



A RYTHMIC WAY OF IMPROVING SELF- EXPRESSION AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS OF GRADE 6 LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

This school-based action research aimed to improve the communication skills and self-expression in English of the sixth-grade learners at Bayanihan Elementary School. Participants in the study were selected purposefully. The chosen participants of this study were the five bottom-low sixth-grade learners in English as recorded on their class performances. The study used an action research design. It employed the collection of data from pre-oral to post-oral recitation in English, as well as the observations made during the implementation of the jazz chant strategy. The results of the gathered data before, during, and after the intervention were analyzed using charts. Observations on learners' behavior and participation during class performances and group activities were also used to support the results. Furthermore, the results of the study revealed that a rhythmic way through jazz chant significantly improved the communication skills and self-expression in English of the five struggling sixth-grade Aguinaldo learners at Bayanihan Elementary School. This leads to the reflection that the result of the study using the jazz chant technique was of great help in developing the communication skills and self-expression in English of the five sixth grade learners. This strategy can be used as an aid in improving the communication skills and self-expression of learners.

Keywords: Jazz Chant, Self-Expression, Communication Skills, English, Strategy

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I. CONTEXT AND RATIONALE

These days, learning the English language is somehow obligatory; thus, some learners are not that fond of English, and they see this subject as something difficult and strenuous. It is also a fact that English lessons somehow focus on grammar rules, and at times communication skills development is not given the same weight of importance as grammar. Thus, learners, often, cannot express themselves well and don't achieve communicative competence in the English language.

Communication skills and self-expression, especially in English, are certainly essential for every learner. It is just typical for every English teacher to aspire for its development and its better enhancement for each of the learners. Accordingly, it is vital because how our learners communicate is their way of delivering their own opinion and expressing certain ideas, especially during their performance output, which has a bigger impact on their academic achievement in English. But sad to say, learners' communication ability and self-expression are very low; nonetheless, it obviously possesses a much larger effect on their performance in the English subject. Thus, I would like to do some study to find better ways and means to improve and enhance the communication skills and self-expression of the five struggling sixth-grade learners in English.

I have proven my apprehension through my gathered information or data on their performance outputs, oral recitation, and overall rating in English. Based on the following pieces of gathered facts, I was able to provide evidence that there were five learners who were having much difficulty with their communication skills and self-expression, which of course greatly affected their performance and overall rating in

English. It is unquestionable that the five struggling learners had low academic performance in English 6 for the first quarter.

Of course, as a 21st century teacher, I believe that choosing the appropriate strategy for 21st century learners will result in better learning. Moreover, I decided to implement the jazz chant technique in the sense that I was optimistic that it could possibly entice the learners through its rhythmic way of delivery of words in expressing themselves. I found out that with the use of a rhythmic way through the jazz chant strategy, I was able to improve the self-expression and communication skills of my five very low-performing students in English.

My findings was supported by the study of Zhang (2011) which gave emphasis that jazz chants significantly develop students' listening and speaking skills, which is probably the most essential idea. Through the use of jazz chants, students were able to exercise their word stress and rhythm that are highly motivating for them to engage in role playing and pair activities. Also, Teh (2012) stressed that jazz chanting strengthen linguistic formations and the ability to speak every day spoken English. My idea as well got its strength from the statement of Kung (2013) which highlighted the notion that jazz chanting are simple spoken words but with adequate rhythm that provide suitable language which children really use and are repetitive, which, mainly in case of very young learners, is reasonably needed. They are suitable for all ages but teachers must only choose the right supplementary activities for students to remember difficult words or phrases suitably.

II. INNOVATION, INTERVENTION, AND STRATEGY

As an elementary English teacher for 18 years, I often have predicaments with regards to my learners' communicative skills during the teaching-learning process. With

this reoccurring dilemma, it came to my mind: why not try using a rhythmic way of improving my learners' self-expression and communication skills? With this, I thought of using jazz chant because it is a rhythmic presentation of the natural English language, linking the rhythms of spoken English to the rhythms of traditional jazz. It is different from nursery rhymes or songs that distort the spoken language for poetic effect. Thus, jazz chants can be easily constructed by anyone and anywhere. The use of jazz chants provides features of stress and intonation, so the involvement of relative levels of stress and pitch within syllables, words, phrases, and longer stretches of speech can be produced more effectively for the achievement of a better way to express oneself and communicate comprehensively.

Jazz chants, according to Graham (2006), can provide learners with useful "chunks" of language expressions they learn rather than word-by-word. It uses natural spoken English, can be used in classes of any size, doesn't require any special materials, can be used with all age groups, and doesn't require musical ability. In addition, Graham (2006) emphasized that jazz chants are a fun, practical way to help learners notice and produce natural rhythm. And rhythm will train your learners to notice stress in English. Even if they don't always get it right, at least they'll be learning to listen to it. It is somehow an informal way of communicating and expressing oneself. This is the utmost reason why I prefer the jazz chant technique to develop my students' communication skills and self-expression abilities.

Accordingly, jazz chant is a very good tactic to practice speaking and listening skills to acquire the target language. Likewise, it is entertainment material for both teachers and learners in the classroom. Since chants are rhythmic, learners can repeat them over and over and then remember them, Peralta (2010). Consequently, jazz chants provide an innovative and exciting way to improve your learners' speaking and listening

skills while reinforcing the language structures of everyday situations (Zhang, 2011). It was stressed by Graham (2006) that jazz chants are interactive. Even though jazz chant lessons involve a great deal of repetition, the repetition is always in response to other learners or the instructor and always ends with activities such as role play. Moreover, with jazz chants, language learning is no longer a painful and boring repetition and memorization process but a natural and interactive one.

Peralta (2010) also added that through word repetition in jazz chants, learners cannot only be directed to memorize chants but also to learn the basic grammar structures using language functions. Quito (2010) also stated that chants are a tool to reinforce the four skills of reading, writing, listening, and speaking by using the rhythm of jazz. Teachers can use these jazz chants in a variety of fun ways. They can practice stress and rhythm with the class and help their students sound more natural when they speak English. Similarly, because each jazz chant focuses on different vocabulary and grammar, you can use them to review important words and structures while at the same time achieving progress with regards to learners' communication skills and self-expression (Zhang, 2011).

It was also accentuated by Teh (2012) that jazz chants bring forth an innovative and stimulating approach to improve learners' self-expression and communication skills while reinforcing the language structures of day-to-day situations. Teh (2012) also added that chant was considered a speech, music, or a heightened or stylized form of speech intended to develop communication skills. Graham (2006) also highlighted that jazz chants stimulate and demand multiple senses of learning. Learners speak, sing, hit, stamp, and move while chanting. Thus, together with music and songs, it offers learners an enjoyable way to learn English. Children can also perform their chants, songs, and poems at a children's concert. The teacher can ask learners to create their

own chants, write poems, and tell their life stories, thus creating a learning atmosphere in which learners are encouraged to use the language in a creative way.

Likewise, jazz chants are simple and repetitive, providing learners with the language they really use. Above all, when students use oral language, in the flow of conversation or expression, one has no time to stop and think about the formal rules. Gradually, fluency is obtained in a very different way. It comes from hearing and understanding phrases correctly modeled and from having the opportunity to apply this learning. In such interactive classroom activities, learners could make every use of these communicative circumstances to train and develop their language fluency without stopping to think about their grammar errors while they are speaking (Graham, 2006). Finally, jazz chants add variety to lessons while reducing anxiety and motivating learners. The use of music relaxes many learners, and the opportunity to practice common phrases with an authentic model helps learners feel more comfortable using those phrases in conversation. Learners also respond more positively to lessons made enjoyable by activities that involve music (Graham, 2006).

Moreover, the jazz chant intervention was conducted by the teacher through a video presentation of some samples. The teacher also introduced it during her English classes. This was done by introducing its rhythmic way of expression as demonstrated by the teacher herself, then letting the learners follow through, and afterward letting the learners use it all by themselves. The teacher made use of some visual aids to present some other jazz chants and continued the activity for several days until the learners were ready to make jazz chants on their own to express themselves and reinforce communication with the use of the English language.

III. ACTION RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This action research study aimed to find out whether the strategy will be effective in improving the communication skills of my students. Specifically, this action research sought to answer the questions:

1. How can I improve the communication skills and self-expression of my five struggling learners in English 6?
2. Will my learners' communication skills and self-expression improve with the use of a rhythmic way through the jazz chant technique?

IV. ACTION RESEARCH METHODS

In my study, I utilized action research to help me understand what is happening in my classroom and identify changes in my classroom teaching and learning process. Action research helps me identify specific instructional strategies to utilize in my teaching to improve the performance of my students, classroom management, and teaching techniques.

a. Participants and/or other Sources of Data and Information

This action research is limited to improving the communication skills and self-expression skills of five grade 6 learners in Section Aguinaldo of Bayanihan Elementary School, specifically in the English subject. The participants of this study were the five lowest-performing learners in Grade VI, Aguinaldo, in English 6. All learners inside the class received the intervention. However, the five learners identified as the most struggling learners relative to their communication skills and self-expression during the teaching-learning process were the focus of this action research.

b. Data Gathering Methods

In this action research, I made sure that the intervention did not cause any detriment to the students inside the classroom. The data and information gathered were treated with the utmost confidentiality. I used pseudonyms in describing their characteristics to avoid revealing the learners' identities. In any report published, I did not include any information that could possibly identify the participants. All records were kept private and stored securely.

Purposive sampling was used in this study. In this regard, only the learners described as the research participants were directly involved. The data gathered was treated using appropriate descriptive statistics and presented both in textual, tabular, and graphical form. Moreover, data gathered through observation was analyzed and presented.

The jazz chant technique was used for three consecutive months with my sixth grade Aguinaldo students during our English subject, particularly with the five chosen participants. Oral recitation was conducted as a pre-assessment, which was used as baseline data to determine the level of their communication skills and self-expression. For three months, a jazz chant was used and validated through the results of the post-assessment.

The prepared materials used for the intervention were presented to the learners on the first day of implementation. I selected three jazz chants, such as "*He Never Speaks in English*", "*Who Was That Man You Were Talking To?*" and "*Present & Past Tense of Verbs*".

I introduced jazz chant as a whole-class activity. I divided the class into six groups with five members in each group because my class is composed of 30 learners. The five bottom-low learners were grouped as one. Then I gave each learner a copy of the jazz chants. Each group read it and was given 15 minutes to practice reading it in

its rhythmic way. They just chose one of the three jazz chants to be presented. After which, each group was given time to present their performance output. After each group presentation, the jazz chant was read again by the whole class to check if their performance was correctly done. Then, I did a short review of the different jazz chants by presenting the PowerPoint presentation again. As a class, we analyzed each jazz chant and its rhythmic style. However, I could see that they were also enjoying its rhythm, and they smiled as they repeatedly practiced reading it rhythmically. I also observed that they are doing the jazz chant even during recess and lunch breaks.

During the second phase of implementing the intervention, I again gave a copy of the three chosen jazz chants to each learner. We've read each jazz chant again together and let them be with their designated groups. Each group was given another 15 minutes to prepare for their performance output and was asked only to present one jazz chant among the given three jazz chants that was not yet presented by the group. Then each group has its own corresponding performance output. Then critiquing followed, as well as having some discussions on their observations of the different presentations. Each group positively commented on their performances, and they have also shared that those timid and shy group members were able to enjoyably present the chants themselves.

In the third phase of the intervention, the same process was followed until the three jazz chants given were all presented by the group. It was amazing indeed when most of them were able to memorize the said jazz chants, including those five struggling learners. In all the activities, I also made sure that students were given individual copies to be brought home and were given time to practice those chants on their own. I also gave time each day for some learners to individually present their chosen jazz chants. Without hesitation, all of them were able to present jazz chants, and they were all

enthusiastic and satisfied with their presentations, especially the five struggling learners. As I have observed, they've taken pleasure in doing it and were able to develop their self-expression and communication as the days passed by.

Finally, during the fourth phase of using the said intervention, each learner was given time to make their own jazz chants using any topic they could think of, and all of them were given some time to present each jazz chant. They were able to make it on their own, remarkably. Even though some of the jazz chants were that simple, the essence of how they were able to make them was overwhelming on the part of the teacher. And to wrap it all up, the five struggling learners were able to make it as well and proudly presented it in the class. That was the post-oral recitation that was given as a task for them to accomplish, and they have done it very well.

c. Data Analysis

In this action research, I used pre-oral recitation and post-oral recitation assessments as well as observations to determine the development of the performance in English, particularly in the communication and self-expression skills of the five struggling sixth grade learners. Results gathered before, during, and after the intervention were analyzed by comparing the points earned by each learner during the pre- and post-oral recitation assessment. I also analyzed my observations and notes on learners' behavior and their participation during class performances and group activities.

V. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND REFLECTION

After data were gathered and analyzed, participants over-all rating in English were presented using pseudonyms or not their real names. Results on the pre and post oral recitation assessment are presented and discussed in graphs and in texts.

Table 1. Overall Rating in English

| Participants (Pseudonym) | Over-all Rating of Participants in English | |
|-----------------------------|--|--|
| | Before the implementation of Jazz Chant (First Quarter) | After the implementation of Jazz Chant (Fourth Quarter) |
| Sheila | 79 | 85 |
| Ruben | 76 | 83 |
| Carla | 78 | 86 |
| John | 77 | 84 |
| Walter | 76 | 83 |

Table 1 shows the comparison of the overall rating in English of the chosen participants (not in their real names) before and after the implementation of the jazz chant strategy. It further confirmed that the five bottom-low learners improved their ratings in English comprehensively.

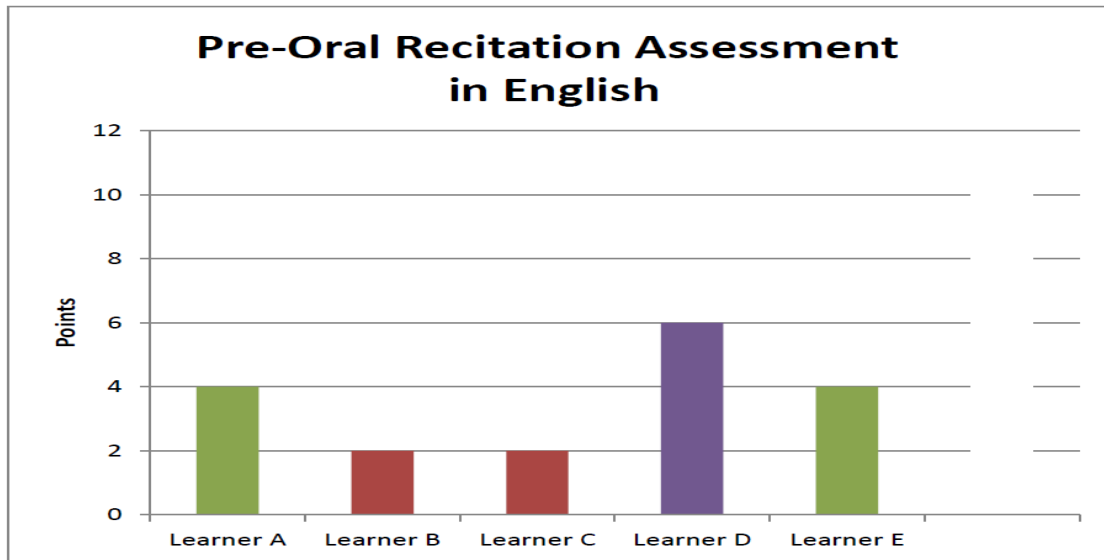


Figure 1. Pre-Oral Recitation Assessment in English

Figure 1 shows the pre-oral recitation assessment result. The figure shows that two (2) of the learners got 2 points, another two (2) learners got 4 points, and only one (1) learner got 6 points in the pre-oral recitation assessment. This further indicates that the five learners were having low performance with regards to their oral recitation in English.

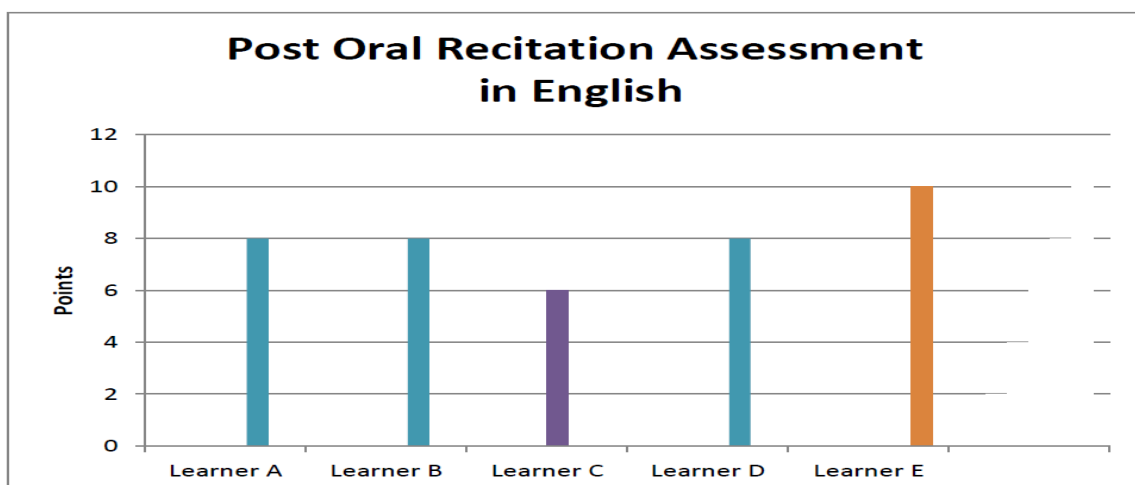


Figure 2. Post-Oral Recitation Assessment in English

Figure 2 shows the post-oral recitation assessment result. The figure shows that one (1) learner got 6 points, three (3) learners got 8 points, and one (1) learner got 10 points in the post-oral recitation assessment. This indicates that the five learners improved their performances with regards to oral recitation in English. The result revealed that all the learners made progress with their communication skills. This also showed that the use of the jazz chant technique enhanced learners' English performance.

As I watched them do the task, this time I saw the research participants were more engaged with the jazz chants and with one another. They readily read the chants with enthusiasm and enjoyment as they were rhythmically chanting. They were discussing the lines and phrases that contained the jazz chants. I noticed that they were gaining confidence in doing the task. They brainstormed ideas on how to present it accurately with the correct pronunciation and rhythm. It was indeed overwhelming to see that they were learning from each other, and they were able to communicate without a doubt. I also kept track of their performance outputs to check if they were able to express the chants correctly.

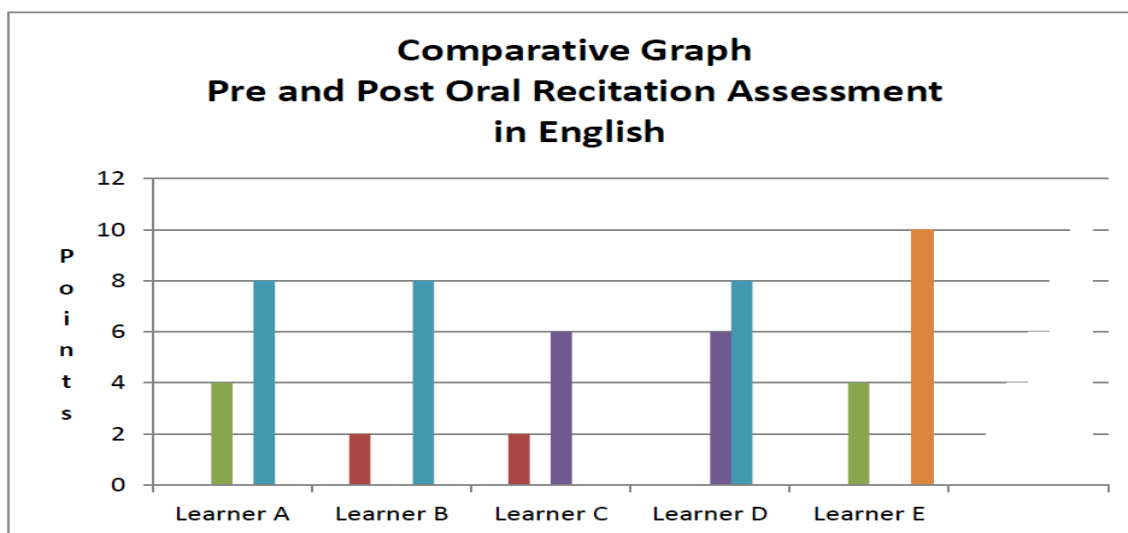


Figure 3. Comparative Results of Pre and Post Oral Recitation

Figure 3 shows the comparison of the results between the pre- and post-oral recitation assessments in English using the jazz chant technique. The result showed that the five struggling sixth grade learners improved comprehensively with regards to their performances in English. Therefore, based on the results of my pre-oral and post-oral recitation, using the jazz chant technique, it brought improvement to the communication skills of the five sixth grade Aguinardo learners in English.

Table 2. Classroom Observations on the use of Jazz Chant

| Observations | Statements |
|--|---|
| Participants Increased participation in oral recitation and English performances | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “<i>Nalingaw jud mi moistorya gamit ang jazz chant maam</i>”. (We really enjoyed talking using the jazz chant Maam.) • “<i>Ganahan kaayu mi mo recite gamit ang jazz chant maam</i>.” (We love to participate using the jazz chant Maam.) • “<i>Malingaw mi gamiton ang jazz chant maski sa pagmemorize ug mga sentences Maam</i>.” (We enjoyed using jazz chant even in memorizing sentences Maam) |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “<i>Mas dali mag memorize kung gamiton namo ang jazz chant Maam mao maka recite nami</i>”. (It is much easier to memorize when using jazz chants maam, that’s why we could participate in the oral recitation.) |
| Students appreciate self-expression through jazz chant | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “<i>Ganahan nami mo recite Maam tungod sa jazz chant.</i>” (We love to recite Maam because of jazz chant.) • “<i>Dili name maulaw mo istorya Maam</i>”. (We are not shy anymore to speak up Maam.) |

Table 2 shows some of my notes from classroom observations. The observations were encapsulated with supporting statements.

"*Nalingaw jud mi moistorya gamit ang jazz chant maam*". (We really enjoyed talking using the jazz chant Maam .), "*Ganahan kaayu mi mo recite gamit ang jazz chant maam.*", (We love to participate using the jazz chant Maam.), "*Malingaw mi gamiton ang jazz chant maski sa pagmemorize ug mga sentences Ma'am.*", (*We enjoyed using jazz chant even in memorizing sentences Maam*) "*Mas dali mag memorize kung gamiton namo ang jazz chant Maam mao maka recite nami*", (It is much easier to memorize when using jazz chants, Maam, that’s why we could participate in the oral recitation.), are statements that show that learners were able to enjoy while increasing their participation in the oral recitations and improving their English performances. It has a big impact on me, because learners can only say these words if they have realized the impact of jazz chant in their oral recitation and English performances. Consequently, this is the purpose of the researcher's use of jazz chant.

"*Ganahan nami mo recite Maam tungod sa jazz chant.*" (We love to recite Maam because of jazz chant.) "*Dili name maulaw mo istorya Maam*". (We are not shy anymore to speak up, maam.) These are statements that show that learners appreciate the significance of jazz chant in improving their self-expression and communication skills in English.

Finally, the results revealed that learners were actively engaged in the English performances in a rhythmic way, which included using jazz chants. The use of jazz chants also allowed participants to appreciate rhythm in expressing their thoughts and ideas. The result of this study gained strength in the study of Graham (2006), who is also the author of jazz chants, who put emphasis on the fact that jazz chants are a fun, practical way to help learners notice and produce natural rhythm that taught learners to notice stress in English and an informal way of communication and self-expression.

Reflection

The intervention was of great help to me as an English teacher because it did not hamper to the way I did my lessons and obtained the objectives of a particular subject matter. Moreover, my learners were able to do their performance outputs without any uncertainties and most importantly they were able to communicate and express themselves this time.

I am satisfied with the findings of my study that jazz chant technique improved the communication skills and self-expression of my five bottom low grade six Aguinaldo learners. My learners improved and were not that shy anymore to speak and share some of their thoughts. I am very much eager to share it with my fellow English teachers. Undoubtedly, jazz chant technique is one of the best approaches to improve one's communication skills and self-expression. It is apparently useful to every English teacher just like me. The result of this study is useful information especially for the English teachers who are aiming to develop communication skills and self-expression of their learners.

Action Plan

| No. | Objectives | Activities/ Strategies | Persons Involved | Timeline | Materials Needed | Expected Output |
|-----|---|---|---|-----------------|--|--|
| 1 | To inform the SDO, District Supervisor and the School Principal on the result of the study; and submit policy brief out of the study. | Send copy of the policy brief; the result and recommendation of the study to the Schools Division Office, District office and Principal's office. | Researcher | Dec. 18, 2019 | Hard copy of the research paper and policy brief, transportation allowance | Received copy of the policy brief and manuscript by the SDO, District Office and the principal |
| 2 | To notify teachers on the making of jazz chant teaching materials that will help the learners in the English subject. | Meeting with the teachers on the conduct of the study, introduction of the innovative teaching strategies and teaching materials needed. | Researcher, School Principal, Teachers | Jan. 7, 2020 | Copy of action plan Training-workshop matrix, snacks | Submitted minutes of the meeting; Narrative report with MOVs, action plan; training-workshop matrix |
| 3 | To help learners improve their communication skills and self-expression through the use of innovative jazz chants materials | Pre-Assessment of learners | Researcher | Jan. 13, 2020 | Bond paper, Printer ink, school data base, snacks | Copy of evaluation and assessment results; final list of participants |
| | | Launching of innovative teaching strategies | Researcher, School Head, Teachers, Learners | Jan. 17, 2020 | Tarpaulin used as backdrop, sound system, snacks | Copy of program launching, matrix, attendance sheet |
| | | Production of learners materials and assessments | Researcher, Learners | Jan. 13, 2020 | Photocopied learner materials, bond papers, printer inks, snacks | Furnished copy of assessment results |
| | | Commencement of the innovative jazz chants teaching materials in English 6 | Researcher, School Head, Teachers, Learners | Jan. 18, 2020 | Bond paper, ballpen, printer copy of class schedule | Learner-recipients are settled. Provided narrative report on the implementation process. |
| | | Program monitoring and evaluation and weekly assessment on learning progress | Researcher, School head, Teachers Learners | March 4-6, 2020 | Bond paper, Pens, printer inks, snacks | Produced a copy of tracking record showing the learners' English performance |

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