

Exploring Parent-Teacher Collaboration to Improve Students' Vocabulary Skills: An Action Research

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ABSTRACT

This action research was conducted to help students develop their vocabulary skills through parent-teacher collaboration and to help parents and teachers understand that collaboration is an important aspect that warrants enough attention. Thus, few studies have focused on parent-teacher collaboration to help students develop their vocabulary skills. This study applies Beck, McKeown, and Kucan's (2013) three-tiered model of vocabulary to gauge the vocabulary level of the students. Moreover, the researchers used quasi-experimental research to test whether or not collaboration between teachers and parents is effective in improving the vocabulary skills of students. This study used pre-test and post-test to measure students' vocabulary skills. A training matrix was developed by the researchers to be used for the month-long duration of the experiment. In the matrix, the researchers employed vocabulary exercises during the experiment. The data gathered were statistically analyzed using SPSS. The results of the study are presented and discussed with reference to the aim of the study; (1) based on the computed mean of the pre- and post-tests, it was found out that there is an increase in the students' level of performance in vocabulary. Moreover, (2) the results accepted the hypothesis that there is a significant difference before and after the exposure to parent-teacher collaboration. Lastly, (3) it is proposed that parent-teacher partnership shall be the next priority of the school Continuous Improvement Program (CIP) which will highlight communication skills primarily.

1. INTRODUCTION

Teacher-parent collaboration is a burgeoning academic partnership that aims to improve students' educational status. In fact, teachers are not only involved in educating students, but are increasingly involved in working with parents to improve educational outcomes (Ellis, 2012). Collaborative partnerships between parents and teachers have valued different skills, experiences, and knowledges that parents and teachers bring to educational decision on the needs of individual students (Epstein, 2001).

In the administration of different language tests, most of the students get low scores in reading comprehension, vocabulary, and grammar tests. Hence, teachers have been frustrated about the disconcerting levels of vocabulary skills among the students that result in poor comprehension. Moreover, English proficiency in the Philippines, as well as in

other subject areas, is declining (Madrurnio, Martin, & Plata, 2016).

In their book, Madrunio, Martin, and Plata (2016) discussed the overview of the results of National Achievement Test (NAT) in English from school years 2004-2005, 2005-2006, and 2011-2012. The NAT results from the abovementioned school years showed the continuing deterioration of English proficiency of high school students in the Philippines as shown in the figure below (Department of Education (2012) as cited by Madrunio, Martin, and Plata (2016).

Figure 1 shows the performance of the high school students in English for the past years has been on the decline and are significantly low. In addition, as regards to the data, students were not able to achieve the 75% passing rate in English. It is for this reason, teachers need to make sense of these data so they can

identify what is the reason behind this low results of NAT in English for several years.

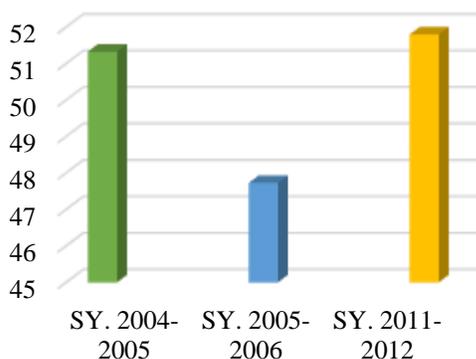


Figure 1. The national performance of High School students in the NAT (English)

One of the main reasons why students get low scores in English tests is they have limited vocabulary because they do not have enough reading materials at home. In addition, parents have also a limited time to help their sons and daughters in their school works. Further, they are not financially capable to buy different kinds of reading materials for them to read during their leisure time. Above and beyond, poor home literacy environments contribute to the shortcomings of students in reading (Johari, Tom, Morni, & Sahari, 2013).

Vocabulary is one of the most important skills that learners need to develop in order for them to become proficient in the language that they are learning. Similarly, Richards and Renandya (2002) contend that vocabulary is a central part of dialect capability and gives a significant part of the premise to how well students talk, tune in, read, and compose. Learning this skill will make students able to do things easily for they can comprehend well what they are reading and listening.

Baras-Pinugay Integrated High School is a public secondary school that is situated in a relocation site wherein students came from different places in the Philippines. The kind of home environment of these students is a lot different from a typical home environment in a rural area or place. These students are really diverse in nature.

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They usually do not spare time in reading but they rather work during their free time to earn money to help their family in the daily financial necessities. Whenever they read, these students usually read newspapers such as *Bulgar*, *Tiktik*, *Abante* and other non-English texts. Further, these are the only materials that are available at home. That is why when these students go to school, they usually get low scores in their activities that will result to underwhelming academic outcomes such as having low grades. Students have been experiencing this dilemma for they lack vocabulary; hence, poor comprehension follows. They need to be exposed to different reading materials to enrich their vocabulary that will help increase their comprehension as well. In 2007, Hindi and Paratore stated that children who come from low income homes experience reading failure.

One of the cornerstones of a proficient English speaker is acquiring vocabulary. Several experts in the field of vocabulary development proposed different models (Graves, 2000; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998; Kamil & Hiebert, 2005) to help language educators create their own program to enrich students' vocabulary skills. In the model of Beck, McKeown, and Kucan's (2013), the levels of vocabulary are considered which means that words can be used in different ways so students can create sentences and concepts related to its meaning. To gauge the vocabulary level of the students, Beck, McKeown, and Kucan's (2013) three-tiered model of vocabulary was used. They classified words as follow:



Figure 2. Tiers of Vocabulary

These words are imperative for giving thoughts amid exercises and building understudies' experience learning (Sprengr, 2014). Parents of these students need to pay attention to the academic performance of their children. However, based on the survey made by the researchers, it was revealed that most of the students' parents do not help them with their homework and other school-related activities. Thus, this results in poor study habits among the learners. As such, the researchers attempted to conduct this study to help students improve their vocabulary skills. In like manner, previously, vocabulary education and learning were frequently given little attention in second dialect programs, yet as of late, there has been a restored enthusiasm for the idea of vocabulary (Richards & Renandya, 2002).

To help students improve their vocabulary, teachers need to collaborate with parents. Since few studies explore on parent-teacher collaboration to improve the language skills of the students, parent-teacher collaboration has been an unexplored area of inquiry. Teachers overlook that home environment is one of the core reasons of poor reading skills. Furthermore, parents and the literacy environments they create in their homes are widely believed to play an important role in the development of children's reading and language skills (Evans, Shaw, & Bell, 2000).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review was organized into several sections to further discuss the importance and perspectives of parent-teacher collaboration, home environment, and importance of vocabulary skills.

2.1 Parent-Teacher Collaboration

Epstein (1997) stated that parental involvement constitutes the school-related activities, attitudes, and/or behaviors which occur at home (homework), in the school (meetings, support and/or volunteering) or within the community (assistance and/or volunteering), that positively impact on a child's educational outcome (as cited in Ellis, 2012; Ertl, 2000; Porter, 2008). Further, parent engagement in

schools can promote positive behaviors among children and adolescents. For instance, students who feel supported by their parents are less likely to experience emotional distress, practice unhealthy eating behaviors, consider or attempt suicide, or disengage from school and learning.

Parents and teachers share the same goals for children and students; they want each individual to do their best to not only to finish their studies but also to see their improvement in every discipline. This will happen when parents and teachers work together. This can happen in a number of ways: first, keeping lines of communication open between parents and teachers. Second, parents help by setting time for schoolwork at home. Third, teachers can send newsletters, create blogs, make phone calls, and send report cards and follow-ups to parents. Fourth, parents can attend parent/teacher meetings to make sure those parents are all on the same page with teachers and students. Fifth, parents can volunteer in the school improvement projects. Sixth, parents can help teachers by letting them know about things happening at home. Thus, teachers and parents can work as a team to provide the best for students (Whirlledge, 2016).

Furthermore, teachers really need to think of different ways in order for the students to learn everything that they need. One of which is the collaboration with the parents. According to Henderson and Berla (1997), when schools work together with families to support learning, children tend to succeed not just in school, but also throughout life (as cited in Ellis, 2012).

2.2 Home Environment

Good education does not happen by chance. It is a product of effective teaching and learning coupled with the effort of the teachers, the school, the students, parents and their various home environments (Obeta, 2014). Home environment is one of the factors that teachers need to consider in identifying the reasons of students for having poor reading skills. Education starts at home wherein parents are the first teachers of their children. If students do not have good home

environment, they will not have a good foundation that will lead to poor study habit. Moreover, Nanalee (1997) pointed out that a positive home learning environment provides social interaction, attention and activities which promote the development of positive attitudes to learning, as well as the acquisition of physical, intellectual, language, social and emotional skills (as cited in Obeta, 2014).

2.3 Vocabulary Skills

Vocabulary skill is an important skill that learners need to learn in order to become proficient in the language. Likewise, Anderson and Freebody (1981) argue that a child who has a wide vocabulary can be good communicator, who knows more words, is able to process various reading texts and is competent to engage in active conversations with people from different backgrounds and proficiency levels (as cited in Sidek & Rahim, 2015).

Furthermore, if students have rich vocabulary, it will not be difficult for them to comprehend what they are reading. They can understand it well as well as expound their ideas based on what they have read. With this, Pikulski and Templeton (2004) opine that people who have large speaking vocabularies generally tend to have large listening, reading, and writing vocabulary; likewise, people who are limited in one of these aspects are likely limited in other aspects as well. Additionally, Marzano (2004) also underscores that effective vocabulary instruction is critical for increasing students' academic achievement. Educational researchers have shown for years that vocabulary knowledge plays a significant role in reading comprehension.

This paper aims to build partnership with the parents and involve them in the teaching and learning process in promoting students' learning. Specifically, it hopes to explore parent and teacher partnership in the development of the vocabulary skills of the learners. Thus, the purpose of this study is to engage parents in the learning process to help improve students' vocabulary.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The present study aimed to improve the vocabulary skills of Grade 11 students through parent-teacher collaboration. It specifically sought answers to the following research questions:

1. What is the level of performance of the students in vocabulary before and after exposure to parent-teacher collaboration?
2. Is there a significant difference in the level of performance in vocabulary before and after exposure to parent-teacher collaboration?
3. What enhancement programs could be proposed to further sustain students' vocabulary vis-à-vis parent-teacher collaboration?

4. RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY

Studies involving parents in enhancing vocabulary skills of the learners are limited. This study will give a great emphasis on improving the vocabulary skills of the students while engaging their parents in the teaching and learning process, which would greatly help them in future. This will bridge the gap between the home and school. The data that this research gathers will also help learners' parents and/or guardians understand that their presence in the academe has an impact to the learners and would contribute a lot to the students' academic success.

5. SCOPE AND LIMITATION

This study was confined to the development of students' vocabulary through parent-teacher collaboration. It was piloted to purposively selected ten Grade 11 students of Baras-Pinugay Integrated High School – Senior High Department whose parents expressed their intention to join in the experiment. It is worth mentioning that the aspects of vocabulary are too broad; hence, the areas covered in the study only included the following: synonyms, homophones, prefixes, and context clues.

6. METHODOLOGY

This study sought to establish the effectiveness of parent-teacher collaboration to the development of the vocabulary skills of the senior high school students.

6.1 Research Design

The research used quasi-experimental, one group pre-test and post-test design, that tests whether or not a month-long parent-teacher collaboration could improve students' vocabulary skills. In using quasi-experimental, it allowed the parents to take part in the study for the reason that the experiment only took part for 1-month. In addition, quasi-experimental study reduces the time and resources required because extensive pre-screening and randomization is not required or utilized.

6.2 Respondents of the Study

The respondents in the study were 10 selected Grade 11 students of the aforementioned school together with their parents. These students were usually coming from the low-socioeconomic status families wherein they spend their monthly family income with the necessary things. In addition, they were chosen using purposive sampling technique. Below is the demographic profile of the ten parents purposively chosen for the study:

Table 1: Profile of the Parent-Respondents

Demographic Variables		f	%
Gender	Male	0	0
	Female	10	1
Marital Status	Married	9	0.9
	Single	1	0.1
Age	Less than 30 years	1	0.1
	More than 30 years	9	0.9
Educational Qualification	Elementary Graduate	2	0.2
	High School Graduate	8	0.8
	Working	0	0
Employment Status	Not Working	10	1

A letter of consent was given to the respondents. This consent form is necessary to ensure that the respondents understood the purpose of their involvement and that they agree to the conditions of their participation in this study.

6.3 Data Gathering Procedure

A profile survey questionnaire was created and various reading materials for vocabulary exercises were also selected. The experts in the field of language validated these materials.

Respondents were chosen purposively and they were also informed about their participation in the study. However, the participation of the students depends on the decision of their parents because the researchers need voluntary intention in joining this study. Likewise, parents who agreed to join the study were invited for an orientation regarding their involvement to help their children improve their vocabulary skills. Moreover, parents agreed that they need to go back to school every Monday for one month to have consultative dialogues regarding the performance of the students.

After the respondents (both parents and students) were selected, pre-test was created to gauge the level of vocabulary of the chosen respondents.

Furthermore, each week students were given different types of reading texts with exercises that they will answer at home and once difficulties are encountered, their parents will help them in accomplishing the exercises. There is also "Kamustahan" to the students and parents to monitor the progress of the experiment. Whenever, the parents were not able to come to school for a short consultative dialogue, home visitations were directed.

6.4 Instrument

A training matrix or plan of activities for the students and parents to follow was designed and reading materials for vocabulary words of pre-test and post-test were also selected. Table 2 shows the training

matrix or plan of activities that the respondents will follow:

Table 2: Training Matrix

Time Frame		Content Outline	Instructional Delivery: Home-Based Activity	Assessment Strategy	In-charge
Week 1	5 days	Overview of the Orientation	Orientation, Lecture, Discussion, <i>Kamustahan</i> (Focus Group Discussion), Home Visitation	Pre-test (for the students), Exercises	Teacher-Researchers, Parents, Student Council, and Students
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roles of the Parents during the conduct of the study • Aspects of Vocabulary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Synonyms ✓ Homophones ✓ Prefixes ✓ Context Clues 			
Week 2	5 days	Topic 1: <i>Synonyms</i>	Lecture, Discussion, <i>Kamustahan</i> (Focus Group Discussion), Home Visitation	Exercises, Post-test	Teacher-Researchers, Parents and Students
Week 3	5 days	Topic 2: <i>Homophones</i>			
Week 4	5 days	Topic 3: <i>Prefixes</i>			
		Topic 4: <i>Context Clues</i>			

7. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The quantitative findings of this study are discussed in this section.

7.1 The Level of Performance of Students Before and After Exposure to Parent-Teacher Collaboration

Table 3 shows the vocabulary aspects enhanced before and after exposure to parent-teacher collaboration. Each domain in the test had a reading text that the student-respondents need to read before they answer the activities. The student-respondents had increased their performance in terms of different aspects in vocabulary before and after the intervention program. Despite this though, the grand mean of each aspect after the intervention of parent-teacher collaboration was higher than that before the intervention.

Because of frequent assistance from the parents in answering the vocabulary tasks, they have been habituated, to some extent, student-respondents got used to have done the tasks every other day of course with the guidance of the parents.

Table 3: Computed Mean on the Level of Performance of Students for Each Domain

Domains	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Synonyms	47.30	7.52	Very Good Vocabulary
Homophones	42.50	6.80	Very Good Vocabulary
Prefixes	49.60	4.69	Excellent Vocabulary
Context Clues	30.50	8.03	Good Vocabulary

They are also reminded that they have to do the activities for they need them to submit the next day. Similarly, as can be seen in Table 4, responses to the items show that post-test has the highest mean value of 43.30 which is verbally interpreted as “Very Good Vocabulary” and standard deviation of 8.87. It clearly reveals that the latter is higher than the first. It indicates that the performance level of the students after exposure to parent-teacher collaboration has increased. In fact, most of the respondents’ scores

have shown patterns of improvement as they increased along with the increasing tier of vocabulary.

Table 4: Computed Mean on the Level of Performance of Students' Before and After Exposure to Parent-Teacher Collaboration

	Mean	Std. Deviation	Interpretation
Pre-test	36.90	9.36	Good Vocabulary
Post-Test	43.30	8.87	Very Good Vocabulary

The findings reinforce McWayne et.al's (2004) research which indicated that learners whose parents are in contact with the school showed higher academic skills than those whose parents did not coordinate with the school at all. A more recent research conducted by Porter (2008) revealed that learner's achievement in reading has improved when parent-teacher collaboration was evident.

This implies that the presence of the parents in the teaching and learning process affects the learners' performance. Parents need to monitor the academic standing of the students in school. This also implies that parent involvement has a positive and significant effect to the performance of the learners. McNeal Jr. (2014) argues that parents simply need to continue to speak with their children about the importance of schooling. In addition, Carpenter and Lall (2005) mentioned that it is important for the teachers and school administrators to embrace parent engagement initiatives enthusiastically (as cited by Feiler, 2009).

The result ultimately disagrees with Goodall and Vorhaus' (2010) claim that teachers often lack the confidence and knowledge to work with parents, and schools do not always recognise or value the ways in which parents are already engaged with children's learning.

7.2 The Significant Difference in the Level of Performance in Vocabulary Before and After Exposure to Parent-Teacher Collaboration

Table 5 presents the significant difference between the level of performance of students in vocabulary before and after the experiment.

Table 5: Computed P-value on the Significant Difference in the Level of Performance in Vocabulary Before and After Exposure to Parent-Teacher Collaboration

	df	Sig. (2 tailed)	H ₁	Interpretation
Pre-test – Post-test	9	.001	Accepted	Significant

Table 5 presents the results of the paired samples t-test computed to determine if there is a significant difference in the mean scores before and after exposure to parent-teacher collaboration. As can be seen from the results, there is a significant difference in the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test, since the $p = 0.01$ is less than the alpha 0.05. This means that there is sufficient sample evidence, which proves that the performance of the respondents has improved after exposure to parent-teacher collaboration.

This result is supported by the study made by Hughes and Kwok's (2007) which emphasized that parental involvement specifically in reading has contributed a lot in student's success. Similarly, Driessen et.al. (2005) asserted that parental involvement was associated with learner's improved academic performance.

7.3 The Proposed Program to Further Sustain Students' Vocabulary Skills vis-à-vis Parent-Teacher Collaboration

The result of the consultative dialogue conducted after every conference with the parents and home visitations reveal that parents who are actively involved in the school activity manage to bring positive changes not only to the academic performance of their children but also to the learners' attitude towards learning. This conforms to Epstein's (1997) claim that parental

involvement can result to a positive impact on a child's educational outcome.

Furthermore, parent-teacher partnership also provides motivation to the learners in trying to become hard working enough so that they will be able to learn the expected competencies at a specific time. This supports Ellis (2012) idea that teachers are not only involved in educating students, but are increasingly involved in working with parents to improve educational outcomes.

5. CONCLUSION

For several years, researchers have done studies on parental involvement (Driessen, Smit, & Slegers, 2005; Ellis, 2012; Feiler, 2009; Goodall & Vorhaus, 2010; Lekli & Kaloti, 2015) which contributed a lot in the success of the student in terms of academic performance. Parent-teacher collaboration is emphasized to be an advantageous potential of fostering students' success in a properly managed school environment. Also, a school that establishes shared responsibility and pursues effective verbal exchange with the parents can contribute to the learners' academic progress. With these being mentioned, consistent and open communication with the parents may result to an increased level of the learners' motivation and improved academic performance specifically in vocabulary.

This present study has limitations since it is only a pilot study on vocabulary development thru the help of the parents in the teaching and learning process. It is along these lines a need to recognize interventions that are successful in supporting parental contribution, especially those guardians who are either not necessarily associated with their youngsters' instruction or who are not included by any means.

This provides implications to the teachers and school administrators that parent-teacher associations shall be empowered in order to make the necessary undertakings that will benefit not only the learners but the whole school which is really needed in the public school.

This present study hopes to continue the pursuit to explore parent-teacher collaboration to enhance the vocabulary skills of the learners. It is therefore essential for the teachers to broaden their horizons for possible collaborations not only with the parents but also to other stakeholders in the academe. This study also hopes that the first intervention program in enhancing the vocabulary skills of the learners shall be further enhanced to sustain the ever-changing type of learners in the Philippines.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Generally, the school administrator, the parents, and the teachers recommend a continuous effort to conduct and to facilitate teacher-parent driven activities such as symposia, seminars, conferences, and intensified home-visitations with the objective of shared governance towards quality education for the 21st century learners. It is therefore suggested that parent-teacher partnership shall be the next priority of the divisionwide Continuous Improvement Program which will highlight communication skills.

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