

Improving Grade 8 Students' Grammatical Competence in Filipino through Task-Based Language Learning Strategy

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effectiveness of Task-Based Language Learning (TBLL) in improving students' grammatical skills in Filipino at Valencia National High School in Valencia City, Bukidnon, Philippines. The goal was to find out the level of grammatical competence among students taught with TBLL compared to those taught with traditional methods and to check for any significant differences between the two groups. A quasi-experimental research design was used, with both a pre-test and a post-test for a non-equivalent control group. Two intact sections participated in the study, with a total of sixty (60) students split evenly between the two groups. Respondents were selected through random sampling to ensure fairness. Results showed that students in the TBLL group improved from a moderate level in the pre-test ($M = 10.67$) to a high level in the post-test ($M = 17.67$), while the non-TBLL group increased from a low level ($M = 9.40$) to a moderate level ($M = 11.43$). Furthermore, an independent samples t-test showed a significant difference between the post-test scores of both groups, $t(58) = -10.54$, $p < 0.001$, indicating that TBLL was more effective than traditional instruction. The findings suggest that task-based strategies improve students' abilities to use grammatical structures in meaningful contexts. This study emphasizes the need to integrate learner-centered approaches in grammar instruction to enhance language learning success.

Keywords: quasi-experimental design, communicative tasks, grammar acquisition, learner-centered instruction, language proficiency

INTRODUCTION

Grammatical competence is crucial in language learning. It helps learners create meaningful and accurate expressions in both spoken and written forms. In Filipino language instruction, it lays the groundwork for effective communication and academic achievement. Despite ongoing classroom instruction, many secondary education students still struggle with correct grammatical structures, particularly in constructing sentences and their usage. This ongoing issue suggests students might know the grammatical rules but have trouble applying them in real-life communication.

Several studies have pointed out this issue within the Philippine education system. Research indicates that many classrooms focus primarily on grammar rules rather than enabling students to use language in meaningful ways. As a result, learners often depend on memorization instead of applying their knowledge, which harms their overall language skills. Moreover, previous findings show that grammatical errors persist among Filipino learners. This highlights a gap between knowing grammar and using it correctly in practice. This gap calls for teaching methods that go beyond traditional styles and encourage active participation in learning.

In response, Task-Based Language Learning (TBLL) has emerged as an effective approach that emphasizes real-world language use through communicative tasks. Unlike traditional grammar instruction, TBLL engages learners in real tasks where language serves as a communication tool. Through structured

phases like pre-task, task cycle, and post-task, students can apply grammatical structures in context, interact with peers, and reflect on their language use. This method promotes better understanding and retention of grammar as learners construct meaning through real experiences. Despite growing support for TBLL, there is still limited evidence of its effectiveness in enhancing grammatical competence in Filipino, especially among Grade 8 students in public schools.

This study aims to evaluate how effective Task-Based Language Learning is in improving the grammatical skills of Grade 8 students in Filipino at Valencia National High School. Specifically, it seeks to assess students' grammatical competence under both TBLL and traditional instruction based on pre-test and post-test results and to determine if a significant difference exists between the two groups.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY

This study aimed to find out how effective Task-Based Language Learning (TBLL) is in improving the grammatical competence of students in Filipino at Valencia National High School. Specifically, it aimed to answer these questions:

1. What is the level of grammatical competence of the students taught using Task-Based Language Learning (TBLL) and those taught using non-TBLL instruction in terms of:
 - a. pre-test; and
 - b. post-test?
2. Is there a significant difference in the grammatical competence of the students taught using Task-Based Language Learning (TBLL) and those taught using non-TBLL instruction?

METHODS

Research Design

This study used a quasi-experimental research design with a pre-test and post-test for a non-equivalent control group. This design aimed to evaluate how effective Task-Based Language Learning (TBLL) is in improving the grammatical competence of Grade 8 students in Filipino. The experimental group experienced TBLL, while the control group received traditional instruction. Both groups were assessed before and after the intervention to measure changes in their grammatical skills.

Respondents of the Study

The study respondents were Grade 8 students from Valencia National High School in Valencia City, Bukidnon, Philippines. Two intact sections were used, totaling sixty (60) students, with thirty (30) students in each group. One section served as the experimental group, and the other served as the control group. Participants were selected through random sampling to ensure fairness in participation.

Research Instrument

The main tool used in this study was a researcher-made 20-item test designed to measure students' grammatical competence in Filipino. The test included topics on the "Aspekto ng Pandiwa" and the correct usage of "nang" and "ng." Experts validated the instrument for its content accuracy, clarity, and suitability for Grade 8 learners.

Data Gathering Procedure

A pre-test was given to both groups first to assess their initial level of grammatical competence. After the pre-test, the experimental group learned through Task-Based Language Learning (TBLL), while the control group underwent traditional instruction. After the intervention, a post-test using the same instrument was conducted for both groups to evaluate improvements in grammatical competence.

Data Analysis

The gathered data were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation to describe the level of grammatical competence. An independent samples t-test was performed to check for significant differences in the performance between the experimental and control groups at a 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Level of Grammatical Competence of Students in TBLL and Non-TBLL Instruction (Pre-test and Post-test)

Grammatical competence is the capacity of learners to comprehend and apply the grammatical rules of a language accurately and suitably during communication. This encompasses understanding syntax, morphology, and sentence construction, all of which are crucial for generating clear and correct expressions (Canale & Swain, 1980). Within language acquisition, grammatical competence is recognized as a key aspect of communicative competence, as it upholds precision and clarity in both oral and written communication.

Table 1 presents the pre-test and post-test results for Grade 8 students in Filipino, comparing those taught using Task-Based Language Learning (TBLL) and those who received traditional instruction. The TBLL group achieved a pre-test mean score of 10.67 (SD = 1.83), categorized as **moderate** grammatical competence, whereas the non-TBLL group had a mean of 9.40 (SD = 2.25), classified as **low** grammatical competence. After instruction, the TBLL group's post-test mean increased to 17.67 (SD = 2.06), indicating **high** grammatical competence, while the non-TBLL group's mean rose to 11.43 (SD = 2.50), reflecting **moderate** grammatical competence. These findings suggest that both groups improved following instruction, but the TBLL group demonstrated a more pronounced gain than the non-TBLL group.

Table 1. Pre-test and Post-test Mean Scores of Grade 8 Students in TBLL and Non-TBLL Groups

Group	N	PRE-TEST			POST-TEST		
		Mean	SD	Interpretation	Mean	SD	Interpretation
TBLL	30	10.67	1.83	Moderate	17.67	2.06	High
Non-TBLL	30	9.40	2.25	Low	11.43	2.50	Moderate

Legend

Range	Interpretation
0-5	Very Low
6-10	Low
11-15	Moderate
16-20	High

These results show that students exposed to Task-Based Language Learning (TBLL) demonstrated a greater improvement in grammatical competence compared to those taught using traditional instruction. The shift from moderate to high performance in the TBLL group suggests that task-based activities significantly support learners in applying grammatical rules in meaningful contexts. This improvement may be attributed to the nature of TBLL, which emphasizes active learner participation, collaboration, and real-life language use. Through structured tasks, students are given opportunities to practice grammar in communicative situations, rather than relying solely on memorizing rules. This aligns with Ellis (2016), who emphasized that grammar learning becomes more effective when integrated with meaningful language use. Similarly, task-

based instruction enhances language acquisition by engaging learners in purposeful, communicative activities. (J. Willis, 2007; D. Willis, 2007)

Alieto (2018) discovered that when instructional strategies offer opportunities for meaningful exposure and use of the target language, Filipino learners perform better in the local context. This validates the improvement in the TBLL group that was noted during the trial. The non-TBLL group only advanced from a low to a moderate level, despite the fact that both groups demonstrated improvement. This suggests that traditional education may have little effect on the development of grammatical competence. This emphasizes even more how crucial learner-centered methods are for teaching languages. However, the study's brief intervention time and small sample size may restrict how broadly the results may be applied.

Significant Difference in Post-test Scores Between Groups

The results of the independent samples t-test comparing the post-test scores of the TBLL and non-TBLL groups are displayed in Table 2. The non-TBLL group received a mean score of 11.43 (SD = 2.50), whereas the TBLL group received a mean score of 17.67 (SD = 2.06). The findings showed that the two groups differed significantly ($t(58) = -10.54, p < 0.001$). This suggests that students exposed to TBLL outperformed those who received traditional teaching in terms of grammatical competence.

Table 2. Independent Samples t-test of Post-test Scores Between Groups

Group		N	Mean	SD
TBLL		30	17.67	2.06
Non-TBLL		30	11.43	2.50
t	df		p-value	Decision
-10.54	58		<0.001**	Significant

**** significant at 0.01 level**

The significant difference in post-test scores verifies that Task-Based Language Learning (TBLL) is more effective than conventional teaching methods in enhancing grammatical proficiency. The improved performance of the TBLL group indicates that involving learners in significant tasks boosts their capacity to grasp and utilize grammatical structures. This conclusion is backed by Nunan (2004), who highlighted that task-oriented language instruction enhances language proficiency via intentional learning tasks. Similarly, Bygate (2015) observed that interaction and communication in task-oriented instruction enhance deeper language acquisition. Cruz (2013) emphasized that grammar teaching is more effective when students participate in communicative activities instead of practicing in isolation. The null hypothesis rejection reinforces that a significant difference exists between the two teaching methods, with TBLL demonstrating greater effectiveness.

CONCLUSIONS

This research determined how effective Task-Based Language Learning (TBLL) is in improving the grammatical competence of Grade 8 students in Filipino at Valencia National High School. According to the results, both TBLL and non-TBLL groups exhibited progress from pre-test to post-test; however, the TBLL group exhibited a greater enhancement in grammatical competence than the non-TBLL group. The findings also showed a notable difference in the performance of the two groups after the test, suggesting that students engaged in Task-Based Language Learning outperformed those educated through traditional teaching methods. This indicates that TBLL is better at improving students' skills in comprehending and utilizing grammatical structures in relevant situations.

The research finds that Task-Based Language Learning is a successful method for enhancing grammatical competence in Grade 8 students. It reinforces the notion that interactive, communicative, and task-based learning activities enhance language acquisition more effectively than traditional grammar-

centered teaching.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are suggested.

For Teachers and Students. Teachers may embed task-based language learning strategies in grammar instruction as the results showed that students exposed to TBLL obtained higher levels of grammatical competence compared to those taught using traditional instruction. Task-based activities may be consistently integrated in classroom practice to provide learners with meaningful opportunities to apply grammatical structures in real communication. Students may actively participate in these activities to further strengthen their grammatical competence and develop confidence in using the Filipino language in both written and oral forms.

For School Administrators and Curriculum Developers. School administrators and curriculum developers may support the wider implementation of task-based language learning in grammar instruction, considering its effectiveness in improving students' grammatical competence based on the study results. This may be strengthened through Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, targeted teacher training, and provision of instructional materials aligned with task-based approaches. Integration of TBLL principles into the Filipino curriculum may also be considered to promote more interactive and learner-centered grammar instruction.

For Future Researchers. Future researchers may further examine the effectiveness of task-based language learning in other language skills such as writing, speaking, and reading comprehension to expand its application beyond grammar. Similar studies may also be conducted using a larger sample size and longer intervention period to validate and strengthen the findings of this study and to explore its effectiveness in different learning contexts.

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