COLLABORATIVE LEARNING: A REMEDIAL TOOL FOR READING COMPREHENSION, VOCABULARY DEVELOPMENT AND GRAMMAR COMPETENCIES ENHANCEMENT

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Abstract - Each student is a potential collaborator in improving English instruction – specifically, on reading comprehension, vocabulary development, and grammar competencies. This study investigated the effectiveness of collaborative teaching in an English 11 class composed of (30) students who initially showed marked deficiencies in the components mentioned. Only three (3) students made the cut off score in a 150-item Pre-Test. As the professor/researcher went through the oral remediation on these areas, the students were observed to be passive, complacent and a bit overwhelmed with all the formal rules and processes, despite examples and illustrations. To address, this problem, small-group discussions with peer leaders as facilitators were formed. With the general instructions and guidelines given, the students were on their own – with only themselves consulting each other. The professor, a virtual "outsider", served as consultant and overall facilitator. After an 18-hour session of collaborative peer interactions using parallel teacher-made test materials, a Post-Test was conducted, the result of which showed a significant increase in the mean score with 26 passers out of 30. The students were likewise observed to be more cooperative and participative. A classroom using collaborative teaching like this class concretizes the Chinese proverb "Tell Me and I'll forget, Show Me and I'll Remember, and Involve Me and I'll Learn."

Keywords - Collaborative learning, small-group discussion, peer leader, facilitator

INTRODUCTION

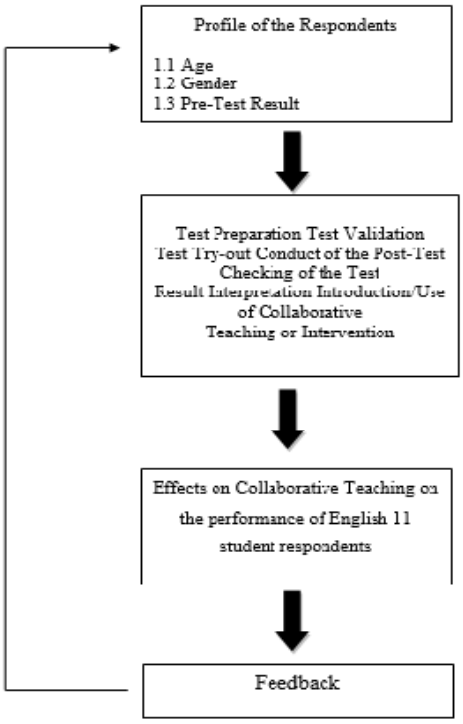
It is a common observation among educators that our students are generally weak in English proficiency-specifically, on reading comprehension, vocabulary usage, and grammar use/usage. Many reasons are posited as to why there is a dramatic decline in English knowledge and practice not only among students but also among graduates and professionals.

A study, "Improving Reading Comprehension through Vocabulary" (Beng, Cressman, Pfang, 1998) focused on using vocabulary to improve reading comprehension. They conducted the use of games and other study methods to improve vocabulary knowledge. In their study, (Best, Rowe, Ozura, and McNemora, 2005), they found out that the students lack the specific reading techniques and strategies to generate inferences that aid in the understanding of science texts.

This study focuses on the English proficiency of students in an English 11 class as a baseline data for the employment of collaborative teaching as an intervention to enhance reading comprehension, vocabulary development and grammar competencies. Specifically, the study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What is the reading comprehension of an English 11 class as respondents?
2. What is the extent of their vocabulary knowledge and use?
3. What is their grammar competency?
4. What is the English proficiency of the English 11 class as respondents after using collaborative teaching as an intervention scheme?

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



Review of Related Literature

It is widely believed that students, graduates, and professionals who have excellent English proficiency skills - be it oral or written, are perceived to have a definite cutting edge. Reading proficiency is

fundamentally an avenue, a means to explore other macro skills. Educators and experts come up with approaches and methods best suited for reading success and produce the best results (De Moulin and Loye, 1999, p. 43). This hypothesis was collaborated by (Deffy, et al., 2003) when they said that "once children are taught by these methods, the instructor will be able to identify the method of reading instruction the child needs for greater success. And true enough, it is generally observed that the best readers turn out good speakers and most especially good writers because of the wide array of concepts, information and ideas that they have accumulated through their reading encounters

Closely tied up with learner's reading ability is vocabulary development in students. The usual complain is students' lack of appropriate vocabulary, completely clueless as to what word/s to use. Hence, English proficiency is derailed if not completely affected. Again, language experts focused their attention on learners' vocabulary knowledge. As cited in Biemiller (2003), Haet and Risely reported that children of working chaos parents (who interact with their children as much as parents of advantaged families) have vocabulary levels comparable to those from advantaged families. Author Carl B. Smith states, "Most educators think of vocabulary as one skill taught in many different ways. However, there are many different levels of vocabulary proficiency that a student must work through. To expand or increase student's vocabulary, there are many teaching methods to use and just like in teaching reading, there is not one perfect method to use. Smith (2003) identifies three factors that affect the methods of teaching vocabulary as:
Active processing: when students are doing something with a word more than just parroting the definition - they are more likely to remember that word.Different contexts: we can learn much about word's meaning through different contexts in which it is used. And the more different contexts we encounter with that word, the more flexible we become with that word and its meaning and the more likely it is that we will remember it.
Using several techniques for reviewing the word instead of only one; Just as learners acquire vocabulary more readily through encountering words in varying contexts, varying kinds, of review activities apparently enhance vocabulary development. Each review reveals a word and its meaning in a different way, offering its own perspective on the word and its meaning.In the article Drama Activities that Promote and Extend Your Students' Vocabulary Proficiency the authors identified ideas to help students learn and practice vocabulary. "Using drama activities to teach target vocabulary words can be an effective and motivating instructional practice for all students, especially those with learning problems" (Albert & Foil, 2003)

Grammar has likewise been observed as the learners' low point. There are two (2) general schools of thought on this - either one goes through the lapses and errors based on rules while the other is focused more on the message, a clearly understood message but not strict on grammar.

There is still a great debate among educators as to accuracy and fluency – would it be Chomsky or Hymes? Would it be formal or informal?In his study on "English Grammar Proficiency of First Year Students in the College of Education of three HEIs in Metro Manila," (Garcia, C., 2012) he found out that the general level of proficiency of the respondents for the three (3) HEIs in terms of grammar skills (a) asking questions (b) responding to questions (c) combining sentences (d) expanding sentences is Fairly Proficient

What is collaborative learning?
Collaborative learning is based on the view that knowledge is a social construct. Collaborative activities are most often based on four principles:
The learner or student is the primary focus of instruction,Interaction and "doing" are of primary importance.Working in groups is an important mode of learning. Structured approaches to developing solutions to real-world problems should be incorporated into learning.

Collaborative learning can occur peer-to-peer or in larger groups. Peer learning, or peer instruction, is a type of collaborative learning that involves students working in pairs or small groups to discuss concepts, or find solutions to problems. This often occurs in a class session after students are introduced to course material through readings or videos before class, and/or through instructor lectures. Similar to the idea that two or three heads are better than one, many instructors have found that through peer instruction, students teach each other by addressing misunderstandings and clarifying misconceptions.

Group work or collaborative learning can take a variety of forms, such as quick, active learning activities in class or more involved group projects that span the course of a semester.

What is the impact of collaborative learning or group work?
Research shows that educational experiences that are active, social, contextual, engaging, and student-owned lead to deeper learning. The benefits of collaborative learning include:
Development of higher-level thinking, oral communication, self-management, and leadership skills.
Promotion of student-faculty interaction.

Increase in student retention, self-esteem, and responsibility. Exposure to and an increase in understanding of diverse perspectives. Preparation for real life social and employment situations.
What are some examples of collaborative learning or group work activities?

Stump your partner
Students take a minute to create a challenging question based on the lecture content up to thatpoint
Students pose the question to the person sitting next to them.

To take this activity a step further, ask students to write down their questions and hand them in. These questions can be used to create tests or exams. They can also be reviewed to gauge student understanding.
Think-pair-share/ Write-pair-share

The instructor poses a question that demands analysis, evaluation, or synthesis.

Students take a few minutes to think through an appropriate response.

Students turn to a partner (or small groups) and share their responses. Take this a step further by asking students to find someone who arrived at an answer different from their own and convince their partner to change their mind.

Student responses are shared within larger teams or with the entire class during a follow-up discussion.

Catch-up
Stop at a transition point in your lecture.
Have students turn to a partner or work in small groups to compare notes and ask clarifying questions.
After a few minutes, open the floor to a few questions.

Fishbowl debate

Ask students to sit in groups of three.
Assign roles. For example, the person on left takes one position on a topic for debate, the person on right takes the opposite position, and the person in the middle takes notes and decides which side is the most convincing and provides an argument for his or her choice.

Debrief by calling on a few groups to summarize their discussions.

Case study
Create four to five case studies of similar difficulty.
Have students work in groups of four or five to work through and analyze their case study,
Provide 10-15 minutes (or adequate time to work through the cases).
Walk around and address any questions.
Call on groups randomly and ask that students share their analysis. Continue until each case study has been addressed.

Team-based learning (adapted from L.K. Michaelsen in Davis, 2009. p.215)
Start a course unit by giving students some tasks to complete, such as reading or lab assignments. Consider assigning these to be completed before class.
Check students' comprehension of the material with a quick multiple-choice quiz. Have students submit their answers.

Assign students to groups and have them review their answers with group members to reach consensus. Have each group submit one answered.

Record both the individual student assessment scores and the final group assessment score (both of which are used toward each student's course grade).
Deliver a lecture that specially targets any misconceptions or gaps in knowledge the assessments reveal.

Give groups a challenging assignment, such as solving a problem or applying a theory to a real world situation.

Group problem-solving

There are many instructional strategies that involve students working together to solve a problem, including inquiry based learning, authentic learning, and discovery learning. While they each have their own unique characteristics, they all fundamentally involve:

Presenting students with a problem.
Providing some structure or guidance toward solving the problem. Note, however, that they are all student-centered activities in which the instructor may have a very minimal role. Reaching a final outcome or solution.

Problem-Based Learning is a collaborative, student-centered approach to learning which students learn about a subject by working in groups to solve an open-ended problem.
For more involved projects that take place over a longer period of time and for which students
will be graded, plan each stage of the group work.
How will groups be formed? Allowing students to form their own groups will likely result in uneven groupings. If possible, arrange groups by skills and/or backgrounds. For example, ask students to rate their comfort/ability level on a number of skills (research, background knowledge of course topics, work experience, etc.) and try to arrange groups that include “experts" in different areas. Another possibility is to do a preliminary assessment, and then

based on the results, purposefully create groups that blend abilities.

This generally involves a 3-step process:
Introduce the task.
Provide students with enough time to engage with the task.
Debrief. This process can be as short as 5 minutes,
Here are some strategies to help ensure productive group dynamics:

Provide opportunities for students to develop rapport and group cohesion.Give students time to create a group work.Have students establish ground rules. Assign roles to members of each group and change the roles periodically. For example, one student can be the coordinator, another is the note-taker, another is the summarizer, and another the planner of next steps.Allow students to rate each other's quality and quantity of contributions

What are some general strategies to keep in mind when incorporating group work?

Introduce group work early in the semester to set clear student expectations. Plan for each stage of group work. Carefully explain to your students how groups will operate and how students will be graded. Help students develop the skills they need to succeed in doing group activities, such as using team-building exercises or introducing self-reflection techniques.Establish ground rules for participation and contributions.Consider using written contracts. contributions. Incorporate self and peer assessments for group members to evaluate their own and others.

METHOD

The researcher used the descriptive method in this study. The purpose is to find out there is difference in the performances of the respondents in their pre-test and post-test.

The target respondents of this study were 30 students enrolled in the subject English 11 for the second semester of the year 2014-2015. The researcher used convenience sampling.

Statistical Treatment of Data

1. Frequency Count and Percentage

$$P = \frac{F}{N} * 100$$

Where:
P= Percentage
F= Frequency
N= Total number of respondents

2. Arithmetic Mean

$$\bar{x} = \frac{\Sigma X}{\Sigma N}$$

Where:
$\bar{x}$ = Mean Value
ΣX = Scores
N = No. of Respondents

3. Standard Deviation

$$S^2 = \frac{\Sigma(x-\bar{x})2}{N-1}$$

$$s = \sqrt{\Sigma \frac{(x-\bar{x})2}{N-1}}$$

Where:
S2 = Variance
S = Standard Deviation

4. T-test

$$t = \frac{X-\mu}{s}\sqrt{N}$$

Where:
T = T-test value
μ= Mean

Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation of Data

This chapter deals with the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of data showing the results of study in the reading comprehension, vocabulary development and grammar competencies enhancement of the respondents. The data are presented in statistical table, whichwere analyzed and interpreted beforehand.

Table 1
Respondents' Profile according to Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	15	50
Female	15	50
Total	30	100%

Table 1 shows the population of the respondents enrolled in English 11 class – second semester having a total frequency of 30; 15 males and 15 females.

Table 2
Respondents' Profile according to Age

Age	Frequency	Percentage
24-25	1	3
22-23	4	13.33
20-21	5	16.66
18-19	13	43.33
16-17	7	23.33
Total	30	100%

Table 2 shows the profile of the respondents in terms of age wherein students' age ranges from 18-19 dominated the population with a frequency of 13 followed by the students whose age ranges from 16-17 with a frequency of 7; 20-21 ages with a frequency

of 5; 22-23 having a frequency of 4; and 24-25 with a frequency of 1.

Table 3
Respondents' Results in the Pre-test and Post-test in Reading Comprehension

Reading	Mean Value	Standard Deviation	Levels of Significance
Pre-test	19.77	0.04	Significant Difference
Post-test	28.37	11.19	Significant Difference

There is a significant defference between the mean value and standard deviation of the reading comprehension of respondents in pre-test and post-test wherein their scores in post-test increase.

Table 4
Respondents' Results in the Pre-test and Post-test in Vocabulary Test

Grammar	Mean Value	Standard Deviation	Level of Significance
Pre-test	6.13	3.67	Significant Difference
Post-test	16.84	29.61	Significant Difference

There is a significant difference between the mean value and standard deviation of the vocabulary development of respondents in pre-test and post-test wherein their scores in post-testincrease.

Table 5
Respondents' Results in the Pre-test and Post-test in Grammar Test

Vocabulary	Mean Value	Standard Deviation	Level of Significance
Pre-test	21.9	0.17	Significant Difference
Post-test	24.43	2.9	Significant Difference

There is a significant difference between the mean value and standard deviation of the grammar competencies of respondents in pre-test and post-test wherein their scores in post-testincrease.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study proved that withstudents who are passive, complacent, and communicatively challenged, it is imperative that the teacher should draw from his repertoire of strategies – one that could motivate and inspire them to try that first significant step into the world of communication. This researcher who has been in the classroom for thirty-six (36) years, secondary level and seventeen years (17) in the tertiary level has more or less a good grasp of how to help this unique kind of learners. He tried out collaborative teaching – an independent group learning with only the students themselves consulting each other for possible correct answers. After a series of group activities, a post test was conducted, the result of which was more than encouraging. Mean scores were higher, students' behavior became better – they were more focused, more cooperative, more communicative.

Some recommendations could be pursued to improve instruction and for more positiveresults.

1. Teacher should try out Collaborative Teaching as a classroom strategy, the better for non-communicative learners to improve themselves.
2. Students should engage themselves into more communicative student-centered activities with their peers for better opportunities at problem-solving and understanding diverse perspectives.

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