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**Research Article** 

# SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHING THE STRUCTURE OF INFORMATIONAL TEXT FOR HIGH SCHOOL LEVEL IN LINE WITH 2018 LANGUAGE ARTS AND LITERATURE PROGRAM

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#### **ABSTRACT**

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The article will use non-fiction structure to approach informational text, analyzes the requirements to read this genre in The 2018 Language Arts and Literature Program (high school curriculum). To ensure the social function of this genre, some solutions has been proposed, including handouts, lesson plan design and some principles of teaching how to read informational text. These suggestions are based on the structure of informational text for The 2018 Language Arts and Literature Curriculum.

*Keywords:* information text structure; how to read informational text high school; the 2018 Language Arts and Literature Curriculum

#### 1. Introduction

Reading comprehension helps learners acquire knowledge through a combination of performing reading operations, methods and strategies to decipher texts as well as the ability to apply knowledge in solving practical problems. Focusing on teaching reading comprehension for high school students is necessary.

Receiving and transmitting information is a basic need in daily life. Teaching reading information text is a process of educational skills, methods of receiving and coveying information. The re-structuring of the 2006 Language Arts and Literature Curriculum based on competences is a condition to reform teaching methods of this subject so that it can penetrate into learners' lives. From a structural perspective, the genre characteristics will be displayed clearly, making it easier to guide students how to read informational text, contributing to the formation of language and literary competence.

#### 2. Research content

#### 2.1. Definition and the typical structure of informational texts

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#### 2.1.1. Informational text definition

"Informational text is a subset of the larger category of nonfiction. Its primary purpose is to inform the reader about the natural or social world [...] it has specialized language characteristics such as general nouns and timeless verbs that are not common in other genres" (Duke et al., 2003, p.17). Duke emphasized the non-fiction and the social essence of informational writings. Besides that, Surber (2007) focused on the communicative purpose of the genre to define informational text. "Informational texts are a type of non-fiction, factual writing. An informational text is different than other non-fiction writings because its purpose is to share information about our social world" (Surber, 2007).

"Informational text is primarily used to provide information about people, things, or phenomena, to guide the activities performance based on objective data, facts, and scientific knowledge" (Do et al., 2019, p.86). Since the first years of the educational reform initiative in Vietnam, there have been many studies to understand informational text. "The name of informational text refer to the type whose content is directly related to real world. The two most widely used concepts are non-fiction text and informational text" (Nguyen, 2015). Based on some conceptual intersections, this researcher draws the attention of this genre. Reality inevitably creates the popularity of informational text in social life for the purpose of communicating and transmitting information.

Sociologically, informational text have the main function of conveying information about people, things and phenomena (Dickson et al., 1998). An informational text differs from other works of non-fiction because its purpose is to share information about our social world. This is different from other non-fiction that may share a history, reasearch articles, or recount an event. Informational text is not a biography, a procedural text, a joke book, or a text with characters (Duke et al., 2003, p.17).

#### 2.1.2. Typical structure of informational text

The informational text is taxonomically diverse. As well as the function of storing and transmitting information that always exists in any form, we can outline a common structure. "Informational texts use several conventionally or traditionally accepted expository structures that may be employed singly or in combination" (Reutzel, 2016, p.305). The informational text reader is regulated within a framework created by the author. This genre depends on the level of "personalization" or "collectivization" of the recipient.

"Text structure is the arrangement of ideas and the relationships between and among the ideas" (Armbruster, 2004, p.48). Informational text also have non-fiction structural characteristics - consisting of five elements: *Description*; *Cause/ Effect*; *Compare/ Contrast*; *Problem/ Solution*, and *Sequence* (Meyer, 1985), can be outlined as follows:

*Table 1. Describe the elements of characteristic informational text structure* (Meyer, 1985)

Elements	Features	Navigation
Description	<ul><li>General or detail description of the event informed in the text;</li><li>Simulate/ narrate the truth for the about the problem being talked</li></ul>	usually placed after the
Cause/ Effect	<ul><li>Present cause and effect relation-ships between events;</li><li>Explain the reason for perfor-ming the information task</li></ul>	Presenting reason part, placed before/ after description (pre-mise/ result/ consequence)
Compare/ Contrast	Specifically interpreting key infor-mation by some deep text analysis operations such as analysis, com-parison, comparison, etc.	tables, images, matching ope-
Problem/ Solution	State a specific problem or a solu-tion for the question (directed at the intended audi-ence only)	
Sequence	Setting between sections of infor-mational text, causing sections to be presented sequentially)	Linking words, indicating time words, place, place, etc. (be-longing to text syntax)

Besides, by considering some subtypes of informational text, there are five important characteristic factors forming the general structure (as above). Based on these factors one can also identify the subtypes of informational text. Not all types of informational text fully represent the non-fiction text structure. Depending on the purpose, context, and object of communication, the structure of the informational text flexibly changes.

#### 2.1.3. Teaching reading informational texts using genre structure

Because of non-fiction characteristics as well as the function of storing and providing information, this genre is not difficult for teaching structured reading (Meyer, 1985). Moreover, the new curriculum also focuses on the structure and mode of expression of the written text instead of the other genres' characteristics (Tables 3, 4). Based on non-fiction texts, Teresa et al. (2003) outlined the relationship between the structural components of informational text used in teaching integrated reading - writing, as follows:

Text pattern	Definition	Key words	Map/ Webs
Description	Descriptive detais about characteristics, actions, etc.	descriptive, adjective words like: on, over, beyond, within, etc.	70,00
Problem/ Solution	Sets up a problem and its solution	propose, conclude, a solution, the reason for, the problem or question	
Sequence/ Time/ Order Chrono- logical	Linking words, Timeless verbs to gives information in order of occurrences	first, second, before, after, finally, then, next, earlier, etc.	O+O+O+O
Compare/ Contrast	or more items to	while, yet, but, rather, most, same, either, as well as, like/ unlike, as opposed to, etc.	
Cause/ Effect	Give reason/ explanation for happening	because, since, if/then, due to, as a result, for this reason, on account of consequently, etc.	

**Table 2.** Describe the structural elements of informational texts in relation to their function (Teresa et al., 2003)

The grid is a short cut designed to connect: (1) Resources and ideas are organized and therefore easily accessed; (2) The necessary links are made between informational structures, webs and informational text excerpts so that all the connections among these pieces of information are explicitly made. Teachers can add the titles to guide students use these structures and personalized grid (Teresa T. et al., 2003).

#### 2.2. Teaching reading informational text for high school level

#### 2.2.1. Understanding problems and teaching consequences

In the new curriculum, informational text exist as part of practical text. "Practical text is a type of text that mentions, discusses, explains, narrates, describes, evaluates... about issues and phenomena that are close and urgent to human life and the community" (MOET, 2006, p.94). Notably, the practical text in the new curriculum is not a literary genre, nor is it only the type of written form but refers to the functional and updated

features. This easily leads to a misconception that practical text can use in any genre<sup>(1)</sup>. Because of its large capacity, teaching and learning practical text may face many difficulties (in both reception and creation). From the understanding of practical text, it can be seen that teaching how to read practical text can be confusing when providing information and discussing are both attributes of this type of text (Le & Nguyen, 2016). The 2006 curriculum does not clearly distinguish between reception and creation activities. Meanwhile, texts with informational purposes are not formally named by term. In the 2006 Program, the informational feature is recognized, the creation teaching for informational purposes is not specific and defined by a satisfactory position.

#### 2.2.2. Informational text corpus and the problems of teaching reading text structure

We found that the proportion of informational text in the 2006 curriculum is low at each level (Grade 10: 12,5%-5/40 texts; Grade 11: 4,3%-2/47 texts; Grade 12: 8,1%-3/37 texts). Teaching reading these texts is mainly to disseminate literary and author knowledge. The amount of academic knowledge serves as the foundation for learners to apply for the next lesson. It can be concluded from the view of the 2006 curriculum that informational text were implicitly recognized, but not used for teaching and developing competence. Based on the structural form, we suppose that most corpus in the 2006 curri-culum are not suitable for competence-based teaching. The informational text composition can be reduced to suit the situation or conditions of teaching and learning process (Duke et al., 2004). As a solution, it is necessary to have a clear classification between the two types, to stabilize the structure for the written text on the principle of inheriting the current curriculum requirement.

## 2.3. Foundation for teaching reading informational text structure for high school level to meet the 2018 curriculum

#### 2.3.1. The requirements of reading informational text in the new curriculum

Based on the requirements for text selection and the learning outcomes in reading informational text in the new curriculum, we found that the implementation of teaching informational text structure activities is feasible and well-established. Teaching reading informational text for high school students has the following outcomes:

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<sup>(1)</sup> In some cases, learners even mention the literary feature of the modern text. Although this is not a necessary requirement for this genre (just halting at text type), it is an important requirement in order to convey deeply and poignantly to the reader an issue that the practical text deals with.

**Table 3.** Requirements for learning informational texts in the new curriculum

Reading Requirements	Requirement's content	Matching Features
Content	Be able to infer and analyze the relationships bet-ween <i>details</i> , <i>data</i> and their role	Description
Content reading	Analyze and evaluate <i>the topic</i> , <i>basic information</i> of the text, how to put <i>the title</i> ; recognize, evaluate <i>the purpose</i> , <i>attitude</i> and <i>writer's viewpoint</i>	Description/ Solution
	Recognize the <i>general informational types</i> : expla-nations incorporating one or more elements	Description
	Recognize the layout, coherence of the text, how the data, details are presented, evaluate their effectiveness; assess the text appropriateness	Description; Problem/ Solution
Form Reading	Recognize, analyze and evaluate the combination of linguistic and non-verbal communication means	Sequence
	Analyze and evaluate <i>the way</i> the news is reported and the <i>writer's viewpoint</i> in a news article	Description
	Recognize and evaluate the novelty, reliability of data and information in the text	Compare/ Contrast
	State <i>the meaning</i> or <i>the impact</i> of the informational text read on-self	Cause/ Effect
Associate,	Express agreement attitude towards the content or the writer's viewpoint and give explaination	Compare/ Contrast
compare, connect	Compare the expressive effect using <i>linguistics</i> and <i>non-verbal communication elements</i>	Sequence
	Evaluate and critique the text based on reader's ex-perience and viewpoint	Compare/ Contrast

The suggestions list in the 2018 curriculum does not introduce specific informational text names, yet lists the topics to choose. Compared to the 2006 curriculum, the informa-tional text in the new curriculum has a significant improvement in position, as regards the non-fiction characteristics and the purpose of providing information.

## 2.3.2. Other principles as required in the new curriculum

It is necessary to discuss the problems of teaching reading in relation to teaching writing, speaking and listening. Teaching reading comprehension of an information text based on its formal structure should be recognized by the interaction with other teaching activities, specifically the following requirements:

**Table 4.** Requirements for learning writing – speaking and listening informational texts in the new curriculum

Requirements	Requirement's content		
	Be able to write <i>regulations</i> or <i>guidelines</i> in public.		
Writing	Write a report or research project on a natural or social problem, using quotations, diagrams, explanations, illustrations, citations, footnotes and know how to present references		
	Write <i>a narrative</i> that incorporates one or more elements such as des-cription, narrative, expression, and argument		
	Know how to introduce, evaluate the content and art of literary work		
Speaking	Know how to recommend a work of art according to personal choice		
& Listening	Present a report of a project assignment or research result on an interest; know how to use a combination of linguistics and non-verbal communications to make the clearly and attractive presentation		

Reading informational text structure supports learners to visualize the standard structure, as well as knowing how to create an information text. The gap between informational text activities has been narrowed, demonstrating the integrated view in the new curriculum. This is a basis for teaching reading informational text structure. Teaching informational text based on genre structure is essential and has practical educational value.

# 2.4. Proposals on teaching reading information text for high school students with the new curriculum

#### 2.4.1. Designing information sheet based on a structural model

We designed the informational text structure based on three principles: (1) The scientific structure of the informational text; (2) The requirements for learning informational text in the new curriculum; (3) The acquisition from the orientation of teaching reading to understand the structure of informational text in the other curriculum of some countries. These templates can be used in both competence-based teaching of reception and creation of informational text.

Table 5. Information sheet design based on structural model

Discription:	Detail - Data - Attitude F	Relation
Detail 1:	Main data:	Detail n:
Attitude:		Attitude:

❖ Sequence:  Steps - Cont	ent Relation		
Step 1:	art 1:		
Step 2:	Topic:		
Step n:	art n:		
Laguage 1	Materials		
Language	Non-verbal Communication		
Target:	Target:		
Positon:	Positon:		
Effect:	Effect:		
Differences:  Event 1 Event 2  Differences:			
❖ Problem/ Solution:			
Problem  Event 1:  Solution:  Event 2:  Event n:			
Reader's viewpoint:			
❖ Cause/ Effect:	[		
Cause: Combo 1 Combo 2	Combo n  Point(s):  Goal(s):		

These informational templates are geared towards teacher preparation and student learning. "Teachers organize for students to read informational text according to characteristics based on two requirements: reading towards the object and reading towards the subject" (Do, 2019, p.95). Here are teacher guidelines for reading informational text from structural elements:

#### - About the informational text form:

+ General requirements: (1) Read the text title, predict the text content, pay attention to bold words or phrases, framed parts from non-verbal communication; (2) Generalize and find out the document organization

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Part	Elements	Teacher Instruction	
	Step	Teachers guide students to find out the manipulations author uses to organize information	
	Part	Teacher guides students to link the title, the manipu-lations author uses for the title/ the content of the parts contained in the text	
Sequence	Topic	Teacher guides students to generalize text topic from the information author presented	
	Language	Teacher guides students to identify and explain language problems in the text	
	Non-verbal communication	Teachers inspire students to connect non-verbal elements with the text content and any other factors that highlight the information (such as images, captions, etc.)	

#### - About the informational text content:

+ General requirements: (1) Explain the main information; compare the text presentation with other texts/ media; (2) Identify and memorize new words; read the textbook annotations about those words meaning, look up the dictionary.

+ Specific requirements:

Part	Elements	Teacher Instruction	
	Detail	Teacher guides students to read slowly, carefully, highlighting the main ideas; interpret/ restate the main information in their own language	
Discription Attitude Teachers guide students to determine author's at presentation of details		Teachers guide students to determine author's attitude through the presentation of details	
_	Main data	Teacher guides students to outline or present the main information using mind map	

Event Compare/		Teacher guides students to based on the author's pre-sentation, identify the comparative content purposes; or relate to the actual situation
Contrast	Difference/ Similarity	Teacher guides students to make criteria on author's idea between comparative contents presented; or relate the information content to the actual situation
Problem/ Solution	Problem/ Solution	Teacher guides students to identify problem/ solution author mentioned; relate to real life
	Event	Teacher guides students to find out the facts related to solution/problem author presented
Cause/ Effect	Cause/ Effect	Teacher guides students to identify the cause/ effect author mentioned; relate that cause/ effect to real life
	Goal	Teacher guides students to identify the author's infor-mation purpose by presenting the cause/ effect

## 2.4.2. Proposed principles for teaching reading informational text structure

To carry out teaching informational text according to the genre structure, and suggest further research directions for related works, we propose three principles:

- *Principle 1:* Ensuring the implementation of teaching reading informational text structure for high school level based on the requirements of new curriculum.
- *Principle 2:* Ensuring the ability to combine active teaching methods/techniques flexibly to differentiate learners' ability to read and understand the texts' structure.
- *Principle 3:* Ensuring the teacher's role in helping high school students understand informational text structure.

From the texts structure components, combined with the principles of teaching informational text, we propose a design of teaching information text (organization period):

**Table 6.** Design of teaching information text (organization period)

Requirements for student	Suggested activities for teacher and student
I. WARM-UP ACTIVITY	
Mobilize background knowledge	Teachers mobilize background knowledge, stimulate children interest before starting the lesson
II. KNOWLEDGE FORMATION A	CTIVITIES
Activity 1. Learning the information	al text form
<ul> <li>Understand the title of the text</li> <li>Identify the informational object through the title</li> <li>Recognize the layout of the text</li> <li>State the main idea of each text</li> </ul>	Conversation, suggestion + Individual/ Teamwork Teacher let students work individually/ in group: - The text title introduces which object? With that title, what information will the text provide to reader? - How many parts can be divided in the text? - What is the main content of each section?

- and explain them
- Identify non-verbal of rhetorical words and explain those meaning

#### - Identify difficult words, new words Conversation, suggestion + Individual work

- Teacher asks students to underline difficult words, new
- devices used in the text and state their Teacher asks students to list words according to classification and analyze the evocative value

#### Activity 2. Learning the informational text content

#### Activity 2.1. Learning discription element

- tion of the text
- in-formation

## - Identify the main/ basic informa- Dialogue, Suggestion + Puzzle + Diagram

The teacher asks students to skim the text:

- Summarize text/ topic based on key What order does the text present the problem?
  - Summarize the main content

## State the author's attitude towards the Dialogue, suggestive problem posed in the text

- What attitude/ emotion does the author express to-wards the problem posed in the text?
- How is that attitude/ emotion shown?

#### Activity 2.2. Learning compare/contrast element

- purposes in the text
- bet-ween comparative contents

#### - Identify the content for compa-rison Conversation, suggestion + Individual work

- Does the author use comparison?
- State the similarities/ differences List the similarities and differences (by criteria)

#### Activity 2.3. Learning problem/ solution element

- author mentioned in the text
- through problem/ solution
- Point out the problem/ solution Problem solving teaching + Playing specialist role
- Identify the problem: Students analyze the situation that - Generalize the author's point the author poses; be aware of the problem
  - Find solutions: Students in specialist role (authors) find ways (in text) to solve problems
  - Decide: Students discuss, analyze the feasibility and effectiveness of the solutions presented by the author, and compare them with their own solutions

#### Activity 2.4. Learning cause/ effect element

- Identify the causes/ effects of the **Teaching by situation** problem mentioned by the author
- effect of the problem/ solution

- Preparation: Teacher suggests solutions and prepares - Identify the author's information documents and knowledge bases for students
- purpose by presenting the cause/ Organization: Students identify causes/ effects for the situation, solve the situation
  - Implementation: Students create learning products, report the results of solving situations

#### Activity 3. Evaluating the informational text form and content

#### About form:

- Evaluate the effectiveness of text Working content of the inner circle: presentation
- State the role of non-verbal com- presentation to the reader's perception munication used in the text

#### Fishbowl technique:

- + In terms of form: Evaluate the effectiveness of text
- + About the content: Evaluate the information mani-

About content:

- Identify the text main structure
- pulation, presentation of the text
- the same topic

pulation and presentation; compare the presentation of this text with other texts on the same topic

- Evaluate the information mani- Working content of the outer circle:
- + Students in the outer circle group can take turns to inner - Compare the presentation of this group and contributing ideas to the discussion
- informational text with other texts on + Teacher needs to prepare questions for observers to comment and evaluate the inner discussion

#### III. PRACTISE ACTIVITY

read texts with the same topic

Draw out how to read textual texts Teacher gives students a sample text, or students find an according to its structure; Actively informational text with the same topic; Based on what has been learned, analyze the structure

#### IV. APPLY ACTIVITY

Students apply the information of the **Problem detecting and solving teaching** learning and real life

- text to solve some situations in Identify the problem: Students analyze the situation; be aware of the problem, present the problem
  - Decision: Students re-present the whole from stating the problem to the solution; Discuss and analyze the feasibility, effectiveness of the solutions, and compare them with their own solutions
  - In-depth solutions: Find out the possibilities of the results; Propose related problems by analogy, generalization, inversion... and solving if possible

#### V. EXPAND ACTIVITY

- reading skills
- Re-present the informational text students to practice reading skills topic and content in other forms

#### - Expand reading range and practice Individual/ Teamwork + Visualization

- Teachers can assign some similar informational texts to
- The teacher asks students to re-present the topic and content of the informational text in other forms

#### 3. Conclusion

The 2018 Language Arts and Literature Curriculum re-positions the informational text, aiming to foster practical social values for learners. Looking at informational text from a structural perspective helps teachers able to address the curriculums' requirements. However, our study is still limited in teaching integration and only discusses some theoretical issues of this topic. Further studies can be focused on teaching integrated informational text according to genre characteristics (corresponding to the informational text structure, the organization plan) and with an experimental study. We can see that the essence of these proposals is how to connect with the new curriculum holistically, increasing the level of reading comprehension informational text. Teaching reading based on text structure helps students identify the standard structure of informational text, thereby applying their understanding to other learning activities related to this genre. In general, teaching reading informational text for high school students lacks outstanding achievements. Implementing the 2018 Language Arts and Literature Curriculum, teaching this genre has educationnal significance. Research on teaching reading informational text structure can supplement the theoretical basis for practical shortcomings, contribute to the changing of teaching Literature conception.

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## MỘT SỐ ĐỀ XUẤT DẠY HỌC CẦU TRÚC VĂN BẢN THÔNG TIN BẬC TRUNG HỌC PHỔ THÔNG ĐÁP ỨNG CHƯƠNG TRÌNH NGỮ VĂN 2018 Lý Trần A Khương

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#### TÓM TẮT

Bài viết tiếp cận văn bản thông tin từ góc độ cấu trúc của một văn bản phi hư cấu; qua đó, phân tích yêu cầu đọc hiểu loại văn bản này ở bậc trung học phổ thông trong Chương trình Ngữ văn 2018. Nhằm đảm bảo hành chức xã hội của loại văn bản, một số biện pháp đã được đề xuất như: các thiết kế phần ghi bài văn bản thông tin, mẫu kế hoạch dạy học đọc hiểu văn bản thông tin và các nguyên tắc dạy đọc hiểu văn bản thông tin. Các biện pháp đều được xây dựng trên cơ sở dạy học văn bản thông tin theo đặc trưng thể loại – từ góc độ cấu trúc văn bản, đáp ứng các yêu cầu về đọc hiểu văn bản thông tin ở Chương trình Ngữ văn 2018 – bậc trung học phổ thông.

*Từ khóa:* cấu trúc của văn bản thông tin; biện pháp dạy - học đọc hiểu văn bản thông tin theo cấu trúc; bậc trung học phổ thông; Chương trình Ngữ văn 2018