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STORY ROULETTE: A STRATEGY IN ENHANCING THE GRAMMATICAL COMPETENCE OF THE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative-action research study aimed to explore Story Roulette as one of the effective strategy in enhancing the grammatical competence of the students of STI College Cotabato both Tertiary and Senior High School. The participants were shown different objects and asked to make a story using all of the objects. The researcher used Focus Group Discussion (FGD) to determine how Story Roulette enhanced their grammatical skills, the problems encountered and how they are addressed, and the suggestions to improve their grammatical skills. As a result, the researcher found that this strategy helped the students enhanced their grammatical competence as well as their critical thinking with proper supervision of the teacher. The major problems identified were difficulty in relating the objects to one another and sentence construction. These were resolved with the helped of the teacher and through word association. In conclusion, Story Roulette is indeed an effective strategy to enhance the grammatical competence of the students through word association and it also developed their critical thinking. Thus, English teachers should use interactive and mind-blowing activities in order to enhance the grammatical competence and unleash the creativity of the students through critical thinking.

INTRODUCTION

In an English class, grammar is either contextualized or integrated within the language systems and lessons. Learners need to transfer the learned items into a living ability to use the language. The simple knowledge of grammar rules will not develop learners' skill in using grammar. The learners need to have opportunities to develop their competence in grammar and convert it into the available automatic output in real life communication. (Scrivener 2005 as cited in Ali, Joshi, and Hareesh 2018)

Thus, teachers need to have an effective strategy that would help develop the students' grammatical competence. According to Canale and Swain, grammatical competence includes the knowledge of phonology, orthography (correct spelling according to usage), vocabulary, word formation, and sentence formation.

In a study conducted at the Columbian Public University, it was found that the common problem among different groups of Columbian student from all levels was their participation in class especially their academic and communicative performances which was affected by their low level of grammatical competence. Cuéllar 2013, conducted a study addressing this problem and he found that one effective strategy was the used of written production through combining two approaches in writing.

In the Philippines on the other hand, English language is widely used in all contexts. However, most Filipinos are still having difficulty of using it. One instance to prove this was the result of the National Achievement Test (NAT) in 2012, which showed that Grade 3 students got a Mean Percentage Score of 54.42% in English Reading

Comprehension (George Lucas Educational Foundation, 2015). The data suggest that young Filipino learners find it difficult to understand English texts. Thus, in the Philippines, teaching English, particularly developing vocabulary, grammar and reading comprehension among young learners, is a great challenge among elementary teachers. (Palasan 2017). This implies that there must be a change in the instructional strategies of the teachers.

In Davao City a study was conducted to test the proficiency and competency of students from selected higher education institutions. It was found that the respondents of the study have an average level of grammar proficiency in terms of subject verb agreement, low level of proficiency in terms of parts of speech and low level of proficiency in terms of parts of speech. The respondents overall proficiency in grammar is low. (Suarez, Anabieza, & Tagaytay, 2014)

Some schools in Cotabato City is also experiencing the same issue of having poor performance in school because of low level in grammatical competence especially in STI College Cotabato where students come from different tribes with different language orientation.

Thus, educators and researchers should continue to find ways to address this issue in English Grammar that is the reason for the conduct of this study. If students will be guided properly and given appropriate strategies their grammatical competence will be enhanced. According to Alvarez, the traditional method of teaching grammar is still effective like board work and paper and pen activity however if a teacher will use story construction games the students will be able to understand and apply the rules in

grammar. Since students want interactive learning environments, Story Roulette as a strategy is effective in enhancing their grammatical competence.

This study is relevant because it will help the teachers identify the level of the student's knowledge in grammar at the same time help them realize their common mistakes in terms of grammar rules. The study also aims to explore the effectiveness of Story Roulette in enhancing the grammatical competence of the tertiary students of STI College Cotabato.

Research Questions:

1. What are the problems encountered on the context of grammar or sentence constructions?
2. How do they address the problems encountered in their grammar?
3. Is Story Roulette helpful in enhancing the grammatical competence of the students?

Theoretical Lens

This study is anchored to the research of Alvarez which entailed that traditional method is still important however it is better to incorporate Communicative Learning Teaching. Her study aimed to improve the grammar teaching among high school student wherein she said that grammar teaching should be more meaningful, experiential, and easier for the students. There should be more focused on the fluency rather than accuracy. Hence, teacher should not only be grounded with what should be the done but on how it should be done.

Alvarez study has the same aim with this study where there should be other ways to enhance the grammatical competence of the students and that is through conducting a Story Roulette where students can explore different possibilities.

Moreover, this study corresponds the research of Ali, Joshie, and Hareesh which emphasized the used of Communicative Activities in teaching grammar. Communicative activity uses real life situation that will help the students use language effectively. This will also enhance the students' grammatical competence and communicative competence.

Significance of the Study

The study is believed to be significant for the school administrators because they may give some seminars on the different strategies to update the teaching styles of the teacher that is suitable to the new generation of learners.

Another beneficiaries of this study are the teachers, this may serve as their guide for the grammatical competence of the students and venue for improvements. This strategy may also be helpful for teachers to come up with a communicative activity.

Finally, this study may help other researchers who may conduct similar study. It may serve as a necessary reference for future researcher who may undertake future studies of the same nature and purpose.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The research design used in this study is a qualitative research specifically exploratory research utilizing Focus Group Discussion (FGD) to gather the needed data.

Exploratory research, as the name implies, intends merely to explore the research questions and does not intend to offer final and conclusive solutions to existing problems.

Sampling Design

This study used two non-probability sampling approaches in choosing the participants. The sampling method was a combination of purposive and quota. The researcher specifically selected participants who would be able to contribute to the study and who would be willing to share their experiences in Story Roulette.

There were only eight students who participated in the conducted of this study, four students who are good in class or fast learners and four students who are slow learners.

Locale of the Study

The study was conducted at STI College Cotabato which is located at Alejandro Dorotheo Street, Cotabato City 9600, Philippines.

Data Gathering Procedure

For the Phase one of this study, a letter of request was sent to the BTLED Coordinator and specific guidelines were taken into consideration.

In phase two, Story Roulette was implemented in the class. Students were divided into four groups and the researcher showed ten different objects (money, rose, basket, etc.) and asked the students to make a story using all the objects. Each member of the group should contribute through writing his or her own sentence using a certain objects then the other member should continue the sentence until such time that all members are done and the objects were all used. Checking of stories was done after 20 minutes.

Phase three of the study was the choosing of the students who will be part of the study. Orientation was given to the chosen participants of this study. They were also asked about their views on the strategy used to them.

Phase four was the conduct of the Focus Group Discussion or FGD. Recorder and structured interview were utilized during the interview. After the interview, the responses of the participants were transcribed, translated, analyzed, described, and interpreted.

RESULT

Story Roulette as a strategy

Grammar is the study of the rules about how words change their form and combine with other words to make sentences. (Cambridge Dictionary) Grammar covers large aspect in our language system that makes it essential in governing the verbal skills of a person. This includes knowledge in the different parts of speech and its function, semantics, vocabulary, and morphology. One must masters the rules in grammar before s/he can communicate effectively. This is the reason for having English subjects starting from Elementary up to Tertiary for us to attain the mastery level in the different rules in grammar. However, grammar is the struggle of most students and the reason why they dislike the English subjects. If students will continue to feel these, their academic performance will be affected since English language is the medium of instructions for all disciplines except Filipino. In this study, Story Roulette was used in enhancing the grammatical competence of the students.

Problems encountered on the context of grammar

The participants agreed that the one of the difficulties they faced throughout the process is constructing sentences using the objects and how they will have connection to one another.

In fact one participant stated that:

"Ahm, katulad na nga din sa mga sinabi nila, yun nga sa pagkokonek ng mga objects…most like yung sa amin di ko...di naming alam kung gagamitin ba naming sya as the usual..ahm..kung gamit ba talaga sya or kung ano yung other kwan….meaning nya or symbols." **Just like what they have said, it's more on the connection of the objects on how we are going to use it; will it be the usual (the thing itself) or symbolism** (Q1, P3)

As the statement mentioned above, it correlates with the Lexical and Conceptual Semantics Theory wherein the syntactic properties of phrases reflect the meanings of the words that head them. With this theory, linguists can better deal with the fact that subtle differences in word meaning correlate with other differences in the syntactic structure that the word appears in. The way this is gone about is by looking at the internal structure of words. These small parts that make up the internal structure of words are referred to as semantic primitives. Semantics and syntax (grammar) correlate with one another thus; words can be used in various ways as long as it follows the rules in grammar.

However, problem may arise if the not all students understand the other term used for the word being described in a certain sentence. Some make take it as literal where in fact it's only a denotative meaning of the word. The tendency is they will make their own sentence based on how they understand it, in this case the might be incoherence in the sentences. Moreover, some students may use the same object with the other member of the group because misunderstanding will arise.

Another difficulty that the participant faced during the process is the construction of sentence with the proper tenses of the verbs.

Another participant confessed that:

"…kung pano gamitin ang past tense atsaka ang present tense. Ano yung proper atsaka san sya banda ilagay, yun po yung nahirapan kami na part." **The proper usage of the past tense and the present tense and their location in the sentence, we find it difficult** (Q1,P2).

Verb is the heart of the sentence without this sentence will not be a sentence. Verb has tense that will tell as the time and when the action takes place. Apparently, tenses of the verb are major concern in language teaching; because of this, tenses occupy most of the English syllabus.

EFL learners face several difficulties in their attempt to master English tense properly. To Cowan (2008, p. 350) 'use of verb forms is one of the two or three most difficult areas for English language learners to master'. As a result, EFL learners sometimes make mistakes in the proper use of verb forms as they attempt to express the time of an event in the target language. (Ali &Rahman, 2015)

On the other hand, this difficulty in the tenses of the verb can be minimized if the teacher will properly guide the students and offer a conducive learning environment where students can make their own sentences without hesitation of committing mistakes, since the teacher will always be there to correct them in a positive way. As B.F. Skinner believed that giving positive feedbacks can uplift the state of mind of the students.

Addressing the problems encountered

The participants agreed addressing the problem through asking for their teacher's supervision and word association.

Two participants said:

"Ahh. Nasolusyunan namin yung problem namin sa pagtanong sa teacher atska paghingi ng mga advice sakanila kung paano gawin ng tama yun." **We solved our problems through asking our teacher on how to do it correctly** (Q2, P6).

"*Nasolusyunan namin by the help our teacher..ahh..kung pano gamitin ang mga words.*" **We solved it through the help of our teacher on the proper use of words** (Q2, P4)

The statement above is congruent with the study of Rahmany, Hasani, and Parhoodeh where they defined supervision as an "assistance for the improvement of instruction" (Glickman et al., 1998, p. 8), which is a "process that engages teachers in instructional dialogue for the purpose of improving teaching and learning and promoting student achievement" (Glanz, 2006 , p. 55).

Historically, teachers saw themselves as tools that could be closely examined to ensure that they carried out methods and procedures settled by the supervisors. Over the years this attitude has been noted and still exists among teachers, but some teachers now see the more positive aspects of supervision. (Rahmany, Hasani, and Parhoodeh, 2014)

Therefore, the success of strategy or activity employed in the classroom still depends on the teacher's supervision because we cannot expect our students to do better if they lack support coming from the teacher.

Moreover, the participants also agreed that the use of word association is also effective in addressing the problems they have encountered in the construction of sentences using the different objects.

In fact, one participant said:

"*Na…nasolve..naconquer po naming yun by the use of dictionary kasi inalaw kami gumamit nun.*" **We conquered it through the use of dictionary since we are allowed to use it** (Q2, P8).

The statement mentioned above is about the use of dictionary for the purpose of knowing other words that can be associated with the existing word this usually happens when students look for the synonyms of the words.

Based on the study of Stuart in 2007, learning words with known synonyms may be easier than learning words without known synonyms because learners may be able to transfer their knowledge of syntax and collocation from known synonyms to less frequent synonyms.

Furthermore, other word association can be done through the use of connotation and denotation as a tool to convey the literal and figurative meaning of the word. As one participant said:

"…*superhero nalang in general instead na superman kahit na yun yung gamit na pinakita.*" **Superhero instead of using the exact term of the object which is superman** (Q2, P3)

Story Roulette as a tool in enhancing the grammatical competence of the students

All the participants agreed that Story Roulette can help them enhance their grammatical competence as well as their critical thinking.

Grammatical competence is the ability to use grammar effectively in verbal communication to convey meaning. This is the struggle of most students since they have to be familiar with the rules of grammar to be competent.

Critical thinking on the other hand is a process of skillfully evaluating, conceptualizing, analyzing, and applying a body of knowledge in order to come up with a meaningful idea.

In fact, one participant said:

"*Ahm. Opo nakakaenhance sya ng skills namin in terms sa grammar. Syempre yung Story Roulette merong time limit mas naboboost yung critical thinking namin.*" **Yes, it enhances our skills in grammar and Story roulette has time limit which helped boost our critical thinking** (Q3, P5).

Conclusion

In light of the findings, the researcher found the effectiveness of using real life context in enhancing the grammatical competence of the students through the use of communicative strategy which is the Story Roulette. This study is of great help to devise more learning strategy specifically communicative strategy not only in English subjects but in other subjects that use English as medium of communication. Furthermore, this study suggests that teachers should provide positive learning environment where students can freely use the language without hesitation and open for constructive criticism.

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