

Reporting as a Strategy in Facilitating the Communicative Competence of English Learners

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Abstract

This study aimed at determining the procedures followed in reporting strategy; how reporting strategy helped students enhance their communicative competence; and suggestions on how to improve the reporting as strategy in enhancing students' communicative abilities. Five Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) were considered composed of tertiary English major students. Results showed that class reporting was usually done through voluntary basis and groupings. Also, class reporting was found to be beneficial because it enhanced not only the students' language competence, self-confidence and soft skills but also developed their hidden talents. Moreover, it enabled students to discover their language strengths and weaknesses. It was implicated that orientation may be done before a strategy can be used; levelling of students' may be done; group members may be given specific task; and rubrics may be explained before the strategy may be applied.

Key Words: reporting, strategy, communicative competence, English learners notre dame of kidapawan college.

1. Introduction

Communicative competence of students is very important topic to deal with in the academe. All over the world, language teachers shared similar sentiments regarding the communicative abilities of students. There is a general observation that language learners struggle in their cognition and acquisition of a second language.

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Thus, language teachers are finding teaching strategies on how they could enhance the communicative abilities of the learners. San Jose and Galang (2015) said that teachers used teaching strategies because they wanted to develop the confidence and competence of their students.

Canale and Swain (1980) and Hymes(1974) described communicative competence as the appropriateness of socio-cultural significance of utterances. They supported the idea of Chomsky, who distinguished the description of language and competence and its use or performance. Chomsky emphasized that the correctness of sentences structurally should be the focal point for linguists to investigate. In the same vein, Coulard (1985), Jaworski and Coupland (1999), Kramsch, (1993) and Wardhaugh (1998) agreed that communicative competence should compose setting, participants, ends, act, sequence, key instrumentalities, norms of interaction and interpretation and genre. They considered these speech contexts because these are involved in real interaction and communication. Moreover, Brown, Angus, Marin, Balmes, Ewart and Nathanson (1994) pointed out that communicative competence of the learners need to be enhance in the language classroom where systematic and organizational component of the language are given great focus.

Among the many strategies in teaching communicative skills is class presentation or reporting. Presentation or reporting can be considered as a one stop-deal-all strategy because it dealt the four macro-skills. In this strategy, students need to read the topic and make paraphrase and summary to fit with the presentation standard. Secondly, students need to write their report in a power point which needs computer skills. Thirdly, they need to practice the presentation or reporting they made before doing the actual presentation. Moreover, reporting does not only enhance student's ability of the target language but also confidence and soft skills. However, San Jose and Galang (2015) pointed out that teaching strategies used in a classroom need to fit students' presumed abilities and needs; hence, no one strategy can be better than the other. The students' perceived effective teaching strategy was their preferred one based on their skills, cognition, cultures and beliefs.

Although reporting is a promising strategy to enhance communicative competence, it needs not to be overused. Because if so, many learners will be displaced and developed lack of interest in learning. It was in this context this research was conducted to find out what and how to improve reporting strategy to enhance the communicative abilities of students.

1.1 Research Questions

This study focused on the communicative competence of English learners. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What procedures are followed in reporting strategy?
2. How reporting strategy help students enhance their communicative competence?
3. What are the suggestions of the students to improve the reporting as strategy in enhancing students' communicative competence?

2. Method

This chapter presents the participants, instruments, and design and procedures employed in this study.

2.1 Participants

The participants of this study were the English 311 (Teaching of Literature) students. These students were purposely chosen because all of them already experienced reporting in class. The participants were grouped into five (5) Focus Group Discussion (FGD). According (Polkinghorne, 2005) having more FGDs lead the exhaustion of important and necessary information.

2.2 Instruments

A validated interview guide questions were used to obtain the pertinent information from the participants. The questions were patterned after the research questions. Moreover, probe questions were also formulated to clarify points which may be unclear. The interview guide was composed of more or less 10 questions. Further, a voice recorder was used to record the utterances of the participants during the Focus Group Discussion (FGD).

2.3 Design and Procedure

Qualitative–phenomenological method was used in this study. Phenomenology was suited in this study because it focused on the individual's personal experiences of a situation (Kvale, 1983; Flick, von Kardoff and Steinke, 2004; Marshall and Rossman, 2015; Smith, 2015).

Prior to the conduct of the study, researchers sent letters addressed to the Dean of the College of Education and College Academic Dean to ask permission to conduct the study. Upon the approval, another letters of permission were given to the participants. Also, permission forms were given to the participants. Written in the permission form were the goals of the study, the role of the participants, ethical conditions and dangers of participation in the research.

Soon the Focus Group Discussion followed. Each group was interviewed in different time to ensure that no contamination of the information. Krueger and Casey (2000) affirmed that a well-planned FGD discussion allows good focus in digging into the information significant to the success of the study.

The recorded information obtained from the participants were transcribed and validated by a language expert. This was done to ensure the validity and reliability of the information. Analysis of information based on the research questions was conducted after.

2.4 Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure the trustworthiness of this study, the researchers utilized the trustworthiness concept of Lincoln and Guba's (1985). This concept assesses the truthfulness of a qualitative work. It involves credibility, dependability, transferability and confirmability. Patton (1999) defined credibility as a researchers dependent on training, experience, track record, status, and presentation of self while (Holloway and Wheeler, 2002; Macnee and McCabe, 2008) pointed out that it presents the truthfulness and verisimilitude of the research findings. In this study, both the student and mentor were knowledgeable about qualitative research. They understood its scope and limits. They were both researchers and therefore they were credible.

The confirmability of the study entails that results must conform to the findings of other researchers in the same field (Baxter and Eyles, 1997). Data must be true and correct and never on the findings of one's imagination (Tobin and Begley, 2004). In this study, several authors exploring the same field were cited. Moreover, interview transcriptions were confirmed by the participants and the same were kept by the researchers for verification. Bitsch (2005); Li (2004); Tobin and Begley (2004) defined transferability as the application of the present study to other milieu through thick description that it will be replicated by other researchers in the same field of specialization. This aspect was handled in this research by providing readings relevant to the study. Further, results and discussions were given focus by giving information related to the aim of the study.

The dependability of the study anchors on the view of Chilisa and Preece (2005); Schwandt, (2007) that the study must undergo audit trail (Cutcliffe and McKenna, 2004; Lietz, Langer, and Furman, 2006), coding (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Mays and Pope, 2000; Basil, 2003; Flick, 2009). This study underwent an audit trail to verify the veracity of the results. Coding and memoing were also conducted to obtain relevant information related to the objectives of the study.

3. Results

This chapter presents the results based from the Focus Group Discussion and research questions of the study. For the purpose of audit trail, codes were used: FGD refers to the Focus Group Discussion; the numeric attachment refers to which group of FGD the information were taken; Q refers to questions while A refers to the answer. Thus, FGD₁Q₁A₅ means that the information were obtained from Focus Group Discussion 1 question number 1 and answer number 5.

Volunteering and Grouping

Teachers assigned students to present their reports in random; however, the teacher asked first the class for volunteers. Moreover, reporting was done in group. Further, students were given presentation rubrics to guide them on what area they will be graded. It was observed that students had they own way of presenting the topics assigned to them. Some usepower point, others utilized the prizi while other preferred the traditional paper and marker. It was also noticed that some groups provided examples to elaborate profoundly the contents of their report. In FGD₁, one of the participants shared

“we present our report not only by reading what is written on the visual aids or in the PowerPoint presentation but we should also do some readings and provide elaborate examples and situations that is relevant to the topic being reported” FGD₁Q₁A₁.

In FGD₂, participants pointed out that their teacher really gave importance in their discourse competence. The teacher was on guard to correct any mistake they committed. One of the participants revealed

“we do not only read the words on our reports but we also analyze what is written in order to form concepts, however, if the teacher finds it faulty, he or she will correct us in order to clarify the concepts to convey” FGD₂Q₁A₂.

In another FGD, students revealed that they do not simply rely on information from on the textbooks rather they also surf from the internet for additional information. The participants in the FGD unanimously agreed that they made it sure they had their readings prior to their class presentation. They articulated

“we do not only settle for the information present within the textbooks, but we also make use of the internet in order to acquire more information pertinent to the report which has been assigned to us”
FGD₃Q₁A₄.

Gaining Confidence and Developing Other Skills

Reporting in class as a strategy gave students the opportunity to express their ideas and assess their language capabilities particularly using the second language. However, undeniably reporting in class created tensions to those students who were shy, timid and unprepared. For them, reporting strategy was a struggle that they need to overcome. Hence, the presence of a teacher inside the classroom to scaffold the learners played a vital role. Students understand that their teacher will guide them during their presentation. Thus, students gained confidence and assurance whenever they were tasked to do reporting in class.

The participants in FGD₄ conformed that those approaches used by the teachers became their paradigm to be ready at all times when they were assigned to present their report.

“those approaches helped us in developing our communicative competence by means that we are reporting, we are trying to organize our own ideas regarding the topic so in that case, we are not just developing our means of communication but also our skill in developing ideas in order for us to come up with a thought which is relevant and essential to the report” and in the same manner, *“ these approaches helped us enhance our communicative competence because through such activity, we enhance our speaking ability because we can articulate ourselves in the English language. Since we are English majors, we should sharpen our skills when it comes to speaking.* FGD₄Q₂A₁

It vividly implied that reporting in the classroom helped students enhance their communicative abilities. It allowed them boost their self-confidence; discovered self-awareness; determined their strengths and weakness particularly in the use of the second language; and identified their soft skills.

The participants in FGD₃ perceived that a teacher who enforced direct-method in the use of the target language was good and beneficial. In the direct-method, a teacher didn't allow any presenter to speak in the vernacular. Thus, the presenter was forced to speak in the target language. They articulated

“some of the teachers that we have encountered were very firm in their implementation of the use of the English language. Through this, we are able to develop our own vocabulary, but also we develop grammar and fluency when it comes to using and speaking” FGD₃Q₂A₃.

Students were convinced that reporting as a strategy could enhance their ability in using the second language. They believed that through reporting, they were able to tap their hidden abilities and skills.

Levelling and Involving Learners

The participants suggested that for the reporting strategy to be more effective and beneficial among the learners, the teachers need first to determine the abilities of the students. This will to lessen to guide those learners who timid, shy, non-gregarious, and have lower communicative abilities. FGD₃ and FGD₂ said respectively

“the teacher should determine the abilities and skills of the students so that it will not be difficult on the part of the students to deliver or present his report” FGD₂Q₃A₁

“some of the teachers should identify the strengths and weaknesses of the students, whether they are slow or fast learners so that students would be able to cope with the standards set by the teacher” FGD₃Q₃A₂.

Moreover, the participants of FGD₃ added that those learners who were identified to have less communicative competence will be assigned to simple topics which they could carry. Moreover, utilization of the multiple-intelligences may be considered by the mentors.

“the teacher should determine the intellectual skill before assigning the report to them. If the student is not very good in organizing ideas and if his intellectual capacity is not that high, they should be given reports which are complex or complicated. Also, English teachers should not limit on activities that would enhance and discover the multiple intelligences possessed by the students” FGD₃Q₃A₃.

Furthermore, FGD₄ mentioned that there may role-assignment. Teachers may assign panel reactors and facilitators during each presentation. By this, discussion among the presenters and audience can be maximized.

“should change the set-up if she notices that there are only few students who are actively participating in the class. One suggestion would be the employment of as group discussion. It would give other students the opportunity to voice out and share their thoughts with regards to the lesson being discussed by the teacher” FGD₄Q₃A₄.

In summary, the results implied the significant role of teacher as facilitator in the learning of the students. Before a planned strategy can be implemented, needed materials may be prepared. In this case, the teacher prepared presentation rubrics which guide the learners which communicative abilities may be assessed. Moreover, the teacher recognized the willingness of the students by asking for volunteers and the teacher also believed in cooperative learning because the presentation was designed for group.

For the students, reporting as strategy in enhancing their language competence showed great promise. For them reporting didn't only help them identify their language strengths and weaknesses but it also taught them to face their fear of presenting in front of an audience.

The students found the procedures of the teachers in applying reporting in class as good; however, they offered suggestions based on what they thought beneficial to other students.

4. Discussion

This chapter presents the in-depth analysis based from the result of the Focus Group Discussion. Literatures from various sources were included to highlight the results. The participants shared that their names were picked in random order; however, the teacher entertains volunteers. This indicates that the teacher considers those students who have advance communicative abilities and recognizes those students who have the willingness to communicate (WTC). Cao and Philip (2006) perceived that students who have willingness to communicate are influenced by their familiarity with topics, self-confidence, medium of communication and cultural background. Thus, asking students to volunteer has win-win benefits for the teachers and students. On the other hand, the teacher prefers the reporting to be done in groups. The idea of grouping the students for a task constitutes cooperative learning. Accordingly, presenters are given presentation rubrics. Moreover, they are instructed to find related reading materials relevant to their assigned topic.

During their presentation, both their classmates and teacher participate in answer and question which allows the audience to understand better the topic. According to Gillies (2004) mediated-learning interactions like this encourages students to interact more by asking more questions. Thus, students modelled many responses and detailed explanations and shorter responses. In turn, the communicative abilities of the presenters and learners are put into action.

Canale and Swain (1980) explained that when an individual communicates his/her communicative competence depends on his/her knowledge and skill such as the linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, strategic competence and discourse competence. Therefore, when communicative interaction occurs as a result of a topic presented, then, someone's questions, responses, and explanations reflects his entire linguistic competence. Paul (1995), Owens (1996), Catts and Hogans (2003), Stanovich (1986) and Dockrell, Lindsay and Palikara (2001) pointed out that oral language competence can be enhanced through reporting. Because in reporting, students become expressive, develop narrative skills and discover phonemic awareness. The participants affirmed that reporting as a strategy in enhancing communicative competence shows positive and promising results. Through the reporting strategy, they are able to organize idea, to develop confidence, and to discover their unknown skills. Furthermore, they find this reporting strategy very helpful because it gives them a taste of what they will become in the future – to become teachers and lecturers.

Lastly, the participants reiterate that to improve reporting as a strategy in enhancing the communicative skills, teachers need to do additional efforts. First, the teachers need to orient the class that reporting will be one of the many strategies to be used in the course. Second, teachers need to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the students so that he/she can create good groupings. This means that willing and non-willing to communicate students can be put together for better interaction. Third, the teacher may give individual assignment to the presenters like who will create the power point? Who will be the scribes and researchers? Who are the presenters and so on. This is to allow utmost participation of the group members. Lastly, the presentation rubric was good; however, it needs to be explained to the students.

4.1 Implication

Teaching language is challenging and demanding jobs. Many language researchers and experts agreed that there is no best strategy that would cater to all learners; however, applying one strategy at a time and contextualizing it to fit the learners will be a better thing to do. Reporting as a strategy is not new; however, it becomes fresh when it is modified according to the needs of the learners.

Hence, learners need to be involved in deciding what strategy will be included in teaching a course. Moreover, reporting may be found to be a walk-in-a-park among teachers because it most of the time involved students doing the task. Language teachers need to understand that using one strategy may defeat the purpose of learning.

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