

The Effects of Using the STAD Method in Teaching the Short Story, *Flipping Fantastic* on Form One Students

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Abstract. Since the year 2000 literature components have been introduced in the English language syllabus of the secondary schools in Malaysia. However until today not all teachers are aware of the possible best ways of teaching literature components effectively. This study discusses the Student Teams Achievements Divisions (STAD) method and the effect of using the method in the teaching of a short story on Form One students. The researchers used a quasi experimental design to investigate the effects of using the STAD method on the achievement of students in comprehending the short story, and their interest in learning the short story. The experimental group was taught using the STAD method and the control group was taught using the conventional method. Independent sample T-test was used to analyze the data obtained from the pre-test, post-test and the questionnaires. The findings indicate that the utilization of the STAD method significantly enhanced students' achievement in answering questions related to setting, plot, characterization, theme and moral values compared with the control group (using the conventional method). The interest of the experimental group in reading short story was also significantly enhanced.

Keywords: The STAD method, reading comprehension, short stories, students' interest.

1. Introduction

The literature component was introduced into the English language syllabus in the year 2000. Through the introduction of this component, students “would find the base for an appreciation of literature in English with its concerns with humanity, values, beliefs and customs as well as its great tradition and heights of imagination and creativity” (Ministry of Education, Malaysia , 2003, p.5). The second round of the literature component implementation started in the year 2010, “...the main objectives of this component are to promote the love for books and encourage the reading habits among pupils between the ages of 13 and 17 in secondary schools” (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2010). Based on several studies conducted by researchers, the teaching and learning of literature is effective and beneficial to students only if students are given the opportunity to participate actively using authentic materials in literature. Chacko (2007) stressed that there is a need to research the learner-centred approaches in the learning of literature in Malaysian ESL classes because the learners in Malaysian schools come from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.

1.1. Problem statement

The literature component has now been part of the English language curriculum in Malaysian secondary schools for more than thirteen years. However, the true scenarios in most rural schools show that the students are still vague about what they have studied in literature component. They do not know how to appreciate the culture in the poem or the short story. They are also weak in interpreting the social, political, literary and historical perspectives of a specific text. For most of them literature is just an ordinary reading text. Therefore, the majority of students are not interested in reading. Hence to them literature is burdening.

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1.2. Objectives of the study

Following are six objectives of the study.

1. To ascertain whether there is a significant difference between the mean score of the Experimental Group and the Control Group for questions related to settings of the short story.
2. To ascertain whether there is a significant difference between the mean score of the Experimental Group and the Control Group for questions related to plot of the short story.
3. To ascertain whether there is a significant difference between the mean score of the Experimental Group and the Control Group for questions related to characterization in the short story.
4. To ascertain whether there is a significant difference between the mean score of the Experimental Group and the Control Group for questions related to theme of the short story.
5. To ascertain whether there is a significant difference between the mean score of the Experimental Group and the Control Group for questions related to moral values in the short story.
6. To ascertain whether there is a significant difference between the mean score of the Experimental Group and the Control Group for interest towards learning of the short story.

1.3. Research hypotheses

The following are the six null hypotheses formulated by the researchers.

Ho 1: There is no significant difference between the mean score of the Experimental Group and the Control Group for questions related to settings of the short story.

Ho 2: There is no significant difference between the mean score of the Experimental Group and the Control Group for questions related to plot of the short story.

Ho 3: There is no significant difference between the mean score of the Experimental Group and the Control Group for questions related to characterization in the short story.

Ho 4: There is no significant difference between the mean score of the Experimental Group and the Control Group for questions related to theme of the short story.

Ho 5: There is no significant difference between the mean score of the Experimental Group and the Control Group for questions related to moral values in the short story.

Ho 6: There is no significant difference between the mean score of the Experimental Group and the Control Group for interest towards learning of the short story.

2. Literature Review

Cooperative learning teaching approach is based on social constructivist theory by Vygotsky (1917). Famous researchers in cooperative learning are Johnson and Johnson (1974). Johnson and Johnson (1990) define cooperative learning as “children are linked interdependently and must work together to resolve a problem, promotes each other’s learning and contributes to group’s discussion, share both personal and material resources, resolves conflicts democratically, and accept responsibility for any group discussion.” STAD method is one of the cooperative learning methods introduced by Slavin (1978). The STAD method is for mixed-ability groups, involving team recognition and group responsibility for individual learning.

The positive effects of STAD method on academic achievement has been proven in many studies. Study by Suhaida (2002) revealed that the STAD method helped the students to perform significantly better in Principals of Accounts. The conclusion derived was that the STAD method encouraged students to actively participate in the learning process.

Further studies on the use of STAD method conducted by Sri Rengan (2004), Gopalakrishnan (2005), Nagarajan (2006), Fletcher (2006), Suguna (2007), and Vasanthi (2011) indicated that the utilization of the STAD method significantly enhanced the students’ overall academic performance. In addition, students’ also showed heightened level of interest in learning after being taught using the STAD method.

Najamuddin (2009) designed a study to improve students’ reading comprehension achievement by implementing the STAD method. The study employed collaborative classroom action research (CAR) in two cycles. The findings showed that implementing the STAD method was effective in improving students

reading comprehension. Similarly Jalilifar (2010) investigated the impact of STAD method on reading comprehension among EFL learners. The researcher concluded that team rewards as one of the central concept of STAD, had a strong impact on learners' performance in reading comprehension.

Study by Tok Hoon Seng (2006) showed that cooperative learning enhanced students' social development as well as interest in learning of English literature. Studies by Suguna (2007), Vasanthi (2011) and Nagarajan (2006) also indicated that the STAD method can raise students' interest towards learning.

3. Methodology

The researchers used a quasi-experimental design in this study. The sample consist of 70 Form One students (thirteen years old) from two secondary school in Sungai Petani, Kuala Muda Yan District, Kedah. 35 students from school A were placed in the experimental group and 35 students from school B were placed in the control group. The sample from both the groups have the same characteristics of academic achievement, gender and school location. The experimental group was taught the short story, *Flipping Fantastic* (by Jane Langford) using the STAD method and the control group was taught using the conventional method over a period of six weeks. Prior to the intervention both the groups were given the pre-test and questionnaires on interest towards learning the short stories. The data obtained from the pre-test, post-test and the questionnaires were analysed using the SPSS program version 17.0.

4. Findings and Discussion

Ho 1: There is no significant difference between the mean score of the experimental group and the control group for questions related to settings of the short story.

The independent samples t test results for the pre-test show that there is no significant difference between the experimental group and the control group for the explicit questions, ($t=0.46$, $df=68$, $p=0.65$). On the other hand the findings of the post-test indicate that the mean score of the experimental group for the explicit questions is significantly higher than the control group ($t=6.18$, $df=68$, $p=0.00$). Therefore the null hypothesis 1 is rejected. These findings are in line with the findings of Johnson and Johnson, and Stanne (2000) which stated that the cooperative learning is one of the best researched of all teaching strategies and it had resulted in higher achievement of students. These findings are also similar to the findings of Gopalakrishnan (2005) and Vasanthi (2011) which indicate that students' active interaction during group discussion and the reward system in the STAD method helped them to perform better when answering explicit questions.

Ho 2: There is no significant difference between the mean score of the experimental group and the control group for questions related to plot of the short story.

The findings of the pre-test indicate that there is no significant difference between the experimental group and the control group for questions related to settings, ($t=0.19$, $df=68$, $p=0.85$). The results of the post-test indicate that the experimental group scored significantly higher than the control group for questions related to plot of the short story ($t=5.38$, $df=68$, $p=0.00$). Therefore the null hypothesis 2 is rejected. As stated by Slavin (1978), in the STAD method, students do not just show each other their answers but they also explain to one another (in their groups) how they arrived at the answers. The experimental group performed significantly better because the STAD method which provides students opportunities to work collaboratively enables them to learn the plot of the short story faster and more effectively.

Ho 3: There is no significant difference between the mean score of the experimental group and the control group for questions related to characterization in the short story.

The results of the pre-test show that there is no significant difference between the experimental group and the control group for questions related to characterization ($t=0.42$, $df=68$, $p=0.68$). The results of the post-test indicate that the Experimental group performed significantly higher than the control group for questions related to characterization ($t=.76$, $df=68$, $p=0.00$). As such the null hypothesis 3 is rejected. These findings are consistent with findings by Jalilifar (2010) and Vasanthi (2011).

Ho 4: There is no significant difference between the mean score of the experimental group and the control group for questions related to theme of the short story.

The findings of the pre-test indicate that there is no significant difference between the experimental group and the control group for questions related to theme of the short story ($t=0.621$, $df=68$, $p=0.54$). The results of the post-test show that the mean score of the experimental group is significantly higher than the control group ($t=5.53$, $df=68$, $p=0.00$). As such null hypothesis 4 is rejected. This findings are similar to Gopalakrishnan (2005), Fletcher (2006) and Vasanthi (2011) which indicated that the STAD method has the ability in raising students' academic achievement significantly.

Ho 5: There is no significant difference between the mean score of the experimental group and the control group for questions related to moral values in the short story.

The pre-test results show that there is no significant difference between the experimental group and the control group in their scores for questions related to moral values ($t=-.45$, $df=68$, $p=0.65$). The post-test results indicate that the experimental group scored significantly higher than the control group ($t=4.59$, $df=68$, $p=0.00$). Therefore the null hypothesis 5 is rejected. This findings are similar to findings by Kagan (1994) and Jalilifar (2010) which indicate active learning process in the STAD method promotes better understanding among students and thus they obtain significant gain in the questions related to moral values.

Ho 5: There is no significant difference between the mean score of the experimental group and the control group for interest of the short story.

The findings of the pre-test shows that there is no significant difference between the experimental group and the control group in their interest towards learning of short story ($t=0.36$, $df=68$, $p=0.72$). After the intervention the interest of experimental group towards learning short story raised significantly higher compared to the control group ($t=15.28$, $df=68$, $p=0.00$). This findings is similar with findings by Suguna (2007), Tok Hoon Seng (2006), Vasanthi (2011) and Nagarajan (2006).

5. Conclusion

This study has some implications on the learning and teaching of short stories in English Language. In this study, it shows that the STAD method is effective in teaching of the Form One short story, *Flipping Fantastic*. The STAD method is effective in raising the mastery of the short story among the Form One students. In addition, this study also helps to raise the level of students' interest in the short story. This study also shows that the teacher is one of the important factors in planning and implementing the STAD method in teaching the short story. The positive attributes which stem from the STAD method enable students (experimental group) to actively participate in an ESL classroom. Moreover, the cooperation and guidance that built up between group members during the learning process improved students' ability to communicate, to discuss and to do group presentation about the subject which they have worked on. A lot of encouragement and guidance from the teacher and group members made this method of instruction interesting and enjoyable. Based on the findings of this study the Education Ministry, in particular the Teacher Education Division can make the STAD method an important input for teaching literature component in English (ESL) in secondary schools.

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