

Collaborative Teaching: Bringing Language Teaching to the English Content Classroom⁺

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ABSTRACT The present study looks at collaborative teaching and how it can be incorporated as a remedial technique in an English content course at the Masters level. Using action research as its method, and the view W. W. Murawski takes on co-teaching while appropriating it for a non-inclusive classroom, the research looks at how co-teachers' use of this technique in a co-taught classroom can enhance their teaching experience and supplement the students' understanding of the content. The current study uses the data in the form of reflections, by both the co-teachers, after each session, for analysis in light of their own earlier experiences. The findings show that taking up co-teaching in an English content course at Masters level can be used as a remedial teaching technique to improve the weak language skills of learners.

INTRODUCTION

The study looks at what comprises collaborative teaching and remedial teaching, and intends to show how the former can be appropriated to be used as a technique for the latter.

Background of Collaborative Teaching

The concept of collaborative teaching can be traced back to the 1970s when Wolfensberger gave the idea of inclusive classrooms as a practical measure to implement the Ideas of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (Rea and Connell 2005). IDEA was in turn an outcome of the No Child Left Behind policy initiated by the US government (p. 29).

The desire to bring the special needs students within the folds of the mainstream educational process led to some schools adopting the strategy of bringing together a general subject area teacher and a special education teacher in the same class and having them teach in tandem. It was the start of an inclusion program and

for Murawski (Murawski 2010) constitutes the origin of co-teaching. Murawski feels that co-teaching needs to be defined to streamline the various uses of the concept. The program of teaching children with special needs separately was the norm before the mid 1960s and it centred on the idea of teaching special children in isolation from the general classroom (Murawski 2010: 14).

In 1968, Lloyd Dunn, in an article, "questioned the ethical and legal implication of excluding special education students from general education" (as cited in Murawski 2010: 14). Kavale and Forness "suggest that this article was the impetus for including students with disabilities in general education" (as cited in Murawski 2010: 14). Kavale and Forness also define such inclusion as "a movement seeking to create schools that meet the needs of all students by establishing learning communities for students with and without disabilities, educated together in age-appropriate general education classrooms in neighbourhood schools" (as cited in Murawski 2010: 17).

Co-teaching Defined

According to Murawski (as cited in Murawski 2010), co-teaching is "when two or more teachers co-plan, co-instruct, and co-assess a

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group of students with diverse needs in the same general education classroom” (Murawski 2010: 11). She states that co-teaching does not involve a teacher and her assistant but it is “two or more co-equal, preferably credentialed, faculty working together” (p. 41). It is conducted at the same time in the same physical space and is different from the previously implemented strategy where a few students are pulled out for separate instruction of the same content or language feature.

Murawski’s definition is not fundamentally different from the definitions of other key theorists in the field. Gately and Gately (2001) define co-teaching as “collaboration between general and special education (SPED) teachers on all of the teaching responsibilities for all the students assigned to a classroom” (as cited in Honigsfeld and Dove 2010: 6). Honigsfeld and Dove (2010) add to this definition by stating that the SPED teacher can be substituted, and collaborative partnership can be forged between “a general-education teacher and a service provider such as remedial math teacher, a reading specialist, a teacher of the gifted and talented, a speech-language pathologist, and the English-as-a-second-language (ESL) teacher” (p.6). Similarly, for Villa et al. co-teaching is when responsibilities are distributed among teachers for “planning, instruction, and evaluation for a classroom of students” (as cited in Honigsfeld and Dove: 6).

Murawski’s definition, however, is more comprehensive and presents co-teaching as collaboration in well-defined key areas such as planning, implementation and assessment rather than coordination between two teachers. Furthermore, Murawski’s work is unique because it is shaped by her first-hand experience of actual co-teaching an inclusion classroom with another teacher, which occasioned her to claim that no teacher should wait for the invitation to co-teach but should “volunteer before someone invites them” (Murawski and Dieker 2008: 40). Therefore, in light of the rigorousness of Murawski’s study, this study prefers Murawski’s definition of co-teaching and regards it as an ‘umbrella term’ for all the understandings of co-teaching.

Theoretical Framework

Murawski’s definition of the entire process of co-teaching is hinged upon three indepen-

dent processes inter-fused together, that is, co-planning, co-instruction and co-assessment of the same class by the two teachers.

Co-planning

Murawski recommends that the co-teachers inform the parents with a letter about the details of the time period of some weeks/months/year (as planned), two teachers will be teaching their children (Murawski 2010), and that the students be introduced to both the teachers and given a detailed explanation about the special teaching environment they will be a part of for that duration. The two teachers then sit together to chalk out what the weak areas of the students are, or set the targets for the students of a particular level. Planning in co-teaching is crucial, as the planning process must consider not one but two streams of input as to what each teacher deems appropriate for the co-taught class. Murawski further advises that the administrators of the institutions should be careful not to put two such teachers in a co-taught class who are not compatible with each other. Murawski also highlights some barriers to co-planning, the top of the list being “time” (p. 151) due to the teachers’ instructional schedules in different classes, which makes extensive planning a challenge. The planning is half the battle and to cater for this, Murawski suggests that the teachers have a “common planning time” (p. 153) and scheduled meetings.

Co-instruction

In terms of implementing the technique of co-teaching, Murawski warns the teachers of the pitfalls of two teachers working together and differences emanating from this partnership. The teachers learn from each other’s strengths and skills, which furthers the rationale of the joint venture, making sure that all the students benefit from the expertise of both the educators. Therefore, Teacher A selected, as a co-teacher, a colleague of hers whom she has been acquainted with for three years and who she finds very professional and honest with her opinions when they are planning lessons for their regular, daily routine classes.

Once the selection of a co-teacher is made, Murawski highly recommends using Friend and Cook’s approaches to co-teaching.

- I. One Teach, One Support
- II. Parallel Teaching
- III. Station Teaching
- IV. Alternative Teaching
- V. Team Teaching

Co-assessment

Murawski (2010) believes that the assessment should not just pertain to how the students have done but what the co-teachers have been able to learn and teach. She proclaims that assessing can be a “daunting” (p. 225) task because of the issue of what constitutes assessment and what constitutes success. Both teachers can have their own concepts. She advises the teachers to discuss the co-assessing aspect with each other and come to a decision before the actual time of co-assessing comes.

Literature Review

Teaching Content versus Teaching Language Skills

Snow et al. state, “The content teacher is responsible for the subject matter, and the language teacher is responsible for the language curriculum. The teachers’ responsibilities do not overlap” (Snow et al. 1989: 204). Thus, the teachers are unaware of what goes on in the other class and are unable to assist each other to help students excel in their content courses. This is the very basis of the current study, that is, content and language need to be addressed side by side and not separately because the weaknesses of the students in language proficiency create problems in their ability to express their thoughts regarding the content they are being taught.

Miller and Burden (2007) ask the most basic question, “When teachers are being effectively collaborative, what are they actually *doing*?” (p. 1), while gathering data on collaborative teaching. Despite the few numbers of researches on the actual process of implementation of co-teaching, there have been some studies conducted to find out the efficacy of this technique. Over the years, researchers have employed different methods in order to find out the results of co-teaching, and this practice in inclusion class-

rooms revealed a distinct pattern of assessment and methods used to get the data for that assessment.

Lundeen and Lundeen (1993) developed and implemented a co-teaching model in Morgantown High School in which special education students were enrolled with regular students. Students’ previous course grades and attendance records were taken as basic data for the study. Analysis after the co-teaching sessions showed improvement in all the students’ grades.

Wiedmeyer and Lehman (1991) also conducted a survey, through questionnaires, for responses from parents, students and teachers to ascertain the effectiveness of co-teaching in Badger Middle School in West Bend, Wisconsin. They concluded that the majority of the participants were satisfied with the results along with the improvement the students had shown during that school year.

Dugan and Letterman (2008) chose a quantitative research to find out the effectiveness of co-teaching by conducting a survey among the students of high school who were co-taught by two teachers. They got their feedback regarding the efficacy of co-teaching as compared to a single-instructor fronted classroom via questionnaires, which resulted in a conflict with some students stating that they were happy with the co-teachers but others commented that keeping two teachers satisfied was very trying.

In 2008, Haider conducted a survey in Lahore, Pakistan, to find out the teachers’ attitudes towards the inclusion classrooms for students with special educational needs. She selected four schools in Lahore and distributed questionnaires among the teachers to get their views on the service delivery option of co-teaching. More than half of the teachers gave a positive response to this technique as compared to some percentage that feared that the students who did not have any special needs might suffer in terms of behaviour and learning of concepts if taught in the same class as the special children.

Mirza and Iqbal (2014), in their study, brought two Math teachers together as co-teachers to grade 8 students in a public sector school in Pakistan. One of the researchers and a volunteer math teacher partnered as co-teachers for this research. They taught an experiment class geometry and algebra with the experts of both

fields in the same class. The researchers took a pre-test to assess the knowledge of the students in both areas and later a post-test to gauge their performance. They applied a statistical analysis on their test results and concluded that the students did remarkably well in their post-tests as compared with their pre-test results. Other teachers have also participated in providing feedback about interdisciplinary collaboration at Masters of Accounting programme in a research done by Evans et al. (2009). The teachers from different disciplines collaborated with English language specialists to “integrate and assess communication skills and enrich the curriculum” (pp. 597-613). Similarly, in another study, a series of semi-structured interviews were conducted by Simons and Baeten (2016) to find out opinions and preferences of the teachers and students with regard to co-teaching and their attitudes towards it, and show promising results if implemented. But none of them have highlighted the dynamics that the co-teachers share when actually co-teaching.

Orr et al. (2008) have recommended the use of co-teaching as a tool to provide the students of graduate programs with opportunities to obtain teaching experience and enhance their pedagogical training. Fucciardi et al. (2016) in a study, tried to find out the students’ satisfaction, learning outcomes and experiences with student-faculty team-teaching in an undergraduate quantitative-research-methods course. Three peer tutors co-taught with a faculty instructor each year, receiving pedagogical-placement credits. Peer tutors reduced student anxiety, but experienced tension amongst themselves with their roles as both teachers and peers. Walters and Misra (2013) endorse such team-teaching as a healthy training for the undergraduates while enhancing the teaching experience of the faculty members.

The survey, with the help of questionnaires and interviews of the participants or the testing of the students, does not fit the researchers’ objectives, as the researchers wanted the teacher’s reflections to be the guide to developing insight into co-teaching and to ascertain if it is doable or not. The researchers also did not want to base the research of the co-teaching models on the students’ responses, as it can be totally based on the students’ liking of a particular professor. The researchers would, however, elicit

oral feedback from the students to take their response to the co-teaching sessions into account.

The researchers also agree with Robinson and Schaible (1995), to “agree from the start that your first time teaching together is a trial run” (p. 57) and the researchers were, therefore, open to any errors that the researcher and the co-teacher would make. The researchers would base their results on the teachers’ perspective on how they found the classroom and lessons to benefit from this particular method of teaching. To do this, an action research was most appropriate to reach an unbiased conclusion. The researchers and the co-teacher would write their honest feedback and conclusion of every class after the class was over. They would then reflect on their own teaching and comment on how the lesson progressed and ended, with the approaches they chose to deliver it.

Remedial Teaching and its Efficacy

Different studies, over an extensive period of time, have proven the importance of remedial teaching and the different techniques used by the teachers. In a report issued in 1966 by the US Office of Education, Wolf et al. (1966) described the results of token reinforcement in an after-school remedial program for low achieving 5th and 6th grade children as compared to a control group who received no such remedial instruction, reporting significant improvement of results in the former group.

In Springfield, Illinois, teachers, administrators and researchers successfully developed and implemented a remedial technique of reciprocal teaching on 1st grade students to improve their reading comprehension (Palincsar et al. 1989). Shults (2000) prepared a research brief for the American Association of Community Colleges, which discussed the use of technology in remedial classes, limiting the class size and offering credits for said remedial courses and highlighted that this helped the students in successful placements in colleges.

The practice of remediation led to the current trend of using computer-assisted language learning (Hsiao et al. 2016: 385), as a remediation technique. The researchers showed that the remedial approach of using CALL helped and improved the performance of students who were taking Chinese as a foreign language.

A recent study, in a bid to look [as a remedial technique] at the performance, both oral and written, of the learners of English as foreign language, employed a native English speaker as an instructor (Haberman et al. 2020) over the course of a semester. The research used the data collected through pre- and post-tests and concluded that there was no noticeable improvement in the language skills of the students, thus breaking the myth that native speakers of English can bring about a positive change in the use of English by the students. Similarly, to improve academic writing skills of learners of English as second language at an undergraduate level, another study used the technique of teaching lexical bundles to students of a non-native country (Kanglong and Afzaal 2020: 476). The study also employed pre- and post-tests to gather data for a quantitative data analysis with the help of a paired-samples t-test. The researchers therefore, chose to use data from reflections to avoid turning the experience of the teachers and the results into numerical data.

Reflective Teaching

This part of the literature review will focus on the views of different researchers and teachers on reflective teaching, which is the method the study employs to collect data for the research.

Brookfield (1995) in his “*Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*” series, calls the teaching where a teacher assumes to know exactly what he or she is doing “innocent teaching” (paragraph 1) and says that it is “naïve” (paragraph 2) thinking on the teacher’s part. The author asserts that the only way to be conscious of what the teacher has taught and what effect that teaching has had on the students is to be reflective on what went on in the class after the class is done.

According to Sparks-Langer and Colton (1991), “Professional knowledge is seen as coming both from sources outside the teacher and from the teachers’ own interpretations of their everyday experiences” (p. 37) Similarly, in a report issued by Ofsted in November 2004, it was stated that the best of teachers are the ones who constantly reflect upon what they have taught because “...they themselves learn lessons each time they teach, evaluating what they

do and using these self-critical evaluations to adjust what they do next time.” (paragraph 19)

Using co-teaching as a remedial technique on the students of Masters of English required that a self-assessing tool be used by the teachers, so that improvement could be made upon the practice as they went along. Because the concept of two teachers in the same physical space and time is new, it was important that the teachers’ perspective and views be taken as data to ascertain the do-ability of the teaching technique at this high a level. This is only possible if the co-teachers reflect on what went on in the class and how it could be improved upon and if it could be used as a remedial technique. The teachers’ reflections after every session constituted the data for analysis to reach the conclusion if co-teaching is a viable option in these cases.

Objectives

The objective of the study is to implement co-teaching at the Master’s level and delve into its implication for appropriating and adopting it as a remedial measure for M.A. English programmes in a non-inclusive classroom.

METHODOLOGY

The study, in essence, models itself as a qualitative research because according to Allwood (2012) it is used to explore or determine the nature of the data and is a means to finding out the proof of a phenomenon. Rhodes (2014) describes a qualitative approach as a way to gather information in order to “describe a phenomenon in a deep comprehensive manner” (Rhodes 2014). Wyse (2011) states, “Qualitative research is primarily exploratory research”. According to both Rhodes and Wyse, a smaller number of participants are involved in this type of research. The research is primarily qualitative because of the fact that the number of participants is small and the teachers involved will be reflecting upon the phenomenon of co-teaching and analysing its do-ability in light of their previous experiences. The study will employ action research, which O’Brien simply describes as “learning by doing” (O’Brien 2001) and highly recommends Stephen Kremmis’ model of action research, which has four simple steps, “plan, act, observe and reflect” (Kremmis as cited in O’Brien 2001).

The lessons, hence, are planned one by one, executed in the session and then the input from both the co-teachers is used to make the next lesson plan.

Research Questions

The research questions that the study intends to answer are as follows:

1. How can co-teaching be appropriated as a remedial measure for an M.A. English programme?
2. What recommendations regarding adopting co-teaching as a remedial teaching measure can be made?

Procedure/Data Collection

The four methods used for reflective teaching are peer observation, teacher diary, recording lessons and student feedback. Out of these four, the study employs teacher diary, which entails that the co-teachers write their reflections of the lesson immediately after the session. These reflections after each teaching session helped the co-teachers to improve upon the lesson plan for every subsequent lesson.

Teacher A (content specialist) selected a colleague, whom she has been working with for three years, to be her co-teacher and brought her up-to-speed with Murawski's vision of co-teaching. They sat together and discussed how it could be implemented and appropriated for this study, using the approaches given by Cook and Friend including how they could be implemented and used in isolation from the others or in a combination of two or three approaches. Teachers A and B also discussed if there was any approach that could not be used for their class and decided that the approaches "Station Teaching" and "Alternate Teaching" could not be applied, as both these approaches require a large number of students and are more suited to cater for the needs of junior level students.

The lesson plan template was devised after a thorough and detailed study of the language items to be taught and the content to be covered. The time that was available for each slot, one hour and twenty minutes, was divided into 10 to 30-minute slots. The lesson plans included step-by-step details of the language focus and

the content along with the activities, which were to be used, written and oral.

The teachers also decided to give an informal assessment to the students to see if there is any improvement in their basic use of language in a content related question. This was not to be used as a reflection on the efficacy of co-teaching, but to have an idea if it has the potential to become a positive and result oriented remedial technique.

RESULTS

The study found that implementation of co-teaching can be summed up by looking at the reflections of the co-teachers at different levels.

Assessment of the Students

The co-teachers, keeping in mind Murawski's explicit understanding of the process of assessment, decided beforehand that they would each check part of the assignment that they would ask the students to do in the last co-taught session, and each teacher's portion would also include material taught by the co-teacher.

Evaluation of the Teachers

Murawski's other instruction for the teachers is to assess themselves in their daily lessons and how they progress, keeping in mind what they did, how they felt during the session, and how they felt their methodology affected their students, positively or negatively. The study selected the method of reflection to keep track of what the co-teachers did in each of their sessions. These reflections include the co-teachers' (henceforth, Teacher A (content specialist) and Teacher B (English language teaching specialist) reactions to, and hindsight about, the experiences during each session. Those reflections are given below in detail.

Lesson No. 1

Teacher A and Teacher B shared the teaching of the content and language, implementing the two objectives hand in hand in the same physical space for the first time. They were both hopeful that given the rapport they share in their

day to day interactions, they would be able to co-teach with a minimum number of distractions and problems. But the actual co-taught class brought to light some things, which they took for granted in teaching sessions alone. Teacher A was confident that they would be able to teach the content and language goal with success, which in the end they did, but she did not consider that she was the content specialist and this, being her course, might cause Teacher B to feel that she was not as in control as she usually is in her own classes. Teacher B, in her reflections, highlighted the same concern, that she was not used to sharing a classroom with another teacher and she felt overwhelmed and a bit unsure because she felt that it was not her class, or her course, but that she was there as a language expert and her duties as a teacher might be limited to the aspect of teaching language only. The positive side of the session was that it was a new experience for both of them and after a few adjustments, they were more accepting of the fact that they were now sharing the teaching job together and they had to continuously adjust for each other.

After the session when they sat down to plan for the next lesson, Teacher B voiced her concern of feeling like a third wheel in this joint venture. They planned the lesson keeping in mind this concern and tried to plan every aspect of the lecture to cater to this problem.

Lesson No. 2

In their second session Teacher B reflected that for the first fifteen minutes or so she had the same feeling of being just a help rather than being an equal partner in the teaching process. She wrote that she felt like she did not have as much control over the situation as she would normally have in her own classroom where she had autonomy. She commented that she kept revisiting her strategies to put in her ideas throughout the lesson but was determined to make it better and work on this issue with mutual planning and discussions. Teacher A was also concerned with the adjustment of Teacher B, so that they could have a mutually satisfying teaching experience.

When they planned for the next lesson, both the teachers worked more minutely on this feel-

ing that Teacher B had, so that the discussion in the class and the area of teaching would always involve both their inputs and so she would not feel as if she had to look up to Teacher A for cues as to what needed to be done next during the lessons. They also went through the main tenets of a co-taught class that both teachers are equal partners and can take any decision regarding the lecture being delivered and the other would be open-minded about it and go with the flow giving autonomy to the one making the decision at that time.

The co-teachers also felt that the students were trying to adjust to being in the presence of two lecturers in their class at the same time. They were slow to answer or participate in the discussions when both the teachers started to explain the concepts to them. Teacher A was afraid that it might confuse them as to which teacher to follow. Teacher A discussed this with Teacher B and they decided that Teacher A will take an informal interview from the students after a few sessions to get their views about their feelings for this joint teaching venture.

Lesson No. 3

The lesson on a dialogue went better than how Teacher A had initially thought it would. She was satisfied with the way the class progressed especially because she felt that the students were now willing to put in their thoughts and views more often and were participating in the sessions. Teacher B wrote in her reflections that she still felt that the pace of the lesson was not in her control. She felt that if it were her own class, she would have given a topic more time and shortened the discussion on another aspect. But because she was with another teacher, she had to adjust regularly with the examples she was giving based on the pace of Teacher A.

After the session, the co-teachers sat down to discuss this issue that was constantly making Teacher B feel that she was not as in control of the class as Teacher A was. The ELT specialist voiced her concern in their time together in which they were to discuss the previous class and plan the next lesson, and Teacher A asked her how she could help her feel comfortable. Teacher B said that the previous experience of teaching a content course autonomously, and

the feeling that this co-taught content course was not her course, inhibited her from actually making a decision without consulting Teacher A. Teacher A realised that it would be a problem for herself as well if the roles were reversed. They then discussed their options to help the ELT teacher feel more in control of the class and planned the lesson in such a way that they looked at each of the scenarios that they might face in the class and devised strategies to deal with them accordingly.

Lesson No. 4

The co-teachers had gone through the planning of this session very carefully, reviewing each aspect and the activities they would assign the students. This session was the first one where they worked like a team through the first fifty minutes or so and did not face any problems in delivering the lesson. When Teacher A gave the students an impromptu task, she noticed that for a moment Teacher B was reluctant because they had not planned it beforehand, but she handled it admirably and went along with it.

Teacher B's reflections were on similar lines, that she did not know that her co-teacher had planned an activity for the class, which she had not, but was a spontaneous action on her part. The co-teacher wrote that the activity came as a surprise to her because she was not prepared for it.

After the class, the co-teachers sat down to go over the session. Teacher B discussed this issue of being unprepared for an unplanned activity and did not feel in control of the class in the last fifteen minutes of this session. Teacher A asked the co-teacher if what she had done was not what she would have chosen if she were teaching alone. Teacher B thought for a moment, and said that maybe she would have but while co-teaching she needed to be prepared for what would happen in the class beforehand, and Teacher A agreed with her on this. She told Teacher B that it was a sudden decision on her part and that it would not happen again.

Lesson No. 5

This lesson once again brought to light the importance of planning and being prepared for all eventualities in class. The co-teachers deliv-

ered the lecture without any problems at first but then when Teacher A asked the students to answer some questions regarding deductive and inductive reasoning on the worksheet she had supplied the students with in the beginning of the semester, Teacher B was stumped. She wrote in her reflections that she had forgotten to read through the worksheet. She then had to go through the worksheet first before she started assisting the group that she was guiding in this session.

After the class, the co-teachers again discussed this lapse and came to the conclusion that despite the fact that it created a little bit of a confusion, the lesson went well. They once again planned to make their next session as smooth as possible, predicting and preparing for as many as possible, if not all, scenarios and assignments, to avoid any circumstance that would speak of their unpreparedness.

Informal Interview

From the first through to the third lesson, the co-teachers were worried if the students had difficulty following along with two teachers in the class at the same time. Especially when they delivered the lecture with the approach of team teaching and were both active participants, they felt that the students might be overwhelmed and confused. Therefore, after discussing this with Teacher B, Teacher A organised an informal interview with the students and asked them about their general opinion about the co-taught class. They responded that they were more attentive in the class now that they had two teachers in the class and with both co-teachers giving their opinions, they had doubled the examples to relate to and learned to accept two different ideas about the same concept or belief.

DISCUSSION

In line with the comment given by Robinson and Schaible (1995), the researchers found that this trial run proved to be equally challenging and rewarding. The issue that co-teachers faced with regard to planning the lessons was to align the content with the language area they wanted to focus on while teaching. They had to visit and revisit the activities to decide what would prove to be most effective for the co-taught class.

This was necessary to strike a balance between the weak language areas and how the content would be used to remedy the problems the students might face. They had to predict the areas of difficulty in light of their previous experiences with the students at this level to integrate content and language. The co-teachers were equipped with a good knowledge of the students' weak areas, as they had taught them previously and therefore, the problem areas were identified easily. But the co-teachers faced a problem in weaving these problem areas into the teaching of the content. The class was of MA level but the problems that the learners were facing, and that had been selected to be worked on while co-teaching, were rather basic. The disparity between the level of the content and the level of weak language areas was rendered all the more difficult by the disconnect between the content and the language areas that needed to be improved. The content was literary in nature and was neither really intended for language teaching nor really appropriate for this purpose. Because the essays were not tailored for language teaching, the co-teachers had to spend considerable time and effort to determine which essay could be linked to particular language areas. This needed a lot of trial and error but eventually the study was able to find the right combination of content and language areas.

Once this was done, they made worksheets, and selected the activities targeting both reading and writing skills, which would assist the students to overcome their weak language skills in addition to giving them a guideline to prepare for the content course.

During the planning phase, another major problem that the co-teachers faced was time management. The co-teachers observed and felt that planning the lesson was the most time consuming task, and supplementing the teaching with reflection required extra time and effort which they, as regular members of the faculty, managed with a lot of manoeuvring of their free time, whenever possible. Murawski (2010) speaks of bringing the management and administration of the institute on board whenever co-teaching is adopted as a technique. The co-teachers were at an advantage that they could carry this study out in their own university with Teacher A's own students, which reduced a lot of extra work that

would otherwise have been a requirement if the study had been conducted somewhere else. The second opportunity was the flexibility that Teacher A had in making her own timetable so that the co-teachers could have slots free before every co-taught session.

Co-instruction was the phase, which had to be carried out by both the co-teachers in real time. There were no rewinds or erase buttons and they had to improvise on whatever they were doing if it created a problem in the smooth running of the session, which is in line with Sparks-Langer and Colton's (1991) suggestion.

Creativity and spontaneity are two major strengths of any good teacher, which the researchers learned from their teaching experience. Even if the lesson plans are made before the actual class begins by predicting most, if not all, of the scenarios that would surface during a lecture, they can never be followed to the letter. No matter how well made the lesson plan is, there is always room for creativity and spontaneous decision-making. This is usually not an issue if there is only one teacher in the class because she has full autonomy to make decisions, which she or he feels appropriate, to care for the needs of the students. But with two teachers in the class, there was no time to discuss the creative idea when Teacher A, on two instances, deviated from the lesson plan. Teacher B, in spite of being an equal partner in the teaching process, took her cues from Teacher A, who was the subject teacher for the course of essays during this semester.

The assessment phase was two-pronged. It included evaluating how both the co-teachers found co-teaching as a technique, and if they could adopt it as a remedial practice when there was need to provide students at Masters' level some extra support to overcome their weaknesses. Secondly, assessment entailed determining how the students found this unique practice and if they were able to benefit from it. Giving a balanced consideration to the learning outcomes of both good and below average students becomes especially tricky for remedial work, since the performance of good students may paint an unnecessarily optimistic picture of the success of the lessons whereas the performance of weaker students may force the teachers to view the lessons with discouragement. It was therefore

necessary to evaluate each student within the reference frame of his or her own ability level. This was judged subjectively by the two teachers based on class interaction. The co-teachers did not feel that a pre-test or post-test was required given the experiences of the co-teachers teaching at the same level for some years now. Furthermore, pre-tests and post-tests are teacher-made tests and are not always reliable. Experience has shown that statistical representation is not always the best representation and is not most appropriate when conducting research to look at a phenomenon, as detailed by Rhodes (2014). Therefore, the assessment was based on the experience the co-teachers had during these co-taught sessions, and was supplemented with an end-of-session essay the students had to write. This, however, was not the basis for any decision the study reaches as far as the do-ability of co-teaching as a remedial technique is concerned.

The co-teachers reflected upon the sessions one by one and found that because it was Teacher A's class originally and she was teaching them this course, Teacher B did not make any decision on her own during any of the lessons. She taught the topics and followed the plans made to exact detail, guiding the students in their grammatical concepts and correcting their mistakes. She maintained on-going dialogue with the students during an each session to improve their listening skills, and was very creative. Because the co-teachers had not planned to stick to just one topic, they improvised and went with the flow of the discussion wherever it took them. Sometimes the students initiated a different line of discussion and the teachers let them come up with their views before guiding them back to the topic under discussion and not once did they have any problems in manoeuvring the discussion in the direction where they wanted it to head.

The second step was the assessment of the students and how they fared in this venture and if there was some improvement in their basic English language skills. Throughout the five co-taught sessions that the co-teachers had with the students, they assessed them in light of the weak areas they had compiled before the start of the semester. Their weak listening skills, comprehension of the written text, correct use of present tense in reported speech, structure of

the answers they had to write and producing a deductive essay for every question asked for the content course *Classical and Modern Essays*, were the areas that the co-teachers had selected to work on. Once the sessions were underway, they relied on their observations to see if the students were showing improvement in the weak areas they had focused on. The students showed improved listening skills when they started participating more with each passing day in the discussions during the lessons. In addition to that, the two small written activities in the early sessions and the full-length assignment in the last session indicated how the students had shown improvement in their written skills after gathering their thoughts on the matter to be discussed and putting them in words.

CONCLUSION

The study found that co-teaching could be appropriated as a remedial technique at a Masters level class for the express purpose of bringing about an improvement in the language skills of the students.

The study therefore concludes that any teacher can undertake co-teaching exercises provided they arm themselves with the theoretical knowledge of co-teaching and read thoroughly on researches in the field so as to be acquainted with the challenges that lay ahead. It also shows that the co-instruction stage of the co-teaching paradigm may bring up challenges in terms of coordination between the co-teachers, time management and may even limit the prospects of creativity.

The study started co-instruction after careful planning, and part of this planning dealt with establishing a balance between the roles of the co-teachers. However, in the initial teaching sessions it was difficult to maintain this balance and this led to feelings of inadequacy on part of the language specialist. The classroom interaction emanated more from, and was directed more towards, the content specialist. The ELT specialist was initially relegated to the role of a resource one may need to fall back on when one encountered a problem. However, the study saw the language specialist share more of the centre stage as the sessions progressed. The language

teacher became a central part of the group as the students realised that the teacher was contributing to their learning. It must be mentioned that a key factor that enabled passing out of this initial phase of secondary role for the ELT specialist was the dynamics and the rapport the co-teachers shared, and the trust they had in each other for all the decisions that were made before, during and after the sessions.

A concern that the co-teachers shared was the effect co-teaching would have on the overall environment of the class. To put two teachers with different temperaments and expectations together in a classroom was something that could affect the students' learning. The study found that the environment during the co-taught sessions was healthy and communicative along with being formal and befitting a classroom at this level. It gave way to an enhanced interaction between the teachers and the students because they had two teachers to talk to and they were talking about both content and language, the latter discussed through the medium of the former. Thus, the learning atmosphere did not get overwhelming and the students' participation in a relaxed, friendly way was a very positive sign for the success of such a venture.

The study showed that the extra reading tasks assigned to the students were challenging for them, as they were not used to such additional home tasks. This was to make the students responsible for a significant part of their learning and so the lessons were not confined to their classroom.

The study also concluded that co-teaching is a process where continuous assessment ensures that the teachers are firmly set on a learning spiral that is always moving up. The co-assessment was done in an unconventional way, as there were no typical pre-tests and post-tests.

The continuous evaluation of the teaching methodology in and outside the classroom was done by the teachers themselves through reflection. The reflections proved to be vital in the shaping and growth of both the teachers as partners in a co-taught classroom, as it made the next lesson more useful and ensured learning. It empowered the teachers to meticulously critique and judge their planning and implementation of the lessons, thereby making the teachers independent in teaching and assessing.

The research elaborated that co-assessment allowed for more efficient assessing of the students' views and their work as the sessions progressed. The interview showed that the students were not daunted by the presence of two teachers and enjoyed themselves during the discussions. Despite being more vigilant in this class than in any other because they were constantly aware that they had two teachers to answer to, they were not overwhelmed by two authority figures in place of one.

The study also showed that the evaluation of the students' assignments was very timesaving and detailed than any other that the teachers had done independently. The discussion of the results by both the co-teachers proved to be a healthy exercise, as it helped the co-teachers to make the plan for the next session in greater detail.

All the all, it can be concluded that the teachers can take up co-teaching as a remedial technique whenever they feel that their students need extra help to improve their basic language proficiency and performance in content courses at higher levels of education. The study elaborated that the choice of a co-teacher should be done meticulously because it is this partnership between the co-teachers that needs to work successfully.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Future researchers can use co-teaching at different undergraduate levels and use a pre-test and post-test strategy to arrive at statistical results of such a venture to solidify its place as a technique for remediation.

LIMITATIONS

The study was limited by the time available for conducting the research. This limited the number of co-taught sessions to five only, instead of eighteen sessions, which are normally conducted in one semester.

This was also the reason why the study did not depend on pre-test and post-test to check the learning of the students. The time available for the co-taught sessions was limited and the students could not be tested after such a short exposure to the concepts taught through co-teaching.

The study was also able to use co-teaching as a remedial technique because of small class size. With a larger number of students in a class, the dynamics would be different and may not yield the same outcome as compared with a smaller class.

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