

Participation in Culminating Tasks of Students in an English Course

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ABSTRACT

This research identifies the culminating tasks participated in by the junior and senior college students in an English course for AY 2018-2019 for the students to articulate their thoughts and feelings effectively using the verbal and non-verbal communication skills in a variety of forms and contexts, use of communication for a range of purposes, e.g., to inform, instruct, motivate, and persuade, use multimedia technologies, and assess the global trend using a self-made rubric and communicate deliberately in diverse environments, including multilingual and contextualization to develop critical thinking skills and engage in collaboration and creative manifestations. It used the descriptive-survey method to address the objectives that learning is better gained through participation in culminating tasks that have become a major global trend and an educational transformation that makes the classroom productive, creative, and an avenue to develop critical thinking skills. Based on the global educational principle that “no one must be left behind.” This innovation is recommended to be sustained. The culminating tasks in and out of the classrooms can be sustained for better preparedness for the present global society in learning life and career skills in a diversified way of a modern environment. These global trends and ideals are used to combat mediocrity and precautions to sluggishness in keeping abreast of 21st-century skills.

Keywords — culminating tasks, global trend, 21st-century skills, performance-based activities, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Meaningful activities engage learners in active, constructive, purposive, authentic, and collaborative ways (Vygotsky, 1978). By using productive learning activities and using multimedia resources, the students are able to take what they do or how they perform and use the same context for another purpose.

Using the multimedia in class discussions and culminating tasks were taken as an opportune advantage when the English major students indulge themselves in their class performance-based outputs as supervised by their respective instructors.

As adult learners, these fourth-year students can work with less supervision and guidance from their instructor, though they consult him or her from time to time as to the theme and content of the class interactive endeavors are concerned. The teaching method, particularly, the use of multimedia in the classroom is based on the concept that “relationship matters in fostering a climate of trust and confidence and a safe and open environment to implement reform and engage in innovative teacher practices (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Coburn & Russell, 2008; Penuel, Fishman, Yamaguchi, & Gallagher, 2007).

In his article “Clearinghouse on Higher Education,” Bonwell and Eison (1991) defined strategies that promote active learning as “instructional activities involving students in things and thinking about what they are doing.” Approaches that promote active learning focus more on developing students’ skills than in transmitting information and require the students to do something - read, discuss, write - that requires higher-order thinking skills.

In Bicol College, particularly, the English major students in the College of Education (CTED), participating in the culminating tasks are their performances in activities such as are Role playing, Micro-teaching, Speech Choir, Choral Reading, Talk Show, Readers Theater, Parade of Characters, Poetry in Motion, Verse Reading, Stage Play, group presentations using Foreign language, Painting, Photo captioning, Radio Broadcasting, Presenting self-made Instructional Materials, and Debate. These focused on the macro skills and done through research, stage production, cooperative and dynamic solo, dyad, triad, and group performances. Presenting culminating tasks is also a process of judging the quality of the students learning as a basis of establishing, assessing the KSA’s

from the performance. Selected students are asked to rate their classmates using some rubrics as the criteria formulated by either the instructor alone or by the collaborative ideas of the mentor and the participants.

The geographical location of the study was the municipality of Daraga, specifically. The respondents were the totally enumerated students in CTED, with the English Language as their major from the 3rd and the 4th year levels from 1st-2nd semesters for Academic Year (AY) 2017- 2018. The number included thirty-five (35) fourth-year students and twenty (20) third-year students, a total of fifty-five (55) respondents of the study.

Macro skills are learned more effectively when the practice sessions are brief and carefully disseminated. In a classroom situation, the practice period should be long enough for the teacher to present meaningful pieces of information. This information or lectures must be articulated so that they can be properly absorbed by the participants who are more likely to get the essence widely and clearly since they are all specializing in the English language.

According to Herman and Aschbacher (2005), a culminating activity is a performance-based assessment that requires students to generate rather than choose a response. Alternative assessments focus on the students' strengths pertaining to what they can do – allowing the teacher to choose as appropriate assessment for students with different learning styles, maturity levels, learning disabilities, physical impairments and other characteristics that could affect language performance. While one student may choose to write a response, another student may perform better in a role play situation or in any other culminating task at hand. This, in a way, gives a learner to do what he is interested in doing then later may engage in other activities that are not within his/her comfort zone, thus, making him/her a holistic learner in the long run. It will also lead a student to mingle with other students, and they help each other, become friends with each other, and become motivated by each other and later to be inspired to become the best that they can be in the future.

Although paper and pencil tests can be effective when assessing listening and reading comprehension skills, they are not appropriate assessment methods for performance skills such as speaking and writing, which are two of the basic macro skills, with viewing added as the fifth skill to refine one's communication skills, both oral and written, critical thinking, collaborative techniques, creative literacy skills, and cultural heritage ideals.

In a balanced assessment program, a variety of evaluation techniques should be incorporated into daily instruction. An authentic assessment combines the

traditional academic content with the knowledge and skills needed to function appropriately in the real world. The context, purpose, audience, and focus should connect to real-world situations and problems. Performance-based assessment requires the learners to perform in realistic parameters. Students participated in specific tasks, interviews, or other performances that are appropriate in the audience and setting. Constructivist learning theory emphasizes that individuals learn through building their own knowledge, connecting novel ideas, and new experiences to existing knowledge to form new or enhanced understanding (Bransford & Schwartz, 1999).

The theory, developed by Piaget and other psychologists, espoused that learners can either assimilate new information into an existing framework to accommodate new information that contradicts prior understanding. Active learning approaches also embrace the use of cooperative or collaborative learning groups, a constructivist-based practice that places particular emphasis on the contribution that social interaction can make. Lev Vygotsky's work elaborated on the relationship between cognitive processes and social activities and led to a sociocultural theory of development, which suggests that learning takes place when students solve problems beyond their current developmental level with the support of their instructor or their peers (Vygotsky, 1979).

Thus, active learning approaches that rely on group work rest on this sociocultural branch of constructivist learning theory, leveraging peer to peer interaction to promote students' development of extended and accurate mental models. Active learning implies that students are engaged in their own learning pace. Active teaching strategies have students do something other than taking notes or following directions. They participate in activities to construct and build new structures of knowledge.

A culminating activity is a summary exercise that is integrative in nature, based on an advanced study, accumulated experience, and carried out with a high degree of independence. It can include, among others, portfolios, theses, oral and written presentations in front of an audience, performance-based assessments, and other strategies. These activities or here in this academic paper, they are termed tasks for the students to perform through mainly the concerted effort of the instructor of English and hands-on tasks of the students to develop the 21st-century skills, namely among others, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity, also known as the four C's of the present global educational arena.

The culminating tasks which are participated in by the students of English will mainly help to articulate thoughts and ideas effectively using oral, written,

and nonverbal communication skills in a variety of forms and contexts; use communication for a range of purposes (e.g., to inform, instruct, motivate, and persuade); use multiple media and technologies, and know-how to assess impact and effectiveness using either self-made rubrics; and communicate effectively in diverse environments, including multilingual, contextualization and translation.

In everyday work around the globe, employees must employ the 21st-century skills in performing their tasks, or else they will remain stagnant and will not vie for any promotion. Students who have been exposed to school tasks that require them to perform activities other than those expected of them are most likely those who will be recognized, appreciated, and given good ratings, which they need when they seek jobs after graduation. Economists Levy and Murnane (2012) have described the new world of work in which the most desirable jobs—the ones least likely to be automated and outsourced and those that require expert thinking and complexities ideals using proper communication facilities learned in school, commencing from participating in culminating tasks in the core disciplines, primarily in English classes to make them holistic learners.

In 2010, the American Management Association (AMA) survey boosted the immersion of students and on-the-job training pre-service trainees to equip themselves with the 21st-century skills and competencies to prepare them to enter the workforce. In a research conducted by Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, University of Oregon, David Conley cited with permission from the Foundation, that “habits of mind” such as analysis, interpretation, precision, and accuracy, problem-solving and reasoning, can be more important than content knowledge in determining success in college courses.

Critical thinking is essential in performing culminating tasks and has long been a valued skill in society. Today, every student, not just the academically advanced-needs it. While critical thinkers are the only ones referred to as the domain of gifted students, now it is a critical zone for every student. These statements were well-supported by modern educators Ranganathan et al., (2004) and no less than the former US president Barack Obama in their respective interviews in a global network. Teachers, supervisors, and education experts commonly cited in their discourses that schools, especially the tertiary level, should join hands and minds to prepare 21st-century students for a global society.

Creativity in Innovation Projects: How Teamwork Matters in the article of Hoegl and Parboteeah (2007) investigated the influence of the quality of teamwork on the performance effects of domain-relevant skills and creative-thinking skills in innovation teams. It proposed that quality teamwork is an

important understanding condition facilitating the application of creative-thinking skills.

The research focused on teamwork in the presentation of their culminating activities, specifically in the presentation of their prepared instructional materials, group talk show, debates, stage play, among others, wherein each group would be assigned by the respective instructors, specific culminating tasks that the members of every group would manage from the practice to the presentation. In Sue-Jen Chen University of North Carolina Willington, the administrator implemented online courses proposing the design strategies should be modified in order to retain the quality of leaning without reducing the quantity of the course content. In this collaborative research, assignments or schedules are sent through emails or messenger. An exchange of ideas and clarifications of the rudiments of the culminating tasks are done electronically via social media.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this collaborative research were as follows, (1) Identify the culminating tasks participated in by the students major in English (2) Single out the problems encountered in the presentation of culminating tasks, (3)provide solutions to the problems and (4) Determine the best practices in presenting culminating tasks in English classes.

METHODOLOGY

The research design of the study used the descriptive survey method employing the qualitative design where the data gathered were drawn. This design was suitable for this study where the indicators varied among themselves and learned the extent to which different conditions and situations obtained among them. The word survey signifies the gathering of data regarding the present conditions. A survey is useful in (1) providing the value of facts, and (2) focusing attention on the most important things to be reported (Paler-Calmorin & Calmorin, 2007).

As to the sources of data came from the responses of the respondents in the questionnaire, while the secondary sources of data came from the documents which were deemed necessary for the analysis of the responses in the questionnaire. The other secondary sources of data included books, theses journals, as well as online sources that further improved and gave substance to this research.

The geographical location of the study is the municipality of Daraga, specifically, in the Bicol College, College of Education. The respondents are the totally enumerated students in CTED, with the English course among the 3rd and the 4th year levels from 1st-2nd semesters for Academic Year (AY) 2017- 2018.

This study focused on the students' answers to the questionnaire provided by the researches and validated in a class of 15 second-year English major students in the same institution. The totally enumerated respondents were the members of the 2 classes, in the third year and fourth year, respectively, with a total of 50 respondents, 10 males, and 40 females. Twenty were third-year students, while 30 were fourth-year learners.

At present, Bicol College has 18 courses, excluding the Elementary, Junior, and Senior High School departments. For three consecutive years, it has been awarded by Philippine Accreditation of Private Colleges and Universities Commission Office Administration (PACUCOA), an accreditation agency for private institutions, as one of the top five institutions with the most number of accredited courses nationwide, under the leadership of one of the granddaughters of the Founder. The College of Teacher Education, has its three existing courses, namely, Bachelor of Elementary Education and Bachelor of Secondary Education, major in English, Mathematics, Science and Filipino, MAPEH and Sociology. The newly approved course is Bachelor in Pre-school Education.

The descriptive survey type of research design provides a snapshot of the current thoughts and feelings of the identified individuals who allow the development of questions for further study. This faculty research was designed to determine the culminating tasks participated in by the students in their English courses in consonance with the global trend on their participation in culminating tasks.

The data collected were tabulated and interpreted using the descriptive method of research. The copies of the survey questionnaire were distributed to the 50 totally enumerated respondents to get a picture of the common culminating tasks initiated by the instructor, but once the rules and terms of references were discussed and clarifications were answered, the students were the ones given the bulk of, effort, time and decision-making in implementing the tasks as a part of the syllabus at hand. The data were retrieved after 30 minutes to get the responses from the respondents.

Bicol College is a higher education institution (HEI) in Daraga, Albay, recognized by the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) decades of years ago. This was founded by Don Roque F. Tabuena in 1941 and presently has

a total population of more than 3,000 enrollees from Kinder school to the Graduate school.

The survey questionnaire and the checklist were the instruments used in the collection of data, which were 100 % retrieved, interpreted, and analyzed statistically and textually. The questionnaire had four parts (1) culminating tasks participated in by the students in English of the Teacher Education (2) problems encountered during the conduct of the activities and (3) best practices in the conduct of the tasks. As to the checklist, the respondents numbered the small boxes beside the choices to get the rank and percentage.

This study was done to gather a relevant academic impact that learning is better through the participation in culminating tasks is now a major global trend and an educational transformation that happens in the classrooms. Based on the global educational setting that 'no one should be left behind,' this innovation is sustained for the genuine love for progress and development of the institutions across the world. This collaborative research intended to explore the participation of the identified respondents in the varied culminating tasks in consonance with the global trend in curriculum, instruction, and outreach program, as the three pillars of the tertiary education, advocated by the Commission of Higher Education.

This study was based on the theory focused on 21st-century skills, namely, the six C's, namely, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, creativity, cultural and computer literacy. It adopted Lev Vygotsky's Culminating Task Theory, which enhances learners' skills in participating in social activities as outcomes of classroom learning and display their talents and shun away their inhibitions to prepare them to become confident teachers of the 21st century.

The culminating tasks mentioned here were the activities in and out of the classrooms, which developed the six important skills of the students to prepare them for the world of work and to gain for them the life skills to strengthen their careers in the future.

These were extended tasks necessary to establish the students' initiative, leadership, and performance – the outgrowth of the knowledge, skills, and values they learned in the four corners of their classrooms. These were the skills mainly developed in implementing the culminating tasks in the classes participated in by the students, major in English, which have become the global trend.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table I shows the identified culminating activities participated in by the 3rd and 4th year students in their English classes conducted for AY 2017-2018. Out of the 14 culminating tasks, role-play (self-made skits/dialogues), literary parade of characters, talk show, and Readers Theater got an equal rank with 40 or 72.22% among the students placing them as number one. Japanese, Spanish, Filipino songs and interpretative dances came as second in rank, 9 or 16.33% while Micro-teaching and storytelling shared the same rank, 5 or 9 %. Radio broadcasting, creative writing (portfolio), and speech choir ranked fourth while 3 or 5% debate and stage play were the last of the students' choices.

Table 1. Culminating Tasks Conducted in English Classes

Task	Frequency	Percentage	Rank
Role Play	50	100	1.5
Parade of Literary Characters	50	100	1.5
Speech Choir	30	54.54	8.0
Radio Broadcasting	25	45.45	9.0
Reader's Theater	45	81.18	5.0
Exhibits Unlimited	42	76.36	6.5
Stage Play	20	36.36	11.0
Poetry in Motion	22	40.00	10.0
Foreign Dance Songs & Verses	48	87.27	2.5
Talk Show	48	87.27	2.5
Debate	18	32.72	12.5
Micro teaching	42	76.36	6.5
Storytelling	18	32.72	12.5
Writing Portfolio	16	29.09	14.0

The implications zeroed in on the satisfaction of the students while they are able to emote using the English language, delight to wear appropriate costumes for a literary character as they join in the parade around the streets to the Bicol Gymnasium or Bibiana Hall as the usual venue of the culminating event. They are glad to participate in talk shows to manifest their love for their admired people in the media, a celebrity, or an idol in the academe. They rejoice to be a part of the

Readers Theater as a symbol of their love for reading being the model readers to their school children when they become teachers in their teaching career.

While the rest of the activities are performed as part of their courses, some find it hard to speak before an audience during a debate on certain issues, giving their reason that they are not very much comfortable using the English language in presenting and defending an issue or researching on some pieces of evidence to support their proposition, in whichever side they are assigned in the same way as memorizing dialogues with matching gestures and styles of acting according to the script in Stage plays.

Table 2 reveals about the problems encountered during the conduct of the activities. One hundred (100) percent or all of the students agreed that two of the basic problems were difficulty in scheduling practice and no time and place designated for practice, followed by uncooperative group mates (90%) much time spent for practice or 60%. Next, was attendance in other subjects was affected with 42 students or 56 percent or 35.00 among the respondents considered difficulty in scheduling practice due to the conflict with the time of the other subjects and spends a lot of time, money spent for costumes and ticket selling for their performance posed problems, too. Not relevant to the objectives was the last problem the students cited.

Table 2. Problems Encountered in Participating in Culminating Tasks

Problems	Percentage	Rank
Difficulty in scheduling practice	100.00	1.5
Uncooperative groupmates	90.00	3.0
Much time is spent for practice	60.00	5.0
Attendance in other subjects is affected	56.00	6.0
No time and place designated for practice	100.00	1.5
Expensive props and costumes	50.00	7.5
Not relevant to the objectives	1.00	9.0
Difficult tasks to perform	72.00	4.0
Selling tickets for viewers of their performance	50.00	7.5

These problems implied that the students wanted to participate in the culminating activities but they cited there are barriers such as those included in Table 2. They were unanimous that time, place and costumes were the basic problems but these could be avoided if proper coordination with the dean, program chairs or the other professors whose subjects might be affected. As to the tickets, the show/s may just be shown for free. What is more important in the culminating tasks is to develop the skills and aesthetic senses. The costumes are immaterial and if the students themselves want to wear simple costumes, they can make use of old or used clothes and shoes as well as the props. Five out of 50 students or 1% who stated that the activities were not relevant to the objectives is immaterial and is not essential to the whole view of the problems identified.

Table 3 reveals the proposed measures to minimize the problems. The instructor, through the coordination with the dean, the top administrative staff to the other professors whose subjects may be affected up to the janitors or in charge of the AVR, mini theater and other places to ask permission to use those places during their vacant periods or on a Saturday morning, as the case may be to schedule practices for their culminating activities. Parents should also be sent letters for this purpose.

The objectives of the syllabus should be made clear at the start of the semester.

Table 3. Proposed Solutions to Minimize the Problems

Solutions	Percentage	Rank
Coordinate with the Dean as to scheduling practice	100.00	1.5
Orient uncooperative groupmates	90.00	3.0
Budget time for practice	60.00	5.0
Coordinate with other instructors as to attendance in other subjects	56.00	6.0
Specify time and place designated for practice	100.00	1.5
Refrain from using expensive props and costumes	50.00	7.5
Include the objectives in syllabus	1.00	9.0
Simplify tasks to perform	72.00	4.0
Refrain from selling tickets for viewers of their performance	50.00	7.5

There may be a very minimal number of students who may not be very attentive so they are unaware of them as part of the requirements for the completion of the course. The use of the school uniform or the use of old clothes for costumes and props may solve the issue on money and expenditures.

The students were one in putting the first 3 data in Table 3 as the top solutions to the problems encountered by the students, major in English in their participation in the culminating tasks to complete their course. Only 20 % of the students were in favor of wearing their school uniform during the culminating event implied that majority among them would have the feel of making the difference in their performance. They realized that they were not only earning grades when they perform but they also wanted to have a feel of the emotions and decisions they entail during their performance. They wanted to feel the importance of their roles and carry the real characters themselves.

Table 4 shows the list of best practices as perceived by the respondents. Fifty or all of the respondents put eight (8) of the practices as Excellent; 6. VS and 2 as S. According to Schuell, the achievement of the learners are the most important part in the educational process. By means of conducting different activities with the real world situations that will mold the learners' active performance, gain skills to develop the multiple intelligence that each of them has. With the present curriculum in this country and in the global setting, performance-based teaching is prioritized by curriculum makers that the students will be graded out of their performance-based tasks given by their facilitators of learning.

In the K to 12 basic education curriculum and that of the upcoming new curriculum of the Tertiary Education, the students are the center of all learning. As Herman and Aschbacher (1992) advocates, culminating task is one of the learning endeavors that requires students to generate rather than to choose a response. This study showed that conducting a variety of activities has a positive or negative effects on the learning process of the students, but at the end of these pros and cons the important thing is that students gain life-long learning and adapt new knowledge that they can apply to their everyday life.

Table 4. Best Practices in the Conduct of Culminating Tasks

Best Practices	Frequency	Description
Developing creativity	50	E
Enhancing leadership	50	E
Showing an edge in performance	10	S
Avoiding fear & inhibition	50	E
Building self-confidence	50	E
Improving critical thinking skills	50	E
Exhibiting skills in making IMs	40	VS
Appreciating & interpreting literary genres	40	VS
Participating in translations of foreign languages	40	VS
Improving communication skills	50	E
Building sufficient	50	E
Facilitating a class for micro-teaching	50	E
Preparing short video clips for interviews	40	VS
Participating in oral discourse (debates)	10	S
Showing proficiency in writing essays	40	VS
Presenting research-based radio broadcasting	40	VS
Participating in talk shows about common issues on academics, environment, tourism, entrepreneurial, discipline & politics	50	E
Hosting a program or a forum	40	VS

Legend: 5 - Excellent; 4 – Very Satisfactory; 3 – Satisfactory.

The same table refers to the Best Practices in the Conduct of the Culminating Tasks in the English classes. It shows that 38 or 69.09 % like culminating activities because they are able to develop their self-confidence; they sharpen their critical thinking skills and they develop their social skills though proper communication. Score 15 or 27.27 % said that the tasks would make them better persons and employees in the future while two (2) or 3 % cited that they want culminating tasks because they will help them in their careers in the future.

The 50 respondents noted that holding culminating tasks highly recommendable noting that 35 among the total number of practices 9 of them were rated as Excellent; 7 were rated Very Satisfactory and only 2 endeavors were rated Satisfactory.

This implies that majority of the 50 respondents were excellently in favor of the conduct of the culminating tasks, 10 among them rated six (6) of the 18 practices as Very Satisfactory and only two (4) practices were rated by 5 respondents as Satisfactory. This means that the students of Bicol College, major in English are aware of the global trend that culminating tasks are very essential in the teaching-learning process in the realm of education in this present era.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings cited, the following conclusions were stated: 1) The 18 identified culminating tasks that were conducted and participated in by students, in an English course were prioritized by the students in the following order: role play, talk show, literary parade of characters, readers theater, and exhibits unlimited followed by music and dance in foreign lands (with annotation in the foreign language of the countries of their choice); poetry in motion, micro teaching, speech choir. Last choices were debate, stage drama, and radio broadcasting. These imply that many students do not value of critical thinking which can be drawn from the importance of drama, debate and radio broadcasting. They are more bent on role play, dance and songs even if they mimic other's languages like Japanese, Spanish and Korean. They are fonder of preparing short dialogues, making gestures and preparing materials for instruction and curricular strategies. Most of them do not want to participate in debates which would develop their decision-making, research skills, vocabulary, and creativity in oral and written endeavors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To improve the conduct of the culminating activities, simple and thorough instructions should be first discussed by the instructors of English before these culminating tasks be effected. The students should be made to understand that these activities are not for show but they are required as they are indicated in the curricular syllabi basically to prepare them for independent learning and for performance-based assessments. Learning is not merely imparted through the books but through the experiential learning they obtain through interdisciplinary interactions and involvement in the 21st century skills which are the trends in educational patterns in the world. These global trends are ideals to combat mediocrity and precautions to sluggishness in keeping abreast with the updated times of the 21st century.

Instructors and students in all courses should be pressing for the functional modern technology in the teaching and learning scenarios in and out of the four corners of the classroom but together the instructor and the learners push through their journey to knowledge, skills and attitudes to hone the students to become holistic, digital literate, critical thinkers since they are the demands of the educational reforms, assessment practices, economic upliftment and policy formulation in education through the years.

Instructors in the modern world are technology driven. The students in this era have grown up in a fast-paced digital world, and easily tuned out of the traditional lecture-based classroom. Researching, communicating and even online job application across the globe via computer and smart phones are a snap for them. Social Networking Sites (SNS) are only as good as the content their users share (Briggs & Burke, 2009).

Hence, this study was bent to facilitate in letting the learners work, live, play and have fun while learning. Hence, the culminating tasks in the classrooms be sustained for better preparedness for the new global society in learning life and career skills in a matter of time. Other researchers may expound on some topics related to the present research such as: Secondary School Teachers Meet the Challenges of the 21st Century ; Language Teachers at the Threshold of the Global Environment, and Impact of the Digital World on the Innovative Students in the Tertiary Level.

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