

Fostering Historical Thinking through Model Annotations (Poster)

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Abstract

Reading and interpreting a text requires more than the technical ability to decode written language, and grasp its literal meaning (Kintsch and Dijk 1978). Texts are written within particular genres that represent the values and modes of reasoning typical of a particular field (Bazerman and Prior 2003). Such disciplinary texts reflect multiple levels of meaning, some of which are implicit and rely on readers' familiarity with disciplinary conventions and with other texts. Experts in different disciplines read texts in their area of expertise in specialized and distinct ways in accordance with the conventions of their field (Shanahan, Shanahan et al. 2011). Therefore, interpreting a text deeply requires familiarity with disciplinary conventions and with a rich corpus of texts in the field. Initiates into a discipline, such as undergraduate students, have neither; hence, they are limited in their ability to glean deep meaningful disciplinary knowledge from disciplinary texts (Moje 2007, Shanahan and Shanahan 2012). One way to scaffold learners as they learn the conventions of the field while being introduced to disciplinary texts is to annotate the texts with the types of interpretive moves and mental notes that experts in the field might make while reading these texts. According to this, historical reasoning is not intuitive as well and we examined whether reading annotated texts could bridge the differences between novices and experts. The annotations reflect facets of historians' reading, such as corroboration, sourcing, contextualizing and close reading (Reisman, 2012; Wineburg, 1991, 2001; Wineburg et al., 2014).

102 education majors were randomly assigned to three conditions of training texts (a set of two primary sources): annotated, labeled annotations denoting the historical thinking facet contained in the annotation, and unannotated (control). Participants responded to an essay question and to multiple-choice questions. These questions were graded on a scale of 0-4, based on the scale of grading historical reasoning essays developed by Monte-Sano & De La Paz (2012). A transfer task consisted of the same procedure with all three conditions receiving unannotated texts. Both annotation groups outperformed the control group on the essay, but not the multiple-choice questions. Results suggest that even brief exposure to annotations can foster the take up of historians' reading strategies.

Keywords: Digital annotations, Model annotations, Primary sources, Historical thinking.

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*Proceedings of the 12th Chais Conference for the Study of Innovation and Learning Technologies:
Learning in the Technological Era*

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