

Enhancing the Writing Skills of Grade 9 through the Project GRAMMAR REAL

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Abstract: This study investigates the effectiveness of Project Grammar REAL, a contextualized digital learning resource designed to improve the writing skills of Grade 9 students. The project integrates digital tools such as tablets to enhance student engagement and support the development of writing proficiency. The intervention involved three phases: Warm-Up, Team-Up, and Write-Up, where students engaged in interactive, guided writing activities. The study employed a pretest-posttest design to assess improvements in punctuation, capitalization, and sentence patterns. Results revealed significant enhancements across all measured areas. Punctuation skills improved from a mean score of 6.23 to 7.73 ($p < .001$), capitalization scores increased from 7.93 to 8.87 ($p < .001$), and sentence pattern skills rose from 4.53 to 5.80 ($p < .001$). Overall writing skills showed a substantial improvement, with the combined mean score rising from 18.7 to 22.4 ($p < .001$), indicating a large effect size. The findings suggest that contextualized digital learning resources effectively enhance students' writing skills, fostering improved academic performance. The study recommends that Grade 10 teachers assess students' writing abilities and continue incorporating digitalized materials to support language learning. Project Grammar REAL offers a scalable and innovative strategy for improving writing instruction in secondary education.

Introduction

Skills and knowledge are keys to quality and a better life in this progressive society. The Human Capital Theory states that as individuals invest in education, they will acquire and learn functional and lifelong skills that will serve as their passes to work and earn money, which may lead to a comfortable and secure life. However, after the onset of the pandemic, the learning deficiencies of Filipino students became worse, as reported by various reports and studies. Dones (2020) stated that secondary schools face different issues and concerns that principals must address to ensure effective and efficient running. The poor academic performance of students, increasing dropout rates, limited resources and lack of discipline are the commonly identified adversaries that could greatly affect the entire school if not responded to accordingly. At present, language teachers focus on eliminating problems in reading comprehension; however, as the proponent conducted focus group discussions with her co-teachers and scrutinized the writing tasks and outputs of students, most of the students could not write even simple sentences, which affected the overall academic performance of the students as they were required to write essays, books and movie reviews, reflections, and speeches. According to Banzuelo (2020), in terms of writing, only 1% of Grade 5 learners in the Philippines achieved "higher levels" of proficiency or those who met the highest level in the standards used by the study. These learners are those with the ability to "write cohesive texts with detailed ideas and a good range of appropriate vocabulary." This has prompted the proponent to conceptualize a content innovation centred on revitalizing the engagement and skills of students in writing, as it has significant implications for the academic performance of students not only in English but also in other learning areas that require language production and output.

As the Department of Education (DepEd) shifted to a more engaging and modernized approach, the integration of digitalization as support for Education 4.0 should be evident. This guided the proponent to digitalize the writing projects the students will be using, especially the Project Grammar Dreams, which generated 10 tablets to maximize their usefulness. The participants of Project Grammar REAL are expected to use tablets.

The students were engaged in writing as they used different contextualized digital learning resources. Through the use of tablets, the students were guided accordingly in the process of writing various sentences using the given topic and following the correct grammar usage. Evidence showed that most students participated actively during the Warm-up stage. They were able to complete the given tasks while also enjoying the company of their group mates. They worked with small groups for the Team Up phase and collaboratively wrote sentences based on the Digi-Prompts. For the Write-Up Stage, they worked on their own. During the implementation process, the learners were asked to come to the Innovation room from

Monday to Wednesday at exactly 11:00 in the morning. They would sit on the floor to start with their Warm-Up.

Step 1: Warm Up

The stage is where they sit on the plastic grass carpet to accomplish the gamified activities per topic/lesson. This is where they need to work with their groupmates to finish the given task, which serves as a review or motivation for the lesson they will learn in the succeeding sessions.

Step 2: Team- Up

At this stage, they have to practice writing sentences in a group of 3 to 4 members; usually, the output is sent through the group chat, where the facilitators give feedback regarding their written output.

Step 3: Write-Up

The final stage of each lesson is where learners write their sentences based on the Digi-prompts provided. This will measure how well each student understood the lesson.

Research Objectives

Project Grammar REAL aims to:

- improve the writing skills of select Grade 9 students from basic writing skills to intermediate writing skills through the use of Digi-Prompts
- incorporate select grammar points in the writing process
- cultivate a positive attitude towards writing activities.

Discussion

A study was conducted to assess the effectiveness of Project REAL in enhancing English language skills, focusing on punctuation marks, capitalization, and sentence patterns. The project involved pretests and post-tests in these areas, with statistical analysis performed using paired sample t-tests.

Results revealed a significant improvement in participants' punctuation marks skills from pretest ($M = 6.23$, $sd = 1.70$) to post-test ($M = 7.73$, $sd = 2.35$), $t(29) = 4.23$, $p < .001$ (See Table 1), with a medium effect size ($d = 0.38$). As shown in Figure 1, participants exhibited a pretest mean score of 6.23, which increased by 1.5 points post-intervention. This gain suggests a notable enhancement in punctuation skills.

Table 1

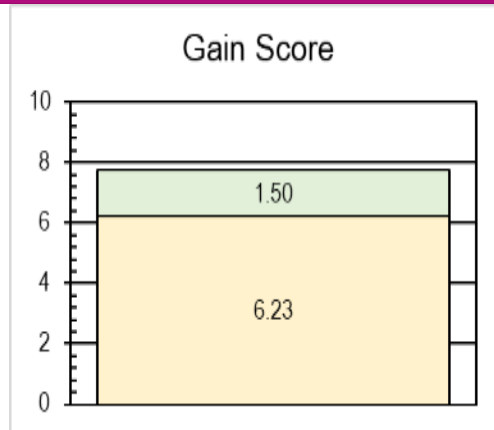
Summary Outputs for Test on Punctuation

	n	Mean	sd	t stat	t _{crit}	df	p
Pretest	30	6.23	1.70	4.23	2.05	29	0.00*
Posttest	30	7.73	2.35				

Note. The asterisk (*) denotes significance.

Figure 1

Gain Score for Test on Punctuation



Similarly, significant improvements were observed in capitalization skills, with pretest ($M = 7.93$, $sd = 1.96$) and post-test ($M = 8.87$, $sd = 1.17$), $t(29) = 2.97$, $p < .001$ (See Table 2), accompanied by a small effect size ($d = 0.23$). As shown in Figure 2, the participants' scores increased by 0.93 points, indicating a slight improvement in capitalization skills.

Table 2

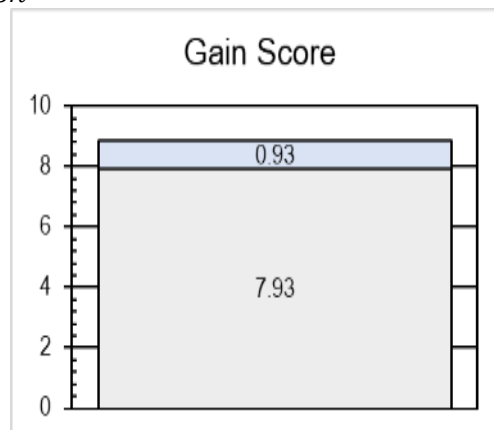
Summary Outputs for Test on Capitalization

	n	Mean	sd	t stat	t _{crit}	df	p
Pretest	30	7.93	1.96	2.97	2.05	29	0.01*
Posttest	30	8.87	1.17				

Note. The asterisk (*) denotes significance.

Figure 2

Gain Score for Test on Capitalization



Additionally, participants demonstrated enhanced sentence pattern skills, with pretest ($M = 4.53$, $sd = 1.80$) improving to post-test ($M = 5.80$, $sd = 2.35$), $t(29) = 3.21$, $p < .001$ (See Table 3), and a moderate effect size ($d = 0.26$).

Table 3

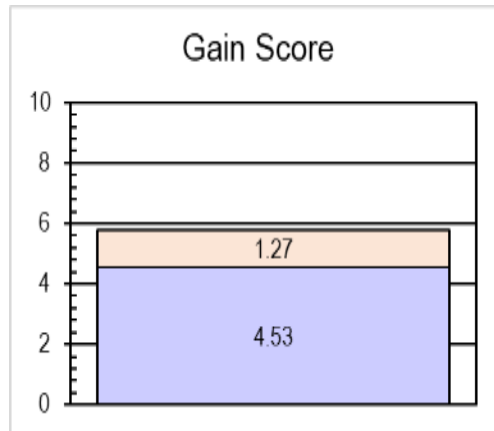
Summary Outputs for Test on Sentence Pattern

	n	Mean	sd	t stat	t crit	df	p
Pretest	30	4.53	1.80	3.21	2.05	29	0.00*
Posttest	30	5.80	2.35				

Note. The asterisk (*) denotes significance.

Figure 3

Gain Score for Test on Sentence Pattern



Participants displayed a pretest mean score of 4.53, which increased by 1.27 points to a post-test mean score of 5.80, reflecting a considerable advancement in sentence pattern comprehension.

Overall, the combined scores of punctuation marks, capitalization, and sentence patterns showed a substantial improvement from the pretest ($M = 18.7$, $sd = 3.94$) to the post-test ($M = 22.4$, $sd = 4.10$), $t(29) = -5.52$, $p < .001$ (See Table 4), indicating a large effect size ($d = 0.51$).

Table 3

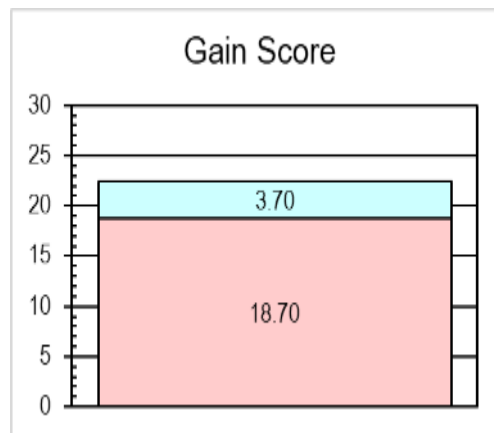
Summary Outputs for the Overall Test Scores

	n	Mean	sd	t stat	t crit	df	p
Pretest	30	18.70	3.94	-5.52	2.05	29	0.00*
Posttest	30	22.40	4.10				

Note. The asterisk (*) denotes significance.

Figure 3

Gain Score for the Overall Test



The combined gain score for all parts showed a pretest mean score of 18.7, which increased by 3.7 points to a post-test mean score of 22.4, underscoring a substantial improvement across various language skill components.

PRETEST

Verbal Interpretation	Score	Frequency
Highly skilled	25-30	2
Skilled	19-24	15
Moderately Skilled	13-18	11
Lacking Skills	7-12	2
Without Skills	0-6	

POST-TEST

Verbal Presentation	Score	Frequency
Highly skilled	25-30	5
Skilled	19-24	14
Moderately Skilled	13-18	11
Lacking Skills	7-12	
Without Skills	0-6	

Recommendations

Teachers of the incoming Grade 10 learners should assess the student's writing ability, for it is the prerequisite of speaking; if the students know how to construct sentences, they can also speak and deliver, which is the target skill for Grade 10 students. In addition, the process should continue with Grade 9 students since this innovation focuses on improving their writing skills, which is required in English 9 lessons where they are asked to write Play Reviews and dialogues and perform Role Plays.

Since the materials are digitalized, the students may revisit the slides sent to the group chat or the feedback given in their previous activities as their basis when they encounter the same topic in their Grade 10 lessons. The materials will aid them as supplemental information regarding their topic so they can easily cope with the discussions.