

TEACHING STRATEGIES IN TEACHING LITERATURE: STUDENTS IN FOCUS

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to determine the teaching strategies used by the AB English teachers in teaching literature courses. It also sought the purposes and the processes on the conduct of the teaching strategies and the impressions of the students towards the use of the strategies. Using the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) among the students and teachers and document analysis, the researchers found that teachers used varieties of teaching strategies but reporting emerged to be common. Moreover, lecture-discussion was found to be the most effective strategy in the teaching of literature. It also revealed that teaching strategies were used to address the different learning skills of the students. Lastly, students were satisfied on the performance and strategies used by the teachers. It was recommended that innovations of the existing effective teaching strategies must be developed to achieve desired learning outcomes.

Keywords: Literature, Teaching strategies, Focus Group Discussion, AB English, University of Mindanao, Davao City, Philippines

1. INTRODUCTION

There is not one single strategy which fits all types of learners. A traditional lecture may inspire one but frustrate the others; a task-based enthuse the exuberant students but may confuse and discourage the timid ones. Hence, teachers must prepare a careful planned lesson with various teaching strategies so that all learners may be satisfied.

Professors, lecturers, and instructors of the institutions of higher learning are pressured to make their learners responsive to the future societal roles these students make take. As a result, faculty are put into the dilemma on how they could answer the call of their duties – to become effective teacher. And to become effective, teachers need to learn, adopt, and use teaching strategies in their day to day lessons in the classroom. Mulligan (2011) pointed out that effective teaching requires ‘flexibility and creativity, constant monitor and adjustment’ of the teaching techniques. Knutson (2014) on the other hand pointed out that choosing the appropriate approaches in teaching and how these approaches are done is pertinent to students’ learning. Bay (2012) maintained that the success of the teaching strategy depends on the frequency of its use in the classroom. Center to Teaching Learning (2014) found that teaching effective teaching does not only involve the utilization of tools, techniques, and strategies but also the comprehension of meanings specifically on how students learn, process information, motivates themselves, and the things which hinders learning.

Just like teaching other subjects in the higher educational institutions, teachers teaching literature in English courses are facing the challenges on the appropriateness of the teaching strategies used. Lambert (1985) viewed teachers in the classroom as dilemma manager, a broker of contradictory interests and concluded that teaching is a personal view of academic image. Shulman (1987) argued that teaching in the classroom ignored comprehension and reasoning, transformation and reflection. While Kirschner, Sweller & Clark (2006) noticed the expert and novice use of unguided or minimally guided instructional approaches which are very popular and intuitively appealing but less effective and less efficient.

In the University of Mindanao, annual retooling programs for teachers are conducted every summer to update teachers on the new and trending teaching strategies. However, the training though beneficial on the part of the teachers, they still need to fit these learned and newly acquired teaching strategies to the needs of their students. Hence, this study will be conducted to determine the teaching strategies used by the teachers assist students learning, to identify what teaching strategies considered efficient by the students, and to recognize students’ inventive teaching strategies which they believe effective for their learning.

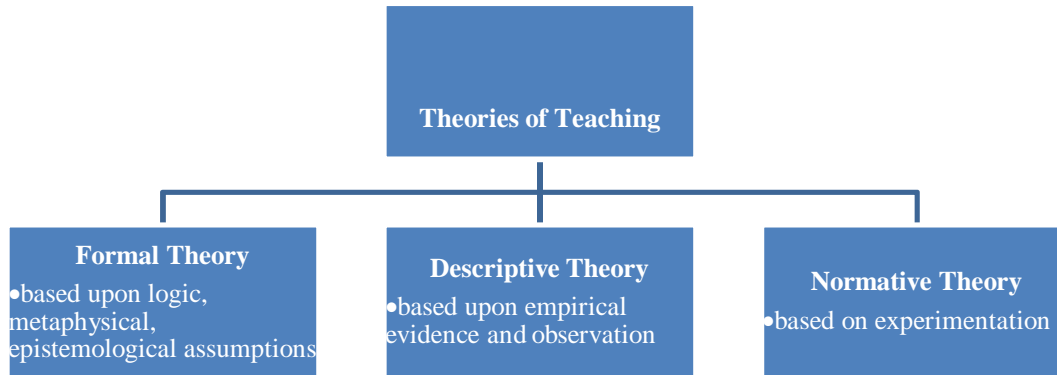
1.1. Research Questions

The primary goal of this study is to determine the different teaching strategies used by the AB English teachers in teaching literature courses, to find out the purpose of the teachers in using the strategies, and to discover impressions of the students on the teachings strategies used. Specifically, it sought answers to the following questions:

1. What are the teaching strategies used by the AB English teachers in teaching literature subjects?
2. What are the purposes of the AB English teachers in using the teaching strategies?
3. How teaching strategies are conducted by the literature teachers?
4. How students feel about the teaching strategies used by the AB English teachers in teaching literature?

1.2. Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on the Theories of Teaching. These theories reflect and interact with the views of the teachers and the reactions of the students in the process of learning.



Formal Theory of Teaching has four (4) philosophical theories of teaching 1) *Meutic Theory of Teaching* which conceives that teaching process helps to unfold knowledge with the questioning techniques. The focus of this theory is on self-realization. The ‘socratic method’ is an essential for this theory. 2) *The Communication Theory of Teaching* which contends that the teacher possesses all knowledge and information which the student does not possess. It further assumes that the learner is like a paper, the teacher can imprint upon it. 3) *The Molding Theory of Teaching* which focuses on basic assumption that human personality is formed, shaped, and molded by their environment and 4) *The Mutual Inquiry Theory of Teaching* which proposed that recorded facts as ‘information’ knowledge is generally substituted for inquiry. Further, it contends that true knowledge is inquiry which can be used in solving a problem.

Descriptive Theory of Teaching has two philosophical theories of teaching 1) *Instruction Theory of Teaching* which proposes the relationship between the outcome of education and measure both the conditions to which the student is exposed and variables representing characteristics of the student and 2) *Prescriptive Theory of Teaching* which composes three phrases. Firstly, the teacher is the analyst of the teaching problem and teaching tests before teaching takes place. Secondly, decisions are made about the relationship of the variables deemed.

Normative Theory of Teaching has four theories of teaching 1) *The Cognitive Theory of Teaching* which assumes that one theory of teaching cannot serve the purpose of education, hence, there should be more than one theory because teaching may be analyzed in several ways. 2) *Theory of Teacher-behavior* which concerns the interaction between the teacher and students in the classroom. 3) *Psychological Theory of Teaching* which focuses on the contractual relationship between the teacher and learners and 4) *General Theory of Teaching* which assumes that teaching is a process designed and performed to make change in the behavior of students.

2. METHOD

Presented in this chapter are the methods and procedures used in this study. The presentation includes the research design, research participants, research instrument use, and procedures in gathering the information.

2.1. Research Design

This research used the qualitative – realistic phenomenological method developed by Daubert, Reinach, Pfander, Scheler, Ingarden, Hartman and Kocher in 1902 (Smith, 1997). Realistic phenomenology analysed the ‘intentional structures’ of mental acts as they are directed at both real and ideal objects (Masten, 2008) and it searched for the universal essences of various sorts of matters, including human actions, motives, and selves (Linsenmayer, 2011). This method is appropriate to this research because it focuses on the descriptions of what students experiences and ‘how it is that they experience what they experience’ (Patton, 1990); it searches for essentials, invariant structure (or essence) or the central underlying meaning of the experience and emphasize the intentionality of consciousness (Creswell, 1998); it also focuses on the essence of ‘lived experiences’ of the learners (Rossman and Rallis, 1998); it understands "how the everyday, inter-subjective world is constituted" (Schwandt, 2000). In this study, the real experiences, reactions, impressions and insights of the AB English students on the strategies used by the teachers was at the center of appreciation.

2.2. Research Respondents

The research participants of this study were taken 108 AB English students enrolled during the first semester of school year 2014-2015. Each year level was represented by seven (7) students; hence, there were four (4) Focus Group Discussion (FGD) and a total of 28 participants.

2.3. Research Instruments

Research guide questions were formulated based on the research questions. The guide questions were composed of four main questions and probe questions which aimed at determining the kinds of teaching strategies used by the AB English teachers in teaching literature and the impact of these strategies to the students. These questions were subjected to experts’ evaluation and validation.

2.4. Procedures in Gathering Information

The source of information of this study was mainly acquired through Focus Group Discussion (FGD) among the four (4) groups of AB English students. Firstly, a letter of permission was given to the AB English teachers who handled literature subjects. The same teachers were also asked to recommend students to be interviewed. After which individual letter of permission was given to the selected students for Focus Group Discussion (FGD). During the FGD, we facilitated the procedures of the discussion and took detailed notes and recordings of the proceedings. After the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was conducted among the four (4) groups, we transcribed, coded and interpreted based on the research problems.

Further, to verify the information taken from the students, we conducted another Focus Group Discussion (FGD) among AB English teachers handling literature subjects. The same procedures with the students were followed.

Lastly, document analysis with the literature syllabi were conducted to triangulate the information gathered from the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) among AB English students and teachers.

2.5. Trustworthiness of the Study

In handling the verisimilitude (Creswell, 2007) of this research, we observed four important procedures in order that gathered information to be reliable. These included credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Lincoln and Guba (1985) explained that credibility is established when there is a prolonged engagement and persistent observation of the participants. In this study, this was not an issue because all the participants, the students and teachers, in this study belonged to the AB English program; hence, all of them were our students

and colleagues. Animosity between and among the participants was not an issue because we already built trust with them. Thus, it made us confident that because of this atmosphere of easiness with our participants they were able to relay sincere and honest answers to the questions given to them.

On the other hand, Creswell (2007) said that transferability is obtained when the results of the study will be utilized by other researchers in their search for clarifications; and degree in which the research can be transferred to other contexts (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). This particular aspect was realized in this study because its result would give insights to the readers and researchers information on the various teaching strategies, reasons of using the strategies, and impressions of the students on the teachings strategies which they could use to other cases. Moreover, transferability was addressed when we made specific details of the situations and methods which readers could compare to similar situation that they were knowledgeable with.

The concept of dependability is based on the assumption of replicability or repeatability (Trochim, 2006) of the study. We observed this aspect by strictly following the standard in the conduct of research. Thus, we anchored this inquiry with the theories appropriate to teaching strategies. Further, we subjected the research questions to experts' validation. We also gathered enough related studies to strengthen the results and claims of this study.

Lastly, confirmability refers to the authenticity of the results which could be verified by others (Trochim, 2006). This aspect was established in this research through the audit trail and coding applied in the information gathered. The reference codes were indicated in every line of the transcripts. Lastly, recordings and transcripts of the gathered information were made available upon the request of the readers.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Presented in this section were the information taken from the four (4) the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) conducted among the AB English students and teachers and from the conducted document analysis on the AB English literature syllabi.

Deviating from the Structure

In our contemporary classroom setting, teachers are faced with enormous challenge in responding to the complex and rapidly changing society. Schools through its teachers are being asked to educate various learners with different cultural background, economic status, and cognitive abilities. Darling-Hammond (2008) pointed out that to realize students' cognition requires vast skillful teaching on the part of the teachers. While Orlich, et. al (2012) believed that good teachers reflect the way in which they will present a lesson and through their education, have a variety of instructional strategies at their disposal.

Relating to the above literatures, the participants revealed that their literature teachers had most of the time use the reporting strategy in teaching the lessons. Reporting strategy was done by assigning a piece of literature (poem, fiction, or play) to a student (FGD 1 and FGD 4) or as an additional task associated with other strategies like dramatization (FGD2) and discussion with other students and teacher (FGD 3). Additionally, FGD 2 and FGD 3 reiterated that student-reporter needed to be backed by the teacher's processing of the information.

In the document analysis of 12 (twelve) literature syllabi, (English 38, English 4a, English 11, English 19, English 28, English 29, English 331, English 20, English 22, English 32 and English 421) it revealed that lecture or lecture-discussion was the most common strategy used followed by role play (dramatization and characterization), group discussion and presentation, group debate and

reportorial. This means that literature teachers deviated from the syllabi by way of using the reportorial strategy even if it was not indicated in the syllabi.

The teachers in literature revealed that their common strategies used in teaching the literature subjects were dramatization and role-playing (P1L3-4, L11, L16), lecture and reporting (P1L7,L16,L29). They also indicated paint the picture, report, group works, sharing of experiences, summary of selection, oration, reflection, pantomime, opera, puppets, shadow play. Miller and Mason (1983) clarified that the use of dramatization or role-play exercises in the classroom was important to 'drive home lessons'; to improve 'reading skills and self-concepts' (Andrianoff and Levine (2002); to 'addresses the situation' (Hornecker, Eden and Scharff (2002); and to function as an important communicative activities (Ueda, 2003). I believed that teachers used common teaching strategies to address some inevitable problems in the teacher and students relationship and to fulfill the task of delivering the knowledge to the learners. This particular condition manifests the *theory of teacher-behavior* which proposes that interaction between the teacher and the learners is of importance to have a meaningful collaboration.

In summary, incongruence of answers was noticed. The literature students revealed that reportorial was the most commonly used strategy by the teachers. In the syllabi, it revealed that lecture or lecture-discussion was the most likely used by the teachers while the teachers' FGD results showed that they used most of the time dramatization or role playing and lecture. These results imply that at worst literature teachers do not follow the syllabi as a guide, at best, teachers might have different specific goals for their students. Instead of using lecture or lecture-discussion which is teacher-centered, they opted to have reportorial which put the students into the limelight. In this instance, the teacher used the molding theory which contends that 'human personality is formed, shaped, by their environment' and practice. Teachers believed that by exposing the students to reportorial presentation, students will be able to exercise their oral, written, reading and presentation skills.

Students Love the Traditional Approach

Most of the participants (FGD 1, FGD 2 and FGD 4) believed the lecture was the most effective strategy in the teaching of literature subjects. In lecture there were inputs and outputs (FGD1); allowed students to measure the knowledge of the teacher on the topic (FGD 2); involved interactions between the teacher and the students (FGD 3). Aside from lecture, oral recitation and boards works were considered by the FGD 1 to be effective because these strategies allowed students to participate actively; for FGD 2, dramatization through group work was effective because it made the classroom interactive and fun; and for FGD 3 considered reporting to be helpful in facilitating their understanding of the lessons because it allowed the reporter-student to develop confidence. Lastly, FGD 4 had varied answers. They believed that effective strategies were literary criticism because they better understand the text; theater act because it enhanced their talents, abilities and skills in acting; monologue and role playing because by these strategies, they could internalize the character, time, speech, tone and feel the emotion.

On the other hand, the literature teachers believed that there was no best teaching method in the teaching of literature (P2L11). However, they presented their preferred teaching methods like lecture because it was practical for the students (P2L13) and ISO method which addressed the four macro-skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening (P2L16-17). In general, the teachers of literature agreed that the teaching of the course need eclectic approach (P2L28) to deal with the learners different personalities (P2L32), to support with the various theories specifically that of the Ellen Showalter (P2L24), to make learner do more of what were expected of them (P2L30).

Assumedly, the literature believed in the *cognitive theory of teaching* which considered that no one theory could explain teaching; hence, it needed variety.

In summary, teaching strategies are used based on the students' presumed abilities and needs; hence, no one strategy could be called better than the other. The students' perceived effective teaching strategy was their preferred one based on their skills, cognition, cultures, beliefs, and others. Burnard and Morrison (1992) found that students tended to prefer a teacher-centered strategy while lecturers preferred a student-centered strategy; Siefert (1998) pointed out the teachers' pedagogical and subject matter's awareness and students' difficulties are indicators in the choice of teaching strategies; Cuthrell and Lyon (2007) corroborated with Burnard and Morrison that students preferred independent, passive modes because of ease, convenience, and comfort. On the other hand, Chamorro-Premuzic and Furnham (2007) discovered that personality and teaching strategies are distinct, but related constructs.

The Significance of Teaching Strategies

The participants believed that teachers in literature used the teaching strategies for the students to learn the lessons easily, to motivate the students, to acquire knowledge and answers to queries and for the students to apply what they learned (FGD 1); they considered that teachers strategized their lessons to suit to the needs of the students and to strengthen the students' weaknesses (FGD 2); they deemed these teaching strategies used by the teachers because teachers wanted to develop confidence and competence in communication skills of learners (FGD 3); and they cogitated that teaching strategies were utilized to cater students multiple intelligences and to have a first-hand experience of the lesson (FGD 4).

The teacher-participants also revealed they used teaching strategies because these were ways to help learners learn the lessons (P6L2), to engage students (P6L2), to address the needs of diverse students' personalities, cognitions (P6L6-7) & (P5L5) and interests (P5L9), to explore students' multiple intelligences (P5L11-12), and to make the learning of literature fun (P5L13). The above information corroborated with Teacher strategies (n.d) which pointed out that the main purpose of using the teaching strategies was to make the implementation of the varieties of teaching techniques easy; to guide students take responsibility of their learning; to make the learning environment more interactive while Armstrong (2013) indicted that teaching strategies were used to support students learn the desired objectives of the lesson.

In summary, the use of teaching strategies was inevitable in the classroom. Teachers used them for different reasons; however, one thing was clear, teachers used teaching strategies not only to deliver the lessons but also to help the learners absorb and grasp the pertinent information embedded in the lessons.

Impression on the Strategies

Participants generally had varieties of responses in terms of how they felt with regards to the teaching strategies used by their literature teachers in their lessons. FGD 1 mentioned that they found those teaching strategies to be good because those strategies challenged their cognitive abilities, encouraged and motivates them to think critically, and pressured them because they those strategies gave them responsibilities to do. FGD 2 felt happy to the teaching strategies used by their teachers because those allowed them to have an exchange of ideas with others, gave them the opportunity to enhance their speaking abilities, put them into the limelight, and helped develop their confidence. FGD 3 felt impressed and happy because those strategies helped them to understand the

lessons easily and to improve their learning skills. However, one group member commented that those strategies used were not appropriate to those students who do not know how to speak English. For FGD 4, they felt grateful because those strategies used by their teachers catered and allowed their skills to be exposed. Moreover, through those strategies they care experience cooperation with their classmates and they were able to learn many things. They were also thankful and satisfied. They believed that the money they paid was worth what they received.

On the part of the teachers, they felt satisfied and fulfilled especially when they saw slow learners participated (P3L3). They observed that intellectually challenged learners were expressive of their emotions during the literature class (P3L7). They were also elated and excited at the same time cautious on how they would apply the strategy (P3L10). Lastly, they felt like a missionary saint (P3L15) because they considered teaching literature as teaching moral (P3L16) to the students. This particular situation supported that *general theory of teaching* which contended that teaching was a planned procedure to influence the learners. Hence, whenever the mentors observed development in their learners, they felt satisfied because they were able to deliver their task.

3.1. Conclusion

Unlike a master key, teaching of literature does not have one strategy fits all dictum. Teaching strategies partly and wholly dependent on the students' needs and the teachers' knowledge, experience, and expertise; thus, making the teaching of literature demanding and exciting. Nunan (1991) reiterated that "there never was and probably never will a strategy for all". This idea of Nunan is supported by Kappler (2001) who pointed out that teaching does not solely rely in accessing a checklist of skills but rather in understanding the strategies to adopt with different learners, in different curricular conditions and in different cultural settings. It is therefore ideal and inevitable on the part of the teacher to involve the learners in the conceptualization and planning of the syllabus of a particular course. By this, learners will realize their importance and role in the learning process. This implies that syllabi should and must be revised as often to respond to the learning needs of the students. It is suggested that innovations of the existing effective teaching strategies must be enhanced to achieve desired learning outcomes among the learners. However, this study found out that teachers commonly used the reporting strategy in teaching the lessons while the students found lecture strategy to be effective in facilitating their learning.

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