An Initial Study of the Effects of Cooperative Learning on Reading Comprehension, Vocabulary Acquisition, and Motivation to Read

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AN INITIAL STUDY OF THE EFFECTS OF COOPERATIVE LEARNING ON READING COMPREHENSION, VOCABULARY ACQUISITION, AND MOTIVATION TO READ

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This study investigated the effects of the jigsaw II cooperative learning (CL) model and whole class instruction in improving learners’ reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and motivation to read. Forty-four grade five English as a foreign language learners participated in the study, and a posttest-only control group experimental design was employed. The results did not indicate any statistically significant differences between the control and experimental group on the dependent variables of reading comprehension and vocabulary acquisition. However, the results revealed statistically significant differences in favor of the experimental group on the dependent variable of motivation to read and its dimensions, the value of reading, and reading self-concept. The pedagogical implications of the findings and suggestions for further research are discussed.

Reading is perceived as a complex act of communication in which a number of textual, contextual, and reader-based variables interact to produce comprehension (Roe, Smith, & Burns, 2005). More specifically, it has been established that word recognition, vocabulary, sentence difficulty, and text structure awareness are all important determinants of comprehension. In addition, reading comprehension is influenced by the reader’s schemata, sensory and perceptual abilities, thinking abilities, reading strategies, and affective aspects such as motivation to read.

Motivation to read is a multidimensional construct that involves readers’ perceptions of the value of reading and their self-concepts as readers. Readers who value reading and have positive self-concepts as readers are more likely to work harder at reading tasks than readers with negative attitudes and poor self-concepts. According to Ruddel (1992), motivated readers see themselves as
successful problem solvers, while readers with negative attitudes value reading less, and their negative attitudes may influence their classmates. Similarly, Maudville (1994) maintains that when readers make decisions about reading and are given opportunities for self-expression, as suggested by Oldfather (1995), they get more motivated to read. Likewise, social interaction during literacy tasks coupled with book-rich environments and teachers who model reading also enhances motivation (Gambrell, 1996; Turner & Paris, 1995).

It is important to identify and use instructional approaches in teaching reading that are effective in helping readers develop the requisite decoding skills and vocabulary as well as acquire the world knowledge, attitudes, and strategies necessary for proficient reading. This is especially the case in the context of foreign language reading where learners need to acquire the orthographic, syntactic, and semantic knowledge as well the world and cultural knowledge embodied in the foreign language.

Recently, many scholars have asserted that cooperative learning (CL) is a theoretically relevant and empirically effective approach in second/foreign language teaching (Kagan, 1995; Kessler, 1992; McGroarty, 1993). This is because CL provides maximum opportunities for meaningful classroom interaction in a supportive environment, thereby improving learners’ achievement, motivation to learn, and overall psychosocial adjustment.

Numerous models of CL have been developed, researched, and operationalized for classroom application. These include Learning Together (LT) (Johnson & Johnson, 1999), Teams-Games-Tournaments (TGT) (DeVries & Edwards, 1974), Group Investigation (GI) (Sharan & Sharan, 1992), Creative Controversy (CC) (Johnson & Johnson, 1979), Student Teams Achievement Divisions (STAD) (Slavin, 1978), Complex Instruction (CI) (Cohen, 1994), Team Accelerated Instruction (TAI) (Slavin, Leavey, & Madden, 1986), Cooperative Structures (CS) (Kagan, 1985), Curriculum Packages: Cooperative Integrated Reading and Composition (CIRC) (Stevens, Madden, Slavin, & Farnish, 1987), and the Jigsaw procedure originally developed by Aronson, Blaney, Sikes, Stephan, and Snapp (1978) and later modified by Slavin (1986) and labeled as Jigsaw II.
Jigsaw II was selected as the CL intervention in this study because it provides an opportunity to teach reading comprehension with narrative or expository materials (Slavin, 1995). Specifically, Jigsaw II consists of a regular instructional cycle of activities that include individual reading, expert group discussion, team reporting, testing, and, finally, team recognition (Slavin, 1995). This cycle provides useful opportunities for communicative language practice in supportive and stress-reduced environments. As such, it is consistent with contemporary thinking regarding second language acquisition (Kagan, 1995; Krashen, 1982; Vygotsky, 1978), especially in the domains of the zone of proximal development (ZPD) and comprehensible input as well as frequent and identity-congruent output as described by Swain (1985). Furthermore, the dynamics of Jigsaw II seem to foster a relaxed and feedback-rich context that might facilitate second language acquisition.

Jigsaw II is one of the CL methods that have received considerable attention in language classrooms. Coelho (1992) maintains that “Jigsaw provides an excellent learning environment for the acquisition of language through relevant content, the development of academic skills through carefully structured reading and writing activities, and the exploration of relevant content through use of purposeful talk in the classroom” (p. 3). Millis and Cottell (1998) consider that Jigsaw II is “ideally suited” in courses “… that require demanding problem-solving-skills that force students to confront complex, challenging topics involving multiple pieces of information necessary for final, overall mastery” (pp. 126–127); these researchers further maintain that Jigsaw II reinforces important cooperative learning elements, such as positive interdependence and individual accountability. This is because in Jigsaw II, learners must teach one another in order to get the “big picture” and must learn “all the information, not just their own portion, since they are tested individually” (Millis & Cottell, 1998, p. 129). Rolheiser and Stevahn (1998) associate Jigsaw II with Wittrock’s (1978) theory of cognitive restructuring that emphasizes the importance of “… linking information into existing cognitive structures for long term memory by rehearsing, explaining, and elaborating on material to be read” (p. 66). As such, Jigsaw’s requirement that participants
teach other participants promotes restructuring, especially during interactive questioning and responding (Brody & Davidson, 1998).

However, previous research has yielded inconclusive results about Jigsaw II’s effects on improving cognitive and non-cognitive learning outcomes. For instance, Slavin (1995) included eight Jigsaw II studies in a meta-analysis of CL research. Four studies showed no significant difference, two favored the control group, and two favored Jigsaw II. Similarly, Aronson et al. (1978) and Mattingly and Van Sickle (1991) reported evidence in favor of Jigsaw II; in contrast, Moskowitz, Malvin, Schaeffer, and Schaps (1983) reported that it did not significantly improve reading comprehension. Furthermore, Johnson, Johnson, and Stanne (2000) reported small effect sizes (0.29 and 0.13) in favor of Jigsaw II on comprehension when it was compared to competitive and individualistic instruction, respectively. Unfortunately, these effect sizes were based on only nine comparisons between Jigsaw II and competitive instruction and five comparisons between Jigsaw II and individualistic instruction.

Furthermore, there is little research on the effectiveness of Jigsaw II in the English as a foreign language (EFL) context. In fact, our review of the literature identified only one study that reported that Jigsaw II was superior to whole class instruction in improving the higher order comprehension of university-bound EFL learners (Ghaith & Abd El-Malak, 2004). These researchers reported that “most of the studies that favor the Jigsaw method were reported by the developers of this method themselves” and that the “studies that are usually included in the meta-analysis reports may not be representative of the research based on the method(s) under review” (Ghaith & Abd El-Malak, 2004, p. 108).

Purpose

The present study examined the effect of Jigsaw II on improving reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and motivation to read among grade five learners of EFL. Specifically, the study addressed these questions.

1. Is Jigsaw II more effective than whole class instruction in improving the reading comprehension of grade five EFL learners?
2. Is Jigsaw II more effective than whole class instruction in improving grade five EFL learners’ motivation to read?

The study was guided by the directional hypotheses that the experimental group would outperform the control group in reading comprehension, perception of the value of reading, reading self-concept, and motivation to read. This is based on the established theoretical relevance of CL, in general, and Jigsaw II in particular, in improving the outcomes of schooling.

**Method**

**Study Context, Design, and Participants**

The study took place in a private school in Beirut, Lebanon. The school belongs to the Makassed Philanthropic Organization, which was established in 1878 and currently operates 42 non-profit schools distributed all over the country. These schools aim to provide quality education for the socially and economically disadvantaged children of the Muslim community. The schools use Arabic as a first language, but value French and English as foreign languages for their vitality in education, commerce, science, and technology. English language instruction starts in kindergarten and continues through grade 12. However, instruction tends to be mostly teacher centered and focused on teaching and assessing discrete linguistic features rather than on what students could actually do with the language. Furthermore, students have very limited opportunity, or no opportunity at all, to use English for communication due to the fact the native language, Arabic, dominates as the language of everyday communication.

The study employed a posttest-only control group design. A total of 44 grade five EFL learners were randomly assigned to experimental and control group conditions. The experimental group included 22 participants (14 males and 8 females) and the control group included 22 participants (12 males and 10 females). The age of the participants ranged from 11 to 12 years old (mean = 11.45, SD = .50).

Both the experimental and control group were taught by the same teacher who holds a master’s degree and a diploma in teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL) and has nine years of
experience teaching EFL to grade four and grade five learners. As such, the teacher was knowledgeable about the nature of the reading process as a complex act of comprehension affected by various text-based, reader-based, and context-based factors such as word recognition, vocabulary, text organization, background knowledge, motivation to read, reader’s self-concept, and the purpose and audience of reading. Likewise, the teacher has received training in the application of a balanced approach in teaching EFL reading that accounts for the development of children’s decoding sub-skills of letter and word recognition and vocabulary as well as reading selections without preference for any specific approach for teaching reading.

The study lasted for 8 weeks at the rate of ten 60-minute sessions per week. Consequently, each of the control and experimental group received a total of 4,800 minutes of instruction provided by the same teacher. The texts used in the study were five short stories taken from the 5th grade book of the series Celebrate Reading published by Scott Foresman. These stories were “La Bamba” (2,115 words) by George Soto, “El Chino” (1,503 words) by Allen Say, “The 5th Grade” (2,410 words) by Jean Little, “Little Green Men” (1,307 words) by Barry Longyear, and “The Growin’ of Paul Bunyan” (2,940 words) by William J. Brooke. The paragraphs in these stories ranged in length from three to eight lines. The long stories took three to four sessions each to finish, while the short ones took two sessions. Each student in a cooperative learning team was asked to read a few paragraphs amounting to 190–205 words. Meanwhile, students in the control group read the same material in a sequential manner.

The control group was instructed according to the following five-stage framework of lesson planning developed by Philips (1984):

Pre-teaching/preparation. The participants brainstormed ideas as they looked at visuals, headlines, titles, and charts to predict and hypothesize what the text might be about.

Skimming/scanning. The participants determined the gist of readings and paragraphs, selected the best paraphrase from multiple-choice options of main ideas in the text, created titles and headlines for passages, and filled in charts and forms with key concepts.
Decoding/intensive reading. The participants practiced learning to read rather than reading to learn; they did this by guessing meaning from context, examining intrasentential and intersentential linkages, and determining the overall discourse structure.

Comprehension. The participants completed various comprehension checks, such as question–answer, fill-in-the-blanks, and completion of schematic diagrams and graphic organizers.

Transferable integrating of skills. The participants went beyond the confines of the text to practice effective reading strategies such as contextual guessing, selective reading for main ideas, appropriate dictionary use, and re-reading strategies to confirm hypotheses. (See Appendix A for a sample lesson plan based on the reading selection “El Chino.”)

Meanwhile, the experimental group was taught by Jigsaw II (Slavin, 1995):

Assignment of students to teams. The total number of participants in the experimental group ($n = 22$) was divided by four to form teams. This resulted in five teams; three teams included four members each and two teams included five members each. The participants were then randomly assigned to teams.

Reading. The participants received the expert topics and accompanying worksheets to facilitate comprehension of concepts and ideas in the materials.

Expert-group discussion Students with the same expert topics met together to discuss them in expert groups and complete corresponding worksheets.

Team report Experts returned to their teams to teach their topics to their teammates.

Test Participants took individual quizzes covering the topics.

Team recognition Teams were awarded certificates of achievement based on the performance of team members in comparison with their previous quiz scores (base score). (See Appendix B for a sample lesson plan based on the reading selection “El Chino”).

Measures

The Motivation to Read Profile (MRP) developed by Gambrell, Palmer, Codling, and Mazzoni (1996) was administered to all
participants in the control and experimental groups upon completion of the study. The MRP is a widely recognized measure of the value of reading and reading self-concept at the elementary level with established validity and reliability. It consists of twenty items that use a 4-point response scale designed to avoid neutral responses and response sets by including positively as well as negatively stated items. The value of reading is measured by ten items of the scale that have an internal consistency of $\alpha = .81$, based on data from the present study, and $\alpha = .75$ as reported by Gambrell et al. (1996). Likewise, ten additional items measure reading self-concept; these items have internal consistencies of $\alpha = .84$ based on data from the present study and $\alpha = .82$ according to Palmer, Codling, and Gambrell (1994).

In addition, the Gates-McGinitie Reading Test, 3rd edition (GMRT) was administered to measure vocabulary and comprehension. The vocabulary subtest is a 45-item multiple choice test of reading vocabulary. The comprehension subtest includes 48 multiple-choice questions based on expository and narrative passages. The test takes 50 minutes to administer: 20 minutes to answer the vocabulary subtest and 30 minutes for the comprehension subtest. The test has high reliability coefficients for grades one through twelve in the upper .80s and .90s alpha levels. Likewise, the validity coefficients with other tests such as the Iowa Test of Basic Skills and California Achievement Test were substantial as reported by its reviewer (Swerdlik, 1994) who maintained that the “GMRT is a useful” measure of reading achievement (p. 352).

To eliminate any potential bias effects due to expectancies of experiment outcomes, the researchers did not work directly with the participants. Rather, an independent teacher was trained to implement the treatment without any suggestions that one of the treatments was better than another. Furthermore, the posttest measure of the dependent variables was designed to reduce the chance of experimenter bias by avoiding open-ended test items requiring subjective judgments. Finally, the treatment fidelity of the experiment was ensured through careful training of the teacher-experimenter, providing the teacher-experimenter with precise specifications and detailed lesson plans, and observing classes to ensure congruence between experimenter behavior and treatment specifications.
Data Analysis

First, three composite scores of the value of reading, reading self-concept, and motivation to read were computed for all participants by summing up responses to the items of the subscales that measure these variables. Then descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) were calculated and a multivariate analysis of variance test (MANOVA) was computed to address the study’s questions. The treatment conditions (control vs. experimental) were used as the independent variable (factor) and the levels of comprehension, vocabulary, value of reading, reading-self concept, and motivation to read were used as dependent variables.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

The posttest means and standard deviations of the control and experimental group are reported in Table 1.

MANOVA Analysis

The results of the MANOVA analysis are reported in Table 2. First, the results revealed an overall significant difference in reading performance between the control and experimental group $F(4, 39) = 8.42, p = .00$. Second, the results of the univariate analysis of variance indicated that there were no statistically significant differences between the experimental and the control group on the comprehension scores $F(1, 44) = 0.04, p = .82$.

| TABLE 1 Descriptive Statistics on the MRP and GMRT Posttests by Treatment |
|-----------------|--------|--------|--------|-----------------|--------|--------|--------|
|                 | Control | Experimental |
|                 | $X$     | $SD$   | $n$   | $X$     | $SD$   | $n$   |
| Comprehension   | 25.45   | 4.13   | 22    | 25.72   | 4.13   | 22    |
| Vocabulary      | 23.86   | 4.08   | 22    | 25.72   | 5.11   | 22    |
| Value of reading| 28.04   | 5.80   | 22    | 35.27   | 3.64   | 22    |
| Reading self-concept | 25.04   | 5.41   | 22    | 32.09   | 4.11   | 22    |
| Motivation to read | 53.09   | 10.37  | 22    | 67.36   | 7.09   | 22    |
TABLE 2 F-Values for the Multivariate Analysis of Variance by Treatment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Multivariate ANOVA&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>Univariate ANCOVA&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Comp. Vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treatment</td>
<td>8.42*</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> P < .00.
<sup>b</sup> df's = (4, 39).
<sup>c</sup> df's = (1, 42).

(effect size d = 0.06) as well as on the vocabulary acquisition scores $F(1, 44) = 1.78, p = .18$ (effect size d = 0.45). However, there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups on their perception of the value of reading $F(1, 44) = 24.49, p = .00$ (effect size d = 1.24), on their reading self-concept $F(1, 44) = 23.63, p = .00$ (effect size d = 1.30), and their overall motivation to read $F(1, 44) = 28.37, p = .00$ (effect size d = 1.37).

Discussion

The findings did not confirm the hypotheses that Jigsaw II would be more effective than whole class instruction in improving the vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension of grade five EFL learners. These findings corroborate those of Moskowitz et al. (1983), as well as the studies reviewed by Slavin (1995) and Johnson et al. (2000) that did not find Jigsaw II superior to competitive and individualistic instruction.

A possible explanation for this finding is that the effectiveness of CL in general, and Jigsaw II in particular, depends upon specific contextual variables, such as the duration of the interventions, the quality and dynamics of interaction among learners during cooperative study, and the composition of the study groups (e.g., gender, levels of proficiency, social skills, and motivation to work with others). In the present study, mixed ability groups of grade five students, balanced by gender, worked together for 8 weeks and received 4,800 minutes of instruction. These students did not have prior experience in cooperative learning and may have lacked the requisite social and collaborative skills needed for effective cooperative study. As such, it would be interesting to conduct further longitudinal and naturalistic research to investigate the long-term
effects and conditions under which cooperative learning is effective in improving learners’ proficiency in a foreign language. It is also important to investigate the question of how certain variables such as gender, proficiency level, time on task, patterns in classroom interaction, and attitudes toward working with others mediate the efficacy of cooperative learning.

In contrast to the lack of significant findings for vocabulary and comprehension, other findings revealed that Jigsaw II is more effective than whole class instruction in improving EFL learners’ perceptions of the value of reading, reading self-concept, and overall motivation to read. The large effect sizes of ($d = 1.24$) in the participants’ perception of the value of reading ($d = 1.30$), in their reading self-concept ($d = 1.37$), and in their overall motivation to read have educational significance. The positive connection between higher motivation and positive self-concept and reading abilities has been established for quite sometime now (Fenimore, 1968; Henderson, Long, & Ziller, 1965; Holmes, 1961) and is underscored by more recent research (Chapman & Tunmer, 1995, 1997; Chapman, Tunmer, & Prochnow, 2000). Previous research has also indicated that a positive reading self-concept is positively related to reading motivation and to becoming a self-actualized reader in adulthood—a reader who reads continuously and enjoys reading (Marino & Moylan, 1994). This suggests that CL may have positive effects on the long term vocabulary development and reading comprehension of EFL learners.

The preceding findings regarding the effects of CL in improving EFL readers’ perceptions of the value of reading, their reading self-concepts, and their overall motivation to read support the tenets of the social interdependence theory that underscore the role of social support and classroom interaction in enhancing the psychosocial adjustments of learners. In the Jigsaw II classroom, social and academic support is provided by both the teacher and peers as they negotiate meaning together to solve problems and achieve common goals. This may have provided learners in the experimental group with opportunities to see the value of reading and perceive themselves as competent contributors to group goals, thereby enhancing their motivation to read.

The findings of this study support the assertion that cooperative learning improves learners’ motivation to read. The findings, however, did not favor cooperative learning in comparison with
whole class instruction as an instructional approach to improving vocabulary acquisition and reading comprehension. As such, the potency of cooperative learning should neither be minimized nor perceived as panacea for all educational problems. This is especially so given that the findings of the present study should be read with caution due to numerous limitations related to the small sample size and the duration and context of the study. Specifically, the findings cannot be generalized into other educational and cultural contexts. The participants ($n = 44$) came from a private school in Beirut, Lebanon, that serves lower-class Muslim families and uses teacher-centered approaches to instruction. As such, the participants were new to CL and may have lacked the requisite social skills for effective CL study, which may have interfered with the efficacy of CL in improving the vocabulary and reading comprehension of the participants.

References


OBJECTIVES

Student should be able to:

- give meaning of certain vocabulary words after guessing them from context clues.
- discuss a reading selection through answering comprehension questions about it.
PRE-TEACHING/PREPARATION
Student should be able to:

• use an idea web to brainstorm ideas about the “El Chino.”
• look at the accompanying illustrations (Chinese characters and pictures of Chinese people) and predict what or whom the text might be about.

SKIMMING/SCANNING
Scan the first three pages of the reading selection to complete the following chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Desired Profession</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rose</td>
<td>Librarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Basketball player</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grocer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

DECODING/INTENSIVE READING
Guess the meaning the following words from context

• Matador:
• Bullfight:
• Charge:
• Cheer:
• Heifer:
• Plaza:
• Trade:
• Hire:
• Explode:
• Charge:
• Hoist:
• Maestro:
• Rancher:
• Swerve:
• Applaud:
• Victorious:
• Cheer:
• Explode:

COMPREHENSION
Indicate whether the following statements are true or false based on what you have read. Write True or False in the space below

1. ___________ The crowd likes Billy.
2. ___________ A manager of bullfighters wanted to help Billy become a real matador.
3. ___________ Billy didn’t accept the offer of the manager of bullfighters.
4. ___________ The manager of bullfighters wanted Billy to fight bulls in his Chinese costume.

Answer the following questions:

1. Why do you think none of the Wongs wanted to be a grocer?
2. Imagine you are a friend visiting Billy. How would you be expected to behave in his home?
3. Billy’s dad said, “In America you can be anything you want to be.” Is this statement true? Is it true for everyone? Is it true only in America? Support your opinions with examples.
4. Why might Billy’s father have told his children, “In America you can be whatever you want to be”?
5. Study the illustration on p. 23 for clues about Billy’s family.
   • Which one is Billy? How can you tell?
   • Why does the author make this illustration resemble a photo?
   • What kind of feeling do you get from the family?
7. What did Billy want to be? What happened to his dream when he went to college? Why?
8. Billy wanted to be a basketball player. Are sports a realistic choice of career? Support your answer.
9. What did Billy decide to be instead of a basketball player? Do you think he made a good decision? Explain.
10. What does the expression “with the clock running out” mean?
11. Describe a bullfight.
12. Why do you think Billy decided to become a bullfighter?
13. Compare Billy’s desire to play basketball to his feeling for bullfighting.
14. What does the expression “dancing inside my head” mean?
15. Imagine that you’re sitting next to Billy when he sees his first bullfight. Do you react to the spectacle in the same way he does? Why? Why not?
16. Why did Billy decide not to return home?
17. The landlady said: “Only the Spaniards can become true matadors.” What do you think of that? Support your answer.
18. Do you think Billy will find a job as a matador? Give your reasons.
19. What is the mood of this selection?
20. What are those “few things” that Billy’s father might have said to those people who say Billy cannot be a matador?
21. How are Billy’s dreams about basketball and bullfighting similar and different?
22. Can you recall a particular time in your life that you felt like Billy—when you knew exactly who you were not just what others expected you to be?
23. What was Billy’s mistake that didn’t enable him to become a matador at first?
24. Why was Billy a spectacle?
25. What does the expression “kept me going” mean?
26. At first ranchers wouldn’t hire Billy because he wasn’t Spanish. When he put on a Chinese costume he got hired. How do you explain that?
27. Why did the ranchers agree to let Billy do the test of becoming a bullfighter the second time?
28. Why did Billy fight a heifer, not a bull?
29. Do you think that Billy will be accepted as a bullfighter?
30. One way people grow is in their understanding of themselves. How was this true for Billy?
31. Was Billy successful as a matador? Why? Why not?
32. What does the term “suit of light” refer to?
33. What enables Billy to achieve his dream of becoming a matador?
34. What does the expression “lose face” refer to?
35. What message is the author giving the reader through Billy?

TRANSFERABLE INTEGRATING SKILLS
Reread the selection and summarize it in your own words.

Appendix B

A Sample Jigsaw II Lesson Plan for the Experimental Group

STEP I READING
• Divide the reading selection “El Chino” into four parts—A, B, C, and D.
• Assign a part (A, B, C, or D) for each student to read alone. In teams that have five members, two students will read the same part.

STEP II EXPERT—GROUP DISCUSSION
• Have students who were assigned the same part form expert teams to discuss their assigned readings, using the following worksheets.
• Give students enough time to discuss the questions and confirm their answers.

_Expert Sheet A_

A. Match each word with its definition.
   a. Librarian ☐ a person who plans, builds, or manages construction
   b. Engineer ☐ a person in charge of a library
   c. Athlete ☐ a dealer in food
   d. Grocer ☐ a sportsman

B. Answer the following questions.
   (1) What words and phrases can you use to describe the Wongs?
   (2) Why do you think none of the Wongs wanted to be a grocer?
   (3) Imagine you are a friend visiting Billy. How would you be expected to behave in his home?
   (4) Billy’s dad said, “In America you can be anything you want to be.” Is this statement true? Is it true for everyone? Is it true only in America? Support your opinions with examples.
   (5) Why might Billy’s father have told his children, “In America you can be whatever you want to be”?
   (6) Study the illustration on p. 23 for clues about Billy’s family.
      • Which one is Billy? How can you tell?
      • Why does the illustration resemble a photo?
      • What kind of feeling do you get from the family?
   (7) Look at the illustration on p. 20. Can you predict what El Chino is?
   (8) What did Billy want to be? What happened to his dream when he went to college? Why?
   (9) Billy wanted to be a basketball player. Is sports a realistic choice of career? Support your answer.
(10) What did Billy decide to be instead of a basketball player? Do you think he made a good decision? Explain.
(11) What does the expression, “with the clock running out” mean?

C. Guess the meaning of the following words from context clues. Then indicate the clue that helped you.

   trade, hired, explode

Expert Sheet B

A. Guess the meaning of the following words from context clues. Then indicate the clue that helped you.

   charge, bullfighter, hoist, maestro, matador, rancher, gaze

B. Answer the following questions:

   (1) Describe a bullfight.
   (2) Why do you think Billy decided to become a bullfighter?
   (3) Compare Billy’s desire to play basketball to his feelings for bullfighting.
   (4) What does the expression “dancing inside my head” mean?
   (5) Imagine that you’re sitting next to Billy when he sees his first bullfight. Do you react to the spectacle in the same way he does? Why? Or why not?
   (6) Why did Billy decide not to return home?
   (7) The landlady said: “Only the Spaniards can become true matadors.” What do you think of that? Support your answer.
   (8) Do you think Billy will find a job as a matador? Give your reasons.
   (9) What is the mood of this selection?
   (10) What are those “few things” that Billy’s father might have said to those people who say Billy cannot be a matador?
   (11) How are Billy’s dreams about basketball and bullfighting similar and different?

Expert Sheet C

A. Guess the meaning of the following words from context clues. Then indicate the clue that helped you:

   search, stare, spectacle, El Chino, heifer, charge, gore.
B. Answer the following questions:

1. Can you recall a particular time in your life that you felt like Billy—when you knew exactly who you were, not just what others expected you to be?
2. What was Billy’s mistake that didn’t enable him to become a matador at first?
3. Why was Billy a spectacle?
4. What does the expression “kept me going” mean?
5. At first ranchers wouldn’t hire Billy because he wasn’t Spanish. When he put on a Chinese costume he got hired. How do you explain that?
6. Why did the ranchers agree to let Billy do the test of becoming a bullfighter the second time?
7. Why did Billy fight a heifer not a bull?
8. Do you think that Billy will be accepted as a bullfighter?

**Expert Sheet D**

A. Guess the meaning of the following words from context clues. Then indicate the clue that helped you:

swerve, applaud, manager, ceremony, plaza, victorious, cheer

B. Write True or False

1. The crowd liked Billy.
2. A manager of bullfighters wanted to help Billy become a real matador.
3. Billy didn’t accept the offer of the manager of bullfighters.
4. The manager of bullfighters wanted Billy to fight bulls in his Chinese costume.

C. Answer the following questions

1. One way people grow is in their understanding of themselves. How was this true for Billy?
2. Was Billy successful as a matador? Why?
3. What does the term “suit of light” refer to?
4. What enables Billy to achieve his dream of becoming a matador?
What does the expression “lose face” refer to?

What message is the author giving the reader through Billy?

Distribute answer key for each reading selection and have students correct their answers and prepare themselves to go teach what they have learned to their home team members.

Answer Key for Expert Reading A

A. Vocabulary:
   a. Librarian: A person in charge of a library
   b. Engineer: A person who plans, builds or manages a construction
   c. Athlete: A sportsman
   d. Grocer: A dealer in food

B. Reading Comprehension:
   (1) The Wongs are a Chinese family living in the United States. The members of this family are ambitious but realistic. They love each other and are united in the face of problems.
   (2) The Wong family members didn’t want to become grocers because they were ambitious and wanted to improve their situation and become librarians, teachers, doctors, and engineers.
   (3) Answers will vary. A possible answer is: I must be very polite and act in a respectful way.
   (4) If a person has will and determination, he can be whatever he wants to be whether he is in the United States or any other country.
   (5) Billy’s father said so because he wanted his family to be educated and not grocers like him. He wanted them to aspire highly.
   (6) Billy is the first one on the right. I know from the basketball he’s holding. The author makes the illustration resemble a photo because he wants to add a realistic element to this biography. It seems like a happy family.
   (7) El Chino is probably a Chinese matador.
   (8) Billy wanted to be a basketball player. His dream ended when he went to college because he was too short.
   (9) Answers will vary. A possible answer is: Sports isn’t a realistic choice of career because it can’t last a lifetime. The
person must have a university degree and sports should be a hobby.

(10) Billy decided to be a highway engineer. I don’t think this is a good decision because he only made this decision to make his mother and family happy.

(11) It means the timed game was almost over.

C. Vocabulary:
1. Trade: a business
   Clue: Learn a trade and earn a living like everybody else.
2. Hire: employ
   Clue: Who’s going to hire a Chinese ball player, anyway?
3. Explode: burst
   Clue: I’d spin and shoot and the whole gym would explode with my name.

Answer Key for Expert Sheet B

A. Vocabulary:
   Clue: The first time the bull charged the bullfighter, I closed my eyes.
2. Bullfighter: matador/the one who fights bulls
   Clue: The bullfighter fools the bull with a cloth cape and kills it with a sword.
3. Hoist: lift up
   Clue: They hoisted him on to their shoulders and marched out of the arena.
4. Maestro: the master of an art
   Clue: The maestro had been a famous matador when he was young.
5. Matador: the one who fights bulls
   Clue: We took turns fighting the bull.
6. Rancher: the one who raises cattle
   Clue: The bull ranchers hired student matadors to test their young cows . . . and the students who fought well would go on to become real matadors.
7. Gaze: look for a long time
   Clue: “Ah, Senór.” She gazed at me with great pity in her eyes.
B. Reading Comprehension:
1. A bullfight is a sport where the bullfighter fools the bull with a cloth cape and kills it with a sword. The bull charges the bullfighter and sometimes kills him.
2. Billy found out that the matador was an athlete, then he found out that the matador was shorter than he is. So he couldn’t get the image of the matador out of his head. He decided to be a matador because bullfighting requires athletic skills that he has and would bring him into the limelight.
3. Both feelings are strong and emanate from a desire to be famous.
4. The expression “dancing inside my head” means “in my thoughts.”
5. Answers will vary. A possible answer is: I don’t think I’ll react in the same way because my hopes and dreams for my future career are different from those of Billy.
6. Billy decided not to return home to pursue his dream of becoming a famous athlete. He thought that he had a good chance of becoming a great matador.
7. I think that this is untrue. Any person can become whatever he wants if he has will and determination.
8. Yes, because he is determined. Being short will not hold him back this time.
9. The mood, or the overall atmosphere, of this selection is a mood of hope and optimism. It’s the mood of a person fulfilling his dreams.
10. Billy’s father would tell them a person’s job isn’t bounded by his nationality. Anyone can be whatever he aspires.
11. Both require athletic skills. Both would bring Billy into the limelight.

Answer Key for Expert Sheet C

A. Vocabulary:
1. Search: look for
   Clue: I searched all over the town and finally found what I was looking for.
2. Stare: look for a long time.
   Clue: As I stared in the mirror, a strange feeling came over me.
3. Spectacle: unusual and impressive public display
   Clue: I was a spectacle. Children followed me everywhere I went. Men greeted me . . . women smiled.
4. El Chino: the Chinese
   Clue: El Chino, they shouted. The Chinese.
5. Heifer: a young cow far less dangerous than the male bulls
   Clue: I was facing my first live bull. Actually it was only a heifer.
6. Charge: attack
   Clue: The charge of the heifer was sudden and fast.
7. Gore: pierce and wound
   Clue: It was only a heifer with horns that could gore right through me.

B. Reading Comprehension:
1. Answers will vary.
2. Billy wore a Spanish costume when he went to ranchers looking for a job.
3. Billy was a spectacle because he was different from other people in his traditional Chinese costume. Children followed him, men greeted him, and women smiled.
4. The expression “kept me going” means helped me continue my plans.
5. I think that the ranchers saw that he wasn’t imitating anyone in his Chinese costume. This time he looked original.
6. The ranchers agreed to let Billy become a bullfighter this time because he wasn’t imitating anyone. He looked original.
7. Billy fought a heifer because he was only a student matador. A bull could kill him since he hadn’t had enough practice for fighting bulls yet.
8. Yes, I do. Billy will be accepted as a bullfighter because he has grace and courage.

Answer Key for Expert Sheet D

A. Vocabulary:
1. Swerve: turn aside suddenly from a course  
   Clue: At the last moment, she swerved and went for the cape
2. Applaud: clap and cheer on  
   Clue: “Olé, Olé!” The crowd applauded me. I’d pass the test.
3. Manager: the one who controls a business  
   Clue: My manager had made an arrangement for me to fight a real bull in a month’s time
4. Ceremony: acts performed to celebrate  
   Clue: I felt like a prince groomed for an important ceremony.
5. Plaza: public square, or stadium  
   Clue: The plaza is sold out and it’s El Chino everyone wants to see.
6. Victorious: winner  
   Clue: In the mirror I looked splendid … I began to feel victorious already.
7. Cheer: shout with joy and enthusiasm to urge someone.  
   Clue: I could almost hear the sold out plaza cheering me on.

B. Reading Comprehension:
1. T
2. T
3. F
4. F

1. Billy understood that his lifetime career isn’t an engineer. He was true to himself and his dreams. He pursued them, and fulfilled them.
2. Yes, he had grace and courage like the best of them.
3. The suit of light is the decorated clothing that the matador wears in the bull ring.
4. Billy never gives up. He has a deep faith in his father’s words that he can become whatever he wants.
5. It means lose one’s reputation or good name.
6. The author is telling the readers through Billy to be faithful and true to themselves and their dream. Taking a good look at who we are can help us decide what we want to do and how we want to grow.

STEP III—TEAM REPORT
• Students report what they’ve learned to home team members.
• Students review what they have learned together and prepare to take an individual quiz.

STEP IV INDIVIDUAL QUIZ
• Students take the following quiz:

A. Answer the following questions.
   1. Do you think Billy will find a job as a matador? Give your reasons.
   2. Why did Billy become a highway engineer? Do you think he made a good decision? Explain.
   3. Why might Billy’s father have told his children, “In American you can be whatever you want to be”?
   4. How are Billy’s dreams about bullfighting and basketball similar and different?
   5. What message is the author giving the reader through Billy?
   6. What kind of a person is Billy? Does he remind you of anyone you know?

B. Describe a bullfight using as many of these words as possible:

Bullfight, matador, charges, swerve, explode, hoist, cheer

The teacher may take the quizzes and correct them by herself or she might give the students the answer sheets and they score for each other. Students who have scored the paper of their friend must put their names at the bottom of the paper they checked. Nevertheless, the teacher should check some of the papers to make sure that students did a good job when scoring.

STEP V TEAM RECOGNITION
• Students correct their quizzes using the following answer key.
• The teacher calculates the improvement points of each student and recognizes teams according to the following guidelines:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual Quiz Scores</th>
<th>Improvement Points</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 Or more below score</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within 10 points above base score</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11–20 Points above base score</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Points above base score or perfect score</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Good Team: Average team improvement score 5–10
Great Team: Average team improvement score 11–20
Super Team: Average team improvement score higher than 20 points above base score or perfect score.