



# Developing Reading Comprehension Skills of Junior High School

Ryan James A. Salalima<sup>1</sup> and Grace S. Pimentel<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Science and Technology of Southern Philippines

<sup>2</sup>University of Science and Technology of Southern Philippines

## Abstract

This study investigated the effect of collaborative learning approach on reading comprehension among the Grade 7 and Grade 8 students using the experimental method. Fifteen grade 7 and ten grade 8 students were tasked to take the pre-test and they were group accordingly based on their scores. The data gathering instrument used in this study was a researcher based and it was validated by an expert. A posttest was given after conducted the treatment to the two group of respondents. The One-way Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used in the study to determine the summary of literal comprehension, inferential comprehension, and evaluative comprehension. In literal comprehension, the analysis yielded an F-ratio of 15.66 and probability value of .001 which indicates that there was significant difference between collaborative learning and conventional approach at 0.05 level of significance which led to the rejection of the null hypothesis. However, in inferential comprehension the analysis yielded an F-ratio of .129 and probability value of .72 and in evaluative comprehension the analysis yielded an F ratio of 3.39 and probability value of .08 which indicates that there was no significant difference which led to the non-rejection of the null hypothesis. The results imply that the junior high students developed their literal comprehension by using CLA which is a better avenue in addressing reading comprehension that was considered as perennial problem in the Philippines as well as in other countries. However, neither of CLA and conventional approach were better in developing the inferential comprehension and evaluative comprehension. There contributing factors why CLA failed in inferential comprehension and evaluative comprehension such as the respondents' cognitive level and priority. Given the demographic area of the school and it is comparable that the cognitive level of students who lived in the urban area far different from the cognitive level of the students who lived in hinterland. Also, students from the hinter land would always prioritized work over education as part of their daily struggle for survival.

**Keywords:** Reading comprehension, collaborative learning approach, literal comprehension, inferential comprehension, evaluative comprehension

## Introduction

Reading is an important skill every person must developed. Most of the information we get are done through reading. It is a fundamental skill which should be developed at the early age. Consequently, it is a vessel in understanding and building knowledge across educational institutions. However, without comprehension reading is pointless. Reading comprehension is a critical learning skill for students (Clarke, Truelove, Hulme, & Snowling, 2013; Wong, 2011) for it is the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and written work. Understanding meaning, analyzing the authors point of view, aiming for writing, and gaining new words are all important skills

that support reading comprehension (Ruiz, 2015). Learners may have the ability to read but failed to understand what is being read because of poor reading comprehension. Not being able to successfully comprehend can prevent learners from learning, retaining information that they read, and graduating from school, which will negatively damage different aspect of their lives later on (Hoeh, 2015). It also leads to poor grades, low examination scores, and in standardized test such as the PISA.

PISA recognizes that evolving technologies have changed the ways people read and exchange information, whether at home, at school or in the workplace. The importance of reading comprehension should not be taken for granted for it will cause a serious effect as they pursue higher education which is the main reason why researchers claim that, “the most important thing about reading is comprehension” (Ness, 2011). Due to our digital world it cannot be denied that sometimes reading is taken for granted. DepEd Spokesperson and Undersecretary Annalyn Sevilla expressed her opinion after the PISA 2018 result came out last December 2019. Sevilla said that she is not surprised by the PISA result for learners are not performing well in NAT.

There are lots of issues arises who are to blame for the poor result in PISA but this is not the time for pointing fingers instead this is wake up call for teachers and researchers on how to addressed these problems. There is no such thing as best strategy to help learners develop their reading comprehension but intervention such as collaborative learning will help students for it could improve students’ critical reading and had a positive attitude toward the teaching-learning process (Khonamri & Karimbadi, 2015; Susanti Et. Al 2020).

There are various benefits that are associated with the concept of collaborative learning (CL). Collaborative is a philosophy of interconnection and personal lifestyle where individuals are responsible for their actions, including learning and respect the aptitude and contribution of their peers. The fundamental premise of collaborative learning is based upon concord building through cooperation by group members, in contract to competition in which individuals get the better of the other group members. Collaborative, cooperative, and team-based learning are usually considered to represent the same idea, although they are sometimes defined differently (Kirschner, 2001).

In collaborative learning, learners participate in small-group activities in which they share their knowledge and expertise. In these student-driven activities the teacher usually acts as a facilitator of learning (Knight, 2016), which is effective in cultivating students with strong competencies. Collaborative learning can be applied in establishing relationships among students from constructive and supportive perspectives in scaffolding students’ reading comprehension (Cohen, 1994; Ghavifekr, 2020).

### **Theoretical Framework**

Collaborative learning is a concept that defines a theoretical and research area of great interest. The issue of intellectual cooperation has a history in the field of research for psychology and education (Zalbal & Berrocal, 1995; Rosellie,1999; Barreiro, Escudero & Sabiron, 200; Barkley, Croos & Major, 2007; Strijbos & Fischer, 2007), regularly associated with the idea of working in a group or team. In the year 1980’s and 1990’s, the idea gains a new propulsion giving rise to the field recognized as collaborative learning.

The term cooperation was replaced by collaboration which is now considered as the new version of cognitive co-participation. Cooperation is defined as a division of functions based on the distribution of the task which would lead to a second stage of assembly group. On the other hand, collaboration is a collective process from the begging, where all of them are jointly involved for performance. This does not imply that there cannot be a natural differentiation of roles, but a spontaneous emergence of interactive dynamics.

The cooperative work is the application by the teacher and group of techniques aimed at achieving the goal. Cooperation is not a widespread ideology of all teaching; it is part of the process where the peer cooperation is used as a way to strengthen learning achievements. In contrast, the collaborative learning approach is a part of social constructivist epistemology (Bruffee, 1993), a social psychology of knowledge. Knowledge is defined as a process of negotiation or joint construction of

meanings, and this applies to the whole process of teaching. The main idea of the concept is the recognition of the value of the cognitive peer interaction, collaborative learning, and the context of teaching as a whole. It's not about circumstantial application of group techniques, but the promotion of exchange ideas and participation of each member in order to build a shared cognition.

The theoretical source of collaborative learning is the neo-Piagetian and neo-Vygotskian inspiration.

**Socio-cognitive Conflict Theory.**

The socio-cognitive conflict theory is a Piagetian thought as a critical derivation. It can be called as neo-Piagetian despite the important concept that socio-cognitive interaction represents the Vygotskian perspective. In fact, it may be considered as a socio-constructivist approach (Dillenbourg et al.,1996).

The Socio-cognitive conflict is the determining factor of intellectual development. Its core content is the social interaction primarily the context of cooperation between peers. The concept of cognitive conflict is implicit in the equilibration often understood as disturbance of equilibrium in the subject-object relationship. Coll (1991) stated, "In what we might call the orthodox version of Piaget, cognitive conflict appears basically as a result of lack of agreement between subject's assimilation schemes and the verification of the corresponding physical observable means, or as a result of the internal contradiction between different subject's schemes".

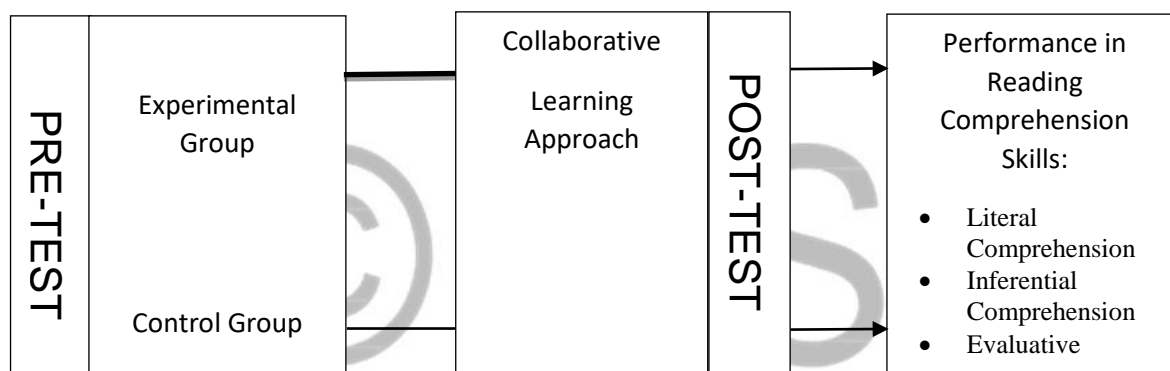


Figure 1: A schematic presentation of the variables in the study.

**Methodology**

This study classified into experimental research design that use pre-test and post-test design. Pre-test and post-test design are a single group that measure or observe not only after being exposed to a treatment, but also before applying pre-test. A pre-test provides a measure on some attribute or characteristic that the researcher asses for participants in an experiment before the group receive a treatment, while post-test measure on some attribute or characteristic that is assessed for participants in an experiment after a treatment (Creswell, 2008).

Table 3.1 The Illustration of Research Design

Pre-test	Independent variable	Post-test
Y1	X	Y2

X: collaborative learning approach that would be used as treatment

Y1: students' reading comprehension skill ability before taught by using collaborative learning approach

Y2: students' reading comprehension skill ability after taught by using

The study was conducted at Gusa National High School- F.S Catanico Annex- Camansi Extension in the second grading period of school year 2020-2021. The school is located at Zone 6, Sitio Camansi, Cagayan de Oro City. It is a public secondary institution owned by the national government under the umbrella of Department of Education. The school was established in the year 2017 which cater Grades 1-6 only and started accepting high school students by the year 2018. It is a small school with a

population of 120 students in the elementary and 30 students in high school. Most of the students are indigenous people (IP) and they lived in far-flung areas.

The respondents of this study were the fifteen grade 7 and ten grade 8 junior high school students currently enrolled in Gusa National High School- F.S Catanico Annex- Camansi Extension for school year 2020-2021. Majority of the students' indigenous people (IP) under the group of higaunon tribe and the researcher used them as a subject for research since their reading comprehension was not appropriate in their current grade level. The Camansi Extension students were divided into two groups, the experimental group and the control group.

In order to fulfill the objectives of the study, the researcher utilized researcher made reading comprehension pretest and posttest, which are used to assess the learners' reading comprehension skills, specifically on literal comprehension, inferential comprehension, and evaluative comprehension. The stories chosen was validated by an expert. *Greater good* is the topic of the story administered during pretest and after that there were 10 stories administered in the experimental group that served as intervention that is composed of 15 items each before letting the students take the posttest. The set of questions in the posttest is the same in the pretest, yet the order of the set of questions are interchanged to assess clearly the reading comprehension growth of the students. The items were not changed to preserve the reliability and the validity of the tests.

Prior in conducting the study in the school premises, the researcher made various steps to gain consent to conduct the study. The researcher used the experimental design to test the validity and reliability of the CL approach.

The researcher asked permission from the principal that the study would be conducted in the school premises.

The researcher asked permission from the parents the purpose of the research study and how they can benefit from it. The researcher also asked if agree with the face-to-face setting upon conducting of the researcher provided that students would abide the safety precautions set by the COVID-19 Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF).

The researcher explained to the tribal land leader the purpose of the research and how students benefited from it. The experimental process is guided in the following:

Students took their pre-test and their corresponding scores varies on which group they belong whether it is in experimental group or control group.

The student who got the highest score would be paired to the student who got the lowest score. Student who were second to the highest score would be paired to the student who were second to the lowest score and so on.

Only ten students would belong to the experimental group and those are the top five students who got the highest score, and another top five students who got the lowest score. The rest of the students who were not selected were considered as control group.

Every student answered two answer sheets. One as their personal answer sheet which is the individual answer sheet and the other one would be intended for the paired work.

The experimental process of the experimental group and control group was conducted in the school premises on the same day but the experimental group was conducted in the morning and the control group was in the afternoon.

The researcher and the students met twice a week specifically Monday and Tuesday only.

Before students went inside the classroom the researcher assured that the students complied the minimum health standard that is set by the COVID-19 Inter-Agency Task Force (IATF) which is to wear face mask and apply 1.5 meters social distancing.

The mode of students' sharing their ideas for five-week that would hone their skills in (a) recalling details, (b) summarizing, (c) identifying the main idea, and (d) determining fact versus opinion.

## **Findings**

Based on the study, the following summary of the results:

1. After the students underwent with the CLA their literal comprehension posttest is higher than the literal comprehension pre-test. The same goes to the inferential comprehension where posttest is higher than the inferential comprehension pre-test. However, there was no significant change in evaluative comprehension score in pre-test and posttest.
2. As the students underwent in different approaches in teaching reading comprehension, the experimental group shows supremacy as the experimental group has higher means than the control group in literal comprehension, inferential comprehension, and evaluative comprehension.
3. Summary of the result shows that literal comprehension is more superior than the conventional method in teaching reading comprehension than in conventional teaching. However, CLA is not superior nor the conventional teaching in terms of teaching inferential comprehension and evaluative comprehension.

## **Conclusions**

The following conclusions were drawn from the findings of the study.

1. The study determined specifically on assessing the effectiveness of Collaborative Learning Approach in developing the literal comprehension, inferential comprehension, and evaluative comprehension of the students. Based on the summary of the results, CLA was better than the conventional approach in developing the literal comprehension of the students. However, neither of CLA and conventional approach were better in developing the inferential comprehension and evaluative comprehension.
2. There are contributing factors that hinders the effectiveness of collaborative learning approach as intervention. One factor believed that impeded the success of the research is the respondents' interest and priority. Due to pandemic, respondents gave too little attention on the experimental process because they rather work than answer religiously the questionnaire given.
3. Poverty is also a contributing factor to the result of the research. Students are busy helping their parents planting crops, selling crops, and finding jobs for their daily survival. In far flung areas, they rather work than go to school for they are more concern on what to eat for the next day rather than to attend school. Survival is at stake here which we cannot blame them.

Moreover, time is also a contributing factor to the research result. Students would walk at least 30 minutes to 2 hours every day just to be in school. Most of the areas where the respondents lived are only accessible by horse and humans only. It is really tiring to walk that long every single day and worst; it always rains in the afternoon in which it makes their pathways muddy all the time.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the aforementioned results, the following recommendations are hereby presented:

1. The Gusa National High School- F.S Catanico Annex- Camansi Extension should have a reading program and reading activity which cater students who are poor in reading comprehension.
2. The school principal of the school should make a program in promoting literacy. The English teachers will spearhead the program while the non-English teacher will have at least 1-2 activity integrated in their lesson. In this way, the non-English teachers will passively be honing the reading comprehension skills of the students without jeopardizing the subject being taught by the teacher. English teachers will not start teaching the students with a blank state of mind instead the teacher will just scaffold reading comprehension skill level of the students

3. English language teacher should develop variety of teaching strategies and instructional materials for reading comprehension. Reading must also be integrated in every lesson being taught by the teachers as it slowly develops the reading skills of the students that would eventually develop their reading comprehension skills in the process. In the process of teaching and learning reading, teachers should be dedicated in promoting literacy despite of the scarcity of reading materials which is a sad reality in DepEd especially in far flung areas.

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