



Collaborative reading in a “lecture-less” class of college students

Bethany Marie Cabantac-Lumabi^{✉1}

¹Polytechnic University of the Philippines, Manila, the Philippines

Article Info

Article History:

Received on 10 July 2024

Approved on 28 October 2024

Published on 30 November 2024

Keywords:

Collaborative reading; lecture-less class; reading of college students; student-centered learning

Abstract

Young and adult Filipinos are mostly into reading according to the results of the 2017 Readership Survey. However, the reading interest of Filipinos does not follow relative results in their reading comprehension based on the low proficiency level of the Philippines in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) both in 2018 and 2022. The reading habits and comprehension levels of young students are carried on to their higher education. Previous studies have shown that reading in tertiary education is usually done as an assignment and assessment in the classroom instead of as a means for class discussion and facilitation of learning. Thus, this mixed-method study was conducted to revive and normalize reading in a “lectureless” college classroom or with limited lectures from the faculty. Guided by collaborative strategic reading (CSR) – a reading strategy to improve students’ reading comprehension with the help of peers in a group, this mixed-method study assessed the college students’ reading through a pretest in the first semester and a posttest in the second semester after collaborative reading and limited lectures. The results posited progressive reading scores among college students with continuous use of collaborative reading and facilitated learning of the college faculty. According to the college students, the FGD and class observation described the advantages of collaborative reading in a “lecture-less” class. This study implies the progressive effect of reading and collaboration on students’ learning and college faculty’s facilitation of their learning instead of lecturing.

[✉]Correspondence Address:
South Wing Main Building, A. Mabini Campus
Anonas Street, Sta. Mesa, Manila Philippines 1016
E-mail: bmclumabi@pup.edu.ph

INTRODUCTION

The habit of reading discovers the full potential of students. The Filipinos, young and adults, were mostly into reading. According to the results of the 2017 Readership Survey, commissioned by the National Book Development Board (NBDB), Filipinos said they still enjoyed the experience of reading, whether they were young (96%) and grown up (94%). Respondents read to learn more or new things (44%) and to keep up with current events (20%). The survey's focus was to assess the respondents' leisure reading.

However, the reading interest of Filipinos does not follow relative results in their reading comprehension. Statistically, Filipino students scored low proficiency levels among 79 countries in a global survey of reading comprehension done by the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) both in 2018 and 2022. According to the President of the Reading Association in the Philippines, the texts (in the exam) are mainly informational, and the evaluation of the text and understanding revolved around informational text and not narrative, which Filipino students are used to in the Philippines (Roper, 2019). Similar results were found in the pretests administered by the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) among elementary students where 18,143 Grade 3-6 students in Bicol, Philippines are problematic in reading comprehension (Salaveria & Adonis, 2020).

The young students' reading habits and comprehension levels of young students are carried on to their higher education. Tertiary education is loaded with reading activities as the basis for college students' written and oral outputs. Their reading motivation for pleasure and entertainment is less than their academic reading. It is believed that academic reading involves critical reading, where a reader is more systematic by applying processes, models, questions, and theories to clarify and comprehend a text. Here, comprehension of the text does not only involve the topic and main ideas but also the effect of the text on the readers and their society. It is observed that students nowadays are exposed to different materials on social media, which they habitually share with their respective audiences without verifying and processing the text, which may eventually lead to misinformation (Manlapig, 2020).

Usually, college-level reading is given as an assignment because students are expected to listen to classroom lectures. A lecture is defined as an educational talk delivered to university students. It is a traditional way of delivering information in a teacher-centered approach wherein the professor discusses the lesson using the board or textbook. At the same time, the college students listen and take notes. Professors use lectures to provide information unavailable to students; to synthesize information from different sources; to logically organize information; to distinguish similarities and differences; to discuss further confusing concepts, ideas, and information; to assist students in consolidating information; to communicate the worth of learning the content; to demonstrate high level of thinking; and to deliver keenness on the content (Barkley & Major, 2018).

When students were assessed after several traditional lectures, results showed improved scores and increased learning. Although students did not specify their preference for the lecture approach, they claimed that interactive and collaborative activities influenced their positive scores and learning (LoPresto & Slatter, 2016). Apparently, traditional lectures still dominate university classrooms, but contemporary college students have changed drastically due to the fast-evolving technology. The attention span of an average individual is disconnected from the length of the average lecture, which causes serious problems in the retention and recall of information (Wiggins, 2019). In other words, college students want and can do more than listen to a one-hour lecture; they can read the lecture content instead and discuss it collaboratively.

Moreover, today's generation is faced with media as its reading platform, which challenges teachers to motivate students to read in class. For Filipino readers, the shift from print to digital reading is another challenge for college students to get motivated to read, considering the vocabulary size of texts and their reading comprehension. There is also a great debate about the areas and the setting of the reading encounters of Filipino millennial learners as they get exposed to varied reading encounters such as the use of online reading sites, reading apps, online books, and social media. With this shift from print to digital setting, educators are challenged to determine what motivates their students to read (Gunobgunob-Mirasol, 2019).

Undeniably, reading strategies for college students are discretely promoted in class because they are expected to be prepared to read lengthy texts quickly. Reading assignments of college students are lengthy and heavy in words, so poor readers struggle to understand concepts, and vocabularies including charts and tables in some cases (Kerr & Frese, 2017). At the same time,

college faculty disregards reading in class because it consumes time considering students' different individual reading rates and the limited class time of 3 hours a week. Lastly, in the college curriculum, there is no reading subject; it is frequently integrated into general education relative to writing and communication subjects (e.g., Purposive Communication, Technical and Business Writing, Speech Communication, etc.). For these reasons, conducting class lectures becomes the most available option, which does not support a student-centered class, especially with young adults who will be professionals in the future.

Aside from that, local studies on college reading were explored to address issues in reading strategies (Ilustre, 2011), reading comprehension (Ong & Pimentel, 2023), vocabulary (Gunobgunob-Mirasol, 2019), language problems (Lobaton, 2022), and reading attitudes (Mercado et al., 2015). Likewise, reading in college is done as an assignment, resulting in college students' reading issues according to previous studies (Brown et al., 2016; Gammerdinger & Kocher, 2018).

Hence, this study was conducted to investigate reading in a tertiary classroom with limited lectures from the college faculty. Guided by collaborative strategic reading (CSR) - a reading strategy to improve students' reading comprehension with the help of peers in a group. Initially, the strategies include previewing the text, clicking and clunking, getting the gist, and wrapping up which involve modified reciprocal teaching and cooperative learning (Klingner & Vaughn, 1996 as cited in Anwar, 2020). Eventually, Klinger et al. (2001 as cited in Nosratinia et al., 2013) established the four steps of CSR: Preview (before reading), Click and Clunk (during reading), Get the Gist (during reading), and Wrap Up (after reading). Specifically, this study: (1) Assessed the reading of college students before and after using collaborative strategic reading (CSR) with limited lectures from the course teacher; (2) Described their reading experience during the collaborative strategic reading (CSR) in class; (3) Proposed collaborative reading to be employed in tertiary classroom across disciplines.

METHODS

The study employed a mixed-method research design which involved statistical analysis of pretest-posttest scores for the quantitative approach and thematic analysis of focus-group-discussion results and class observation description for the qualitative approach.

The participants were second-year undergraduate students from a sectarian university in Manila and a non-sectarian university in Caloocan, Philippines. The college students were enrolled in the programs of Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSE) major in English (34 pax), AB English (13 pax), and AB Literature (12 pax), respectively. Their consistent involvement in the data collection affected the limited number of participants. The qualitative data were thematically analyzed to describe their reading experience.

For the quantitative data collection, customized or self-made reading assessments (pre-test and posttest) composed of 30 multiple-choice questions were developed based on the course content validated by experts, who were college faculty and university administrators with relative English language graduate degrees. The instruments for qualitative data collection involved unstructured FGD questions and class observation protocol aligned with the research questions which were validated again by experts.

With the consent of the program chairpersons and college students, the collaborative reading, course content reading materials, talk points, and guide questions were conducted during major classes with class observation for two consecutive semesters. The pretest was given as a reading assessment in the first semester, while the posttest was given as a final reading assessment in the second semester. Then, the focus group discussion (FGD) was facilitated with the selected college students from each class.

Descriptive statistics using T-test was employed to analyze the reading assessment scores from the pre-test and post-test. To analyze qualitative data, the notes from classroom observation and transcripts from focus group discussions were thematically analyzed to understand the reading experience of college students.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The reading of college students before and after using collaborative strategic reading (CSR)

Through T-test analysis, the reading assessment scores of college students are summarized in Table 1. Results showed the mean of their pretest scores namely BSE English with mean score of 15.03 (SD 3.98) and posttest mean score of 19.65 (SD 3.65); AB English with pretest mean score of 15.25

(SD 3.41) and posttest mean score of 19 (2.89); and AB Literature with pretest mean score of 16.47 (SD 3.62) and posttest mean score of 20.05 (SD 3.05).

Table 1. Summary of reading assessment scores of college students

Participants	Pretest Mean	Standard Deviation	Posttest Mean	Standard Deviation	Difference
BSE English	15.03	3.986	19.65	3.657	Significant
AB English	15.25	3.416	19	2.898	Significant
AB Literature	16.47	3.625	20.05	3.051	Significant

Moreover, the pretest and posttest scores showed significant differences in all groups of college students, revealing higher mean scores in their posttest than in their pretest mean scores. The results posited progressive reading scores among college students with continuous use of collaborative reading and facilitated learning of the college faculty. These findings are consistent with Al-Jarf's (2021) study, where EFL college students demonstrated significant differences in the posttest scores at the end of the semester due to extensive collaborative (e-book) reading. This reading approach positively affected the reading attitudes of college in general.

Reading experience during the collaborative strategic reading (CSR) in class

The qualitative results of the FGD and class observation supported and triangulated the reading assessment scores. Table 2 shows the themes analyzed from the FGD about the college students' collaborative reading experience. They were classified into the following advantages and disadvantages: (see below)

Thus, the qualitative results of the FGD and class observation revealed consistent descriptions of the college students' experience in collaborative reading. All participants claimed that it was their first time to do collaborative reading in class and they found it convenient and enjoyable. Positively, they recognized the following advantages of collaborative reading in a lectureless class: (1) It accommodates casual and intellectual consultation among students to further understand the text using convenient language; (2) It assists slow readers in understanding not only the meaning of the text but also the difficult words through peer teaching; (3) It increases the reading rate and productivity of students because of the reading time and required output; (4) It enhances other language skills such as speaking, listening, and writing skills; and (5) It promotes learner independence since the students discuss the talk points and answer the guide instead of listening to a lecture.

On the other hand, the following disadvantage themes of collaborative reading from the FGD were notable for its development in a lectureless college class: (1) Leader appointment in a group with 5-6 members encourages non-performing members or freeloaders; (2) There are passive readers and nonchalant members; others are just listening to the discussion which may result in their limited contribution to the group discussion of the text; (3) The 30-minute collaborative reading time is minimal; and (4) The assigned readings are not of the same length but with the same reading time. These findings are notably considered in conducting collaborative reading in class

Table 2. Themes from the FGD with college students

Participants	Themes from the FGD with College Students	
	Advantages	Disadvantages
BSE English Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reading in class with peers is more enjoyable than reading alone. • Collaborative reading helps in understanding concepts and unlocking difficult words in the text. • Reading with a small group of peers involves language convenience (code-switching) and open communication. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leader appointment in a group with 5-6 members encourages non-performing members. • Not all members are reading; others are just listening to the discussion. • Some members have limited inputs about the reading, or they usually agree with others' understanding of the text.

AB English Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussing the reading material together as a group helps the slow reader classmates understand the text more clearly. • The students share more than what they read from the texts; they provide examples or instances to explain further their understanding of the text. • The intimate group (trio) can quickly consult each other and elicit understanding from the text; the collective reading becomes an intellectual peer conversation. • With collaborative reading, the 1.5-hour class becomes productive for discussing the reading materials, including planning the group output. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despite the small group (trio), there is still a passive reader and nonchalant member. • In a 1.5-hour class, the collaborative reading time of 30 minutes is minimal. • Sometimes, the brainstorming about the texts becomes peer teaching because the active members tolerate the free loaders.
AB Literature Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborative reading enhances not only the reading skills but also speaking, listening, and writing skills. • The talk points and guide questions provided are beneficial for the group to analyze the text and to achieve the required output. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some members are scanning the assigned text; they are not reading anymore because they expect to understand it during the collaborative reading. • The assigned readings are not of the same length but with the same reading time. • The output of the collaborative reading is usually done by one member (i.e. leader) who collates the inputs of all members, but the group shares the grade.

Likewise, Table 3 (see below) presents the summarized notes from the class observation on the collaborative reading of college students in sectarian and non-sectarian universities. They were summarized from all the participants' selected programs according to their writing activities before, during, and after the collaborative reading.

Proposed collaborative reading to be employed in tertiary classroom across disciplines

Based on the findings in the class observation, the following are recommended to make collaborative reading of college students successful before, during, and after its employment in class:

- Allow students to choose their group members, reading tools (print or digital), and collaborative positions to facilitate pre-reading comfort and convenience in the classroom.
- Give reading time for individual reading before the collaboration. Let students be mindful of the reading time given to them. In this way, they become focused on their reading and conscious of the class time.
- Provide talk points and guide questions for group discussion. Let students initiate the facilitation of discussion even without assigning a group leader. In this way, they may involve passive and nonchalant members to contribute to the talk points and answers.
- Provide post-reading time for groups to polish their answers to the talking points and guiding questions and to plan their group presentation to the class properly and responsibly.

Table 3. Class observation on collaborative reading of college students

Before	During	After
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most students preferred to select their group members instead of random groupings. • All students prepared and used their gadgets in reading for they downloaded the soft copy shared from the learning platform (Google Classroom and Canvas). • Most students checked on the talk points and guide questions on the board while preparing the reading material. • Some students have initially read the assigned text before the collaborative reading. • Students were arranging their seats in small circles in preparation for the collaborative activity. • One member was usually late and skipped the pre-reading stage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The group spent 10 minutes for individual reading for those members who had not read the assigned text yet. • Afterwards, the most active member initiated to facilitate the reading comprehension of the members by answering the talking points and guiding questions. The same member was assigned to be the group secretary. • One member of each group was sleepy and passive, but responsive to the group discussion. • Most groups were not asking questions or consulting the college faculty. • Most members provided answers to the guiding questions and participated actively in the talk points. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The group discussed the details of collaborative reading output based on the instructions provided by the college faculty. • The group decided the division of the work and assigned its parts respectively. Most members were agreeable to their respective assignment. • The most active member of the group imposed the deadline for the members' individual contribution, ahead of the group output submission. • Most members were satisfied with the group's decision on the deadline, output, and work division. • One group needed more time to finalize the group output because members were unresponsive.

CONCLUSION

The progressive scores from the pretest to the posttest corresponded to the college students' positive experience in collaborative reading in a "lecture-less" class. They affirmed that collaborative reading strengthens peer teaching and group collaboration, presents different text analyses and understandings, motivates passive readers and speakers, widens vocabulary, and enhances writing and research skills. Indeed, the findings of this study support reading in the classroom, student-centered learning, and the minimal conduct of lectures in college or university classrooms.

However, the study's conclusions may be limited in their generalizability considering the small sample, the rationale, and its unique student demographics. Thus, the following recommendations were drawn from the FGD disadvantage themes so teachers can develop a more systematic collaborative reading in class. First, group leaders should not be appointed by the teacher; it is the discretion of the consensus to assign its group leader to avoid freeloading among members. Second, pre-reading should include the orientation of the members' individual role, which serves as a reminder to passive readers and nonchalant members. Lastly, the time and length of assigned reading must be highly studied in preparing collaborative reading considering the class time. Overall, this study implied continuous reading activities in college students' classroom to strengthen their reading comprehension and their language competency.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The research is a non-funded study; it received no funding from any agencies or institutions.

REFERENCES

- Anwar, A. K. (2020). The effect of collaborative strategic reading toward students reading skill. *Anglophile Journal*, 1(1), 21-28.
- Armstrong, F. (2019). *Social constructivism and action research: Transforming teaching and learning through collaborative practice*. Routledge.

- Asoodeh, M. H., Asoodeh, M. B., & Zarepour, M. (2012). The impact of student-centered learning on academic achievement and social skills. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 46, 560-564
- Barkley, E. F., & Major, C. H. (2018). *Interactive lecturing: A handbook for college faculty*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Brown, C. A., Danvers, K., & Doran, D. T. (2016). Student perceptions on using guided reading questions to motivate student reading in the flipped classroom. *Accounting Education*, 25(3), 256-271.
- Gammerdinger, W. J., & Kocher, T. D. (2018). Understanding student perceptions and practices for pre-lecture content reading in the genetics classroom. *Journal of Microbiology & Biology Education*, 19(2). <https://doi.org/10.1128/jmbe.v19i2.1371>
- Glowa, L. & Goodell, J. (2016). *Student-centered learning: Functional requirements for integrated systems to optimize learning*. Vienna, VA.: International Association for K-12 Online Learning (iNACOL).
- Gunobgunob-Mirasol, R. (2019). Vocabulary size, reading motivation, reading attitudes and reading comprehension performance among Filipino college learners of English. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education*, 8(1), 64-70.
- Kerr, M. M., & Frese, K. M. (2017). Reading to learn or learning to read? Engaging college students in course readings. *College teaching*, 65(1), 28-31.
- Hamilton, A. (2012). Rethinking the large lecture: Teaching and learning the large scale. Retrieved from <http://www.bu.edu/hps-scied/files/2012/12/Hamilton-HPS-Rethinking-the-Lecture-Teaching-and-Learning-at-Scale.pdf>
- Koşar, G. (2023). Online collaborative learning: does it improve college students' critical reading skills? *Interactive Learning Environments*, 31(8), 5114-5126.
- Lobaton, A. M. (2022). Bilingualism: Its influence on the reading comprehension of college students. *International Journal of Science, Technology, Education, and Management*, 2(2).
- LoPresto, M. C., & Slater, T. F. (2016). A new comparison of active learning strategies to traditional lectures for teaching college astronomy. *Journal of Astronomy & Earth Sciences Education (JAESE)*, 3(1), 59-76.
- Manlapig, M. (2020, April 21). What's to blame for the low reading comprehension of the Filipino youth? *CNN Philippines*. Retrieved from <https://www.cnnphilippines.com/life/culture/2020/4/21/reading-comprehension-problem.html>
- Mercado, J., Urrutia, J. D., Bautista, L. A., Borigas, J. M. E., & Elgaran, D. A. (2015). Reading attitudes of the students of Polytechnic University of the Philippines: A principal component factor analysis. *European Academic Research*, 3(3), 3167-3187.
- National Book Development Board (2017). *Readership survey: Reading behavior and patterns of purchases*. Retrieved from <https://booksphilippines.gov.ph/readership-survey-reading-behavior-and-patterns-of-purchase/#:~:text=Overall%2C%2094%25%20of%20adults%20and,respondents%20cite%20the%20same%20reason.&text=The%20Readership%20Survey%20is%20conducted,habits%20and%20attitudes%20of%20Filipinos>
- Nosratinia, M., Mirzakhani, E., & Zaker, A. (2013). Toward a humanistic instruction: Collaborative strategic reading approach and EFL learners' reading comprehension. *International Journal of Advanced Studies in Humanities and Social Science*, 1(8), 1119-1138.
- Ong, C. & Pimentel, G. (2023). A reading program for college students. *The Asian Conference on Arts & Humanities 2023, Conference Proceedings*. The International Academic Forum.
- Pecorari, D., Shaw, P., Irvine, A., Malmström, H., & Mežek, Š. (2012). Reading in tertiary education: Undergraduate student practices and attitudes. *Quality in Higher Education*, 18(2), 235-256.
- Roper, G. (December 5, 2019). Why Pinoy students ranked last in reading comprehension survey. *ABS-CBN News*. Retrieved from <https://news.abs-cbn.com/news/12/05/19/why-pinoy-students-ranked-last-in-reading-comprehension-survey>
- Salaverria, L. & Adonis, M. (2020, February 18). Pupils' problem not literacy but reading comprehension – DepEd. *Inquirer.net*. Retrieved from <https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1230013/pupils-problem-not-literacy-but-reading-comprehension-deped>

- Tanaka, M., & Sanchez, E. (2016). Students' perceptions of reading through peer questioning in cooperative learning. *Tesl-Ej*, 19(4), 1-14.
- The lecture method (2014). *Center for Instructional Development and Distance Education*. Retrieved from <http://www.uq.edu.au/teach/teachingpracticeinventory/documents/Lecture-Method-CIDDE.pdf>
- Weimer, M. (2002). *Learner-centered teaching: Five key changes to practice*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Wiggins, G. (February 3, 2019). The more I lecture, the less I know if they understand. *Teachingthought.com*. Retrieved from <https://www.teachthought.com/pedagogy/lecture-less-know-understand/>