

## A Study on the effect of underlining during Reading

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**Abstract:** *The present study has been attempted to assess the effect of underlining during reading/study on retention. For this purpose, a sample of 100 Postgraduate students have been selected and equally divided into two groups Experimental and Controlled. Thus each group containing 50 students. A simple passage of 800 words was distributed in both groups. One group (Experimental group) was instructed to read the given passage and also to underline any portion of the passage if they feel important for retention. Whereas, other group (Controlled group) was instructed to only read the passage. After then, they were asked 10 objective questions based on the given passage. If Experimental group fared better than Controlled group then it must be due to Underlining.*

**Key Words:** *Underlining, Reading, Study, Retention.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The topic is related to the improvements of learning through mathemagenic activities and a lot of research has been done in this area of visual cuing as a learning enhancement technique. However, this paper is devoted to assess the effect of underlining during reading.

### 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE:

Matthews (1938) reported no significant difference on two comprehension measures in his studies undertaken to assess the effectiveness of underlining of important concepts and ideas [1].

But Cashen & Leicht (1970) found their experimental group scored significantly higher on the criterion test than the controlled group did [2]. They studied a group of college freshmen using passages underlined by the examiners to determine if reading underlined passage facilitates comprehension. Klare, Mabry and Gustafson (1955) also found positive effect of underlining on immediate recall more recently [3]. Thomas R. Schnell & Daniel J. Rocchio undertaken a study in which four groups were used. They also found that the groups which did their own underlining scored significantly higher than the instructor-underlined group on immediate recall. Further, they had found a significant effect of underlining on the retention and comprehension of study material in their study [4]. Recently, similar result was reported by John Dunlosky, Katherine A Rawson, Elizabeth J Marsh, Mitchell J Nathan, and Daniel T Willingham (2013) in their review published in Psychological Science in the Public Interest [5].

However, Fowler and Barker (1974 Exp 1) had not found any positive effect of underlining in their study [6]. Similar result had been reported by Hoon, 1974, Idstein & Jenkins, 1972: Stordahl & Christensen, 1956 [7].

### 3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM:

The author of this paper after examining the existing work in underlining during reading, designed a study to assess the effect of underlining during reading on retention.

### 4. PROCEDURE:

The study examined a sample of the postgraduate students, which was divided into two groups Experimental and Controlled for experimental purposes. Experimental group was asked to read the passage and also underline any part of the same if they found that part important enough for retention. the experimental passage if any part they think important. Whereas, controlled group was asked only to read the given passage.

Immediately following their completion of reading of the Passage, each student returned the passage to the examiner and a break of about 10 minutes was given in which they were engaged in some informal conversation. Then, a 10 item multiple choice test over the passage was given to each of them and collected when answered or attempted.

The instruments used were a passage of 800 word on "Osho" - a spiritual thinker, and a 10 item multiple choice test developed thereupon. The item discrimination of the test items was significant at 0.5 and 0.1 level. Difficulty level of the test items was in the range of 0.23 to 0.86.

The sample population consisted of 100 post graduate student of PG department of Vinoba Bhawe University, Hazaribag, Jharkhand. Before the starting of Experiment, the students were assessed on reading and comprehension abilities and found to be equal in both terms.

## **5. RESULT:**

Data collected in the experiment were analyzed using appropriate statistical tools. The group which underlined during the reading scored significantly higher (at the level of points 0.5) on the criterion test than the control group who had read without underlining.

## **6. SUMMARY & CONCLUSION:**

Based on the data gathered in this experiment plus data found in the existing literature on underlining, it suggests that the use of underlining during reading results in significant improvement in comprehension and retention of the study material.

Now, the very natural question arises in the mind is how and why does this underlining help improve the retention? To answer this question or to explain such finding isolation effect may be referred to which is a basic cognitive phenomenon whereby a semantically or phonologically unique item in a list is much better remembered than its less distinctive counterparts. For example, if students are studying a list of categorically un-related words (eg 'Desk,' 'Bed', 'Cow') is presented, the students will later be more likely to recall the word 'Cow' than they would if it had been studied in a list of categorically related words (eg 'Goat', 'Pig', 'Horse', 'Chicken', 'Cow'). The analogy to highlighting is that a highlighted, underlined or capitalized sentence or word will POP OUT of the text in the same way that the word "Cow" would if it were isolated in a list of words for types of furniture. Consistent with this expectation, a number of studies have shown that students are more likely to remember things that are highlighted or underlined in the text.

But my explanation of this effect is active participation of the student in form of the act of underlining because students score differed significantly also on nature of underlining. In other words, students who underlined themselves scored significantly higher than the students who only read the instructor-underlined passage (refer to the study of Thomas and Daniel at serial number 04 mentioned above).

## **7. RECOMMENDATION:**

Having discussed the effect of underlining on retention during reading in earlier studies in general and in present study in particular, it is strongly recommended to underline the matter which is considered important for retention. In other words, if someone desires to improve his/her memory then he/she must underline the important part of the matter during reading.

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