

STUDENTS' ORAL AND THINKING SKILLS THROUGH SAMPLE ACTIVITIES IN ENGLISH

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Abstract-This is an experimental study evaluating the students' performance as shown in their oral responses as sample activities in English are given to them in English classes. It determined the classroom activities that elicited their prejudices, values, breaking habits, and constructing a new point of view.

Three intact English 111 classes were used as subjects in the study. A quasi- experimental non-equivalent control group design was used. The traditional lecture and the use of visual materials were tried in English classes. The data were gathered from the audio- taped responses of the students, transcribed, evaluated, and scored through the help of the language experts to ensure that the students' responses reflected higher order thinking.

The findings showed that both methods: traditional lecture and use of visual materials were found to be very effective in enhancing and developing oral and thinking skills of the students. In eliciting speeches or responses from their prejudices, values, habits, and points of view as sample activities were given to them found to be interesting for they were not just practicing or using their effective skills in speaking the English language but they used the chance to express and share their feelings and experiences with their classmates and teacher. Significant differences were found in the speaking performances of the students in their pretest and post test results using the lecture method and visual materials in English. The sample activities in English made the students participate in the discussions whether they were taught with visuals or not. Their effectiveness in stirring their oral and thinking skills should lead to the integration of these sample activities in freshman English classes.

Keywords- oral and thinking skills, prejudices, values, breaking habits, constructing a new point of view, lecture method, and use of visual materials.

I. INTRODUCTION

The outgrowth of the cognitive approach has been perceived in language teaching together with reflections about the relationship between thinking and language. Teachers who want to promote thinking should try to observe how students produce knowledge rather than how they merely reproduce knowledge where it requires the use of a number of thinking skills such as analytical, lateral, problem solving, critical,

creative, and reflective thinking. This has been enunciated in the article of Ustunlugluo in 2004. Students need activities where they can be triggered to express their ideas and develop their thinking abilities like analysis, critical and reflection and not just to repeat the teacher's language and ideas especially in English classes.

In this study, activities in English which elicit the students' opinions on their prejudices, values, breaking habits, and in

constructing a new point of view were given to the students learning English as a second language.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study primarily evaluated the effectiveness of the sample activities in English in enhancing the oral and thinking skills of the college freshmen in the University of Eastern Philippines (UEP) Main Campus.

Specifically, it sought to:

1. determine the sample activities in English that can elicit students' responses using lecture method and visual materials;
2. ascertain the performance of the students as to their oral and thinking skills in the following activities:
 - a. prejudices,
 - b. values,
 - c. breaking habits, and
 - d. constructing a new point of view;
3. determine if there is a significant difference in the students' performance in the pretest and post test using the lecture method; and
4. find out if there is a significant difference in the students' performance in the pretest and post test using visual materials in English..

III. METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted at the main campus of the University of Eastern Philippines (UEP), the former Catarman National Agricultural School which was converted to a state college, the Samar Institute of Technology, then a university. Only two of the ten colleges of the University- the Colleges of Education and the Arts and Communication were included in the study.

It made use of a non-equivalent control group design of quasi-experimental research since no randomization was done on the subjects. Instead, intact classes were used. Using Ustunlugluo's activities in English, they were

tried in English classes to elicit oral responses from the students. Responses were audio-tape recorded, transcribed by the researcher, and evaluated and scored by two language experts to determine the performance of the students as to oral and thinking skills..

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Sample Classroom Activities in English Used to Elicit Oral Responses and Interactions from the Students

Prejudices. This activity was done by giving certain concepts or open-ended sentences to complete. Varied questions were then used so that feelings, ideas or opinions were heard from them. The respondents were made aware of their prejudices and those of their classmates in the discussion of their responses. Concepts like Man, Marriage, Education. and Teacher were given to the students to discuss.

Values. In this activity, the students wrote or discussed their five most important values, ranked them from most important to the least important. They were made to explain why such values are preferred.

Breaking habits. New thought patterns were elicited by giving open-ended sentences and shifting perspectives to break habits of negative thinking.

Constructing a new point of view. This activity helps students to see something different. Grouping was done and each group represented a philosophy to believe in. They have to communicate and interact with the other group to convince and persuade them of their own philosophy.

In this study, they acted as a jury who will decide on a punishment for a suspect who

was caught stealing food. The man is 25 years old, and has lost his wife and his job, and has sole responsibility for the care of his ten-year-old son.

Performance of the Students as to oral and thinking skills through Sample Activities in English Using Lecture Method and Visual materials

Prejudices. Using the lecture method of teaching this activity, 54.76% of the students had an excellent performance. However, a significant percentage of 45.24% performed poorly in this activity. Using visual materials in this activity, about 77.08% performed effectively and only 22.92 had a poor performance. With this results, the use of visual materials was found out to be more effective in soliciting students' prejudices. Both groups performed very well and discussed thoroughly their prejudices in English although the use of visuals had a higher frequency than those groups in which lecture was used.

For values, the students had a very good performance using the lecture method with 80.49% and 90% using visuals. Only 19.51% performed poorly in the lecture and 10% in the use of visual materials. This shows that the activity in eliciting the values of the students were both effective using the lecture method and visual materials. The students were very much aware of their values and can express their thoughts and ideas in English with or without visuals.

Breaking habits. In this activity, 67.5% performed effectively using lecture method and 80.39% using visual materials in talking about students' breaking habits. Only 32.5% in the lecture group and 19.61% in the visual group had a poor performance. With this, the use of visuals was more preferred by the students in interacting in English with their teacher and

classmates although both were found to be very effective. The majority discussed very well their values in an English class. This activity generated awareness among the students of their five most important values in their lives and expressed them very well. The use of traditional lecture had a very good effect also in eliciting responses among students.

Constructing a new point of view. In this activity, 55.55% had a very good performance using the traditional lecture and 65.91% of them performed very well using the visual materials in English. There were 44.44% and 34.09% performed poorly in this activity. It shows that the use of visual materials in constructing students' point of view elicited more responses and discussions from them showing better performance in this activity although both groups again showed more interactions and responses in English. They gave very good responses in English thus presenting their new points of view. Both groups performed very well. This shows that students responded very well to these activities using visual materials or the traditional lecture for teaching higher order thinking skills in an English class.

Test of Significant Difference in the Students' Performance in the Pretest and Post test using Lecture Method

Using the arithmetic mean and t test for correlated samples, a significant difference in the pretest and post test of the students was found. The table below shows a mean difference of -15.99, a computed value of -25.74 and tabular value of -1.645. It means that the sample activities in English using lecture method improved significantly the oral performance and thinking skills of the students. It elicited more responses and interactions among their classmates and with their teacher. Thus, the goal of teaching the subject is accomplished. It is

undoubtedly the aim of language teachers for the students to practice and use the English language

Type of Test	Mean	Mean Difference	T- value computed tabular	Interpretation	
Pretest	16.76	-16.66	-23.95	-1.645	significant
Posttest	33.42				

in class interactions so that they can initially develop the skill in speaking. As most language experts hold, that language is primarily speech so that they have to carefully choose the language activities they are giving to the

Type of Test	Mean	Mean Difference	T- value computed tabular	Interpretation	
Pretest	15.33	-15.99	-25.74	-1.645	significant
Posttest	31.32				

students.

Result of the t-computed value

Test of Significant Difference in the Students' Performance in the Pretest and Post test using Visual Materials

The summary result of the difference in the students' performance using the visual materials in teaching the sample activities in English is shown in the table below. Using the arithmetic mean and t-test for correlated samples, a significant difference was found. There was a mean difference of - 16.66, a computed value of -23.95 and a tabular value of -1.645. This implies that the use of visual materials in enhancing the speaking and thinking skills of the students in English teaching is effective. Indeed, using visual materials in English helped in the performance of the students. The materials they see on the board stimulated their thoughts on how to express them in English. This helped them feel at ease in understanding the activities and aided their practice and use of the English language in the classroom. Even though the responses may be

are not that perfect, but then again, it is a significant improvement on the part of the students who are still feeling their way in the language.

Result of the t- computed value

V. CONCLUSIONS

From the findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The sample activities presented in this paper included activities in eliciting students' prejudices, values, breaking habits and constructing a new point of view. This implies that language teachers can make use of these activities if they primarily aimed at enhancing and developing the speaking and thinking skills of the students in English classes. These activities proved that there were more responses and interactions elicited from the students and this could be a good start in teaching them other aspects of language for they can freely express their thoughts and feelings.
2. As to activities on prejudices, the students performed better using visuals although they also performed very well using the lecture method. To let students talk about their prejudices, the use of visual materials and the traditional lecture were effective in eliciting oral responses from them. Although in numerical value the activity using the visual materials had higher frequency counts, still the majority in the traditional lecture class performed competently. Students in both groups were fully aware of their biases and responded very well to the questions raised in English. The same is true in the activity which tried to elicit the

students' values, breaking habits and constructing a new point of view.. Both the lecture method and the use of visuals found to be very effective although the use of the latter proved to be higher in numerical value. This implies that the sample activities in English used in this study in enhancing and developing the speaking and thinking skills of the students were very effective. They honed the speeches and oral responses enough to stimulate their thoughts and feelings and that of their classmates.

3. There was a significant difference in the student performance in the pretest and post test using the lecture method. As such it can be construed that the use of the traditional way in teaching speaking and higher order thinking skills in English classes is also very effective. There was a significant improvement in the speaking and thinking performance of the students using the traditional way of teaching.
4. There was a significant difference in the student performance in the pretest and post test using visual materials in English. It can be implied that the use of visual materials in presenting the sample activities in English towards honing their oral and thinking skills in English classes is very effective. Further, it also aids them in their self-awareness and relationship with their classmates and teachers. The use of visual materials in presenting the sample activities had a very significant effect in the students' speeches and responses leading to their very good performance in the class.
5. On the whole, it is concluded that the sample activities in English used in the study specifically that of eliciting speeches and students' prejudices,

values, breaking habits, and constructing a new point of view stir the students to think, speak, and motivate them to use English in discussing their views.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are proposed:

1. Sample activities in eliciting student's prejudices, values, breaking habits, and constructing a new point view should be integrated in basic English classes. These activities motivated and made the students use English in class discussions and should be resorted to by language teachers if they want their students to be productive in the language.
2. Language teachers should prepare visual materials in presenting activities in English if they want to have an active participation from their students. Audio- visual materials should be used to develop the oral and thinking skills of the students, as they were found effective in this study.
3. Language teachers may then resort to traditional lecture if necessary for it has also been proved to be effective in this study.
4. Teachers may add other concepts and situations in the sample activities in English which they feel best and effective to their kind of students.
5. Researches should be conducted along the development of speaking and thinking skills preferably among both teachers and learners in English, and even in other disciplines.
6. A similar study but this time focused on writing to try the effectiveness of the sample activities used in this study should be conducted to find out if the activities also work as motivators for writing.
7. Critical thinking exercises should be integrated in English classroom activities

and the syllabus to develop proficiency in the language.

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