

# Enhancing Grade 7 Students' Reading Comprehension Using Graphic Organizers

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## CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

Proficiency in reading not only enhances one's knowledge but is essential for a good education. In the framework of education, students must read any written materials about any subject area to understand and become familiar with the source (Nair, 2020). It is common knowledge that proficient readers possess well-developed reading abilities (Hernández-Chérrez et al., 2020).

Reading comprehension is thought to be a difficult activity that essentially requires two stages: decoding graphemes and extracting linguistic meanings (Tárraga-Mínguez & Sanz-Cervera, 2020). Along with this, reading comprehension is a necessary skill for deriving meaning from the text (Hasanah & Kholili, 2023). Reading comprehension is the capacity to comprehend and appropriately interpret the information included in a text (Grabe & Stoller, 2019). Additionally, they pointed out that reading without comprehension is pointless, proving that the two are inextricably linked (Guo et al., 2023).

Students must comprehend what they read and derive meaning from it; simply decoding words on a page is insufficient (Lai & Mukundan, 2023). Students who are unable to comprehend are considered to be reading a blank page (Imsa-ard, 2022). However, problems including visual literacy difficulties, unfamiliarity with GOs, poor cognitive level, and choosing the right GO all affect how effective graphic organizers are (Lai & Mukundan, 2023).

With the aid of graphic organizers, students' critical thinking skills can be developed (Styati & Irawati, 2020). The value of organizers is frequently centered on their ability to enable the reader to map and evaluate concepts, particularly with concept maps and mind maps (Salazar-Rodríguez, 2020). Through the creation and presentation of a graphic representation of the structure of a text, a graphic organizer serves as a visual tool in teaching that enhances long-term progress of the students in their reading comprehension in English (Qi & Jiang, 2021). Graphic organizers use visual symbols as a tool for communication to convey information, concepts, ideas, and their relationships (Ghanizadeh, 2020). These are spatial and visual displays made to assist in the teaching and learning of the content found in a given text by using certain layouts and lines to describe the text, its structure, and the important conceptual relationships that go along with it (Rahat, 2020).

Proficient readers actively engage with the text and are conscious of the strategies they employ to comprehend what they are reading (Banditvilai, 2020). It is evident from the study so far that reading comprehension is directly influenced by decoding abilities, linguistic proficiency, and executive processes (Nouwens et. al., 2021).

Graphic organizers have been widely recognized as effective tools for improving reading comprehension. However, most existing studies primarily focus on their application in higher-grade levels or in contexts where students already possess foundational reading skills. Considering they are in the crucial period of moving from simple to more complex texts, children in Grade 7 exhibit a clear lack of use of graphic organizers to improve their reading comprehension. Furthermore, prior research has often examined graphic organizers in general terms, without delving into their specific impact on struggling readers or their adaptability across different types of texts. This leaves several unexplored dimensions that warrant further investigation, particularly in middle school settings where reading comprehension remains a key challenge (Miles, 2017).

This research study aimed to enhance Grade 7 students' reading comprehension using graphic organizers in one of the secondary schools in Ozamiz City. The study focused on enhancing students' ability to understand and analyze texts through the structured employing visual organizers as a reading technique. This study focused on a specific group of Grade 7 students, which primarily addressed development in reading comprehension, excluding other literacy skills such as writing, speaking, and vocabulary acquisition. Due to time constraints, the study was able to document the immediate effects of graphic organizers on students' understanding abilities. These limitations ensured a targeted analysis while highlighting potential areas for future research.

This study addressed the problem of developing reading comprehension skills among Grade 7 students, a crucial foundation for academic success across subjects. The study presented a systematic and visual method to improve students' reading comprehension by using graphic organizers. The findings of this research benefited students by enhancing their comprehension and critical thinking skills; teachers by providing an effective instructional strategy; school administrators by offering insights for curriculum development; and future researchers by contributing to the growing body of literature on reading interventions and instructional tools.

### **Intervention**

Graphic organizers, which visually represent relationships among ideas and details, are known to support students in organizing, synthesizing, and understanding information. By structuring key elements of a text through tools such as Venn diagrams, story maps, and concept webs, students can get better at recognizing ideas, establish connections, and recall information effectively (Graham et al., 2022).

The intervention involved systematically embedding graphic organizers into reading lessons. Story maps were used to analyze narrative texts, while cause-and-effect charts helped students understand expository content. This strategy was grounded in the principles of active learning and cognitive load theory, which emphasize reducing cognitive strain and fostering deep learning (Sweller et al., 2019). Additionally, graphic organizers have been shown to enhance metacognitive skills of students. This enables them to track their understanding and adjust their reading strategies accordingly (Roberts & Pyle, 2019).

The effectiveness of graphic organizers was assessed through pre-test and post-test on reading comprehension from students. This approach ensured the alignment of the strategy with students' diverse learning needs and preferences (Tomlinson & Moon, 2020). Overall, the intervention provided a replicable and evidence-based framework that teachers can adopt to enhance comprehension skills in other contexts.

### **Steps in Using Graphic Organizers**

The steps in using graphic organizers to enhance the reading comprehension of Grade 7 students began with the teacher selecting appropriate texts and identifying key reading skills to focus on, such as determining the main idea, making inferences, or analyzing the structure.—such as a cause-and-effect chart. The teacher displayed the visual organizer prior to reading such as fishbone diagram, or problem-solution chart—and provided an example of how to use it to arrange textual data. To visually structure significant details and relationships, students actively completed the graphic organizers throughout the class, either individually or in groups. After completion, graphic organizers were utilized by the researcher in follow-up exercises to enhance comprehension. To strengthen comprehension techniques and promote their consistent application across various reading materials, the instructor lastly integrated the graphic organizers into reviews and assessments.

### **Action Research Questions**

The purpose of this action research was to improve the reading comprehension of seventh-grade pupils in one of Ozamiz City's public secondary schools by using graphic organizers. Specifically, this study answered the following research questions:

1. What is the level of reading comprehension of the students before the use of the graphic organizers?
2. What is the level of reading comprehension of the students after the use of the graphic organizers?

3. Is there a significant difference in the students' level of reading comprehension before and after the use of the graphic organizers?

### Null Hypothesis

(H<sub>0</sub>): There is no significant difference the reading comprehension of Grade 7 students before and after the use of graphic organizers.

## ACTION RESEARCH METHODS

**Research Design.** The study employed a Single Group Pretest-Posttest Design. The purpose of this study was to evaluate how well graphic organizers improved the reading comprehension of Grade – 7 students. It allows for pre- and post-intervention comparisons while adapting to classroom constraints (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). This design was deemed appropriate for the study, as it addressed the problem of Grade 7 students with their reading comprehension.

**Site.** The study was conducted at one of the public secondary schools in Ozamiz City, specifically on Grade 7 students. This institution was dedicated to equipping students with fundamental knowledge and competencies essential for future career opportunities. The school is commitment to academic excellence and holistic student development established it as an appropriate setting for this action research study.

**Participants.** The study consisted of 20 Grade 7 students from a single section. These students were selected using a purposive sampling technique. The selection criteria included: students enrolled as Grade 7 students for the academic year 2024–2025, students belonging to a specific academic performance level in the Grade 7 curriculum, and students who provided full consent to participate. The researcher makes sure that all participants met the criteria before conducting the study.

### Instruments

The following instruments were used in this study:

**A. Reading Comprehension Assessment Test.** This researcher-made test consist of 45-items assessed the reading comprehension of Grade 7 students. It focuses on key comprehension skills such as determining main ideas, making inferences, summarizing, and understanding structures of the text. The test was used for pre-test and post-test to assess the comprehension levels of the students before and after the intervention. A pilot test was also conducted with students who were not included in the study.

The following scale was used to interpret students' reading comprehension performance:

Score	Grade Equivalence	Interpretation
38-45	90-100	Outstanding
35-37	85-89	Very Satisfactory
31-34	80-84	Satisfactory
27-30	75-79	Fairly Satisfactory
1-26	Below 75	Did Not Meet Expectation

**B. Lesson Plan.** The researcher designed a structured lesson plan incorporating graphic organizers into reading activities. It focused on improving the reading comprehension of the students by systematically using different graphic organizers, such as Venn diagrams, concept maps and story maps, in reading instruction. Prior to the intervention, the cooperating teacher reviewed and made any required revisions to the lesson plan.

**C. Pretest and Posttest Questionnaire.** A researcher-made pretest and posttest questionnaire was used to assess the reading comprehension of students before and after the implementation of graphic organizers in reading instruction. The questionnaire consisted of 45 multiple-choice items aligned with the Grade 7 reading curriculum. These items evaluated the students' understanding of main ideas, supporting details, sequence, cause and effect, and inference. The same instrument was used before and after the intervention to measure the improvement of reading comprehension skills among students. Responses were collected in written form and analyzed quantitatively to ensure the effectiveness of the intervention.

## **Data Gathering Methods**

### **A. Pre-Implementation Phase**

Before conducting the study, the researcher obtained consent from the principal, the cooperating teacher, the parents of the students, and the superintendent of the schools division. After clearance is received, data gathering started. During this phase, the researcher designed pre-tests, graphic organizer templates, and other instructional materials aligned with the Grade 7 curriculum. Preparatory meetings with the cooperating teacher ensured that the intervention aligned with the lesson plan being made.

### **B. Implementation Phase**

The researcher conducted lessons incorporating graphic organizers that help support the reading comprehension of the students. Structured and detailed instructions were given to students on using graphic organizers in analyzing texts. The intervention lasted for one month, during which students actively engaged with various types of graphic organizers in reading activities.

### **C. Post-Implementation Phase**

After the one month intervention, a post-test was administered to measure the progress of the students in reading comprehension. The researcher documented the implementation process through field notes and photos. The collected data were then tallied, analyzed, and interpreted to determine the effectiveness of graphic organizers in enhancing the reading comprehension among students. Conclusions were drawn based on the findings and provided recommendations for future instructional practices. Additionally, the researcher conducted proofreading and editing to finalize research report.

## **Ethical Considerations**

To ensure transparency and compliance with data protection policies, the researcher adhered on the Data Privacy Act of 2012, where informed consent was secured from students and their parents/guardians, clearly explaining the purpose of the study, its procedures, and the rights of the participants. Confidentiality was maintained, with all personal information being anonymized to protect participants' privacy.

## **Data Analysis**

With the aid of Minitab statistical software, the following statistical tools were employed to analyze the data in this study:

*Frequency and Percentage.* Frequency and Percentage were used to describe the distribution of students' reading comprehension levels before and after the intervention using graphic organizers.

*Mean and Standard Deviation.* Mean and Standard Deviation provided a measure of the average performance and variability in scores.

*Paired T-Test.* A paired t-test was used to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference in the students' reading comprehension scores before and after the implementation of graphic organizers.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Level of Reading Comprehension of the Students

#### Before the Use of Graphic Organizers

Table 1 shows the level of reading comprehension of the students before the use of graphic organizers. According to the 20 Grade 7 pupils' total performance, the majority (95.0%) were classified as having "Did Not Meet Expectation." No student received a score in the "Satisfactory," "Very Satisfactory," or "Outstanding" categories, and only one student (5.0%) received a "Fairly Satisfactory" rating. This suggests that before the intervention, the majority of the children struggled with reading comprehension.

The information points to a concerning weakness in the pupils' basic comprehension abilities. The fact that 95% of the children received scores in the lowest performance bracket suggests that these kids might have trouble recognizing the major concepts, drawing conclusions, or summarizing important details—skills that are essential for comprehending academic literature. Absence of pupils at higher performance levels, such as "Satisfactory" or "Outstanding," could also indicate a problem with the teaching approach, student involvement, or the material's accessibility.

The pre-intervention pattern reflects a foundational struggle in comprehension, which may be attributed to cognitive overload, insufficient scaffolding, or lack of structured reading support. According to Cognitive Load Theory, students who are presented with dense textual information without organizational support may experience excessive intrinsic load, which negatively affects comprehension. Likewise, the absence of tools to externalize information may have limited students' ability to form coherent mental connections, consistent with Schema Theory, which emphasizes the need to activate and structure prior knowledge to make sense of new information.

The implications for instruction are notable. English teachers should assess traditional reading practices and integrate structured visual tools to reduce cognitive demands. School administrators may also consider professional development programs focused on differentiated instruction and the use of visual scaffolds. Suggested activities include peer-assisted reading tasks, guided reading sessions using concept webs or story maps, and scaffold comprehension exercises that visually break down complex information.

Table 1. Level of Reading Comprehension of the Students Before the Use of Graphic Organizers

Students' Reading Progress	Frequency	Percentage
Outstanding	-	-
Very Satisfactory	-	-
Satisfactory	-	-
Fairly Satisfactory	1	5.0
Did Not Meet Expectation	19	95.0
Overall Performance	20	100

*Note: Performance Scale: 38-45 (Outstanding); 35-37 (Very Satisfactory); 31-34 (Satisfactory); 27-30 (Fairly Satisfactory); 1-26 (Did not Meet Expectation)*

### Level of Reading Comprehension of the Students

#### After the Use of Graphic Organizers

Table 2 presents the level of reading comprehension of Grade 7 students after the use of graphic organizers. The majority of pupils (95.0%) achieved an "Outstanding" level, demonstrating a substantial performance



improvement overall. Just one student 5.0%) was classified as "Satisfactory." Interestingly, following the intervention, no pupils fell into the "Very Satisfactory," "Fairly Satisfactory," or "Did Not Meet Expectation" categories.

The results clearly show that the reading comprehension of Grade 7 students significantly improved due to the use of graphic organizers. After the intervention, 95.0% of students achieved the highest category, compared to 95.0% who initially failed to meet expectations (as indicated in Table 1), suggesting both a statistical improvement and an authentic educational breakthrough. This finding implies that students were able to organize and comprehend textual information with the help of visual learning aids, including Venn diagrams, story maps, and concept charts, which allowed them to function at higher cognitive levels. The small percentage of pupils in the "Satisfactory" group highlights the intervention's effectiveness for almost the whole class.

The ability of graphic organizers to structure content is what makes them so effective; it helps learners digest and remember information more easily. Using graphic organizers improves comprehension and student engagement by offering a scaffold that allows for concept organization and concentration during reading (Castillo et al., 2024). Furthermore, it was discovered that the implementation of graphic organizers boosted student confidence and activity, which further enhanced comprehension abilities (Gustina & Syarif, 2021).

This substantial improvement demonstrates the strong instructional value of graphic organizers. By visually structuring key concepts, relationships, and text patterns, learners were better able to comprehend and recall information. This aligns with Dual Coding Theory, which posits that combining verbal information with visual representations strengthens understanding and memory. When students used Venn diagrams, concept maps, or story maps, they processed information through both linguistic and visual channels, resulting in deeper comprehension.

Also, by organizing text into structured, manageable components, graphic organizers helped reduce unnecessary cognitive load, enabling students to focus on essential meaning rather than struggle through complex text structures. Furthermore, the intervention likely activated and expanded students' existing schemas, allowing them to integrate new information more effectively—again consistent with Schema Theory.

Instructionally, these results highlight the importance of integrating graphic organizers into daily reading lessons. Teachers can utilize organizers not only during reading tasks but also during pre-reading (to activate prior knowledge) and post-reading (to reinforce understanding). Administrators may also consider system-wide implementation by providing resources, templates, and training for teachers. Remedial support may be offered to the lone student who performed at the "Satisfactory" level through one-on-one guided reading using simpler organizers.

Table 2. Level of Reading Comprehension of the Students After the Use of Graphic Organizers

Students' Reading Progress	Frequency	Percentage
Outstanding	19	95.0
Very Satisfactory	-	
Satisfactory	1	5.0
Fairly Satisfactory	-	-
Did Not Meet Expectation	-	-

*Note: Performance Scale: 38-45 (Outstanding); 35-37 (Very Satisfactory); 31-34 (Satisfactory); 27-30 (Fairly Satisfactory); 1-26 (Did not Meet Expectation)*

## Difference in the Students' Level of Reading Comprehension

### Before and After the Use of Graphic Organizers

Table 3 shows the difference of the reading comprehension of the students before and after the implementation of graphic organizers. The analysis used a paired samples t-test to ascertain whether there was a statistically significant difference between the students' pre-test and post-test scores. The pre-test mean score was 17.15, whereas the post-test mean score was a significantly higher 39.80.

The reading comprehension scores of Grade 7 students before and after the intervention differed statistically, according to the results ( $t(20) = 17.58, p = .000$ ). The difference is deemed significant since the p-value is less than 0.001. It indicates that the implementation of graphic organizers significantly improved the reading comprehension performance of the students. In addition to statistical gain, the notable rise in mean scores indicates a significant educational impact, demonstrating that graphic organizers improved the ability of the students to absorb, retain, and comprehend textual material. This comparison showed no non-significant results ( $p > .05$ ), highlighting the intervention's efficacy.

The significant rise in average scores suggests that graphic organizers successfully improved pupils' text comprehension skills. It was highlighted how graphic organizers improved understanding by helping students see the connections between ideas (Astuti, 2021). It was discovered that students who received instruction utilizing visual organizers significantly improved on reading assignments, especially when it came to summarizing and interpreting important concepts (Astuti, 2021).

These findings reinforce the theoretical mechanisms behind the intervention. Graphic organizers reduce extraneous cognitive load, support dual processing, and strengthen schema-building. When students visually map concepts, relationships, and text sequences, they deepen their comprehension and retain information more effectively than through text alone.

To sustain these gains, teachers should continue using visual organizers in reading instruction, integrating varied forms such as flowcharts, fishbone diagrams, and cause-and-effect charts. Administrators may consider implementing workshops and collaborative lesson planning sessions to build teacher capacity.

Table 3. Level of Reading Comprehension of the Students Before and After the Use of Graphic Organizers

Variables	Mean Score		Test Statistics	
	Pre-test	Post-test	t-value	p-value
Before and After the Use of Graphic Organizers	17.15	39.800	17.58	0.000

Note: \*\*\*  $p < .001$  (Highly Significant); \*\*  $p \leq 0.01$  (Highly Significant); \*  $p < 0.05$  (Significant);  $p > 0.05$  (Not Significant)

## CONCLUSION

### Summary

This study aimed to enhance the reading comprehension of Grade 7 students through the use of graphic organizers by addressing three key objectives: determining students' comprehension levels before intervention, assessing their progress after using graphic organizers, and evaluating whether there were significant differences between pre-intervention and post-intervention. The study implemented graphic organizers—including fishbone diagrams, concept maps, and other visual tools systematically incorporating them into reading lessons over one month. The 20 participants were selected through purposive sampling and were Grade 7 students from one of the public secondary schools in Ozamiz City. Data were collected through a 45-item researcher-made comprehension test administered as pre- and post-tests. To ensure accurate analysis, the data collected were processed using Minitab software, employing frequency and percentage to categorize comprehension levels,

mean and standard deviation to measure performance trends, and a paired t-test to determine the statistical significance of score improvements.

## Findings

The following were the key findings of the study:

1. Before the implementation of graphic organizers, 95% of students fell under the "Did Not Meet Expectation" level in reading comprehension, indicating significant difficulties in understanding and analyzing texts
2. After using graphic organizers, 95% of students achieved the "Outstanding" level, demonstrating remarkable improvement in comprehension skills.
3. A paired t-test revealed a highly significant difference between pre-test ( $M = 17.15$ ) and post-test ( $M = 39.80$ ) scores ( $t(20) = 17.58, p = .000$ ), confirming the effectiveness of graphic organizers.

## Conclusion

Based on the findings, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. Traditional reading instruction methods alone are insufficient for developing Grade 7 students' comprehension skills, as evidenced by the overwhelmingly low pre-intervention performance.
2. The use of graphic organizers significantly enhance the reading comprehension of the students by providing visual scaffolding that helps students organize, synthesize, and retain textual information.
3. The strategy proves to be a highly effective, low-cost intervention for bridging comprehension gaps, particularly for struggling readers in transitional grade levels.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions, it is recommended that:

1. Integrate graphic organizers systematically across subjects (e.g., English, Science, History) to reinforce comprehension skills.
2. Provide teachers with graphic organizer templates and training as part of professional development programs.
3. Investigate the long-term effects of graphic organizers on standardized test performance.
4. Explore adaptations for digital platforms (e.g., interactive organizers on tablets) to engage tech-savvy students.

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