Using Process-based Teaching Strategy in Enhancing Grammar Competence

Andrea Lean C. Manapat

Calawitan National High School, Department of Education – Bulacan, San Ildefonso, Bulacan, Philippines
andrealean.manapat002@deped.gov.ph

Abstract: *This study is aimed at enhancing the grammar competence of students using a process-based teaching strategy by the teacher. This strategy gives importance to a procedural approach to teaching grammar lessons and highlights four essential steps as part of the learning process, namely: (1) setting clear goals, (2) teaching/modeling, (3) guided practice, and (4) independent practice. As a quasi-experimental research, the respondents to this study were two sections of Grade 9, 107 in all. The researcher made use of a pre-test/post-test instrument, and a researcher-made prototype module, with lessons based from the competencies in the DepEd K to 12 Curriculum Guide for Grade 9. In the pre-test, the experimental group (EG) scored a lower mean compared to that of the control group (CG), interpreted as Fairly Competent. After a 10-week exposure to the strategy, the mean score of the EG surpassed the score of the CG on the post-test (Moderately Competent). It was found out that there is highly significant difference in the pre-test and post-test scores of both groups. Further, based on the result of the post-test, it is the EG which registered a higher mean score than that of the CG: a clear indication that the grammar competence of students may be enhanced with the help of the process-based teaching strategy. Therefore, the tested strategy has played a significant role in enhancing the grammar competence of the students.*

Keywords—grammar; grammar competence; grammar teaching; process-based; teaching strategy

1. INTRODUCTION

English language teaching in the country has gone a very long way since time immemorial. It has withstood the changing formats of education and has preserved its invaluable importance as a core part of any curriculum ever implemented. And now more than ever, the teaching of English that is aimed at developing competent and globally competitive learners among our schools is deemed relevant.

Palasan (2017) argues that there is a strong need to improve on our English instruction. Teachers have to take on the challenge of finding effective teaching strategies that would help improve students' performance in English.

This is why the researcher opted to explore and study the use of process-based teaching strategy by English teachers, towards enhancing grammar competence among learners. Process-based learning (Imray, Gazquez-Navarro & Bond, 2010) is described as a holistic approach that highlights the teaching process.

Brown, cited in Sitohang (2015), argued that grammar is an integral ingredient and/or element in the learning of a language. And as Rhalmi (2012) found out, grammar must be part of any language instruction. In teaching grammar lessons, teachers may employ a teaching strategy to which optimum learning may be achieved.

In general, grammar teaching may be viewed from two points of view: the explicit (direct) and the implicit (indirect)

approaches. Today's grammar teaching set-up is geared towards an indirect and incidental approach.

However, one possible pitfall of the incidental teaching of grammar is fossilization of unlearned basic concepts. Donger (2013) found that the students often encounter problems in their understanding of texts because they have not understood the grammar context.

When language teachers teach grammar implicitly, less attention and time is given to students to fully grasp the concepts taught. And when they (the students) use their 'half-baked' grammar concepts in their communicative tasks, there is minimal (if there is at all) error treatment on the grammar side as long as the context/message gets across. We therefore cannot say that the students are communicatively competent if, first of all, they are not grammatically/linguistically competent: thus results to failure in the teaching-learning process. Johnson (2014) opines that the next generation is put at an immediate disadvantage if grammar skills are learned incorrectly.

So, how should grammar really be taught? There is no single best way in teaching grammar. But if one way seems to not work well, then the teacher should try another one. It wouldn't hurt that much to go back to the basic: teach grammar overtly, build a strong foundation for the students, and once they gain mastery, they can use it effectively in communication.

Instead of just explicitly teaching grammar in the very traditional and 'biblical' way, this study explored the effect of practicing a process-based teaching strategy in enhancing grammar competence among students. By process-based, the

researcher means there is a step-by-step procedure in teaching a grammar lesson. It is also a reflection of the explicit teaching which highlights the following: (1) setting clear goals (presentation); (2) teaching (modelling); (3) guided practice; and, (4) independent practice (Mangaser, 2018).

Others may view the process-based grammar teaching strategy as a teacher-centered strategy. But it will not give justice to the concept of this strategy if it will not be made clear that the whole teaching-learning process is shared by the teachers and the students. At first, the teacher lays down the cards and delivers the instruction – the students pick up – they practice the skill with the guidance of the teacher – until such time that they are able to do the tasks independently and correctly: an "I (teacher) do it, We do it, You do it" approach. While some might fear that this approach to teaching might be a setback to the pedagogy which has revolutionized in great heights since ages ago, again, it is not bad to go back to the basics if it is the way to get back to what went wrong and do the necessary damage control.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The main goal of this study is to enhance the grammar competence of Grade 9 Calawitan National High School students through the use of a process-based teaching strategy.

Specifically, it sought answers to the following question:

(1) Is there a significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental and the control groups in the pre-test and post-test?

2. RELATED WORKS

As teachers, it is a tall order on our part to have a needs analysis on what to teach. There may be set standards and target skills that DepEd provides through curriculum guides, however, teachers may depart a bit from what is 'prescribed' and adjust the lesson to better suit and fit the learners if there's a need to do so.

Borg (2006) enumerated five reasons why teachers teach grammar. They are:(1) Acquisition: teachers expect that students will acquire accuracy in their use of the language; (2) Raising awareness: students may have explicit understanding of the rules of the language through grammar; (3) Diagnostic: teachers may be able to work on areas of language where students need to improve linguistically; (4) Psychological: as expected by the students, they have to learn grammar because it "provides concrete evidence of instruction"; and (5) Classroom management: grammar drills, exercises and drills may invigorate classroom atmosphere.

There exist two core approaches when we speak of grammar teaching. As presented in the work of Sitohang (2015), these are: 1) deductive approach, and 2) inductive approach. The former, otherwise known as explicit grammar

teaching, highlights the discussion of grammatical points. The latter, on the other hand, is aimed at making the students discover the grammatical rules by themselves, through the examples given by the teacher (Brown, in Larsen-Freeman, 2014).

In the teaching of grammar, it is said that there are issues that need to be resolved. They are enumerated as:(1) fluency or accuracy; (2) inductive or deductive teaching of grammar; (3) use of authentic or adapted language; (4) working with sentence-level or connected-discourse material; (5) engaging students in both open-ended communicative interaction or controlled response exercise; (6) explicit instruction or communicative exposure, and finally; and (7) awareness or performance (Sitohang, 2015).

Azar, mentioned in Sitohang (2015), introduced GBT as an approach that has its focus on the importance of having fundamental understanding of grammar concepts in order to use the language effectively, and which applies to both native and non-native speakers. GBT was described as an approach in teaching and learning that puts premium to grammar as the basis and starting point of developing skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing, with the help of diverse opportunities for practice.

The expository essay by four language teachers (Callary, Maher, Root & Ryan, 2018) from the Cape Breton University, Canada described the importance and gave examples of how five process-based pedagogical methodologies help students to learn, develop and work with one another and with the community. They toiled on this endeavor, with the end goal of devising a functional Community Studies (COMS) course under their Bachelor of Arts in Community Studies (BACS) program that would produce students who are passionate about learning in and through their communities.

Kuh (2008) recognized that such type of learning community is a very good practice among universities, and those courses with such practice actually promote life-changing learning and increased retention among students in the undergraduate level.

For process-based teaching in relation to teaching writing, the paper of Ajmal (2015) in The European Conference on Language Learning deliberated the importance of teaching and learning English writing. He discussed that English as Second Language (ESL) students in Pakistan are oblivious of the purposes and processes of writing. Because they are often blindsided by the customary traditional product approach, the goals of the teaching-learning process are often not fully achieved. Thus, he investigated the effects of teaching writing through the process-genre based approach in the writing performance of ESL university foundation course students in Pakistan. The

results showed that the process-genre approach is indeed effective in refining the students writing ability. Another significant finding is that the survey for the students and the teachers both reflect their acceptance and support to the approach being suggested.

When we speak of the teaching-learning process, students may be at the heart of it, but teachers probably make up its soul. Teachers are at the frontline in delivering education to students, so they have the most-comprehensive and most-realistic view of what really happens in the battlefield.

The study of Uysal and Bardakci (2014) investigated the Turkish English language teachers in the primary-level and their beliefs and patterns in their grammar teaching practices, and the reasons for these patterns. While grammar teaching has been a central issue and a problematic area in language teaching, it is necessary to give attention to what teachers believe and do in grammar instruction.

Seidel (2013) worked on error analysis in verbs for developing instructional materials for English 1. In her study, she used an integrative method of measuring the language performance of the respondents from Caloocan City Science High School through cloze test and writing composition. The cloze test results reveal that student errors are highly concentrated on tenses, agreement, appropriate verb choice and structure, while the error analysis in the compositions reflect that the difficulties of the learners are centered, still, on tenses.

One significant finding by Lagos (2014) is that comprehensible output had positive effect on the respondents who were grade 7 ESL students in raising their grammar awareness. Majority of them showed overall improvement in observing the subject-verb agreement and in the consistency of their verb tenses.

Robinson and Feng (2015) found out that grammar instruction plays an important role in effective speaking and writing. With the goal of examining the effects of direct grammar instruction to student's writing skills, they conducted writing pre-assessment on 18 fifth grade students. Afterwards, two fifth grade teachers administered direct grammar instruction to address common errors found in their writing, each week for four months. When the post-assessment was done, results revealed that half of the participants improved on their writing, as reflected by the significant increase in their overall writing scores. Further, the results of the study proved that research-based strategies, grammar instruction as such, can help improve the students writing skills.

In establishing the relationship between writing process-based practices and higher order literacy achievement,

Briddle (2013) hypothesized that there is a positive relationship between higher-order thinking and writing process-based instruction practices. For this study, the researcher analyzed 1,974 fifth grade students. In his study, he described the writing process as socio-cognitive and highly complex for it includes planning, text production, review, metacognition, writing for comprehension, and a social context..

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Design

This study employed the descriptive quasi-experimental research method which concerns itself in evaluating the effectiveness of a treatment. As Cook (2015) explicates, quasi-experimental research is where the independent variable is manipulated. And unlike in the true experimental research, the participants in this type of research are not randomly assigned to conditions or order of conditions.

This method of research was so chosen for the reason that the population and sample for the study is relatively small and that random assignment (true experiment) is difficult, if not impossible.

The pre-test – post-test design was utilized in the study since the target was to establish any significant effect of using the process-based strategy in teaching grammar lessons, and they were subjected to paired sample T-tests an independent samples T-test.

3.2 Respondents

While there were three sections of Grade 9 in the Calawitan National High School composing of 162 students enrolled in the present school year 2018-2019, the study was conducted involving only the two regular sections, where one section was the experimental group and the other one was the control group. Through the purposive sampling technique, specifically the complete enumeration sampling, all the students from these two sections, 107 in total, served as the participants of the study. The control group came from the section 9-Silver which (at large) has 52 students of 27 males and 25 females. On the other hand, the experimental group was formed from the students of 9-Platinum, which were at 55: 29 males and 26 females.

Moreover, the sections 9-Platinum and 9-Silver are the two regular, heterogeneous sections in Grade 9 of CNHS. This implies that the two groups are of the same conditions for the study to be free from bias.

3.3 Instrument of the Study

The data needed in this study were gathered from the student-participants and language experts.

For the student-participants, the data were gathered from a pre-test and post-test questionnaire answered, in which one was administered during week 1 (pre-test), while the other was on the 10th and last week of implementation (post-test). The tests were both researcher-made, with the same topics covered in the DepEd Curriculum Guide for English

The curriculum guide specifies learning competencies for eight (8) skills/categories, namely: reading comprehension, listening comprehension, viewing comprehension, vocabulary development, literature, writing composition, oral language fluency, and grammar awareness. Since this study is particularly concerned with the grammar competence of the students, only the learning competencies for the grammar awareness were taken out.

3.4 Statistical Analysis

The data gathered from this study were subjected to certain statistical treatments including paired T -test and independent sample T -test. The mean scores were used as statistical parameters to get the results. The data were encoded, checked and tabulated.

The test scores of the respondents were interpreted using the scale adopted and modified from the study of Fajardo (2011) with the title "Language Attitude, Motivation Learning and Thinking Styles and Grammar Proficiency of Selected College Students". In describing the academic achievement of the students from the previous assessment before the conduct of the study, the updated grading system of the K to 12 program stipulated in the DepEd Order No. 8, s. 2015 was utilized.

3.5 Data Gathering Procedure

First, the researcher facilitated a focus group discussion (FGD) to validate the listing of grammar topics to cover. The focus group consisted of six English language teachers of CNHS: they were the participants and key informants to the FGD.

Focus group discussion, as explained by Datu (2016), is a methodology in research in gathering data where a small group of participants come together and discuss a specific topic or issue, and where the interaction between the moderator and the group, as well as the interaction among the members, is a way of achieving the goal of the researcher to better understand the topic at hand from the perspective of the participants. On the other hand, key informants are people to be interviewed (in-depth) about a particular problem, program, or interest group. They may provide inputs, program evaluations and/or needs assessments which will be supplemental to the findings of the study. They are so-chosen for they serve as knowledgeable representatives of the group or organization they belong to (Lavrakas, 2008).

This group of specialists is the English teachers group of CNHS, who teach the language from all grade levels of the junior high school department (Grades 7-10) formed the small group. The teacher-participants were asked to fill-in their demographics on a demographic details sheet. Then, they were oriented by the researcher about the purposes and goals of the FGD, and the guidelines for the proceedings were discussed in the introduction which includes soliciting their permission to record the whole discussion while observing necessary ethical considerations. After the preparatory activities, the actual discussion took place while being guided by a pre-drafted set of questions. The sharing of thoughts and insights was prudently noted, and served as basis, along with the level of participants, the time frame for the study, practicality and practicability, and others) for the researcher to come up with the final list of grammar lessons included for the implementation of the study.

In the conduct of the study, the researcher secured a written permit and endorsement letter from the Division Office of DepEd, allowing the researcher to gather data from the respondents. A separate letter was also written, addressed to the school head of the school where the respondents are from. Request letters for third-party language teachers were also distributed, soliciting their help in evaluating the prototype module of the researcher, using an adapted validated evaluation checklist form. Ethical considerations, including maintaining the confidentiality of the respondents' personal information, were adhered to.

Once the permits were secured, the researcher proceeded in profiling the student-respondents and gathering the initial data (pre-test). The results were collected by the researcher for statistical treatment and safekeeping.

Afterwards, the process-based grammar teaching strategy was applied to the experimental group (9-Platinum) for 10 weeks, while the control group was taught the same lessons in a traditional light. After the 10-week time frame, the post-test was conducted after the 10th week, with the same procedure as the pre-test. Lastly, the data were collated by the researcher and processed using appropriate statistical analyses such as descriptive statistics, paired sample T-test and independent sample T -test.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The main goal in this study is to enhance the grammar competence of students using the process-based teaching strategy, with the aid of the researcher-made prototype module that was validated by language specialists to be significant and of help in achieving such goal.

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Pre-test Scores of the Control and Experimental Groups

Pre-test Score	Control Group (N=52)		Experimental Group (N=57)		Verbal Description
	f	%	*f*	%	
61 – 75	0	0.00	0	0.00	Highly Competent
46 – 60	1	1.92	1	1.82	Very Competent
31 – 45	14	26.92	10	18.18	Moderately Competent
16 – 30	35	67.31	41	74.55	Fairly Competent
0 – 15	2	3.85	3	5.45	Lacks Competence
Mean	25.94 (Fairly Competent)		24.42 (Fairly Competent)		
Range	13 – 49 (36)		10 – 47 (37)		
SD	7.81		7.78		

The number of respondents from the two groups was classified according to their scores in the pre-test, to show the breakdown of frequencies and their equivalent percentages. The mean scores of 25.94 (control group) and 24.42 (experimental group) indicate that the respondents from both groups are Fairly Competent. This was before the implementation of the process-based teaching strategy (for the experimental group) and traditional teaching (for the control group) of grammar lessons to enhance their grammar competence.

To prove the variance between the two groups under study, Table 5 provides the *F*-test value of the pre-test means of CG versus that of the EG.

Table 2: F-test Two-samples for Variances of the Pre-test for Control and Experimental Groups

F-Test Two-Sample for Variances				
	Mean	*F*-value	*F* critical	*p*-value
Control Group	25.94	1.06	1.58	0.41 ns
Experimental Group	24.42			

Legend: Not Significant (ns) (p-value ≥ 0.05)

Since the *p*-value from the *F*-test Two-samples for Variance of the pre-test is 0.41 which is not less than 0.05, the null hypothesis cannot be rejected, and that there is an equal variance assumed between the CG and the EG.

The result of the *F*-test proves that the study was conducted to learners from balanced groups. These learners, as interpreted from the data above, are on an equal grammar competence level during the pre-test. A high level of accuracy in the effect estimates of a study may be achieved when there is a balance between the groups involved, and having a balanced group is an important condition for an experimental study to yield a highly statistical result (Sebastian, 2019). Thus, the result of this *F*-test helped the researcher to minimize any unintended influence of other factors, except that of the variable being tested and/or the environment and conditions set by the researcher.

Sarmiento (2018) explicates that in studying English and in order to be proficient in it, grammar concepts need to be clearly understood through conscious academic effort; this is where the teacher's method and/or strategy in teaching comes to play. Furthermore, he proposes that explicit approach to grammar instruction yields to awareness and is leading towards conscious learning.

The concept of explicit teaching is actually the very inspiration of this study's process-based teaching strategy in enhancing grammar competence. As a traditional view to teaching grammar, explicit instruction emphasizes on explaining grammar rules and practicing the learned grammar skills through drills (Gabriel, 2009).

Similarly, the process-based teaching strategy rests on the procedural approach to grammar teaching. It highlights four key steps, namely: (1) setting clear goals; (2) teaching/modelling; (3) guided practice; and, (4) independent practice.

For a period of 10 weeks, the CG and EG were subjected to 10 grammar lessons/sessions. These lessons were the same lessons covered in the pre-test given to them. The same content, examples and drills were given to both CG and EG to ensure objectivity and give equal chances of learning. However, the approach in teaching these lessons differed for each group. The CG was taught in a traditional approach, while the EG was exposed to the process-based strategy by the teacher. Therefore, the procedure in delivering the lessons differed for the CG and the EG.

A post-test followed the 10-week program. The same lessons and competencies as that of the pre-test were utilized in the post-test. Table 6 presents the post-test results of the two groups involved in this study.

Table 3: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of the Post-test Scores of the Control and Experimental Groups

Post-test Score	Control Group (N=52)	Experimental Group (N=57)	Verbal Description

	f	%	*f*	%	
61–75	1	1.92	1	1.82	Highly Competent
46–60	5	9.62	12	21.82	Very Competent
31–45	30	57.69	32	58.18	Moderately Competent
16–30	16	30.77	10	18.18	Fairly Competent
0–15	0	0.00	0	0.00	Lacks Competence
Mean	34.58 (Moderately Competent)		38.13 (Moderately Competent)		
Range	19 – 62 (43)		22 – 68 (46)		
SD	8.77		8.59		

Out of the 75-point post-test for grammar competence, the control group under the traditional teaching of grammar lessons scored a mean of 34.58 while the respondents from the experimental group got a higher mean score at 38.13. Both the means sores of CG and the EG are verbally interpreted as Moderately Competent, which have improved from the pre-test mean score interpretation of Fairly Competent (for both groups). Meanwhile, the range and SD for both groups have also shown improvement.

The data in the table below provide basis on the effect of the traditional method and the process-based strategy in teaching to enhance grammar competence.

Table 4: Paired T-tests: Two-samples for Means of the Pre-test and Post-test for Control and Experimental Groups

Paired T-test Two-samples for Means				
	Mean	*T*-value	*T* critical	*p*-value
Control Group	25.94 (Pre-test)	-10.05	2.01	0.000**
	34.58 (Post-test)			
Experimental Groups	24.42 (Pre-test)	-14.67	2.00	0.000**
	38.13 (Post-test)			

Legend: Not Significant (ns) (p-value ≥ 0.05)
Significant (*) (p-value ≤ 0.05)
Highly Significant (**) (p-value ≤ 0.01)

As reflected in the table above, the mean scores of both groups show an apparent increase from the pre-test to the post-test. Subjecting these data into the paired T-test Two-samples for means yielded the result of p-value at 0.000 for the CG, and 0.000 for the EG. These values are way below the 0.01 significance level. Thus, the results of using traditional method and process-based strategy in enhancing grammar competence are both highly significant. Also, since the T-values for CG and EG are both higher than their respective T critical values (in absolute value), it gives a more solid evidence that the teaching of grammar lessons really helped the learners improve their grammar competence.

Finally, to assess whether there had been a difference between the traditional method and the process-based strategy, the researcher employed the statistical treatment Independent Samples T-test. The results are presented in the table below.

Table 5: Test of Difference between the Difference in Post-test of Control and Experimental Groups

Independent Samples *T*-test				
	Mean Difference	*T*-value	*T* critical	*p*-value
CG and EG	-3.55	-2.12	1.68	0.04*

Legend: Not Significant (ns) (p-value ≥ 0.05)
Significant (*) (p-value ≤ 0.05)
Highly Significant (**) (p-value ≤ 0.01)

The result of the independent samples *T*-test revealed that the experimental group subjected to the process-based teaching strategy better enhanced their grammar competence, as compared to the level of enhanced grammar competence by the control group under the traditional method of grammar teaching. The derived *p*-value of 0.04 that is less than the alpha of 0.05 serves as proof that the tested strategy – using process-based teaching strategy– made a significant impact in enhancing grammar competence of the selected students. In fact, these data cemented the idea that the process-based teaching strategy yields better result compared to the use of traditional method in grammar teaching.

The result of this study runs parallel with the result of the study of Sarmiento (2018) which has proven the success of sentence diagramming (through explicit instruction) in enhancing the grammar skills of the learners.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the conclusions generated from the findings in this study, the researcher came up with these recommendations:
1) Teachers need to carefully assess the learning needs of the students, as basis for important instructional decisions to be made. Once these needs have been identified, they need to be properly addressed so to avoid possible learning gaps in the future.

2) Teachers must be creative and open-minded in finding solutions to instructional problems because it has been proven, time and again, that there is no singular solution that would perfectly address a problem.

3) When teachers design instructional strategies and materials to amplify a lesson, they must always put into consideration their usefulness for the students. Modules and other materials must always be tailored in such a way that the lessons will be presented in the best and easiest-to-grasp possible way for the students.

4) Further study about teaching strategies in enhancing not just grammar but the over-all competence of students in the subject, must be conducted to explore and discover the most effective of these strategies, and to help the teacher best achieve their instructional goals and objectives.

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