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Slap and tap teaching strategy: an intervention in overcoming student reticence

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Abstract

This study aimed to explore the effectiveness of the slap and tap method that will change the mindset of shy students in communicating their ideas in the classroom. Qualitative design is used with triangulation through participant observation, focus group discussion and interview. As a result, reticent students when involved in game activities through a slap and tap strategy, writing their clustered ideas, using sticky notes is excited, confident in sharing ideas. In conclusion, the strategy made a significant transformation of the shy students and it also sustained the interest of potential students as reflected in their journal logs and testimonies.

Keywords: Reticence, slap, tap strategy, activity.

Estrategia de enseñanza Slap and Tap: Una intervención para superar la reticencia de los estudiantes

Resumen

Este estudio tuvo como objetivo explorar la efectividad del método de bofetadas y tapping que cambiará la mentalidad de los estudiantes tímidos al comunicar sus ideas en el aula. El diseño cualitativo se utiliza con la triangulación a través de la observación participante, la discusión en grupos focales y la entrevista. Como resultado, los estudiantes reticentes cuando participan en las actividades del juego a través de una estrategia de golpe y toque, escriben sus ideas agrupadas, usan notas adhesivas y se entusiasman, confían en compartir ideas. En conclusión, la

estrategia hizo una transformación significativa de los estudiantes tímidos y también mantuvo el interés de los estudiantes potenciales, tal como se refleja en los registros y testimonios de sus diarios.

Palabras clave: Reticencia, palmada, estrategia de tap, actividad.

1. INTRODUCTION

Reticence is one of the major factors that affect student's performance as this hinders them to actively participate in any classroom activities and limits them to share their ideas, thus, tagging them as non-communicative (Cheng, 2000). According to Liu and Cheng (2000), poor language competency in either their first and second language especially in the four main macro skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing caused them to stop elaborating their ideas as they fear the immature judgment of their inability to communicate their ideas well. The unfamiliarity of their classmate's urban culture, which rural students presume that it is more advanced, as well as the place of origin where their schools are located during their secondary education greatly, affect their self- confidence as they see themselves as marginalized when they are already in the city, attending their tertiary education.

In the Philippine context, we have the term, DDU or the depressed, deprived and underserved communities which are called now as DOPE or the depressed, oppressed, poor and exploited communities where most of our students graduated from. This study investigated the causes of student's reticence and gave solution through an innovative technique called slap and tap strategy which made a 360 degrees transformation to

shy students to become active and confident while making the potential students more creative, solution-oriented and out-of-the-box thinkers.

2. METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in the sophomore class of the Bachelor of Elementary Education and Bachelor of Secondary Education of the Institute of Teacher Education in their professional education subjects, particularly Principles of Teaching and Facilitating Human Learning where half of the class are graduates of Rural High Schools, who are evidently shy and unconfident. The qualitative design being used are: through participant observation, whenever there are drills such as recitation, focus group discussion where all individuals are motivated to speak as regards their group activities where ideas are treated as communal and interviews, where empathy session is being held to identify the deep need and dilemma of student's in the classroom which is the main target of paradigm shifting, Reticence to Self-Confidence. The study is documented through photos, videos and journal logs. Written consent is also secured from the campus authorities to conduct the study and consent was also given by the students who are the participants in this study.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Reticence has been a prevalent problem of teachers inside the classroom as they could not really gauge the ability of their students because of the unknown reasons why most of the students do not actively

participate in class oral recitation and even hesitant to work with groups. But on the contrary, their written examinations and essays fair well. Through a face-to-face interview with the reticent students during their spare time, the causes of reticence have been identified as follows:

Cause 1: Being a Barrio/ Village High School Graduates

In the separate interviews conducted to 18 BEED students and 18 BSE students, the main reason for their shyness comes from their places of origin. Their belief that students who graduated from urban or city high schools are better than they are because they are exposed to advanced technologies in the classrooms, such as the used of modern gadgets like smartphones, laptops and they are more accessible to internet connection especially for those who came from central villages of Cauayan City because it is a digital city where there is a free wi-fi connection. The transcript of the interview shows their explanation.

Teacher: What is the main reason why you are hesitant to participate in our oral discussions?

BEED Students: We are not actively participating in the oral discussion in the classroom because we are afraid that we might give the wrong responses especially that our classmates are graduates from the urban areas where they have more bright ideas because of their richer experiences than us. We are anxious about being a laugh-off. It has a longer effect that will haunt us every time there will be an announced and unannounced recitation. We just wait for the written activities because we

can express better for we know that it is between us and the teacher who will read our ideas and not being broadcast in the class. It is safe to write than to talk (Rezaei & Nemati, 2017)

BSE Students: We are sometimes tempted to raise our hands and answer our teacher's query but when one of our classmates who came from the city already recited, we felt that we could not give an idea that is as brilliant as his/ her ideas because we are afraid of being compared of. In our school (rural) before, our teachers are confused who will be called first to recite as all of us wanted to speak what is in our minds, the reason is, we all came from one place and we are already familiar with one's culture that even if our answers are right or wrong, we are still appreciated. But now, in this urban environment, we are still trying to cope with the culture and still waiting for their acceptance (Zariski, 1997).

From the two group's point of views, socio-cultural background greatly affects their participation in the classroom as this limits them to feel marginalized. We can see the issue of a progressive setting versus a developing setting.

Cause 2: Language Anxiety

Language has been one of the identified reasons for reticence in the BEED and BSE class. Most of them used their native language or vernacular language as a means of communication in the classroom as they were permitted to speak in their native dialects when they can no longer express their ideas in the prescribed medium of instruction,

particularly the English language. They describe themselves as an underachiever and unmotivated Chen & Chang (2004), or shaving language learning disabilities (Grigorenko, 2002). This is evident in the transcript of the interview as they show their reasons:

Teacher: Why do you suddenly withdraw your hands when I ask you to recite in English or try to explain in our prescribed medium of instruction during recitations?

BEED Students: We actually have ideas, but in our brains, we processed it in our local dialects. When we try to translate it in English, we lose the sense of our ideas because we can no longer give the equivalent words. There were times that we tried so hard to express our ideas but we end up restless because we saw the frowning and bewildering facial expressions of our classmates.

BSE Students: The idea of thinking in our local dialect versus delivering it to a foreign language is really difficult especially that we were not that articulate with the English language. Too much consciousness on whether our grammar is right or wrong made our ideas unorganized and it left us, stammering and stuttering and eventually, make us extra shy again to participate in class.

Cause 3: Fear of Judgmental Classmates, slight bullying

Preoccupation from non- verbal consciousness such as optics, kinesics, and paralanguage made the students develop reticence in the

classroom because they presume that any action associated with these three non- verbal communications sends a negative message towards them. According to Cheng (2000), bullying experiences affect victims' academic achievement in both direct and indirect ways that makes a student stop participating in any class activity. It is further confirmed by Konishi et al. (2010) that interpersonal relationships within the school environment influence academic achievement.

Teacher: When you are raising your hands for recitation, I felt very happy because you are becoming responsive, but I am also surprised when you suddenly stopped and did not finish the ideas you are sharing with the class.

BEED Students: We had an experience with our other classmates that when we began to talk and share our ideas, we felt anxious because we can see their eyebrows moving, they also rub their elbows with each other and I find that actions very uncomfortable and I will just cut my talk because I could no longer concentrate.

BSE Students: Maybe we just felt paranoid when our other classmates do some extra movements because we are concluding that our answers are wrong especially on the formulation of our sentences that we are sometimes confused with the subject-verb agreement, then suddenly one of our classmates will just make a correction and you can see them smiling differently.

Cause 4: Stage Fright

Stage fright is a normal reaction of students whenever they are asked for something that they are not familiar or prepared with. This is quite connected with the statement of Jerry Seinfeld that people's number one fear is public speaking. This usually happens to the BSE and BEED students when they are given the task to stay in front and try to persuade their classmates regarding the theory and principle that they believe about teaching pedagogies.

Teacher: Your written outputs are very impressive, it communicates that you are wide readers and you are very analytic in the different theories and principles that we are discussing in class, but what makes you so long to go in front of the class and explain to them your stand?

BEED Students: We are afraid of the unknown, Ma'am. We felt that our classmates will become tiger listeners, that they will be guarding every little idea that may be wrong in their perception. We felt that staying in front of the class is as good as you are in a hot seat.

BSE Students: Staying in front is a struggle for us because we need to share our ideas with classmates which we may find apathetic sometimes. When they applauded after our talk, we did not find it as a compliment but rather, we are starting to question ourselves if we did communicate our ideas clearly or not.

Cause 5: Familiarity of Teachers on Bright Students

The issue of favoritism is also highlighted in the class as most of the time, the active and participative students in the class are given more attention, to avoid wastage of time in lectures and activities, thus, affecting instruction and student success. According to Jussim et al. (1998) teachers usually give successful students more opportunities to speak out and learn. Teacher favoritism does not happen willfully but through spontaneous positive feedback (Roy and Roy, 2004).

Teacher: In some of our graded recitations, when some of you were called, you recommended the names of your classmates to go first, why?

BEED Students: Aside from being frightened to be the first, we shouted the names of the bright students from the city because we know that you are more familiar with them and they might easily give you the best answer and that would mean a saving mechanism for us because we will no longer need to defend our answers.

BSE Students: Honestly, we already concluded that the students that you are always calling during our usual lecture days are the bright ones, we have the reservation of not volunteering. And the funny thing is, when all our bright classmates are already done sharing their ideas, it is also an opportunity for us to formulate our good answers, making their answers as our point of reference.

With the five causes of reticence being identified, we can clearly see that shy students are having their reservations of just staying in their comfort zones together with their identified classmates who have the same

feelings as them. An intervention is needed to change their culture and make them competitive and develop self-worth. It is then that Slap and Tap Strategy is used as an intervention to make shy students develop their self-worth while other students who are already confident and active are being grouped with them and share the same efforts in learning. Thus, the whole class is benefitted with the strategy as the active students are also enjoying mingling with their classmates.

The following positive effects have been manifested all throughout the conduct of this study through the collective ideas of the students. Before the interview, they conducted their own meeting to be able to give their general impressions:

Effect 1: Speeds-up solution to the problem; promotes teamwork and cooperation

The students realized that group activity through synergy is effective as it draws multiple solutions from a different point of view. According to Brown (2001) group effectiveness skills including interpersonal communication, negotiation, and teamwork, are essential in the classroom as collaborative group learning is more effective for students to share their cognitive perspective and problem-solving skills than students working individually (Kutnick et al., 2006).

BEED Students: During our persona making activity that deals with a problematic learner, we have thought that working in a group is difficult especially when your group mates are not really your set of friends, there

is a feeling of awkwardness because you may not have the same ideas especially on attacking the problems. But our initial perception has changed while doing the activity, multiple ideas were coming out; we have listed it all in sticky notes and brainstorm. We do the clustering, explaining and eliminating until we arrived at one specific solution on how the problematic persona will be able to change. All the ideas contributed are discussed to see its substance, and all are very happy because we have chosen the best solution for the problem and no one claimed ownership to the solution. Aja, BEEed!

BSE Students: Group activity for us before, is not a good idea for we knew that not all group members will be working; others will just depend on the most brilliant member. Why we have experienced that already when we were freshmen students. Anyway, our group members are becoming positive during the activity proper, persona making activity we tend to listen to each of us (group mates) and draw important points from it, then arrived at a doable solution. The good thing is, most of our group mates have a schema about the persona that we presented, that they can relate. Sharing their experiences helped us to draw more solutions that are true to all. So we spent more sticky notes on the board. Overflowing ideas. The best solution came out! Looking forward again for problem creation and solution activity.

Effect 2: Develops creativity and motivates students' optimum participation

The students realized that they have a lot of creative skills and they can give their optimum participation during any group activity through the tap and slap method. This is supported by the statement of Caruso & Woolley (2008) and Mannix & Neale (2005) that group projects can help students develop a host of skills that are increasingly important in the professional world. With the words (single word) written in their sticky notes to explain a certain activity like the traits of a 21st-century learner, they came up with the following innovative presentations:

BEED Students: During our activity on the traits of a 21st-century learner, we were divided into five groups. All of us are excited to write on our sticky notes because of the fear that the other groups may write everything and nothing will be left to others. We are like elementary students who are excited about parlor games. We wrote as many as we can and the time has ended and all of us stopped when you told us to stop. Then a sudden twist was announced by you, Ma'am. We felt so nervous, we are thinking that we did not follow the instructions until you announced that we may apply the following to our outputs: spoken words, short skirt, broadcasting, telling a story and musical play with only 15 minutes to prepare. Pressure but we need to fight. And the ending, we did it! The enjoyment, super-duper!

BSE Students: We are always looking forward to having our class Ma'am, as we are always excited about having our sticky notes with us. We have named your class as stuck with me. Ha, ha, ha, ha! The group activity on 21st-century learner was so good! Our classmates who do not even know how to sing had sung. Those who don't know how to act just

acted. And everything was voluntary, it was fun learning and sticking with you! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Our sticky notes now, our ticket in having fun inside the classroom even we are already 18, 19, 20 years old.

Effect 3: Develops and maintains a strong classroom relationship.

This effect was not really expected by the students' especially that they focused more on their academics due to the strict retention process of the Institute. The campus is practicing a four- day scheme, from Monday to Thursday regular classes are being conducted while Friday is optional for students to stay in the campus. Both the BEED and the BSE classes noticed their change of habits, it was observed before that only few of them are staying during Fridays but when they get to familiarized among them they started to make Fridays as their study sessions and bonding time. Thus, they have established sibling relationships.

BEED Students: Honestly, we are apathetic before. We see each other as a competitor and we do not even care for each other, we are not blood-related anyway. But we are surprised now that we are enjoying the whole company. We are sticking together now. Thanks to our sticky notes, Ma'am! Guys, what is our favorite song now? The lyrics please, together we stand, divided we fall... Ha! Ha! Ha!

BSE Students: We are no longer moving by what major fields we belong, we are one now. No more statements like, I am a Physical Science Major; I am Math Major and I am an English Major. We are the BSE 2

class. We may be assigned to other group mates, everything is fine. Thank you, slap and Tap!

The three major effects of the slap and tap method to the Sophomore BSE and BEED students is a good start to let unique individuals feel inclusive education, that no one is left behind due to reticence, inactivity inside the classroom.

Impact of the Slap and Tap Strategy

1. Students have gained self- confidence as attested by their professors during their third year and fourth year as education students especially in oral recitations, demonstration teaching and field studies including their off-campus internship program.
2. In June 2018, all the participants in this study graduated on time, having Four Cum Laudes from the BSE Program and Five Cum Laudes from BEED Program.
3. In September 2018 Board Licensure Examination for Teachers, Five Regional Top Notchers hailed from the BEED Program and High Percentile Rank for BSE Program.

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