	0.507	Always
7	Use supporting materials to display prior knowledge?	4.70	0.535	Always
8	Develop inquiries about the text to create a purpose for reading?	4.73	0.450	Always

9	Select keywords from the text that require the students to infer the text topic?	4.53	0.629	Always
10	Link the topic to their previous experience?	4.80	0.484	Always

From Table 2, the answers show that the teachers mostly apply the following activities in their lesson preparation and delivery. Making their students discuss topics in class is the most used assignment (M = 4.90) while organizing ideas on the board under headings and listing phrases related to the reading topic both rank as the least used activity (M = 4.43). All items are classified as Always (4.21 – 5.00).

These results indicate a generally high perception of teachers towards these schema-involving activities. It can be interpreted that teachers prioritize independent schema activation because of the high means with items that encourage student participation such as discussing topics in class (M = 4.90), developing inquiries about the text to create a purpose for reading (M = 4.73), and linking the topic to previous experiences (M = 4.80). The use of concept mapping, diagrams, or other related teaching tools, however, is relatively less utilized because of low mean scores with organizing ideas on the board under headings (M = 4.43), listing statements on the board related to the reading topic (M = 4.47), answering visual-based questions (M = 4.53), and selecting keywords from given texts (M = 4.53).

4.3. How Schema Theory Influences Reading Comprehension of ESL Students

Next, to know what the participants know about the effects of schema theory as they apply strategies in their lesson preparation and delivery, the subsequent Likert-scale part looked at determining what they observe in their students after activating their schemata. The grand means and standard deviations of teachers' answers on what specific outcomes display when they apply schema theory were calculated and summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Participants' Observations on Influences of Schema Theory on ESL Students' Reading Comprehension

N	Sufficient schemata make students:	Mean	SD	Descriptive Rating
1	Read and understand the text better.	4.90	0.305	Strongly Agree
2	Recall prior knowledge easily.	5.00	0.000	Strongly Agree
3	Focus on and link main ideas efficiently.	4.80	0.484	Strongly Agree
4	Improve limited linguistic awareness.	4.70	0.535	Strongly Agree
5	Relate reading topics to their previous experiences.	4.90	0.305	Strongly Agree
6	Infer text meaning quickly.	4.77	0.430	Strongly Agree
7	Confirm predictions from background information.	4.80	0.407	Strongly Agree

Table 3 shows that the participants generally observe the listed effects of activating schema frequently. Teachers mostly see that their students read and understand the text better (M = 4.90), recall prior knowledge easily (M = 5), and relate reading topics to their previous experiences (M = 4.90). On the other hand, even with high ratings, students are

less inclined to improve their limited linguistic awareness ($M = 4.70$) and infer text meaning quickly ($M = 4.77$). All items are classified as Strongly Agree (4.21 – 5.00).

These results suggest a very high positive opinion of teachers towards the impact of applying schema theory. It can be interpreted that teachers observe increased recollection and relation of ideas with prior knowledge because of high means with items that indicate as such like recalling prior knowledge easily ($M = 5$) and relating reading topics to their previous experiences ($M = 4.90$). On the other hand, despite the relatively high agreement, teachers observe increased focus and skill development the least as seen with improving limited linguistic awareness ($M = 4.70$) and inferring text meaning quickly ($M = 4.77$).

4.4. How Teachers View the Implementation of Schema Theory

Finally, to determine how teachers view the implementation of schema theory in their lesson preparation and delivery, they were asked three (3) open-ended questions regarding what they think about their teaching practices and their strengths after observing the impact on their students, how they will enhance their teaching practices to play a larger role in students' reading comprehension, and how they will design a more effective approach to students' schema development based on the answers given on the previous Likert-scale questionnaires. Thematic analysis was used to examine and analyze the themes of their answers.

- **Perception of Teaching Practices' Effects.**

After being asked the question: "What do you think about your teaching practices and their strengths after witnessing their effects on your students?", the participants thought that they required constant adjustment and improvement, their practices made the discussions engaging and understandable for learners, and their methods helped students make their inferences about the topic. Participants answered that they needed adjustments and improvements based on the student's learning styles, skill sets, and motivation toward the reading topic.

"My teaching practices are not enough. Always, teacher[s] need to improve his/her teaching style to suit the need of the learners and their learning styles." (Participant 1)

On the other hand, alongside some answers that suggest the previous theme, participants answered that their teaching practices make discussions effective, understandable, and enjoyable. Helping students acquire the necessary competencies and making students show enthusiasm in the discussion are some of the observed strengths of applying schema-centered activities in their lesson preparation and delivery.

"I think my teaching practices are continuously improving as years go by. My students show great enthusiasm towards the lessons, especially when I direct them towards authentic learning." (Participant 8)

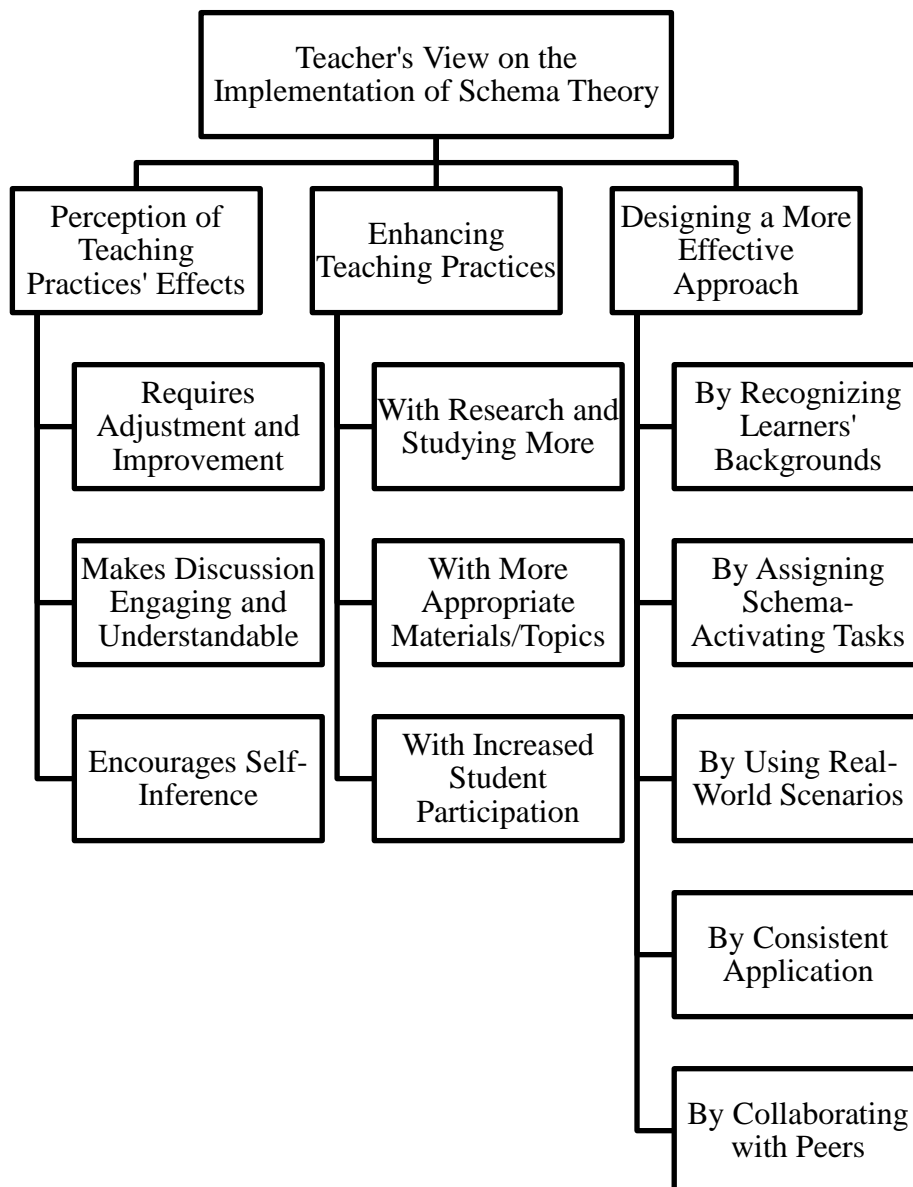


Figure 1: Thematic Map of Participants' Responses

Finally, the remaining participants observed that their students improved their ability to infer or relate to meanings found in texts. Schema-activating tasks help learners build a foundational understanding of the topics to let them understand the lessons individually. Own generalizations and self-inferences become the result of activating the students' prior knowledge.

“Using techniques that utilize schema such as scaffolding can ground a topic compared to it being an abstract thing that students see as foreign. Using their experiences, they see how relevant the subject and topic are and make their own generalizations.” (Participant 10)

- **Enhancing Teaching Effects**

Next, the participants were asked the question, "How can you enhance your teaching practices to play a bigger and more positive role in ESL students' reading comprehension?" The participants answered that learning more about strategies and methods, including additional appropriate reading materials and topics, and increasing student participation would help in enhancing the effects of their perceived teaching practices on students' understanding. Some participants answered that graduate studies, seminars, and workshops helped in learning strategies and methods while some offered self-research or development of routine that applies schema theory.

"We should be open to discoveries and changes. As teachers, we should be more of researchers of new techniques, strategies, and methodologies on how to improve the teaching-learning process." (Participant 7)

Aside from self-improvement, some answers mentioned adding more reading materials or topics for better discussion and development of comprehension. Reading materials that promote thinking skills and topics that can be related to students' prior experiences to improve text understanding are some of the responses they gave.

"I can make use of reading topics related to their experiences to infer text meaning and make predictions better. This can also improve their understanding of the text and have a clearer picture of what they should focus on and understand." (Participant 2)

Lastly, increasing student participation appeared as the third method for enhancing their teaching practices. Reading circles, group discussions, and reporting are mentioned to be used to observe learners' comprehension of the given text. They suggest that giving students the independence to understand the lesson in their ways would help in enhancing reading comprehension.

"One of my practices is to give all of my students specific roles that they will portray in the class. In our reading class, I employ reading circles, having 7 members per group. During the reading circle, I only observe while they are discussing specific points with one another, Afterwards, we do general group discussion to synthesize their points and allow them to share their insights to the entire class. I've seen how they comprehended the reading selections every time I use these strategies." (Participant 4)

- **Designing a More Effective Approach**

In closing, the participants were asked a final question, "How would you design a more effective approach to students' schema development based on the answers that you have provided in the previous queries?" Five different themes appeared: recognizing the learners' experiences, assigning schema-activating activities, using real-world

situations, maintaining consistent application, and collaborating with peers. A majority of the participants emphasized recognizing the background knowledge and experiences of their learners for a more effective approach. Pinpointing the strengths and weaknesses of their students would help them identify the best methods and techniques. Helping learners connect their experiences to the text can also aid in better understanding.

"It would be helpful to bank on their experiences at the beginning of the required content and connect it back to their experiences at the end of the discussion/lesson. As for reading and writing skills that require more objectivity, it would be helpful to try and make the students see what the value of the objective activity is for their own experiences."
(Participant 10)

Assigning activities that activate schema became another prevalent theme in the responses. Guide questions, graphic organizers, and group discussions were given as examples of what tasks can activate schema before or after the topic discussion. The answers suggest activities that let students create and connect schema for a deeper understanding of topics.

"I would include more processing or guide questions that are related to their life experiences or provide activities that will be applicable to real-life setting of the learners."
(Participant 3)

Afterward, another set of participants answered that using real-world situations would motivate students to think about the topic. They inferred that using scenarios that students have experienced at some point would pique their interest in the topic. The theme can be closely correlated with using activities that activate schema.

"I'll inject more real-life situations in the lessons so learners will be motivated to activate their schema towards a better understanding of the reading lesson." (Participant 8)

The last themes found that the answers on how to design a better approach for schema development are consistent application and collaboration with peers. One participant mentioned that maintaining consistent application can help in effectively ingraining knowledge in students while another emphasized working together with co-teachers and learning from the department and school heads that advise ways to develop students' schema.

"There must be a consistency of application." (Participant 5)

"Collaboration with my co-teachers, mentoring with my Department Head and School Head." (Participant 6)

5. Conclusion

This research study aimed to analyze their teaching practices based on ESL teachers' responses to schema theory, determine how reading teachers view the effects of schema theory in ESL reading, and gather opinions and perceptions about the effects of applying schema theory in lesson preparation and delivery. The researcher asked how reading teachers apply schema theory in their instruction, how schema theory influences the reading comprehension of ESL students, and how teachers view the implementation of said theory in daily practices. The data were collected through a questionnaire with Likert-scale type and open-ended questions. The participants in the study counted 30 English teachers with experience in how to develop ESL reading comprehension and proficiency of students from secondary and tertiary schools located in selected provinces in Central Luzon, Philippines. Based on the results of the study, the following conclusions were drawn:

- 1) Activities that promote the independent realization of schema such as developing inquiries about the text, linking the topic to previous experiences, and discussing topics in the class are more favored than graphic organizers and other teaching tools. It can be said that teachers prefer letting students understand texts and passages in their own ways since learners are also believed to have their own methods for learning and analyzing the topics.
- 2) Most participants said that they have observed that applying schema theory in their lesson preparation and delivery helped students to connect prior experiences and make better inferences. From this finding, the researcher can say that schemata are one of several factors that can leave an impact on student comprehension and text understanding.
- 3) Finally, as found in the responses to the open-ended questions, Filipino ESL teachers have positive perceptions towards activating schemata for students in teaching English reading comprehension. Teachers mostly believed that they needed more knowledge and guidance to formulate more effective strategies for better reading instruction. They are also found to favor making students relate their own experiences for a deeper understanding of the topic.

6. Recommendations

From the results and the conclusions of the study, the following actions are recommended:

- 1) Improve the overall teacher education to help new teachers manage diverse sociocultural backgrounds and overcome possible difficulties in the schema activation process. English teachers need to get enough training opportunities on a variety of techniques for activating students' schemata effectively since teachers play a very major role in student development of different skills, specifically reading.

- 2) Furthermore, provide teachers with opportunities to learn about pedagogical techniques and strategies that they can apply in the classroom. Teachers should also be taught how to do self-studies and self-research for the sake of enhancing their conceptual and theoretical knowledge regarding schema activation.
- 3) Finally, expose aspiring ESL teachers to different classrooms for initial experiences in engaging diverse learners from different backgrounds, giving substance to the concepts and theories provided to them through formal and non-formal education.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

About the Author

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