SELF-PACED GRAMMAR LEARNING GUIDE AND THE GRAMMATICAL COMPETENCE OF GRADE 10 STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The study aimed to determine the grammatical competence of Grade 10 students using a self-paced grammar learning guide. The one-group pretest-posttest research design was utilized to determine the performance of the respondents. Also, this study used an intact sampling technique which is a type of non-probability sampling used to produce results that can be generalized only by making very strong assumptions about the sample(s). An intact group is an already-formed group. In this study, the respondents included thirty (30) Grade 10 learners enrolled in Alaminos Integrated National High School, Alaminos Laguna for the school year 2020-2021 who underwent self-paced study using the designed grammar learning guide for eight (8) consecutive school days. The study pointed out the following hypothesis: There is no significant difference between the pretest and post-test scores of students in using the self-paced grammar learning guide. Thus, the study yielded the findings that there is a significant difference in the pretest and posttest scores, and mean gain scores of the students using a self-paced grammar learning guide. Since the study revealed that there is a significant difference in the pretest and posttest of respondents in using the self-paced grammar learning guide, the school administration may encourage teachers to develop a learning guide that will be suited to the needs of the students and uses this other than textbooks to develop and improve students' academic competence.

Keywords: Self-paced, Grammar, Learning Guide, Grammatical Competence

INTRODUCTION

Grammar serves as the structural foundation of one's ability to express ideas. If we are aware of how it works, we can monitor the meaning and effectiveness of the way we and others use language. Also, it can help foster precision, detect ambiguity, and exploit the richness of ideas in English (Crystal D., 2017).

In Columbia, the National Ministry of Education gave guidelines to teachers and administrators to develop students' communicative competence through proposals like Basic Standards of Competences in Foreign Languages: English, National Ministry of Education, 2006. However, problems in gaining communicative competence occurred even though there is support that policies and curricula give to develop learners' communicative competence in English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts (Littlewood, 2007).

Hence, the inherent problem in imparting knowledge about communication specifically grammar is that teachers are unprepared for this task and responsible for such a long period (Hudson & Walmsley, 2005). Thus, the concept of grammar teaching has now become a challenge. The sudden problem was also experienced in Alaminos Integrated National High School

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(AINHS). This is all the more so since the new K-12 Curriculum requires teachers to teach grammar in a spiral manner. Thus, grammar parts have been divided at each year level. Limited grammar points became the product of such division. Whereas, teachers find it difficult to employ the lessons without teaching again the other structures of grammar.

Likewise, determining the competence of grammar is an important skill for language production. However, some of the learners consider it as a difficult skill specifically in English speaking and writing. This is evident in the Philippines since acquiring a foreign language has long been the struggle of learners. Additionally, English grammar acquisition in a non-native context is an indispensable and complex process that should be explored more fully.

Nowadays, the number of grammatically competent learners decreased because of several factors. Learners are being exposed to external factors which are outside influences that give impact their grammatical competence such as technologies that includes texting through mobile phone, chatting on social media, sound tripping with lyrics, new trends of conversation, and family's competence in grammar.

Wherefore, there is a challenge to teachers in providing innovations specifically in creating instructional learning guides that will meet the needs of the learners in terms of grammatical competence. Conventional face-to-face classroom setting alone is insufficient to help students retain schema of knowledge, particularly in the mastery of English grammar. Consequently, Maarof and Munusamy (2015) reiterated the significance of educators' versatility in the use of teaching strategies through integrating new methods and materials for the learning process like developing and disseminating grammar learning modules suited to students' identified learning styles.

Likewise, Kellough (2009) states that coherence in lesson planning, teaching and learning process, and implemented curriculum must be achieved. In a particular manner, the workbook or learning material serves as a support for the teacher, a useful aid for substitute teachers, and a meaningful record for future use when teaching similar lessons and classes. Furthermore, it feeds information to achieve quality teaching and learning and improves the learners' standard of performance in gaining knowledge.

Whereby, educators should consider the integration of grammar instruction within the curriculum in each content learning area as remarked by Fang (2008). Isolated grammar lessons as interventions should be considered (Silliman & Scott, 2009). Learning researchers reiterated and emphasize the significance of language in the content-area instruction of students with learning disabilities. Improving language instruction in the regular curriculum and more specific grammatical instruction for students with learning disabilities may lead to the potential involvement of the speech-language professional as a key mentor of the educational team. The said collaboration has been promoted as an important means of quality instruction for literacy (Sawyer, 2010). Also, this binds the teaching of language literacy and basic language competence (Moats, 2009).

Thus, the researcher aimed to create a self-paced grammar learning guide, with fundamental rules of English grammar usage. This self-paced grammar learning guide has an orderly set of instructions in grammar usage. This is in print forms which is designed for the facilitation of grammar lessons which should be integrated into the Grade 10 English learning management system (LMS). The said a learning guide is a paper-based form that will serve as the learners' pocket (LeaP) designed with lessons following the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs). The paper-based grammar learning guide is developed with the following elements: graphic design, grammar content, learning activities, assessment, and evaluation to achieve learning growth through self-paced instruction. Conceptualized for this purpose, the said learning guide was based on the implementation of Policy Guidelines on Daily Lesson Preparation for the K to 12 Curriculum from DepEd Order No. 42, s. 2016. Aligned herewith is a new set of competencies presented in PIVOT 4A Budget of Work (BOW) wherein adjustment in teaching and learning was done to cater to diverse learners

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(Zape, 2019). Basic grammar rules are explained and discussed in plain English with lined-up examples and a set of activities. The scope of grammar rules in this guide are categorized into three: parts of speech, capitalization and abbreviation, and punctuation. Learning English grammar is not that easy to acquire, but with the aid of a self-paced grammar learning guide the learners, at their own pace, will be reminded of the rules of English usage confidently.

Moreover, the said learning guide is assumed as one kind of teaching material that will be provided to the students as support in the teaching and learning journey during pandemics. By using the learning guide, the researcher believes that students will have opportunities to learn at home because this instructional material is not only expected to become a learning source for English instruction but also hope to build motivation and quality studying of learners.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

This study was conducted to determine the impact of the self-paced grammar learning guide usage on the grammatical competence of selected Grade 10 students in Alaminos Integrated National High School. This study sought to 1) determine the pretest performance of the respondents in grammatical competence before using the self-paced grammar learning guide in terms of parts of speech; capitalization and abbreviation; and punctuation; 2) determine the posttest performance of the respondents in grammatical competence after using the self-paced grammar learning guide in terms of parts of speech; capitalization and abbreviation; and punctuation; determine if there is a significant difference between performance in pretest and posttest of the respondents in their grammatical competence before and after using self-paced grammar learning guide in terms of parts of speech; capitalization and abbreviation; and punctuation.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a one-group pretest-posttest research design since the researcher aims to determine the cause-and-effect relationship between an independent and dependent variable. Henceforth, respondents are grouped based on non-random criteria. A one-group pretest-posttest research design is frequently utilized by behavioral researchers to find out the effect of provided intervention as the treatment on a given group. That is why this design is more often used in research writing (Knapp (2016). Here, the study utilized a pretest-posttest design in which the dependent variable is weighed before and after it is implemented by the clients (Thyer 2010).

Furthermore, the pretest-posttest design is a commonly used method of assessment implemented for only one group. To create a treatment group, the respondents will receive the intervention, the treatment of the study. Before and after the treatment, the data are collected from the treatment group. The data collected before treatment was done to establish a baseline for the individuals in terms of the performance and skill being intervened on; while the data collected after the treatment will look for differences. Thus, the differences that were observed are attributed to the given intervention. From this point on, no changes would occur if there is no given treatment (Sala, G., & Gobet, F., 2017).

One group of respondents is taken who received the treatment. From ten (10) sections of Grade 10 enrolled in Alaminos Integrated National High School, Alaminos Laguna in the school year 2020-2021, one (1) section was used as a clients or respondent of the study. Only thirty (30) students are used from the first student in alphabetical arrangement up to the thirtieth students. To ensure the absence of bias in conducting the grammar lessons, all students were handled by the researcher having the same lesson plan and activities. Additionally, the great participation of three (3) English Teachers from different high schools in the district of Alaminos is needed to validate and evaluate the lessons and essential features of the module.

Moreover, this study used an intact sampling technique as the type of non-probability sampling was used to produce vague results by making very strong assumptions about the sample(s). Henceforth, a group that was already formed is called an intact group. Here, the entire group is used to represent some larger population

wherein no selection procedure is used. The process by which the group was formed determined the validity of the results from this kind of sample (Swami, 2016). With this, the researcher chose thirty (30) students from one (1) section to represent all Grade 10 students. The researcher used this naturally constituted group for easy access to the data from the respondents since the pandemic causes limited movements of individuals.

The researcher made a pretest with thirty (30) items. This was checked by the three (3) external validators who are competent teachers from the Alaminos district.

Permission was officially sought from the Principal of the research locale before administering the data-gathering instruments. This was followed by the conduct of the sample pretest for a control group of twelve (12) students for pilot testing to test the validity of the teacher-made pretest. Since distance learning was implemented this school year and the students chosen modality is modular learning, the pretest was given to them via Facebook messenger through sent PDF files. Then, scores of students were forwarded through pictures of their answer sheets or chats. All the outputs were gathered and encoded in spreadsheets for item analysis. Using the result of item analysis, a revision was made to some items.

The aforementioned pretest was based on the learning guide prepared and designed by the researcher with the content of basic grammar points. The learning guide is designed in a self-paced manner to ensure that even though there is distance learning, learners can work independently or at their own pace. The self-paced grammar learning guide was validated by three (3) English teachers from different schools under the district of Alaminos. Teachers' perceptions and knowledge of the self-paced grammar module's graphic design, grammar content, and learning activities were determined. The said learning guide was saved by the researcher as PDF files and sent via Facebook messenger (students' chosen social media platform) to one group of respondents comprising thirty (30) students who in the course of study are Grade 10 students. The learning guide was used by the students for eight consecutive school days. This learning guide discussed the three (3) content areas of grammar such as (a) parts of speech, (b) capitalization and abbreviation, and (3) punctuation. These were integrated into the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) of the third quarter in English. The researcher administered the instruments to the students and carefully explained the directions through group chats on Facebook Messenger to ensure the reliability of the data obtained. Even queries of students are entertained for clear dissemination of instructions and learning tasks.

After the student self-paced studying of each learning area, a posttest was given to determine the level of learning that has gained after using the self-paced grammar learning guide. Same with the pretest, the posttest was administered through Facebook Messenger. Even the pictures of answer sheets were gathered through the said social media platform. For easy gathering of data, the answers were readily available. Then, data gathered from the pretest and posttest scores of students were submitted to Stat Center. After the data analysis has been forwarded by the Stat Center, the researcher consulted the statistician and the researcher adviser for analysis interpretation. With their help, data were collected, checked, recorded, tallied, tabulated, and analyzed carefully using spreadsheets.

Moreover, various modes of data treatment were employed for data analysis that corresponds to the requirements of each of the research problems. The data in demographic profiles were also collected, recorded, tabulated, and noted in frequency counts and percentages. To determine the performance of the students in each part of grammar included in the pretest and posttest, weighted mean and standard deviation were used.

For problem number one (1), data on students' level of grammatical competence before the treatment were gathered through a pretest. Here, data is described using the mean score and standard deviation. For problem number two (2), data of students' level of grammatical competence after the treatment using posttest and data were described using again mean score and standard deviation. For problem number three (3), the data in the pretest and posttest were recorded, tabulated, and analyzed to get a significant difference. The mean percentage was used by the

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researcher to analyze the pretest mean scores and the posttest mean scores.

Paired sample t-test, a statistical procedure, was used to determine the significant difference between the mean scores in pre-test and post-test. Here, each entity is measured twice resulting in pairs of observations (Statistic Solutions 2021). Withal, the use of pretest and posttest for one (1) group of respondents is applicable to determine whether the use of intervention affects the performance of the students by comparing their pretest and posttest scores. All computations were analyzed by Stat Center and the assigned statistician to ensure the accuracy of the results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Profile of the Respondents

1.1. In terms of Age

The profile of the students is defined in terms of their background. It is categorized into age and gender.

Presented in the figure above is the distribution of respondents as to age. It shows that the greatest number of the respondents belong to the age bracket 15-16 years old with about 63% of the total respondents (30).
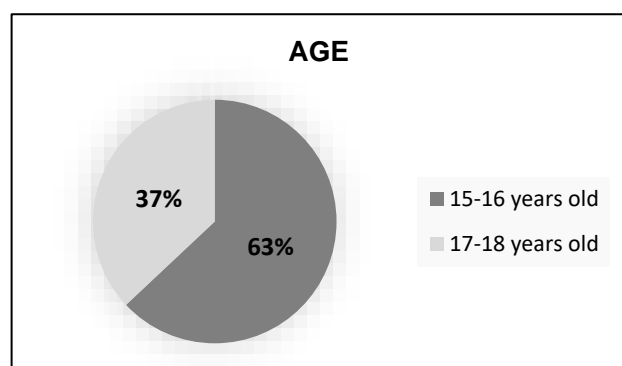

Figure 1. Distribution of Respondents according to Age

The figure implies that most of the respondents are at the right age as grade 10 junior high school. Age is one factor to consider in

understanding the readiness of students to comprehend a given lesson. It can be observed that the ability to comprehend can sometimes be attributed to age.
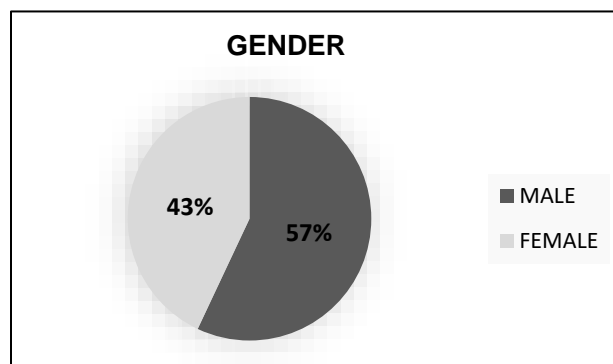
1.2. In terms of Gender

Figure 3. Distribution of Respondents According to Gender

Presented in the figure above is the distribution of respondents as to gender. The data shows that male respondents comprise 57% of the total respondents while female respondents is about 43%. This indicates that male respondents are greater by 14% than female respondents.

2. Pretest and Posttest Performance of the Respondents

Table 1
Pretest Mean Scores of the Respondents

Dependent Variables	Pretest	
	Mean	**SD**
Parts of Speech	2.83	1.46
Capitalization and Abbreviation	3.27	1.96
Punctuation	3.27	1.78
Total	**9.37**	**3.55**

The study utilized a pretest that contains thirty (30) items and was given to one group of respondents, thirty (30) students. The mean and standard deviation were used to determine the level of students' performance in grammar before using the self-paced grammar module.

Shown in the table above is the respondents' mean score in the pretest. As reflected in the data there is a mean score of 2.83 in the parts of speech while capitalization and abbreviation and punctuation have the same mean score which is 3.27. This implies that the respondents are of different levels of knowledge in grammar before using the self-based grammar module.

The result is supported by the development of questionnaires and surveys as an iterative research process that includes several carefully planned stages. Thus, the use of a pretest questionnaire serves as a method of checking that questions work as intended and are understood by those individuals who are likely to respond to them (Rolfe, et.al 2013).

On the other hand, the results also show that some students are not proficient due to a lack of knowledge about basic grammar and they need interventions to improve their grammatical competence.

In connection to this, Kirkham (2013) stated that the core of grammar is the rules of language that can vary greatly from definition to definition. Whereas, common understanding of grammar rules differs in obscure sense and linguistic sense of the term.

Moreover, Hailikari, et al., (2008) stated there should be consideration of students' prior knowledge or schema in designing instructional material and curriculum planning. Furthermore, the tool for student support in addressing areas of deficiency will be based on the results of prior-knowledge assessments.

To assess if there are improvements in the grammatical competence of grade 10 students, the researcher also utilized a posttest with the same number of items, thirty (30). The items were the same as the pretest wherein revisions were made in the choices. This posttest was given to the same group. This is administered after the treatment to determine the level of students' performance in grammar after using the self-paced grammar module. The mean and standard deviation were used to determine the student's level of performance after the treatment.

Table 2
Posttest Mean Scores of the Respondents

Dependent Variables	Posttest	
	Mean	SD
Parts of Speech	3.70	1.39
Capitalization and Abbreviation	4.10	2.24
Punctuation	4.07	1.71
Total	**11.87**	**4.21**

Table 2 shows the mean scores of the respondents in the post-test. As reflected in the data there are mean scores of 3.7 in the parts of speech, 4.1 in the capitalization and abbreviation, and 4.07 in the punctuation. This implies that still, the respondents are of different levels of knowledge in grammar after using the self-paced grammar module.

However, the results of the posttest show a significant increase in the mean score as compared to the pretest. This implies that students are considered proficient respondents after the treatment due to their schemata wherein they have already previous knowledge about some grammar points since the topic was already taught in elementary. Processing information about grammar was achieved in the sense of familiar content which was refreshed and enhanced through the use of a self-paced grammar learning guide making students become independent learners.

This supports the study of Hailikari, et al., (2008) that knowledge in a procedural manner was learners' achievement. If the knowledge has been acquired after learning, it was a great help for learners with low intelligence or slow working memory capacity by overcoming their cognitive processing limitations. This will then leads to acquiring more knowledge when there is an application of intervention (Sala, G., & Gobet, F., 2017).

Moreover, Burns (2009) stated that grammar is particularly about the systematic patterns of words that people usually choose and combine. Through this, students may familiarize themselves with the regularity of structure which

will then serve as the foundation of language. From the preceding premise, learners may gain the confidence and competence to talk about the language system.

In connection with this, the provided self-paced learning guide is valuable with varied purposes such as means to facilitate learning for individualized or self-paced instruction, a supplement to conventional instruction, and as tool to provide additional thorough training.

Accordingly, Ur (2009) stated that once the learners are asked to produce a clear outcome by activating, engaging, and practicing the language in an interesting and challenging way through useful material, grammatical competence is achieved. Grammar tasks like exercises and activities that were organized and set in instructional material are applicable in the learners' current new-normal setting due to the pandemic.

Thus, students developed confidence in grammar lessons and a sense of responsibility for their learning.

3. Test of Difference between Pretest and Posttest

For further analysis and comparison, data were gathered to answer the third problem wherein paired T-test was used to determine the significant difference between the pre-test and post-test of one group of respondents.

Table 3
Test of Significant Difference between the Pretest and Posttest Performance of the Respondents

Dependent Variables	Pretest		Posttest		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD			
Parts of Speech	2.83	1.46	3.70	1.39	-2.339	29	0.026
Capitalization and Abbreviation	3.27	1.96	4.10	2.24	-1.495	29	0.146
Punctuation	3.27	1.78	4.07	1.71	-2.476	29	0.019
Total	**9.37**	**3.55**	**11.87**	**4.21**	**-3.205**	**29**	**0.003**

Table 3 shows the test of significant difference between the pretest the posttest performance of the respondents in their grammatical competence before and after using a self-paced grammar learning guide. It can be gleaned from the table that the mean difference in the mean score of the pretest and posttest is -0.87 in parts of speech, -

0.83 in capitalization and abbreviation, and -0.80 in punctuation. The results indicate that there is a significant difference in the mean scores of pretest and posttest in all of the dependent variables. This implies that there is a positive gain score, meaning there is an increase in the knowledge about the topic after students are exposed to grammar lessons and activities included in the self-paced grammar module.

Moreover, the t-test was employed to determine the significance between the mean scores of the pretest and post-test scores. It has a t-value of -2.339 in parts of speech with a p-value of 0.026, -1.495 in capitalization with a p-value of 0.146, and -2.476 with a p-value of 0.019 in punctuation. This implies that the use of the self-paced grammar learning guide is effective and efficient as reflected by student's increase in the mean score and can be used in improving the performance and grammatical competence of students. A treatment effect since enough time of observation and treatment condition were given. After giving the intervention, it is observable that respondents are responsible for the outcome. Thus, a change in scores from the pretest to the posttest for the treatment group is evident. However, there is less improvement in the performance of students when it comes to capitalization and abbreviation with a p-value of 0.146. This implies that there is an external factor that affects them which is social media, particularly Facebook, Messenger, Instagram, and WhatsApp. In relation to this, Ghouali & Benmoussat (2019) had a finding in their study that intensive use of social media led to a significant decrease in the writing level of the students due to their developed new form of writing such as fabricated abbreviations and capitalization that didn't follow Standard English Language.

A study by Garillos (2012) showed that when the instructional material was introduced and implemented in the class there was a significant increase in the post-test results compared to the pretest result of the students. The instructional design is highly effective if it greatly increases students' success. Through instructional design, there will be clear instructional goals by which learners' needs are considered. Through this, students are engaged with interactive activities,

improved their performance, and motivated learning experiences (Davis, 2013).

On the other hand, the dissimilarity between the pretest and posttest scores of each respondent was also observed. Among the possible explanations for this finding are (a) near transfer, (b) confounding influence of third variables not controlled for like socioeconomic status and metacognition on prior knowledge and post-test knowledge, and (c) the difficulty of quantifying the similarity of knowledge measures (i.e., the transfer distance) validly (Sala, G., & Gobet, F., 2017).

However, the overall result further reveals that the self-paced grammar learning guide is beneficial to the students. The findings of Gravoso, et.al. (2008) suggest that instructions can change and improve the quality of learning outcomes if carefully planned and designed to support knowledge construction in a learner-centered learning environment.

CONCLUSIONS

This study was designed to determine the effect self-paced grammar learning guide in the grammatical competence of the students. Thus, the following conclusion was drawn:

1. There is a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores of students in using the self-paced grammar learning guide.
2. There is a significant increase in the mean gain scores of students in using the self-paced grammar learning guide.
3. The self-paced grammar learning guide for Grade 10 students is accepted as instructional material for intervention for improvement of the grammar competence of the students based on the data gathered and analysis interpretation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations below are hereby suggested in accordance with the results and conclusions of the study:

1. The school and division administration may encourage teachers to develop a self-paced learning guide since the study revealed that there is a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores in using the self-paced grammar learning guide. A self-paced learning guide is a suitable and applicable instructional material since they could learn at home aside from what they gained learning in school.
2. Teachers may consider the needs, abilities, and interests of students in using learning guides other than textbooks to improve their performance. Even other subjects could make enhanced K to 12 learning guides that would improve knowledge in that particular subject area.
3. English teachers may initiate awareness on the varied connotations of grammar as an aid to help other educators in understanding the disinclination of the learners in studying grammar and their difficulties or confusions about the subject.
4. The next researcher may conduct a replication of this study using another test such as a test of correlation between the respondent's profile and mean gain score, a test of correlation between the performance of low-performing and high-performing students, and a test of correlation between related factors and respondent's perception on the use of self-paced learning guide which is not part of the study to further assess the strength of the enhanced grammar learning guide as to its applicability and effectiveness.

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