

The Effect of Metalanguage Technique on the Grammatical Competence of Grade 8 Students in Hadiyyah International School International School: Basis for Module Writing

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Abstract

Grammar is a fundamental aspect of language, yet many students struggle to develop adequate grammatical competence. This study examined the effect of the Metalanguage Technique (MLT) on the grammatical competence of Grade 8 students at Hadiyyah International School International School, employing an embedded mixed-method design. Sixty participants were divided into control and experimental groups. Single Group Pre- and Post-test research design, alongside interviews, were used to gather data. Findings revealed a significant improvement in the experimental group's performance after exposure to MLT, with an 18.6 margin difference which refers to the t-value compared to the control group, which showed no notable gains. Students reported that MLT made grammar lessons engaging, promoted reflection, and encouraged self-correction. The study concludes that MLT is an effective method for improving grammatical competence compared with traditional approaches. A proposed module based on the 5Es framework illustrates how MLT can enhance grammar instruction.

1. INTRODUCTION

Grammar is a fundamental aspect of language. The mastery of grammar is crucial for effective communication in any language. Over time, various grammar teaching methods have been developed alongside broader language-teaching approaches. As Keen (1997), cited in Sioco and De Vera (2018), pointed out, teaching grammar often focuses on memorizing rules and structures without ensuring true understanding. Sioco and De Vera's (2018) research indicated that Junior High School students need to improve their grammatical skills further because of the spiral of various teaching approaches.

This is one reason why, despite the implementation of the K-12 program, grammar instruction has largely relied on traditional pedagogies, such as the Grammar-Translation Method, which excludes oral practice and focuses solely on the mother tongue. Consequently, the target language was neglected, making it impossible for students to speak. Students must develop the ability to think in the target language. Although the structural approach offers an incomplete representation of the grammatical system, it fails to provide the rules necessary to create an unlimited range of grammatical sentences.

It has been observed that a significant issue for students is their ability to grasp and effectively apply grammar in meaningful ways. This challenge is particularly pronounced among English as a Second Language (ESL) students, whose difficulties with grammar are increasingly evident across various educational levels, from primary school to university. Many students at these levels are identified as needing assistance to adhere to grammatical rules in both spoken communication and written expressions (Sioco & De Vera, 2018).

Based on the given conditions, grammar is recognized as a crucial aspect of language instruction and is frequently regarded as challenging, owing to its distinctive characteristics. Furthermore, achieving proficient command of grammar can facilitate the production of high-quality writing (Bradshaw, 2013). According to Ellis's 2016 study findings, grammar instruction encompasses various methods that focus students' attention on specific grammatical forms, aiding their meta-linguistic understanding, and enabling them to internalize these forms for comprehension and production purposes.

The use of metalanguage techniques in language teaching is relatively new and has received limited attention in action research and studies on English language teaching (Harun et al., 2017). In educational settings, there is often a lack of understanding of language patterns across different subjects and a corresponding lack of metalanguage, a way of discussing language. This gap primarily arises from insufficient recognition or acceptance of the interdependence between language and knowledge. Even Communicative Language Teaching, which emphasizes fluency, often neglects accuracy in language use.

Metalanguage has been incorporated into various disciplines to discuss language. As Gebhard, Chen, Britton, and Graham (2014) explain, metalanguage involves a conscious awareness of language, articulated and reflexively used as a cognitive tool to build knowledge about language. A distinctive aspect of metalanguage is its ability to enhance metalinguistic knowledge through corrective feedback. As referenced by Ellis (2016), Berry argues that metalinguistic knowledge is a distinct human capability, because it involves the ability to reflect on one's own language use and communication. Being explicit about language necessitates metalanguage—a form of language that discusses language itself. According to Berry (2010), metalanguage can be understood both as a set of specific terms (terminology) and as an active process of discussing and reflecting on language (talking about language).

Some studies have argued that understanding language patterns within disciplinary knowledge renders metalanguage unnecessary. Therefore, this study focuses on a single secondary school to examine how employing a metalanguage technique can enhance the

grammatical skills of ESL students. It also explores whether metalanguage should be considered as a valuable technique in language teaching.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies emphasize the importance of metalanguage in developing learners' awareness of language forms and functions. Metalanguage is defined Hnd operationalized as "language used to talk about language". It serves as a cognitive tool that allows individuals to reflect on their own language use. Ellis (2016) highlights that metalanguage directs learners' attention to specific grammatical forms, aiding their metalinguistic understanding. While some traditions claim that explicit focus on forms might hinder fluency, contemporary research by Schleppegrell (2013) suggests that it supports academic language development and critical reflection.

According to Roehr and Gánem-Gutiérrez (2009b), learners' proficiency in their second language (L2) encompasses their overall language ability, which includes both language knowledge (metalinguistic knowledge) and strategic competence. These two types of knowledge together enable learners to effectively use the language to "create and interpret discourse" to comprehend and negotiate intended meanings. Metalanguage prompts students to reflect on the language they are learning, which is known as its metalinguistic function. Furthermore, proponents of metalanguage (e.g., Keen, 1997; Shakoor, Rehman, & Raees, 2013; Pelger & Sigrell, 2016) argue for its adoption in language instruction because it enables language teachers to effectively explain sentence construction and sharpens students' understanding.

Schleppegrell (2013) illustrated how metalanguage supports contextual and situated language learning, aligning with current educational research on L2 acquisition. It helps meet disciplinary goals in English language arts while enhancing students' ability to meaningfully engage with language. Metalanguage is seen as a "powerful navigational toolkit for teachers" that enables students to engage with complex social semiotic practices and diagnose strengths and weaknesses in their own texts. Despite some views of metalanguage as "complex jargon," this study supports the position that it is a vital tool for making sense of and learning language explicitly.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study employed an embedded mixed-method research design. In this approach, quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis are integrated into a single framework. The researcher simultaneously gathered and analyzed both types of data, where one type of data serves a supplementary role to the other. In this context, the quantitative component, a quasi-experimental intervention specifically a single group pre-test and post-test design, was primary, while qualitative data from one-on-one interviews provided additional insights into the students' learning processes.

The study's participants consisted of sixty Grade 8 students at Hadiyyah International School, all of whom are native speakers of Meranaw (L1). Despite being enrolled in a private educational setting where English is the primary medium of instruction and students are encouraged to speak the language throughout the campus, many demonstrate a disparity between fluency and accuracy. This environment fosters a higher level of communicative

confidence and oral fluency; however, most participants entered the study with a low level of English grammatical proficiency, as evidenced by their average pre-test scores which fell below the passing competency of 75%. Their background reflects a common ESL (English as a Second Language) profile in the region, where frequent exposure to English speakers provides a foundation for communication, yet formal grammatical structures remain a significant challenge.

The study was conducted at Hadiyyah International School International School in Marawi City, a locale chosen because of its students' exposure to international academic environments and native English speakers, which creates a pressing need for interventions in English grammar. The participants consisted of sixty Grade 8 students, divided into experimental and control groups of 30 each using a matched-group technique. The experimental group was exposed to Metalanguage Technique (MLT) through researcher-crafted modules, while the control group was taught via traditional lecture methods.

4. DATA COLLECTION

The data collection process was structured into three distinct phases: the pre-test, the intervention, and the post-test followed by qualitative interviews. Initially, a 50-item researcher-made grammar test was administered as a pre-test to both groups to determine their baseline knowledge of English speech parts. This test underwent content validation by experts and a pilot test to ensure reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.812).

During the intervention phase, the experimental group received grammar instruction integrated with the Metalanguage Technique. The researcher implemented a module consisting of ten grammar topics, including reflexive pronouns, modals, and reported speech. The instruction followed the 5Es framework: Engage (collaborative dialogue scenarios), Explore (reflecting on language patterns), Explain (elucidating outputs), Extend (teacher-delivered metalinguistic feedback), and Evaluate (final application).

The control group, meanwhile, was taught the same topics by the same teacher but through conventional lecture-based methods. Following the intervention period, a post-test, containing randomized items from the pre-test to avoid memorization bias, was administered to both groups to measure the impact of the technique. Finally, one-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants from the experimental group to capture their subjective perceptions of the MLT.

5. DATA ANALYSIS

The analysis of data combined both descriptive and inferential statistics alongside thematic qualitative analysis. For the quantitative data, the researcher calculated the weighted mean and standard deviation to describe the pre-test and post-test performances of both groups. To determine if there were significant differences within each group (pre-test vs. post-test), Paired Samples T-tests were utilized. An Independent Samples T-test was then conducted to compare the post-test mean scores between the experimental and control groups to evaluate the effectiveness of the MLT compared to traditional instruction.

Qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews were transcribed and analyzed using thematic coding. The researcher looked for recurring patterns in student responses related to their engagement, motivation, and ability to self-correct under the MLT framework. This "embedded" analysis allowed the researcher to triangulate the statistical gains (quantitative) with the students' reported experiences of increased clarity and confidence (qualitative), thereby providing a more holistic understanding of the intervention's success.

5.1. Ethical Statement

In accordance with established institutional research ethics and the professional standards for educational research of the Mindanao State University-Main, the researcher developed comprehensive protocols to ensure the protection and well-being of all participants. An Informed Consent Form (ICF) and a Student Assent Form were utilized to clearly outline privacy and confidentiality measures, which were strictly maintained throughout the duration of the study. Given that the participants are Grade 8 students, specific attention was paid to ensuring that data gathered from pre-tests, post-tests, and interviews were treated with the utmost discretion to prevent any impact on their regular academic standing.

The researcher followed strict conduct guidelines regarding professional standards, the disclosure of any potential conflicts, and the accuracy of the data reported. All research materials, including the results of the intervention modules and qualitative interview responses, were securely stored in a password-protected digital environment accessible only to the researcher. Furthermore, protocols for data disposal were established to ensure that participant information is permanently deleted once the study's requirements are fulfilled, maintaining transparency and integrity in the presentation of the findings.

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

6.1. Pre-test Results for the Control and Experimental Groups

The individuals' pre-test results were obtained by administering the fifty Multiple-choice test with 50 items. Information regarding their pre-test results was acquired prior to the intervention via the Metalanguage Technique (MLT).

Table 4.1

The Descriptive Statistics Summary for Pre-test Total Scores

	N	Mean	SD	Transmuted Grade	Description
Control Group	30	27.10	3.527	73%	Failed
Experimental Group	30	28.87	3.060	74%	Failed

Table 4.1 demonstrates that the experimental group outperformed the control group on average, with a mean score of 28.87 as opposed to a mean score of 27.10 for the control group. Considering the two groups' means, their performance was nearly identical. Nevertheless, it can also be observed that the experimental group's scores have a standard deviation and are more variable. of 3.527, with a standard deviation of 3.060, in contrast to individuals in the control group. This implies that the test-takers' responses vary, which is to be expected, given that they are still learning the course material covered in the exam.

This pre-test result implies a common phenomenon in an experiment wherein the participants have yet to be exposed to treatment. A score below 60 percent (75%) is described as failed and implies that the students perform below the passing competency. It is expected that students will still need to be equipped with lesson content. However, they may have superficial background knowledge of the lessons; with metalanguage intervention, they might be able to comprehend the ideas covered in grammar classes.

Similar results were found in the pre-experimental investigation by Otara and Magdara (2018). In the pre-test, their responses may have been better. Still, a notable There was an improvement in the post-test results, which indicated that both groups' pre-test scores were their mean scores were similar, and their results fell short of passing competency..Serrano's (2011) study also revealed how students with the use of metalinguistic knowledge performed better in the post-tests than in the pre-test with the traditional method used by the teacher, while Shakoor, Rehman, and Raees (2013) disclosed how their participants – students and teachers – positively responded to the use of metalanguage because it made them proficient in L2 by translating English to their Urdu native language. A more recent study by Tighe et al. (2019) indicated that the metalanguage technique accounts for not less than 90% of the predictors of the reading comprehension abilities of struggling adult readers.

6.2. Post-test Scores of the Experimental and the Control Groups

Following the intervention, the subjects' post-test results were acquired, and they were instructed on the writing techniques covered in the exam. These results were obtained by giving the fifty (50) item multiple choice pre-test that the participants had completed.

Table 4.2

The Descriptive Statistics Summary for the Post-test Total Scores

	N	Mean	SD	Transmuted Grade	Description
Control Group	30	25.77	2.979	72%	Failed
Experimental Group	30	39.63	2.810	87%	Very Satisfactory

The post-test performance summary for both subjects is presented in table above. in the intervention, control, and experimental groups, respectively. Observations revealed that, generally, with a mean score of 39.63, the experimental group outperformed the control group.

Has a 25.77 mean score. Additionally, it is evident that the experimental group's scores were lower by 2.979 standard deviations, whereas individuals in the control group had a standard deviation of 2.810 deviance. It is evident that, after being exposed to metalanguage, the experimental group approach showed largely comparable responses to the post-test following the intervention.

This advantageous outcome of the metalanguage technique is improved. Grade 8 students' grammatical proficiency was ascribed to the justifications noted by the experimental group that took part in the conversation. The subsequent explanations noted by the interviewees regarding the MLT's qualities included making learning enjoyable and clear for pupils, encouraging them to make their own corrections and decisions, and attends to demonstrate pupils' capacity to reflect on and articulate their understanding through critical questioning to encourage involvement in action. It works well for instructing students in grammar. Several of the following are replies:

P5: *“I enjoyed it; it was fun Hindi gaya ng dati na mag memorizing rules about grammar lang po, pag mahirap ang topic, mas interested ako basta all, and I learned a lot.”*

(I enjoyed it. It was fun, unlike the old stressful way of memorizing rules about grammar; when the topic was challenging, I became more interested. All in all, I learned a lot.)

P9: *” The way nag discuss si ma'am is exciting. The way ma'am starts the discussion with the activities sa mga lessons is intriguing and fun. Dati, I feel like boring and grammar topics kaya hindi ako nakikinig... Naisip ko mas maganda na the way pagtuturo ng English teacher namin, mas curious ako and help me mas maka focus.”*

(My teacher's way of discussing is exciting, and the lessons were introduced in an intriguing manner and with fun activities. I found grammar lessons boring, so I did not listen... I think that is a better way of teaching; it makes me more curious and helps me focus more.

P3: *“Mas na remember ko ang lessons because, after the many activities and discuss pa ni ma'am ng maayos, I learned from my classmates' din every time mag present kami as a group, mas better talaga kasi nakakasali ako sa discussion kaysa ako lang sasagot ng mga test.....”*

(I remembered the lesson better because we had a thorough discussion. I also learned from my classmates that every time we have our group presentation, it is far better if I am included in the debate than alone.)

P6: *“.... I cannot forget when our teacher says, very well after my report. She said I was right; I feel happy because before, even if may*

naiisip ako na sagot, di ako nagsasalita kasi hindi ako sure kung tama pagkaintindi ko."

(After my report, I cannot forget when my teacher said, 'Excellent.' She told me that my discussion was proper and I felt happy. After all, I used to keep silent despite having a thought because I was not sure if my understanding was correct.)

P1: *".... Dati kahit favorite subject ko yong English, nahihirapan parin akong maka memorize nung iba't ibang parts of speech, kaya when my teacher did a new way ng pag teach ng English topics naming mas lumalaki na mga scores ko sa mga tests and gusto kong sumasali sa mga activities..."*

(Before, even if English was my favorite subject, I still found it challenging to memorize the different parts of speech, so when my teacher showed us a new way of teaching our English topics, my scores improved, and I wanted to join the different activities.)

However, based on a comparison of Tables 4.1 and 4.2, it can be shown that the experimental groups' performances improved with the application of the corresponding interventions. This is a result of rising mean scores. Furthermore, it is imperative to remember that, following the intervention, there was a noticeable increase in the dispersion of results within the experimental group. In contrast, the score dispersion of the control group was constant. Because the effects of the metalanguage technique are often similar among learners, it can be a useful teaching strategy in the classroom, independent of the learning preferences of students.

It is anticipated that the experimental group's post-test scores will improve for students who have used the metalanguage approach or intervention. Conversely, the standard teaching approach, which mostly consisted of lectures, was applied to the control group. These variations (especially increases) in the pre-test and post-test scores within an experimental group and comparisons between the experimental groups' post-test results were further examined and explained in the following sections. In the experimental group, the subject teacher used the metalanguage technique to apply the researcher-designed modules. On the other hand, the control group received instruction from the same subject teacher using the conventional approach, specifically the lecture method. The intervention, the MLT module, was practical as the students tended to have good scores during their evaluation and assessment after the phases of activities, which allowed them to self-reflect, engage, and explore grammar lessons.

Similar to Storch's (2019) study on metalanguage, its goal was to determine the influence of the metatalk students used in a certain text reconstruction assignment. The investigation found a noteworthy demonstration of how elaborate interaction aided in learning and benefited the students by building on their understanding of metalinguistics to effectively complete the given text construction. Swain's (2012) study on the use of metalanguage

embedded in students' language activities during various assigned form-focused language tasks is particularly relevant to this investigation. Lastly, like Schleppegrell (2013), he exemplified how metalinguage supports the situated and contextual language learning that current research in education and L2 acquisition calls for, while supporting disciplinary goals and activities in English language arts.

6.3. Comparison of the Control Group's Pre- and Post-Test Results

The control group's pre-test and post-test score differences are calculated using T-test for Paired Samples. When administering this type of test, the control group's mean score difference group was recognized in two situations for the pre- and post-tests: the one where equal variance was present and the one in which no assumption of equal variance was made. This addresses the research from this study. Third Question (#3).

Table 4.3

The Descriptive Statistics Summary for the Control Post-test and Pre-test Total Scores

Paired Samples Test										
		Paired Differences					T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Interpretation
		Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference					
					Lower	Upper				
Control Group	Pretest vs. Posttest	1.33	3.661	.668	-.034	2.700	1.995	29	.056	NOT SIGNIFICANT

Table 4.3 demonstrates that the control group's performance did not significantly increase after the test. Their mean score dropped from 27.10 to 25.77. The null hypothesis is therefore supported, since the significance level of 0.056 is higher than 0.05.

Furthermore, as previously indicated, the control group did not encounter the metalinguage approach in the grammatical debate teaching-learning process; students were still instructed primarily through lectures when using the conventional approach. They showed no signs of progress on the evaluation after the test.

According to the participants' comments, before being exposed to MLT, Their English grammar lessons were passive and taught by their teachers using the lecture technique.

As manifested by the responses of the participants, before they were exposed to MLT, their teacher used the lecture method, they were passive learners of grammar lessons in English,

P10: *‘I feel motivated because pinapayagan kami ni ma’am mag explore about doon sa topic namin sa way na iba’t iba ang activities namin...’*

(I feel motivated; our teacher allowed us to explore and know the topic through activities.)

P2: “..... *I hated English before because mahirap siya na subject, the way ma'am teaches us was boring, diko alam sa ibang classmates ko, but for me this technique ay mas better kaya sa dating pagtuturo ng English Teacher naming.*”

(I used to hate English because it is a complex subject, and our teacher teaches us in a boring way. I do not know my other classmates, but the MLT is much better than my English teacher's old method.)

P9: “...*Nakaka motivate pag English subject na naming, kasi alam naming kailangan naming mag participate and sobrang fun kasi kahit mahirap pag nag group presentation kami, I feel like I belong and my thoughts are being heard.*”

(It is motivating when it is our English subject time because we know we need to participate, and it is so much fun despite its difficulty during our group presentation because I feel like I belong and my thoughts are being heard.)

P3: “...*Masaya ako, because nakaka contribute ako pag nag kasama ko, groupmates ko since napipilitan lang akong making leader and parang nagging duty ko na to think about our task and the questions, and then share or teach my other groupmates.*”

(I am happy because I can think of contributions when in a group since I am usually the forced leader, and I have to think about the tasks or questions and share or teach my other groupmates.)

Learning has been maximized since the metalanguage technique has vividly impacted students' motivation. It was proven that the metalanguage teaching technique is efficacious in improving the grammatical competence of the experimental group through the support of the module crafted by the researcher using the 5Es aligned with the essential features of MLT: (a) Engaging way of indirectly introducing the grammar lesson in a collaborative discussion; (b) Exploring which allows reflections; c) Explaining reaching learning goals through learning inputs, the students output after the activities; (d) Extending for the further teacher's discussion and eight delivery of feedback; and (e) evaluation of the final application. This MLT module ensured that the activities were realistic and authentically suited to the grammar lesson, where students would see its practical use in real-world dealings or realia. Students are observed through this motivation.

As discussed in the related literature, motivation for teaching and learning activities is the overall driving force within students that raises, ensures continuity, and provides direction for learning activities so that students' learning objectives are expected to be achieved

(Sardiman, 2001 cited in Pondiong, 2022), specifically self-motivation or intrinsic motivation. As Praytino (1989) cited in Pondiong (2022), self-motivation is a basic de Ma'ame that encourages individuals to achieve various fulfillment of their own needs. To satisfy students' fundamental needs or requirements, the instructor merely needs to provide information to spark their innate curiosity. content that is appropriate for children. He continued by saying that raising student motivation by giving pupils the chance to conduct independent research and enabling them to discover anything worthwhile by labor.

6.4. Comparison of the Experimental Group's Pre- and Post-Test Scores

The experimental group's pre- and post-test scores differed from each other. Calculated with T-

Test for Paired Samples. The noteworthy average variation in the ratings of the two conditions met for the determination of such a group: equal variances were assumed, and equal variance was not taken into account. This provides an explanation of the response to Research Question #4.

Table 4.4

Paired Samples Test										
		Paired Differences					T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Interpretation
		Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference					
					Lower	Upper				
Experimental Group	Pretest vs. Posttest	-10.77	3.22	.59	-11.97	-9.56	-18.29	29	.000	SIGNIFICANT

The Descriptive Statistics Summary for the Experimental Post-test and Pre-test Total Scores

The performance of the experimental group significantly improved, as shown in the above table. Following the post-test. The pre-test and actual test showed a mean difference of 10 points. after-test results. Because 0.000 is less than the significance value, the null hypothesis is rejected. greater than 0.05.

P6: *“Na correct ni ma'am yong mga wrong ideas about our grammar topics, but maganda din dahil nasshare ko yong mga alam ko and my understanding...”*

(... Our teacher was able to correct my misconceptions and wrong ideas about the grammar topics, but it was good that I could share my prior knowledge and my understanding.)

P4: *"MLT helped me. We are part of a discussion on ma'am. Nung binabasa ko yong mga sentences during our activities mas nagiging aware at curious ako about grammar and yong function nitp sa bawat word na meron sa sentence. Sometimes my guess is wrong, but okay lang sakin because mas hindi ko makakalimutan yong tamang explanations."*

(... MLT helped me. We were part of the discussion with our teacher; when I read sentences during our activities, I became more aware and curious about the grammar and function of each word in that sentence. Even if my guess is wrong, it is okay because it helps me retain proper explanations.)

P5: *"Pinaka mahirap for me and parts of speech, kapag naririnig ko na mag discuss nanaman ng grammar inaantok ako, pero noong na observe ko that parang kami na yong magiging teacher kasi maraming tanong na dapat masagot naming, mas na challenge ako na dapat maka focus ako so that I can answer and nagawa ko nga"*

(Parts of speech are my most complicated topics. Whenever I hear that grammar is a topic, I feel sleepy. However, when I observed that we are challenged to become like the teacher because of the many questions we need to answer, I felt more challenged, and it made me realize that I need to focus so that I can answer, which I did.)

As implied by the responses, students were urged to focus on learning from their errors. Moreover, because of the MLT, they were determined to understand the topic. From the responses above, metalanguage poses a significant challenge to students of second languages and language teachers. To apply metalanguage, teachers are expected to have expertise in the nuances of the English language's morphology, grammar, and syntax as well as the semantic and pragmatic aspects of the language. This is also supported by Tessa (2017) in her paper on the use of metalanguage in teaching spelling, wherein she proposed that language teachers should also have metalinguistic competence or knowledge to enable them to employ metalanguage in teaching syntax. In addition, the results suggest that MLT activities can stimulate students to produce better test scores. They excel in terms of their post-test scores compared with the control group. MLT contributed to improving the grammatical competence of the 30 participants due to their involvement in MLT, which is through the post-test score. This result is supported by the observation of the students in the learning sessions, suggesting that the MLT adhered to Chomsky's grammatical competence theory in 1965.

According to Chomsky, competence is the ideal language system that enables speakers to produce and understand an infinite number of sentences in their language and distinguish grammatical sentences from ungrammatical sentences. It is unaffected by "grammatically

irrelevant conditions" such as speech errors. According to some students' responses during the 11 interviews, their teachers could point out and correct their mistakes and misapprehensions of the grammar lessons through the metalanguage technique. This phenomenon occurs after Berry (2010), as cited in Ellis (2016), that the metalanguage technique is seen as a powerful navigational toolkit for teachers, as it enhances one's metalinguistic knowledge. Metalinguistic knowledge is unique to humans because it is only humans who can reflect on how they communicate or their ability to reflect on their language. Being explicit about language requires metalanguage (language about language).

6.5. Comparison Between the Control Group and Experimental Group in terms of Post-test Performance

The following table shows the difference in post-test scores between the control and experimental groups. It reveals the answer to the study's hypothesis that the students taking in the metalanguage technique (MLT) manifest improvement and better scores in the post-test than those who did not experience the MLT. It also discusses research question five (SOP 5).

Table 4.5

The Descriptive Statistics Summary for the Control and Experimental Post-test

Independent Samples Test									
		t-test for Equality of Means							Interpretation
		t	df	Sig. (2tailed)	Mean Diff.	Std. Error Diff.	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
							Lower	Upper	
Post-test	Control vs. Experimental	-18.6	58	.000	-13.9	.75	-15.36	-12.37	SIGNIFICANT

There was a significant difference between the control and experimental groups in their post-test scores, with a 18.6 margin. Therefore, the experimental group performed better than the control group did. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, given that the significance value of 0.000 is less than 0.05.

To summarize the independent t-tests in Tables 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5, there is a significant increase in the scores of the experimental groups and between the post-test scores of these two groups. This implies that despite the two groups being taught grammar lessons relevant to the test administered, the use of MLT in the experimental group showed improvement. Moreover, from the post-test of the control group to the post-test of the experimental group, a significant increase was also observed (see Table 4.3). The claim

that the intervention is efficacious in improving students' performance is essential to note that the metalanguage technique (MLT) used in the experimental group, as shown in the researcher-designed learning guide, is much more effective than the usual teaching method in making such an improvement.

This is further supported by the statements of some of the participants during the interviews:

P7: *'.... yong mga classmates ko and ako we were all challenged but ma'am guided us, every day we follow the same steps, and I feel determined lalo na pag ang group na naming ang mag present ng sagot naming.'*

(... My classmates and I feel challenged but guided by our teacher. Every day, we follow the same steps, and I think we are determined, especially when it is our turn to present our answers.)

P10: *'Before parts of speech topics are so hard to understand, Akala ko it is all about subject and verb agreement, but because of ginawa ni ma'am new way of teaching sa class, I feel like I understand it now.'*

(... parts of speech are difficult to understand. Previously, I thought it was all about subject-verb agreement. Because of what ma'am and our class did, I can understand it now.)

The participants' responses above accord with the CLT approach, MLT, and are similar to CLT; they both tend to be student-centered rather than teacher centric. The teacher's responsibility in the classroom is to lead communication between students and among students via practical learning tasks. Usually, apart from intrapersonal reflection, students are allowed to have interpersonal interactions, share, exchange peer examinations, and share contributions, which positively improves their grammatical competence.

Hence, this study hypothesizes that there is a significant difference in the post-test scores of the experimental and control groups. MLT effectively improved students' grammatical competence in their English 8 subject. This result agrees with the fact that metalanguage has been adopted and embedded in various practical teaching techniques to enhance grammatical competence.

Metalanguage talks about language, or as Gebhard, Chen, Britton, and Graham (2014) state, is 'conscious awareness, articulated, and used reflexively as a cognitive tool to construct language knowledge.'

Coinciding with the findings of Harun, Abdullah, Wahab, and Zainuddin (2017), their results revealed that through the MLT, students used their linguistic prior knowledge tool as a problem-solving tool to explore form-meaning relationships of the target concepts learned. The findings corroborated the significant role of language in mediating students' cognitive processes, as viewed in Vygotskian thought. The function of language in this

context is twofold: a communicative tool and a psychological tool to support students' mental and linguistic development in their L2 learning.

6.6. The Proposed Module uses the Metalanguage Technique (MLT)

As shown in the previous statistical and thematic presentations containing the findings about the positive effect of metalanguage as a technique for improving their grammatical competence, the craft included features of MLT that were considered during the implementation of the intervention. In constructing the module for part-of-speech lessons in English 8 using the metalanguage technique (MLT), the researcher merged several considerations and interpretations of the MLT steps to arrive at this module design. The MLT steps in this instructional guide are neither definite nor exact with the steps of MLT, as suggested by the different resources because they also have varying interpretations of how MLT should be implemented.

The 5Es format was used to consist of five steps that were patterned from the MLT. The first part of step is Engage, a way of indirectly introducing the grammar lesson in a collaborative discussion that presents parts of speech topic-related motivational and engaging activities that draw the attention and participation of the participants, followed by Explore, which allows reflections and encourages the students' discernment of what has been done during the activities and here, they were given sets of parts of speech topic tests/activities, and then they move to Explain, reaching learning goals through learning inputs which is the presentation of their output and answers, followed by the Extend, or Elaboration of the teacher, to correct and further discuss the topic and further teacher's discussion and delivery of feedback, lastly an Evaluation, to assess the student's entire understanding of the whole discussion through final application of what they have learned.

7. CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that the Metalanguage Technique is a significantly more effective intervention for improving grammatical competence among Grade 8 students than traditional lecture based methods. While both the experimental and control groups started with similar failing pre test scores, the experimental group achieved a very satisfactory post test mean of 39.63 after exposure to the technique. In contrast, the control group performance remained stagnant and showed no notable gains, which confirms the efficacy of this approach in facilitating a remarkable improvement in student scores.

The success of the intervention is attributed to the 5Es framework, which includes engaging, exploring, explaining, extending, and evaluating, as this allows students to bridge the gap between communicative fluency and technical accuracy. Qualitative data from interviews revealed that the technique makes grammar lessons more enjoyable and understandable while promoting self correction, critical questioning, and reflection. These features transformed students from passive learners into active participants who could clearly articulate their understanding of complex grammar concepts.

Ultimately, the study highlights this technique as a powerful navigational tool for teachers, demonstrating its essential role in helping students internalize target linguistic concepts. Despite the study focus on a single school and specific grammar topics like reflexive pronouns and modals, the significant margin difference between groups underscores the potential of the

method. The findings suggest that incorporating metalanguage into instructional modules provides a coherent and effective path toward enhancing the overall grammatical competence of students.

Authors' Declarations

Author Contributions

The conceptual development, methodological framework, data collection and analysis, and the comprehensive drafting and refining of this manuscript were collaboratively undertaken by both Otara and Alangca.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors explicitly state that there are no competing financial or personal interests that could have influenced the conduct or reporting of this research.

Statement on Generative AI

The authors certify that this research project was produced entirely through original effort, without the assistance of artificial intelligence tools in the data gathering, analysis, or writing processes.

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