Effects of the Somebody-Wanted-But-So (SWBS) Chart as a Text Structure-based Technique on Second Language Narrative Prose Comprehension

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Abstract: Key themes in English language arts teaching include text schemata and comprehension, and the quest for suitable instructional approaches. This article presents a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest classroom-based research study conducted by a trainee teacher documenting the effects of teaching the Somebody-Wanted-But-So (SWBS) chart as a text structure-based technique on second language (L2) narrative prose comprehension. Subjects were 68 Secondary Six ESL students in S.T.F.A. Leung Kau Kui College, an English medium school in Hong Kong. By collecting quantitative data including the pretest and posttest scores and running inferential statistical analysis, it was found that the use of SWBS significantly enhanced the experimental subjects' narrative prose comprehension at sentence level and supra-sentence level. Pedagogical implications are then discussed from the point of view of first, encouraging teachers to consider explicit instruction of narrative text structure knowledge through the use of SWBS in upper-intermediate ESL classrooms; second extending SWBS to teaching writing short stories and to speaking activities in class; and third encouraging secondary level students to become independent readers after being equipped with narrative text structure knowledge.

Keywords: Narrative Text Structure-Based Techniques, Narrative Text Schemata, Narrative Text Comprehension, SWBS, ESL, Hong Kong

Contextual Background

ENGLISH AS A second language (ESL) is a mandatory core subject in the secondary school curriculum in Hong Kong. Prevalently, the texts found in textbooks are informational texts which aim to develop ESL learners' reading skills and strategies, and awareness of language forms and functions (Chan, 1994). This is mainly due to the backwash effect from public examinations which heavily emphasize "occupational English" and "social English" (HKEAA, 2008a, p.3). However, it is viewed that English language teaching and learning in Hong Kong has been instrumental: "English is taught and learned for specific purposes such as work and study" (Chan, 1999, p.38). Therefore, to broaden learners' perceptions of English language learning, from 2005 onwards, the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) has included a print fiction component in the current Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) English Language School-based Assessment (SBA). The most recent New Senior Secondary (NSS) English Language Curriculum Guide also offers an elective short story module, with a view to sensitizing advanced learners to language awareness, cultural awareness, critical thinking skills and creativity through the world of short stories (CDC and HKEAA, 2007a, p.33). In addition, narrative writing including pictorial writing and creative writing are very common

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in Writing papers in the public examinations including Territory-Wide System Assessment and HKCEE. There is thus a need to teach narratives in ESL classrooms in Hong Kong.

To teach narrative texts effectively, teachers may introduce students to narrative text structure-based techniques. One of which is called the Somebody-Wanted-But-So (SWBS) chart. However, most practitioners seem unprepared for teaching narratives. Therefore, this study helps to inform in-service teachers of one way to deal with narratives in ESL classrooms.

Theoretical Background

One type of schema readers bring to the reading of literature is a sense of how a story functions, which is called story structure or story schema (Anderson and Pearson, 1984). Many empirical studies have demonstrated that native readers, including both children and adults, are sensitive to such structure, and that both comprehension and recall are facilitated when being aware of such structure (van Dijk, 1976; Thorndyke 1977; Flood and Lapp, 1992). A number of studies have also shown that explicit teaching of narrative text structure-based techniques are conducive to readers' narrative comprehension in their first language (Mandler, 1978; Gordon, 1980; Short, 1982; Singer and Dan, 1982; Singer and Nolte, 1985). Carrell (1984) conducted a comparative research study which sought to investigate the role of story schemata in ESL comprehension. Her results have shown that the same conclusion could be transferred to the second language context.

There are many narrative text structure-based techniques, one of which is the SWBS chart proposed by MacOn, Bewell, and Vogt in 1991. SWBS has been widely used in narrative text instruction in native-English speaking classrooms (Beers, 2003; Foster, 2004; Womeli, 2004; Ellery, 2005). However, a review of literature fails to relate teaching such techniques in ESL classrooms. Therefore, the present study endeavors to bridge the gap of the context of teaching and learning English as the first and the second language with regard to narrative text structure based techniques.

Narrative Text Structure Knowledge

Research on discourse comprehension has shown that comprehension is determined not only by the local effects (sentences or paragraphs), but also by the overall organization of a text. The ability to identify main ideas and relations between main ideas is important for reading comprehension (Dickson, Simmons and Kameenui, 1998). Following Bartlett (1932), this knowledge has been called a *schema*, and more specifically, following Carrell (1983), this is called a *formal schema.*

For decades, there have been conflicting views regarding instruction of narrative structure and reading narrative comprehension. Some researchers have asserted that explicit instruction of story structure is counterproductive since it emphasizes only one piece of a story and de-emphasizes story content (see e.g. Schmitt and O'Brien, 1986). Likewise, Moffett (1983) argues against instruction of story structure, since students will automatically internalize this knowledge indirectly as a by-product of story listening or viewing. However, many other researchers have found that instruction in narrative structure enhances readers' comprehension (Flood and Lapp, 1992; McMackin, 1998; Pershey; 1998; cited in Flood, Lapp, and Fisher, 2003). Many of these studies were carried out with native English-speaking children and young learners. Gordon (1980) carried out a quasi-experimental classroom-

based study to compare the effects of three different instructional strategies, namely text schemata, content schemata, and traditional approach, on narrative comprehension of fifth graders. It was found that the group which were taught both text structure and content strategies outperformed both the group which were taught content strategies only, not to mention the control group. In the ESL context, Carrell (1984) has demonstrated the facilitative role of a simple narrative text schema on readers' comprehension and recall. By manipulating the order of text presentation which violated the expected story schema in the story, it is found that quantity of recall and temporal sequencing of recall will be affected.

Teaching Narrative Text Schemata

Both studies conducted by Singer and Donlan (1982), and Cunningham and Foster (1978) extend imparting learners with story structure knowledge (story schema) to story structure knowledge *application*. The former study took a questioning approach as the teaching strategy while the latter study took a story grammar tree diagram approach as the teaching strategy. The former emphasizes teaching a general problem-solving schema for short stories and then posing story-specific questions while the latter emphasizes generic labels in simple language as a textual aid for story comprehension and recall. The present study adapted these two studies and adopted a text diagram approach using generic labels in lay terms. The study sought to equip learners with first a general problem-solving schema for short stories through the use of generic labels, and second microstructure schemata, i.e. text schemata at the episode level through teaching constituents of a story, namely character, goal, conflict and resolution. The next section will review a list of narrative text structure-based techniques, and specifically the Somebody-Wanted-But-So (SWBS) chart which was the focus of the study.

Narrative Text Structure-Based Techniques

A review of literature identifies a variety of narrative text structure-based techniques. However, these techniques have been considered not very relevant in this study. The Probable Passage (Wood, 1984) was not chosen since it aimed to elicit general responses like the 5W questions. This study had a very clear objective which was to sharpen learners' text structure knowledge. The Prediction Chart or Knowledge Chart (MacOn, Bewell, and Vogt, 1991) were not chosen either because they sought to elicit learners' content schema, that is cultural orientation in terms of background knowledge when reading a narrative (Singhal, 1998), which was not the focus of the study. This study focused on the role of text schema in relation to narrative text comprehension. The Story Map or Story Pyramid (Birkets, 1994) was not chosen as it took a macro-perspective, i.e. the plot level in story analysis, which was not the focus of the study either. This study took a micro-perspective, that is to say this study investigated learners' ability to identify particular incidents in terms of its episode-level constituents. The Venn diagram was not chosen as it involved cross comparison between different narrative texts which was not the scope of this study. The present study selected SWBS because of its simplicity, clarity and directness. More importantly, it helped to sensitize learners' narrative text structure-based knowledge at episode level and also emphasized problem-solving schema as it stressed characters' conflicts and resolution. In the next two sections, the features of SWBS and its usefulness will be discussed.

Somebody-Wanted-But-So (SWBS) Chart

Somebody-Wanted-But-So (SWBS) chart was first designed by MacOn, Bewell and Vogt in 1991 and plays a scaffolding role for readers' narrative text structure knowledge (Beers, 2003, p.151). It is a plot progression chart which is a popular strategy in L1 contexts like the United States to teach plot sequence (Foster, 2005). SWBS comprises four columns labeled "Somebody," "Wanted," "But," and "So." Within each separate column, a corresponding aspect of the story can be listed. To complete the chart, the protagonist is first identified and then filled in the "Somebody" column. The character's goal, i.e. what s/he/ it wants to achieve, is filled in the "Wanted" column. Usually, the character encounters a conflict or a problem while trying to attain the goal. This twist is then filled in the "But" column. Encountering the dilemma, the character has to judge and make a decision. Hence, the resolution is identified and filled in the last column, "So" column. Because a story comprises a progression of events, the same character will possess multiple goals, encounter multiple conflicts, and makes multiple decisions. Therefore, a retelling of the plot can be constructed in this SWBS chart. Table 1 illustrates how a SWBS chart can be constructed based on reading an excerpt of a narrative text.

> *"One day I w as helping my friend Sandy prepare some food in the kitchen. Suddenly the knife that I w as using slipped and cut Sandy on the hand. When I looked at the cut, I was frightened to death to discover that, instead of blood, all I could see were wires, electrical circuits and computer chips…"*
> *(Adapted from HKCEE 2000 English Syl. B Writing Question 1)*

Table 1: SWBS Chart based on HKCEE 2000 English Syl. B Writing Question 1

Somebody	Wanted	But	So
I	to help Sandy prepare some food.	my knife cut her by chance,	I was terrified to discover that she had a 'robotic' arm.

Effects of SWBS

Since SWBS chart is a plot sequence strategy, it helps readers understand the story as a whole. SWBS also provides a scaffold for readers to distinguish main ideas from details and hence to summarize a story. Specifically, SWBS equips students with narrative text structure knowledge with regard to characters, events, conflicts and resolutions. In addition, cause-and-effect, problem-solving and temporal (sequential) relationships are recognized through construction of SWBS. Besides, SWBS helps students identify character differences and character motivations. As students choose names for the "Somebody" column, they are indeed looking at characters and trying to decide who are the main characters. Therefore, once the "Somebody" is changed to a different character, the goals, conflicts, and solutions in the next three columns will be different. Learners thus understand how shifting the point of view emphasizes different aspects of a story. Students in groups can then decide which characters are worth discussing based on writing their own SWBS charts from different points of view. In addition, students may evaluate which summaries are the best (MacOn, Bewell, and Vogt, 1991; Beers, 2003).

However, the predominant studies on the use of narrative text structure-based techniques, in particular the narrative text diagrams, were done in the first language (L1) setting. To relate L1 reading instruction techniques to second language (L2) contexts, it is thus necessary to discuss the differences and similarities between the two contexts in order to argue the possibility of positive outcomes. This will be discussed in next section.

Cross-Linguistic Contexts

According to Riley (1993), "no reported studies have investigated the effects that the structure of narrative texts have on the reading comprehension of L2 readers (p.417)." All the aforementioned studies except Carrell's were carried out in L1 setting. Indeed, there were other studies, though truly very few, in an L2 context. Walters and Wolf's (1986) empirical study with intermediate EFL readers confirmed the hypothesis that "a story which violates the expected story structure would be more difficult to comprehend and recall" could be transferred to L2 setting. This hypothesis was reconfirmed in the study carried out by Horiba, van den Brock, and Fletcher (1993) in L2 setting.

All these studies were similar: for studies that have focused on the discourse structure of short stories and its effect on comprehension in both L1 and L2, the stories were constructed for experimental purposes consisting of one or two simple episodes, and were written to conform to the typical story grammar (story structure). This is because even if a text is read in L1 and L2, the reader is reading the same text structure. In other words, if this is text-specific, it has little to do with language – be it L1 or L2. The teaching point is then to focus on generic labels of a story. Therefore, the crux of teaching text structure knowledge lies with text characteristics rather than learners' characteristics.

Besides, these comparative studies of ESL and EFL reading comprehension typically involve subjects who are more advanced than learners in early and intermediate level foreign language classrooms, probably because of the factor of fundamental language competence. Although it seems feasible to relate L1 reading instruction techniques to L2 context, caution should be taken with regard to the choice of text. As too easy or too difficult a text will not elicit any strategies, a text written in language which is too difficult for the reader is unsuitable (Chun, 2000). Riley (1993) has called for further research regarding the effect of explicit instruction in narrative text structure by providing graphic organizers or text diagrams that indicate the narrative structure of a story in second language or foreign language contexts, therefore the present study has attempted to bridge the research gap by investigating instructional effects of narrative text structure on comprehension in an advanced ESL classroom in Hong Kong.

Rationale and Research Questions

Set against the background that has been examined, the present study aimed to investigate the effects of the use of SWBS as a text structure-based technique on ESL readers' narrative prose comprehension. The specific research questions are:

- Did the use of SWBS enhance ESL readers' narrative prose comprehension performance?
- Did the use of SWBS enhance ESL readers' ability to analyze a narrative text in its constituents?

Methods

This was a quasi-experimental pretest-posttest design involving an experimental group and a control group. An intervention treatment was administered only to the experimental group and it consisted of the instruction of SWBS on two reasonable excerpts of short stories.

Participants

Subjects who participated in the study included 68 Secondary Six Hong Kong Chinese students in S.T.F.A. Leung Kau Kui College[1], an English medium school in Tuen Mun. An English medium school refers to a school which uses English as a medium of instruction (EMI) in all subjects except Chinese, Chinese Literature and Chinese History. Teacher-talk, pupil-talk, textbooks and examination scripts are all in English (Chun, 2000, p.97).

Instrumentation

- *Reading tests*

Two sets of reading tests were developed as the pretest and posttest. Students were asked to answer 18 questions after reading a 900-word excerpt of a narrative text. The test format included both objective marking like multiple-choice questions and giving one-word answers and subjective marking like writing down particular incidents of the story based on the generic labels. 30 minutes were allowed to finish each test. Both reading passages were narrative texts which were adopted from the past HKCE English Language Examination papers; one from 2005 Syllabus B Passage One and the other from 2000 Syllabus A Passage Two[2].

One way of categorizing these 18 comprehension questions is by identifying how much of the text a student needs to understand in order to answer the question (HKEA, 1996): e.g. one sentence (sentence level), two or more sentences (supra-sentence level), or the whole text (text level). In addition to these three measures, the ability to analyze the story in its constituents was also measured in the present study. The constituents refer to the four generic labels, namely the character, the goal, the conflict and the resolution. Students were required to identify the particular incident in the story based on these given generic labels. Classification of each question into four measures of comprehension is tabulated in Table 2.

[1] This secondary school was the teacher-researcher's alma mater.

[2] There were concerns over the consistency of difficulty in the pretest and posttest because Syllabus A was recognized as easier than Syllabus B in the old HKCE English Language Examination. Getting an A in Syllabus A is equivalent to getting a C in Syllabus B in the old HKCE English Language. The difficulty of a comprehension test mainly depends on two factors: the difficulty of the passage and the difficulty of the questions (Nation, 2009). Indeed, the Examiner's Report in 2000 English Language Syllabus A paper writes, "it should be noted that while this text was edited from a much longer passage, very little of the original language was changed, indicating that, providing the tasks/ questions are set at an appropriate level, authentic texts may be used at a range of levels with only minor amendments (HKEA, 2000a, p.97)." Therefore, the teacher-researcher edited the questions in both papers without editing the passages in an attempt to set an approximately consistent level of difficulty in both tests. The year of candidature was not an important point for consideration in this study.

Table 2: Classification of Each Question into four Measures of Comprehension

Level of Comprehension	Possible Max. Score	Pretest	Posttest
Sentence level	6	Q.1,2,3,4,6,11	Q.2,5,6,8,9,11
Supra-sentence level	6	Q.5,7,8,9,10,12	Q.1,3,4,7,10,12
Text level	2	Q.13,14	
Constituents	4	Q.15,16,17,18	
Total	18		

Each question carried one point. The possible maximum score in both tests was thus 18. The raw scores obtained in the two reading tests were converted to percentage scores for ease of comparison. The pretest and posttest were administered to both the control and experimental groups.

Procedures

The study comprised various stages and each stage was described in the sections as follows:

- *Finding suitable texts*

Two very reasonably short excerpts of narrative texts were used for teaching SWBS. The first text entitled "Paper Bag Princess" (1981) written by Robert Munsch was a fractured fairy tale (Appendix 1). The second text was adapted from Question One in HKCE English Language (Syllabus B) writing Paper in 2000 (See Table 1 above). These two texts were used because of their suitably short lengths. This would retain students' attention. Secondly, these two texts were rich in conflicts which particularly suited well for the SWBS chart. Thirdly, the two texts were stimulating, with the former one subverting the readers' expectations and the latter one being relevant to Hong Kong students' "exam" lives.

- *Teaching approach*

No empirical studies on the teaching approach of SWBS have been found. Direct instruction approach was adopted by the teacher-researcher. This approach entailed five stages:

1. explicit instruction on narrative text structure—students were told explicitly the constituents of a narrative text in lay terms (characters, goals, conflicts, resolution);
2. explicit instruction on SWBS as a narrative text structure-based technique—students were told explicitly what the acronym S-W-B-S stood for (Somebody-Wanted-But-So), and what they referred to with reference to metalanguage in lay terms (characters, goals, conflicts, resolution);
3. demonstration on the use of SWBS by the teacher-researcher—the teacher-researcher showed students how SWBS was tabulated while reading an adapted version of "The Paper Bag Princess". Think-aloud was used as the teaching technique to model how to fill in the SWBS chart in class. The teacher-researcher verbalized his thinking processes

to see how he worked out the relationships among characters, goals, conflicts and the resolution.

4. guided practice—Under the teacher-researcher's guidance, students selected any one passage from the story books they had been reading and then completed the SWBS chart[3].
5. feedback—Immediate feedback was provided by the teacher in class. The teacher invited students to construct their SWBS charts on the blackboard and discussed issues regarding the four constituents.
   (Adapted from Chun, 2000, p.133)

- *Length of instruction on SWBS*

A total of two lessons were spared to teach the experimental group to use SWBS. These two lessons, each comprising 40 minutes, were not make-up classes. In other words, the experimental group did not receive extra instruction in reading compared with the control group.

Data Analysis

- *Reading tests*

The effects of teaching SWBS were investigated by comparing the performance of the experimental group and the control group in the pretest and posttest. Firstly, the mean total score and standard deviation were calculated. The total score was then broken down into four measures, namely sentence level score, supra-sentence level score, text level score and constituent level score. The mean score and standard deviation of each measure were calculated. The raw scores obtained in the two reading tests were converted to percentage scores for ease of comparison. Inferential statistical analysis were then run. Analyses of Covariance (ANCOVA) was computed using both raw scores and percentage scores to test for significant differences of the posttest scores between the experimental and control groups using the pretest scores as the covariate on all four measures.

Results

- *Effect of SWBS on reading narrative prose performance*

ANCOVA was used to test for significant differences of the posttest scores between the experimental and control groups using the pretest scores as the covariate. Results for the overall reading performance mean percentage scores and for each measure are tabulated in Table 3.

[3] In the school, every student was required to bring their own books and read fiction during lunch reading time. The teacher-researcher exploited this opportunity by asking students to bring their own short stories or novels in English class.

Table 3: ANCOVA of Mean Scores Obtained on Overall and Four Measures of Reading Performance

	Possible max. score	Experimental (N=34)			Control (N=34)			*F*	*p*
		Mean (Mean percentage) [S.D.]		Mean gain (Mean % gain)	Mean (Mean percentage) [S.D.]		Mean gain (Mean % gain)		
		Pretest	Posttest		Pretest	Posttest			
Total	18	10.79 (59.9%) [2.75]	12.88 (71.56%) [2.76]	+2.09 (+11.62%)	11.71 (65.06%) [3.20]	11.41 (63.39%) [2.63]	-0.3 (-1.67%)	1.858	0.0178*
Sentence level	6	3.21 (53.43%) [1.20]	4.09 (68.17%) [1.08]	+0.88 (+14.74%)	3.97 (66.17%) [1.19]	3.79 (63.17%) [1.43]	-0.18 (-3%)	2.558	0.0007***
Supra-sentence level	6	3.74 (62.33%) [1.05]	4.03 (67.17%) [1.38]	+0.29 (+4.84%)	3.62 (60.33%) [1.56]	3.76 (62.67%) [1.48]	+0.14 (+2.34%)	2.385	0.0016**
Text level	2	1.24 (61.76%) [0.70]	1.71 (85.25%) [0.46]	+0.47 (+23.25%)	1.5 (75%) [0.62]	1.38 (69.00%) [0.55]	-0.12 (-6%)	1.426	0.1138
Constituents	4	2.62 (65.44%) [1.02]	3.06 (76.47%) [0.95]	+0.44 (+11.03%)	2.68 (66.91%) [0.98]	2.47 (61.75%) [0.61]	-0.21 (-5.25%)	1.552	0.0679
*=p<0.05; **=p<0.02; ***=p<0.001									

From the table, the intervention produced statistically significant improvements in the reading performance in the case of experimental subjects (F=1.858, p=0.0178). When the overall scores were broken into its various components, more significant results were obtained in sentence-level comprehension (F=2.558, p=0.0007) and supra-sentence level comprehension respectively (F=2.385, p=0.0016). That is to say, the experimental group enhanced sentence-level and supra-sentence level comprehension significantly better than the control group after receiving the instruction of SWBS. Students' text level comprehension and the ability to identify the particular incidents in a story based on its constituents did not differ significantly between the two groups. Teaching SWBS has neither significantly improved the ability of the experimental group to explain a story in terms of its constituents nor their text level comprehension. However, compared with the mean percentage score for text level comprehension, there were an increase of 23.25% in the experimental group, as compared with a slight decrease of 6% in the control group. One possible explanation for no significant difference in this measure was that too few questions (only two questions) were set at the text level. Indeed, the experimental group was substantially weaker at sentence level and text level comprehension before treatment as seen in the analysis of pre-test scores using independent two-sample t-test. Note that after receiving the instruction of SWBS, the experimental

subjects showed a drastic increase of 23.25% in mean percentage score (or an increase of +0.47 in mean score) at text level comprehension, which was a promising figure.

Likewise, compared with the mean percentage score for the ability to explain a story in its constituents, there were an increase of 11.03% in the experimental group, as compared with a slight decrease of 5.25% in the control group. This result was interesting because the crux of teaching SWBS was to sensitize learners' story schemata and enhance their ability to explain a story in its generic labels. Note that the result was not very significantly different ($F=1.552$, $p=0.0679$), the reasons behind will be inferred in Discussion section.

However, it should be highly encouraging that given the lower ability of the experimental group before treatment, the experimental group outperformed the control group in the posttest in every measure, scoring 12.88 in total out of 18 as compared with 11.41 in the control group. This offers empirical evidence to the positive outcomes of teaching SWBS as a narrative text structure-based technique. The use of SWBS can promote readers' awareness about the narrative text structure and facilitate their comprehension.

Discussion

The study has sought to identify the roles of story schemata in reading second language narrative prose comprehension. This will be discussed in the sections as follows:

- *Sentence level and supra-sentence level comprehension*

The study has shown that students' enhancement in sentence level comprehension was the most significant ($F=2.558$, $p=0.0007$) and their enhancement in supra-sentence level comprehension was the second most significant ($F=1.858$, $p=0.0178$). This finding matched the rationale of the whole study. As stated, the study aimed to sensitize students with narrative text microstructure knowledge rather than macrostructure knowledge. SWBS is a narrative text structure-based technique that can sharpen readers' microstructure knowledge (MacOn, Bewell and Vogt, 1991). In other words, students were expected to identify and explain the particular incidents of a story in terms of its episode-level constituents.

Albeit apparently fruitful, such a study should be interpreted with caution. Since the two tests were adapted from HKEA, some questions that deal with sentence level comprehension in multiple-choice format were retained without any change because of cost effectiveness. Some of these questions tested students' lexical knowledge, but SWBS does not primarily aim to improve readers' vocabulary comprehension because it is a technique that helps readers distinguish the main ideas from details and summarize a story. That is to say there would be a mismatch between the teaching point and the testing point. However, questions that deal with sentence level comprehension but test referencing skills, sequential or causal relationships would be very valid because these testing points match the outcomes of using SWBS. Therefore, if resource allows, the test questions should be refined and validated. Questions that ask for lexical knowledge should be replaced by ones that ask for referencing skills and different kinds of relationships.

- *Text structure knowledge and deep processing*

Despite the fact that the experimental group enhanced the ability to explain a story in its constituents, the result was not significant. One possible explanation was the validity of the self-designed tests. Not enough questions had been set in this measure. One refinement of the test could be to duplicate questions 15 to 18, asking students to identify two episodes rather than just one episode with regard to character(s), goals, conflicts and resolution. This would make the test more valid. To gain score in these four questions, learners need to manipulate the text at a deeper level (Beers, 2003). In the pretest, direct copying was prevalent, indicating that students read the text for its surface meanings only. Blank answers were common as well, indicating that students were weak in text structure knowledge. Students also misrepresented a character's internal conflict for his goal. Answers like "(Peter) wants to express the sad feeling that he is going to be an entirely different person from a child" were provided in Question 16 which tested on goals. In the posttest, for the experimental group, no blank answer was provided. Even more encouraging, students processed the text at a deeper level, inferring and then explaining the character's intentions. For example, for Question 16 (goals), students wrote "(Christy Brown) used written words to express his mind." For Question 17 (conflicts), students wrote "(Christy Brown) wanted to express himself by speaking or writing*, but he failed.*" This suggests that students demonstrated use of problem-solving schemata in addition to their ability to segment the text into meaningful units to aid text comprehension (Negin, 1987). In so doing, students also have demonstrated their text structure knowledge. They were aware of the complexity of different constituents like different types of conflicts including physical and internal conflicts, personal and impersonal conflicts.

Another refinement of the test could be to add a textual analysis section, asking students to write down generic labels next to the text. However, asking students to label the text correctly mainly tests their specific piece of knowledge about the text rather than ability to identify text coherence (Frase and Schwartz, 1979).

Another possible explanation for the insignificant difference of the results could be the clarity of the text structure. In the pretest, the main character's (Peter's) conflicts are predominantly emotional and subtle except for the fighting scene with his brother. Most students chose to take this fighting scene as the answer on Question 16 but left the following two questions blank because the writer does not address the consequences of the fight in the passage. The text structure perhaps is "embedded." In the posttest, although conflicts are also emotional, they are very explicit as the main character (Christy) struggles to free himself from being born with deformities. Therefore, one cannot with certainty completely reject the idea that SWBS did not significantly sensitize learners' story schemata or enhance their ability to explain a story in its generic labels. Indeed, as exemplified in experimental subjects' pretest and posttest answers, credit should be given to their improved ability in explaining text structure. Other factors including the number of questions and the clarity of the text structure should be considered to address insignificant differences.

Implications

To conclude, this study contributes to the literature on ESL narrative prose comprehension both in terms of theoretical significance and pedagogical implications.

Theoretical Significance

The study is derived from two different areas of research strands studying reading narratives, namely schema-theoretic approaches to reading and reading in cross-linguistic contexts. The study has made an attempt to examine reading narratives in English for Hong Kong Chinese learners by teaching the SWBS chart which was originally an L1 narrative text structure-based technique as a *means* to helping learners read. The integration is promising and viable in studying two entities, text structure and reading in cross-linguistic contexts. This cross-fertilization of different strands has echoed Carrell's (1984) and Riley's (1993) call for further ESL research in these two areas.

The study has also contributed to the literature on the theoretical importance of text schemata in reading, and direct instruction in second language reading using text structure-based techniques for improving text comprehension in Hong Kong Chinese ESL learners in the context of reading narrative prose.

Pedagogical Implications

What the present study has focused on is narrative prose. The results show that developing story structure knowledge or story schemata through learning SWBS as a text structure-based technique facilitated reading narratives. The present study may be extended in three areas: first, extending SWBS to teaching writing short stories (Foster, 2004; Ellery, 2005; Foster and Marasco, 2007); second, extending it to a SBA speaking activity by eliciting students to give an overview of the story with the aid of a SWBS chart; and third, extending SWBS to teaching other genres like print non-fiction that can be told in *narrative* form (Womeli, 2004). It is hoped that with the aid of narrative text structure-based techniques, students will be more motivated and engaged in reading short story genres (see e.g. Harfitt, forthcoming).

Nonetheless, a few considerations have to be taken into account by practitioners when teaching narrative text structure-based techniques. Teachers have to consider both the choice of text and the teaching approach. Dickson, Simmons and Kameenui (1998) have reviewed secondary research on text structure, the physical presentation of the text and their interplay with reading comprehension. It was found that well-presented physical text, clear text structure, students' awareness of the text structure, and explicit instruction of the physical presentation of the text play a facilitative role in reading. Thus it is strongly advised to teachers to use narrative texts with very clear text structure. Modifying (Abridging or rewriting) the text is suggested if necessary. Lattimer (2003) has viewed that the short length of a narrative text motivates students to participate actively in class. Only when the particular text comprises a sharp character, goal, conflict and resolution can SWBS be taught successfully. As for teaching methodology, demonstration of how to use the SWBS chart is most crucial and challenging. Teachers ought to be able to relate the text diagram to the text explicitly, for example the signal words and transitional markers that indicate the story structure so that students acknowledge the purposes of using this text structure-based technique.

Further Research

To make the study manageable, this article did not deal with the relationship between text structure-based techniques and text structure-based reading strategies. If time and manpower

allow, the study may be expanded to explore the relationships between text structure knowledge and text structure-based reading strategies. Nor did the study attempt to investigate the relationship between second language proficiency and second language competence. How necessary it is for readers to have mastered fundamental second language skills before the text structure-based knowledge is still not yet clear (Chun, 2000). Further research can be conducted in this area.

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Appendix 1: Text One for Instruction of SWBS

"The Paper Bag Princess" (Adapted from Munsch, 1980)

Once upon a time there was Prince Ronald and Princess Elizabeth. They lived in a castle. One day a dragon smashed the castle and carried off Prince Ronald. Princess Elizabeth decided to chase the dragon and get Ronald back.

Princess Elizabeth defeated the dragon. Elizabeth walked right over the dragon and opened the door to the cave.

There was Prince Ronald. He looked at her and said, "Elizabeth, you are a mess! You smell like ashes, your hair is all tangled and you are wearing a dirty old paper bag. Come back when you are dressed like a real princess."

"Ronald," said Elizabeth, "your clothes are really pretty and your hair is very neat. You look like a real prince, but you are a bum."

They didn't get married after all.

Table 4: SWBS Chart Based on the Adapted "Paper Bag Princess"

Somebody	Wanted	But	So
Princess Elizabeth	to rescue Prince Ronald.	the prince did not appreciate this at all and even despised Princess Elizabeth,	Princess Elizabeth did not concede either and they did not get married.

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Anson Ming-chun SINN is now a final-year English Language Education student aspiring to choose teaching as a career. During his undergraduate study, Sinn has actively assisted professors from the Department of Curriculum and Instruction with research projects including "Academic literacy" and "Reading English language across the curriculum." With determination and persistence, he co-authored with Ms. Mhairi Mackay, an instructor working at the Independent Learning Centre (ILC) in CUHK, a life history research paper entitled "Autonomous Learning as Keeping On and Taking Charge: A Learner's Story." As a Hong Kong-based student, Anson SINN has developed versatile interests and hobbies—from academic to non-academic, from music to films, from writing to community services. As a productive student, he was recruited as a freelance movie columnist working for English Street, Hong Kong Economic Times. For writing is discovery, Sinn builds on reflections and seeks perspectives through ten years experience of leisure writing. In addition to creative journalism, he once held the post of Editor-in-Chief for his high school newspaper, Whats'Up, and now, as an undergraduate Editor-in-Chief, helps run Netter, a blog under the project "English Teacher Education on the Net" (ETENet) launched by the Faculty of Education, CUHK.