

Strengthening Grade 7 Students Mastery in Filipino Grammar through LARO-TALAS Strategy

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ABSTRACT

Filipino grammar proficiency remains a widespread concern among learners in public secondary schools in the Philippines, where conventional teaching approaches often result in low engagement and limited retention of language concepts. This study investigated the effectiveness of the *Laro-Talas* gamified instructional strategy in improving Grade 7 students' grammar competence at Bukidnon National School of Home Industries, Maramag, Bukidnon, Philippines, during the school year 2025–2026. A quasi-experimental research design was employed involving two intact groups. Both groups were administered a 40-item pre-test and post-test, with the experimental group exposed to *Laro-Talas* structured game-based learning activities and the control group receiving conventional instruction. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, including t-tests and analysis of covariance. Findings revealed that both groups began with very low proficiency, with mean pre-test scores of 18.83 and 18.63. After the intervention, the *Laro-Talas* group achieved a mean score of 35.17, indicating a high level of proficiency, while the *Non Laro-Talas* group obtained 30.02, remaining at a low level. The experimental group demonstrated a greater mean gain of 16.34 compared to 11.39 in the control group. Statistical analysis showed a significant difference between groups ($F = 58.4, p < 0.001$), confirming the effectiveness of the gamified strategy. The findings highlight the value of interactive, game-based instruction in improving grammar proficiency, enhancing engagement, and supporting meaningful learning in public secondary schools.

Keywords: Gamification, Student-centered Strategy, Educational outcomes, Quasi-experimental, Intervention in Filipino Subject

INTRODUCTION

Mastery of Filipino grammar is essential to effective communication and academic success among junior high school students in the Philippines, where Filipino serves as a lingua franca. A strong foundation in grammar enables learners to form meaningful sentences, express ideas clearly, and understand texts across subject areas. However, many students still struggle with grammatical competence, especially in sentence construction, word usage, and punctuation. These persistent difficulties point to the need for better instructional approaches in teaching grammar.

In the Philippine educational context, grammar learning has long been associated with traditional, rule-based instruction, which many students find dull and difficult. This often leads to low engagement and weak retention of grammar concepts. Aratea and Pasubillo (2024) found that students showed low mastery in grammar competencies before intervention, particularly in areas such as the use of modals. Their study also showed that conventional teaching methods were not enough to address least-mastered skills, highlighting the need for more engaging and innovative strategies. Similarly, Defilippi et al. (2025) stated that gamification

transforms traditional learning environments into dynamic ones by making learning more contextualized, collaborative, and autonomous. In grammar instruction, many studies show that gamification helps students strengthen their mastery of grammar concepts.

In response to these challenges, gamification has emerged as a promising instructional approach in language education. It integrates game elements such as points, rewards, competition, and interactive tasks into the learning process, making lessons more engaging and motivating. A Philippine-based study by Aler Pagente et al. (2024) showed that gamification enhances student engagement and participation in classroom instruction. Nob et al. (2024) also found that gamification in the Philippine context leads to increased motivation, improved academic performance, and better higher-order thinking skills. These findings suggest that gamified strategies can address learning gaps and encourage active participation among students.

International studies also support the effectiveness of gamification in grammar learning. Research shows that gamified instruction makes grammar lessons more interactive and meaningful, improving motivation and learning outcomes. Chan and Lo (2024) emphasized that gamification improves engagement and helps students retain language concepts better. Wardoyo and Herda (2025) likewise noted that gamification addresses the monotony of traditional grammar teaching by making learning more dynamic and learner-centered.

To address these persistent difficulties, this study proposes *LARO-TALAS*, a gamified strategy that combines *laro* (play) and *talas* (sharp thinking) to help students master Filipino grammar concepts. It is designed to improve Grade 7 students' mastery of Filipino grammar through structured, game-based learning activities. The strategy integrates competitive, collaborative, and independent games that target specific Filipino grammar competencies.

This study aims to fill the gap in the use of gamified instructional strategies by examining the effectiveness of *LARO-TALAS* in strengthening Grade 7 students' mastery of Filipino grammar at Bukidnon National School of Home Industries during the school year 2025–2026. While existing studies show that gamification improves engagement and learning outcomes, most are focused on English or other subject areas, with limited attention given to Filipino grammar in the junior high school context.

Objectives Of Study

1. What is the level of Filipino Students Mastery in Filipino Grammar exposed to the *LARO-TALAS* strategy and those who are exposed to the *Non-LARO-TALAS* strategy in terms of;
 - a. Pre-test, and
 - b. Post-test?
2. Is there a significant difference in the Filipino Grammar Mastery of students who are exposed to the *LARO-TALAS* strategy and those who are expose to *non-LARO-TALAS* strategy?

METHODS

Research Design

The researchers used a quantitative quasi-experimental design. Quantitative research relies on measured or observed data to investigate questions about a sample population (Allen, 2017). In this study, the pre-test scores served as the baseline or control variable for comparing the post-test scores. This design clearly connects the participants' pre-test and post-test results.

Participants of the Study

This study utilized two intact sections from Grade 7 students enrolled in Filipino subject at Bukidnon National School of Home Industries, Maramag, Bukidnon, Philippines for the school year 2025-2026. One intact group

was randomly selected to be the experimental group exposed to the *LARO-TALAS* strategy and the other group was exposed to the Non-*LARO-TALAS* strategy.

Data Collection Methods

The researchers adhered to the correct protocol when collecting the data and selecting the statistical tools to use. They requested an authorization letter to carry out the study in writing from the Bukidnon National School of Home Industries principal. Before distributing the survey questionnaires as the primary instrument in collecting data to the chosen Junior High School students, the researchers gave consent forms to the participants after the principal's letter was signed and content validity and reliability will be established. The pre- test and post-tests were provided to the students with plenty of time to complete. Above all, the researchers ensure that data confidentiality is maintained.

Data Analysis Plan

The researchers used Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) to determine the effectiveness of the *LARO-TALAS* strategy in improving students' mastery of Filipino grammar, with pre-test scores as covariates. An Independent Samples ttt-test was also used to compare the grammar mastery levels of the experimental and control groups. To determine if there was a significant improvement after exposure to *LARO-TALAS*, a Paired Samples ttt-test was used for within-group comparison. Descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, frequency count, and percentage were used to describe the data. Inferential statistics were then applied to test for significant differences. The data met the parametric assumptions, as shown by the Shapiro-Wilk Test ($p=0.593$)($p = 0.593$)($p=0.593$) for normality and the Levene's Test ($p=0.082$)($p = 0.082$)($p=0.082$) for homogeneity. Since the data were normally distributed and homogeneous, parametric tests were appropriate.

Below is the adopted DepEd grading system from DEPED Order No. 8, Series of 2015, utilized for the qualitative interpretation of this study:

Legend for Assessing Students' Level of Filipino Grammar Mastery			
Raw Score	%	Descriptive Rating	Qualitative Interpretation
36-40	90-100	Outstanding	Very High
34-35	85-89	Very Satisfactory	High
32-33	80-84	Satisfactory	Moderate
30-31	75-79	Fairly Satisfactory	Low
0-29	Below 75	Did Not Meet Expectations	Very Low

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Students' Level of Filipino Grammar Mastery Before the Intervention

Range		Groups				Qualitative Interpretation
Raw Score	%	<i>LARO-TALAS</i>		Non <i>LARO-TALAS</i>		
		n	%	n	%	
36-40	90-100	0	0.00	0	0.00	Very High

34-35	85-89	0	0.00	0	0.00	High
32-33	80-84	1	2.44	0	0.00	Moderate
30-31	75-79	2	4.88	1	2.44	Low
0-29	Below 75	38	92.68	40	97.56	Very Low
Total		41	100.00	41	100.00	
Mean		18.83		18.63		
MPS		Very Low		Very Low		

The *LARO-TALAS* group had a pre-test mean score of 18.83, indicating very low mastery of Filipino grammar. The *Non-LARO-TALAS* group scored similarly at 18.63, showing comparable baseline proficiency between groups.

Distribution analysis revealed that in the *LARO-TALAS* group, 38 out of 41 students (93%) scored 0-29 (very low mastery), while 3 scored 30-31 (low mastery). In the *Non-LARO-TALAS* group, 40 out of 41 (98%) scored 0-29 (very low), and only 1 scored 30-31 (low). No students in either group achieved very high proficiency.

These results highlight the need for intervention to improve students' Filipino grammar mastery. Local studies support this finding: Agni et al. (2025) identified grammar and spelling as persistent challenges among Filipino learners, emphasizing the need for structured instructional activities. Similarly, Potane and Sacal (2023) noted that grammar mastery remains a continuing issue affecting students' language proficiency, particularly in writing and communication skills.

Table 2. Students' Level of Filipino Grammar Mastery After the Intervention

Range		Groups				Qualitative Interpretation
Raw Score	Grading Scale	Experimental		Control		
		n	%	n	%	
36-40	90-100	19	46.34	3	7.32	Very High
34-35	85-89	6	14.63	8	19.51	High
32-33	80-84	8	19.51	2	4.88	Moderate
30-31	75-79	4	9.76	5	12.20	Low
0-29	Below 75	4	9.76	23	56.10	Very Low
Total		41	100.00	41	100.00	
Mean		35.17		30.02		
MPS		High		Low		

After intervention, the *LARO-TALAS* group (n=41) achieved high mastery (mean = 35.17): 19 students scored 36-40 (very high), only 4 scored 0-29 (very low). The *Non-LARO-TALAS* group (n=41) remained low mastery (mean = 30.02): 23 scored 0-29 (very low), only 3 scored 36-40 (very high).

LARO-TALAS effectively elevated most students from very low to high/very high mastery, while conventional instruction showed minimal improvement. The results were aligned to the study of Potane and Sacal (2023) found innovative strategies yield higher grammar achievement than traditional methods. Hicana (2020) showed interactive approaches improve engagement and competence.

These studies affirm that the significant improvement observed in the *LARO-TALAS* Group can be attributed to the use of an engaging and interactive instructional strategy such as *LARO-TALAS*, while the lack of improvement in the *Non-LARO-TALAS* is consistent with literature highlighting the limited effectiveness of conventional teaching methods.

Table 3. Test of Difference Between the Students' Level of Filipino Grammar Mastery Exposed to *LARO-TALAS* and *Non-LARO-TALAS*

Group		n	Mean Percentage		Standard Deviation
Pre-Test	<i>LARO-TALAS</i>	41	18.83		6.47
	<i>Non-LARO-TALAS</i>	41	18.63		5.24
Post-Test	<i>LARO-TALAS</i>	41	35.17		3.66
	<i>Non-LARO-TALAS</i>	41	30.02		3.74
Source	Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	F-Value	<i>p</i> -value
Overall Model	911	2	455.64	51.3	<0.001**
Covariate	384	1	383.70	42.5	<0.001**
Group	528	1	527.58	58.4	<0.001**
Residuals	713	79	9.03		
$\eta^2 = 0.325$	$\eta^2 p = 0.425$		$\omega^2 = 0.317$		
Note: **-significantly different at 0.01 level of significance					

Table 3 shows $F=58.4, p<0.001$, confirming a significant difference between the *LARO-TALAS* and *Non-LARO-TALAS* groups.

Both groups showed significant pre- to post-test gains. The *Non-LARO-TALAS* group had a mean difference of 11.39 but remained at low proficiency (post-test mean = 30.02), suggesting insufficient practical improvement. This aligns with Sacal et al. (2023) and Salering et al. (2025), who found traditional methods yield statistical gains but limited functional language improvement.

The *LARO-TALAS* group showed a larger mean difference of 16.34, reflecting meaningful gains. This supports Hamari et al. (2014), Bolaton and Mabit (2025), and Barredo (2020), who found gamification boosts engagement, motivation, and language mastery.

The group effect sum of squares (527.58) exceeded the covariate (383.70) and residuals (9.03), indicating *LARO-TALAS* explained substantial variance beyond pre-test scores. Philippine studies confirm this: Guisadio et al. (2025) found gamification improves outcomes and engagement; Lomibao et al. (2024) showed superior achievement in language learning; Caballero et al. (2022) reported enhanced Filipino performance; and Mangulian (2025) noted significant gains in motivation and mastery.

These results confirm *LARO-TALAS* as an effective gamified strategy for Filipino grammar mastery.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings, both the LARO-TALAS and Non-LARO-TALAS groups demonstrated very low levels of mastery in Filipino grammar during the pre-test, with mean scores of 18.83 and 18.63, respectively. This indicates that both groups had comparable prior knowledge and limited proficiency in Filipino grammar before the intervention. After the implementation of the instructional strategies, both groups showed improvement. However, the group exposed to the LARO-TALAS strategy achieved a mean post-test score of 35.17, which corresponds to a high level of mastery. In contrast, the Non-LARO-TALAS group obtained a mean post-test score of 30.02, which falls under the low level of mastery. These results indicate that while conventional instruction contributed to some improvement, the LARO-TALAS strategy was far more effective in elevating students' mastery of Filipino grammar from very low to high proficiency.

Furthermore, the results revealed a statistically significant difference between the Filipino grammar mastery of students exposed to the LARO-TALAS strategy and those taught using the Non-LARO-TALAS approach. The ANCOVA results yielded an F-value of 58.4 with a p-value of less than 0.001, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This confirms that the LARO-TALAS strategy had a significant positive effect on students' Filipino grammar mastery beyond what could be achieved through conventional teaching methods alone. Therefore, LARO-TALAS is an effective and innovative instructional strategy that substantially enhances Filipino grammar mastery among Grade 7 students.

Both groups started at comparable pre-test levels, ensuring a fair basis for comparison. However, the *LARO-TALAS* group significantly outperformed the *NON-LARO-TALAS* group, as confirmed by the ANCOVA results ($F = 58.4$, $p < 0.001$). This indicates that the *LARO-TALAS* strategy had a statistically and educationally significant impact on improving Filipino grammar mastery in Grade 7 students at Bukidnon National School of Home Industries beyond what traditional teaching methods could achieve.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on these findings, the following recommendations are suggested:

1. The principal may embed the *LARO-TALAS* strategy in the Learning Action Cell (LAC) session.
2. Filipino teachers may adopt the *LARO-TALAS* strategy into classroom instruction. Its effectiveness in improving grammar mastery, learner engagement, and motivation highlights its potential applicability not only in Filipino but also across other subject areas.
3. Curriculum developers may incorporate game-based learning principles in instructional design to promote active, meaningful, and student-centered learning experiences.
4. Future researchers may explore other game mechanics and examine the long-term effects of gamified instruction on academic achievement.

By fostering interactive and learner-centered environments, educators can promote deeper understanding, sustained engagement, and improved academic performance, reinforcing the value of gamified instructional strategies in contemporary education.

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