

Reading Through Connections: A phenomenographic study of student connections to scholarly text

Why help students read more effectively?

we ask them to read scholarly articles all the time

the articles aren't written for undergraduates

reading is their way in to discipline conversations

Why read with connections?

connecting new material to prior knowledge is important

connections can help students see the relevance of
information

academic reading is a process of connecting that
students are expected to practice but rarely see

This study (richer detail on handout)

30 students in a 3rd-yr. PR research methods class

at MRU most students are from Calgary surrounding area

⇒ some familiarity with oil industry/farming

study occurred during a session on reading scholarly articles

most students had not read past the abstract in advance

How students were encouraged to make connections:

J. Jahansoozi / Public Relations Review 33 (2007) 398–406

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① Academic interest in OPRs mirrored the need in practice for organizations to understand, listen, and develop a dialogue with their important publics so that crises originating from organizational activities were reduced. This 'cost reduction' perspective can be linked with the ideas of sociologist Ulrich Beck (1992, cited in L'Etang, 2007) who proposed that alongside the benefits of industrialization and globalization there were also risks created by organizational activity. Whilst organizations reap benefits from their activities there are also negative as well as positive consequences which may impact their publics and in turn could have implications for the organizations' social license to operate. Within the relationship management perspective the negative consequences of an organization's activity causes tension in the OPR that needs to be addressed in order for the relationship to continue.

Much of the literature and research on OPRs is from the perspective of the organization and has a corporate bias. In this perspective publics that are not supportive of the organization's goals are viewed negatively and the organization is required to 'win them over' or placate them. However, if the OPR is viewed as a collaborative relationship where the parties involved participate in the decision-making processes the public involved is no longer viewed as being problematic but rather as a partner.

The relational paradigm provides an opportunity to shift the perspective away from the organization being viewed as the central point in a stakeholder map and instead focus on relationships which are considered important for maintaining the organization's social license to operate and provide organizational legitimacy.

OPRs have been categorized into different relationship types such as exchange and communal (Clark & Mills, 1993), as well as covenantal, exploitative, and contractual (Hung, 2005). Exchange relationships rely on the relational parties to exchange benefits with each other whereas in communal relationships the relational parties have no expectation of an exchange of benefits but merely provide benefits in an altruistic fashion. An exchange relationship often breaks

- ① This reminds me about an article that said practitioners don't use research.
- ② Wasn't there a news story about a rancher shooting at an oil field worker on his land?
- ③ Heard a student say her boss told her PR was all about 'winning people over'.
- ④ Think this relates to Grunig.

students were asked to
read a portion of the text,
write down connections,
mark the text that sparked the connections

So let's try this with the paragraph on p.4.

Reading Through Connections

How did it feel to read with connections?

Basic data from the in-class exercise:

Students made from 2-8 connections

132 connections were made

Connections, not students were the units of analysis

Phenomenography

Research approach based in the study of learning

Used in educational and information literacy research

Describes qualitatively different, logically related categories of experience


What I was looking for:

What students were connecting to – academic material, pop culture, life, etc.

What I found:

WHAT students connected from indicated **HOW** they were reading

Categories and connections:

SPARK	CONNECTION	READING
Word	Word Association	Surface
Word >>>Text	Context Association	
Text >>> Meaning	Summarization	
Meaning	Analogy Integration Critique	Deep

Reading the words – connecting as word association:

Sundre – this reminds me of billboards advertising this place on the highway

learned about 2-way symmetrical in Intro PR

Thought of a book about women involved with the gold rush I read around grade 7

Reading from the words to the text: Connecting as context association:

Many of my neighbours went through this, oil companies paying to use their land. Sometimes it went well, sometimes not so much

*Movie in the states that talked about people/property being **bought off** then pissed off*

Reminds me of a friend at her work

Reading from the text to the meaning; Connecting through summarization:

Common stereotype of rural Alberta vs. Big Oil

*When the farmers became more established they became discontent with the oil company... **complaints, frustration, dissatisfaction***

The dialogue between community/industry members was explored in ATP/Downstages play "Good fences"

Reading the meaning: Connection as analogy:

Thought of ... developing countries. Diamond mining comes to mind and cell phones and gorillas

when settlers came to North America to find native aboriginals conflict was ignored and left unresolved causing tensions that still exist today

Reminds me of Blackberry – so many complaints, the company ignores and doesn't address problems

I wonder if unhappy citizens were labeled eco-terrorists or foreign interlopers such as those in Keystone

Reading the meaning: Connection as Integration:

Believe PR would have been considerably easier in the 50's when both farmers and oil companies felt they were benefitting

Building positive relationships between oil companies and the community in Alberta is difficult, because issues associated with these relationships are rooted in the past. To get the big picture we must go back several years ago and understand how it all started.

Reading the meaning: Connection as critique:

I believe this background content should be in the intro, since it's important to understand reasoning behind the study.

In a scientific article, I usually expect to see non-biased reporting of results. The quoted 'helped out' and 'difficult times' start to highlight the researcher's opinion

Implications for teaching:

The findings echo Marton's work on deep and surface reading

...**THAT** has implications for what, how, and how long information is retained, and how well it can be re-used

SO... we need to think about helping students understand different ways of reading for different purposes

AND ... we need to be clear about how we want them to read
- respond to **words**, memorize facts, etc.

OR

- respond to **meaning** – remember key concepts, analogies, expand understanding, integrate into knowledge

Thanks!

Hope I've left time for some discussion

Thanks are also due to the *Institute for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, fellow NEXEN SoTL scholars, colleagues (especially those who let me play with the students), and most of all, to the students themselves.