THE EFFECTIVENESS OF REMEDIAL TEACHING ON STUDENTS' PROFICIENCY IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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Abstract

This study probed the effect of Remedial Instruction in English Programs in raising the level of the English Proficiency of students using a Pre-test/ Post-test Quasi-Experimental Design and the Sequential Explanatory Design. After determining the English proficiency level of the participants based on their CAT scores in English, ten (10) students (Experimental Group) were randomly chosen to undergo a 12-week Remedial Instruction Program, and ten (10) students for the Controlled Group were chosen as a basis for comparison. The data used in assessing the effectiveness of the program from both groups were collected using a 90-item English proficiency test, and a two-part questionnaire composed of a 20-item survey questionnaire. A semi-structured interview using an open-ended questionnaire was administered to the Experimental Group to determine their perception of the effectiveness of the program. Descriptive Statistics, Paired- Samples T-test, and Thematic Analysis were the tools and methods used to analyze the data. The quantitative assessment revealed that the program had a significant effect on the Experimental Group students' English proficiency. On the other hand, the qualitative data revealed that the English program was effective as it helped learners improve their competencies in English.

Keywords: remedial instruction, english proficiency

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1.0 Introduction

The Philippines is globally recognized as one of the largest English-speaking nations, with a majority of its population at least fluent in the language, and English is spoken by more than 14 million Filipinos mainly because English is one of the official languages (Cabigon, 2015; Ozaki, 2011). Many countries, such as the Philippines, have implemented strong English language policies because of their belief that competence in the English language will relieve their social, economic, and political problems, among others (Gutierrez *et al.,* 2019; Hillman, 2015; Namanya, 2017). While English learning in the Philippines is being implemented in schools beginning in the first year of a child's education, poor English proficiency of students nowadays is often blamed on the Mother Tongue-Based Multi-lingual Education teaching component embedded in the K to 12 curricula (Alberto *et al.,* 2016; Cabigon, 2015; Valderama, 2019). This approach was supposed to enable early-grade learners to express themselves in class using a language they already know and to help them master their native tongue and ultimately acquire competency in the globally dominant English language, but declining English proficiency levels show that this approach has yet to prove its effectiveness.

Moreover, English language students do not spend much time learning English at school since the medium of instruction in elementary and high school is not English. This being the case, the students tend to either find difficulty in developing the required proficiency in the English lessons or eventually forget the learned language skills (Simonez, 2016). Every year, thousands of high school graduates enroll at colleges and universities but sadly, they are unable to cope with the demands for higher education courses as English is used as the medium of instruction in mathematics and science-related subjects in elementary, including secondary schools, and in all subjects at tertiary educational institutions (Racca & Lasaten, 2016). Therefore, to help these students practice and develop their English language skills, many schools, colleges, and even some universities have opened English language clinics or remedial teaching programs and have been running them successfully (Maharaj & Khan, 2017). A remediation program, which is focused on the fact that certain students have abilities that are not appropriate to participate competently in the offered programs, helps students to learn the skills needed to complete college courses and academic programs successfully (Alghamdi & Siddiqui, 2016). It comes from the awareness that students may

need help during their academic careers at any time (Chetty *et al.,* 2019). This remedial program is important. A support system like this is normally thought to benefit students who can obtain academic support from other tutors outside the classroom (Hillman, 2015; Selvarajan & Vasanthagumar, 2022; Triviño, 2016).

Thus, this study was conducted to allow low-achieving first-year university students to enhance their English proficiency to ensure that these students are not left behind. In addition to this premise, the assessment of the effectiveness of remedial instruction in English programs will serve as a benchmark in preparing a more comprehensive and more needs-specific curriculum for future Remedial Instruction in English Programs. Specifically aimed to (1) assess the English proficiency of the controlled and experimental groups through their pre-test and post-test scores; (2) evaluate the significant difference between the experimental and controlled group's English proficiency through their pre-test and post-test scores; and (3) lastly evaluate the perceived effectiveness of the remedial instruction program in English to the experimental group.

2.0 Methodology

The Pre-test/ Post-test Quasi-Experimental Design was used to investigate the effectiveness of the Remedial Instruction Program in improving the student's proficiency in English. Also, a systematic mixed method, particularly the Sequential Explanatory Design was used to evaluate the outcomes of the intervention.

The Controlled Group and Experimental Group (students who are enrolled in GEC 4-Purposive Communication), consisted of 20 students each, who were assessed to have low proficiency in English based on their College Admission Test (CAT) in English for school year 2019-2020. The subjects of the study were randomly selected from the Bachelor of Arts in English, Bachelor of Science in Information Technology, and Bachelor of Science in Hospitality Management programs. To determine the participants for the study, the researchers assessed the English proficiency level of the freshmen students enrolled for the first semester, of the school year 2019-2020, using their 2019 College Admission Test (CAT) results in English. After determining students with below-average English proficiency levels, the researchers randomly selected twenty (20) students for the Experimental Group, who underwent the Remedial Instruction Program in English, and 20 students for the Controlled Group, who were not part of any intervention. Although

20 participants were the target size of the remedial program, factors such as class scheduling conflict, unwillingness to attend the program, and financial constraints on the part of the participants, only 10 students had completed the remedial program and had taken the post-test; thus, the researchers used the data gathered from the Experimental Group and randomly chose test results of 10 students from the Controlled Group as a basis for comparison.

The researchers designed a comprehensive Remedial Instruction Curriculum for the program. This was scheduled for three hours, every Friday for 12 weeks, during the first semester of the school year 2019-2020. The Experimental Group had undergone a 12-week program using the traditional, interactive, and communicative language approach in teaching the fundamentals of English through the five macro-skills: speaking, listening, writing, reading, and viewing. The lectures were composed of lessons in grammar, public speaking, oral drills, and individual and group exercises, with a particular focus on critical thinking, confidence building, and conversation fluency. The researchers also served as lecturers and facilitators for the program. The materials for the program such as hand-outs and writing materials were also provided.

The data used to assess the program's effectiveness were collected using an English Proficiency test (used as a pre-test and post-test). The 90-item pre-test in English was administered before the start of the program to gauge the student's English proficiency level in both groups. The researcher-made multiple choice proficiency tests consisted of 10 items for speaking (stress, pronunciation, and intonation), 20 items for vocabulary, 10 items for reading comprehension, and 50 items for proper grammar and usage. The pre-test and post-test materials had also undergone face and content validity and were checked and proofread by language experts.

A two-part questionnaire was administered to the Experimental Group of students to determine their perception of the effectiveness of the Remedial Instruction Program. Part I consisted of a 20-item survey questionnaire adapted from (Aldaihani *et al.,* 2019). The questionnaire was organized into five components: (1) a student's perception of improving his oral/aural ability, (2) a student's understanding of grammar improvement, (3) perceptions of their writing improvement, (4) perceptions of their oral/aural skills improvements, and (5) an understanding of English content. The participants indicated their level of agreement with the 20 evaluative statements using the following scale:

Scale	Weighted Mean	Descriptive Interpretation
1	1.00- 1.50	Strongly Disagree
2	1.51- 2.50	Disagree
3	2.51- 3.50	Neither Disagree nor Agree
4	3.51- 4.50	Agree
5	4.51- 5.00	Strongly Agree

The initial testing of the gathered data shows excellent reliability with a *Cronbach Alpha* reliability score of .94. To validate the response of the Experimental Group students, a triangulation process through a semi-structured interview using an open-ended questionnaire was conducted. The triangulation process was Part II of the questionnaire, wherein students were asked to answer questions on their perceived effectiveness of the remedial program in their English proficiency.

Mean and Standard Deviation were used to determine the proficiency level of the Controlled Group and the Experimental Group in English based on their pre-test and post-test scores. The

same statistical tools were also used in calculating the Experimental Group's responses to the 20-item survey questionnaire. To describe the overall proficiency level of the students the arbitrary level was used:

Score	Descriptive Interpretation
61- 90	High
31- 60	Moderately High
0- 30	Low

Paired Sample T-test was also used to measure the statistical significance between the pre-test and post-test scores of the Controlled Group and the Experimental Group. While the Experimental Group's responses to the open-ended questions were transcribed and analyzed to determine the students' perception of the effectiveness of the program.

3.0 Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows the result of the pre and post test English proficiency mean scores and paired sample t-test of the experimental and control group. As depicted in the table below, both groups have moderately high proficiency in English; the students from the Experimental Group had a mean score of 42.40 (SD=5.56), while the Controlled Group had a mean score of 37.30 (SD=6.16). Although the mean score of the students from the Experimental Group is higher than the students from the Controlled Group, the paired t-test result shows that there is no significant difference between the student's pre-test scores. This means that the students were on the same level of English proficiency before the intervention.

The post-test results show that although the groups were described to have moderately high proficiency in English, the mean score of the Experimental Group (Mean=45.30, SD=5.56) is relatively higher than the Controlled Group (Mean=37.20, SD=4.59). The paired t-test result shows a significant difference between the post-test scores of the Experimental and Controlled Groups with a .01 level of significance. Findings suggest that the program has successfully enhanced the English proficiency of the students in the Experimental Group, which indicates that the English Remedial Program has had a substantial impact on the English literacy of the Experimental Group students.

Table 1. Pre-test and post-test English proficiency mean scores and paired sample T-test results of the experimental and controlled group

		Mean	SD	DI	Sig. 2-tailed	DI
	Paired Sample Statistics					
Pre-Test Score	Experimental Group	42.30	5.56	Moderately High		Not Significant
	Control Group	37.30	6.16	Moderately High	.16	
Post-Test Score	Experimental Group	45.30	5.56	Moderately High		Significant
	Control Group	37.20	4.59	Moderately High	.01	

Similar to the findings of Ho (2016), the English remedial course on low proficiency students in the experimental group performed significantly better in the final exam compared with the control group. The experimental group self-reported an improvement in their basic skills in English and had highly positive attitudes toward

Table 2. Student's response on their perception of the effectiveness of the remedial instruction program

Student's Perception of the Effectiveness of the Remedial Instruction Program	Mean	SD	DI
Improvement in Reading Skills 1. The English courses helped me read and understand various types of texts.	4.70	.67	SA
2. After I finished the English courses, I was able to read and interpret texts.	4.50	.70	A
3. The English courses have helped me learn strategies for increasing my vocabulary skills.	4.60	.51	SA
4. The English courses have helped me read and comprehend texts relevant to my course.	4.70	.48	SA
5. After completing the courses in English, I was able to generate ideas in texts by reading critically.	4.40	.69	A
Total Mean	4.58	.61	SA
Improvement in Grammar 6. The English courses provided a thorough revision of the English grammar I learned at school.	4.50	.70	A
7. After I completed the courses in English, I was able to write coherent and grammatically correct sentences.	4.20	.78	A
8. The English courses introduced me to ways of examining the form of sentences in English texts.	4.60	.51	SA
9. After I had finished the English courses, I was able to speak using grammatically correct sentences.	4.60	.51	SA
Total Mean	4.47	.62	A
Improvement in Writing Skills 10. The English courses helped me acquire the skills of writing texts for various purposes.	4.30	.82	A
11. After I finished the English courses, I was able to write well-organized and coherent paragraphs.	4.20	.78	A
12. The English courses gave me the opportunity to review the writing mechanics and punctuation.	4.80	.42	SA
13. The English courses helped me write reports relevant to my course.	4.40	.51	A
Total Mean	4.42	.63	A
Improvement in Oral/Aural Skills 14. The English courses improved my oral communication skills in school.	4.50	.52	SA
15. The English courses developed my oral communication skills in places beyond my education.	4.50	.52	SA
16. The English courses developed my presentation skills in front of my classmates.	4.40	.84	A
17. The English courses improved my listening skills in English.	4.50	.70	SA
Total Mean	4.44	.64	A
Content of the English Program 18. The methods used in teaching English in the program were effective.	4.50	.52	SA
19. The English courses improved my proficiency in English.	4.10	.87	A
20. My English Skills is not good, and the English proficiency program made addition to my skills.	4.20	.91	A
Total Mean	4.26	.76	A
Grand Mean	4.44	.65	A

the remedial course (Sheu *et al.,* 2013), and their motivation and confidence were also enhanced. Chang *et al.* (2019) and Huang (2010) also explored the possibilities of using the task-based methodology consisting of simple language, grammar, and eight self-studying articles; their findings showed that those taking part in the corrective course had higher reading and listening ratings and were motivated to learn.

In addition to increasing students' competence in English, the remedial course integrates students through variance reduction. This is not only good for individual students but also helpful for teachers since they have a course that dramatically decreases ability differences, reduces learning gaps, and reduces the likelihood of the student failing or even quitting an entire course (Luoch, 2014).

Table 2 shows the students' perceived effectiveness of the English Program in improving their reading, grammar, writing, and oral/ aural skills, and the content of the remedial English program. The students strongly agreed that the program had helped them in reading and comprehending different types of text (Mean=4.70, SD=.67), strategies in increasing their vocabulary skills (M=4.60, SD=.51), and reading and understanding texts that are relevant to their course (M=4.70, SD=.48). The total mean indicates that the program is effective in enhancing the students' reading skills (Mean=4.58, SD=.61).

Based on the data gathered from the interview, the researcher found out that the program effectively enhanced the student's reading skills. Participant 1 said that "*The program is effective because it helps me to understand difficult English words and terms,*" while Participant 3 stated that "*The English program improved my skills in listening in English; it also helped me to read and comprehend different types of text.*" Learners stated that the program helped

them in comprehending and analyzing reading tasks in their other subjects (Participants 2, 4, 5, and 8) and that the program had taught them to interpret written works through reading comprehension exercises (Participants 6 and 7). The students also reported that reading comprehension exercises enabled them to think critically when reading texts. Literature has shown that remedial reading is an evidence-based approach intended to improve reading fluidity and comprehension (Balinas *et al.,* 2017). This method of practice improves language skills and develops general knowledge that lays the foundation for basic life skills.

In terms of improvement in grammar, students strongly agreed that the program is effective in helping them analyze the structure of sentences in English texts (M=4.60, SD=.51) and speak grammatically correct sentences (M=4.60, SD=.51). The total mean shows that the students agreed that the program had developed their grammar skills (Mean=4.47, SD=.62).

The interviews revealed that the students view the intervention as an effective program in enhancing their grammar skills as expressed by Participant 4's statement: "T*he lessons in the English program helped me construct grammatically correct sentences which I use in our classes.*" Participants 6, 7, and 9 also stated that the program had an impact on their grammar skills because it helped them construct sentences using proper grammar, which they used in other subjects. Thus repeated oral reading helped the students in improving their pronunciation, and the method of combining phonics training with repeated reading plays a vital role in pronunciation and fluency (Chang *et al.,* 2019).

In terms of improvement in the student's writing skills, results show that the English program is effective in reviewing and understanding writing mechanics and punctuation (M=4.80,

SD=.42). The total mean shows that the students have agreed that the program had improved their writing skills (Mean=4.42, SD=.63).

The students' impressions regarding the development of their writing skills and the revision of punctuation marks and other writing mechanics were good, although they pointed out some suggestions about the learning of the actual writing process. As Participant 10 stated, "*The teachers should give more lessons and activities in writing paragraphs and essays*". This is consistent with the findings of Aldaihani *et al.* (2015) when it comes to writing well-organized and coherent paragraphs and compositions, students need to be active in the actual phase of writing activities in which they need to undergo drafting, revising, and editing processes to make progress.

The English program also helped Participants 1 and 2 in improving their basic competence in different aspects, particularly in writing their reports and answering their assignments. The students also expressed that the English program enhanced their vocabulary bank, which they use in their writing tasks. According to Maheswari (2018), the combination of the inductive and deductive approaches to teaching grammar and setting multiple goals and strategies in remedial teaching yielded positive results. Moreover, students have acknowledged that the teachers who provide activities and corrective feedback techniques have been helpful.

In terms of the student's improvement in their oral/aural skills, results reveal that the program is effective in improving their oral communication skills in (M=4.50, SD=.52) and out of school (M=4.50, SD=.52), and in the improvement of their listening skills in English (M=4.50, SD=.70). The total mean also shows the students' perceived effectiveness in the development of their oral and aural skills (Mean=44, SD=.64).

Based on the interview, the students acknowledged that the program enhanced their English-speaking skills. Participant 1 stated that "*Even though my skills in English are not good, the program helped me learn new words, and I gained new vocabulary knowledge that I can use for speaking and writing.*" The confidence of the participants was said to have increased as well, according to Participants 2, 3, and 8. Participant 8 added, "*I become more confident in speaking the English language unlike before and I have gained more knowledge in using the correct vocabulary.*"

Moreover, Participants 4, 5, and 6 stated that their usual English class is very different from the Remedial Program because they had a chance to communicate in English with the other participants of the program, which enhanced their speaking confidence. Participant 9 also said that the oral drill activities enhanced his confidence in speaking English, while Participant 3 stated that the oral drills helped him use the correct pronunciation in speaking English. Finally, the students also indicated that the incorporated activities, such as watching videos and listening to audio clips improved their listening skills and helped them learn proper pronunciation of English words, including proper stress and diction.

It can be deduced that oral communicative activities are key resources of a successful English remedial program. Sambath and Sethuraman (2017) claimed that tasks are resources for providing opportunities for learners to use the target language, which is why oral communicative tasks improve students' ability to speak and also allow them to think and produce sentences on their own. This shows that Communicative Language Teaching integration in speaking activities and oral drills has been effective in enhancing students' English proficiency (Chou, 2013).

The findings of this study indicated that students learned to speak English comfortably when they were taught in a communicative environment (Butler, 2011); thus, in cultivating students' basic communicative skills, the teachers behind the English remedial curriculum should provide students with the ability to conduct basic English communication daily (Chou, 2013; Simonez, 2016). Also, hands-on tasks were found to be stimulating, especially for weak learners, who had low attention spans. Continual exposure that tapped their other multiple intelligences, such as kinesthetic, interpersonal, and spatial-visual, effectively attracted their interest in learning English (Bowen, 2013; Gardner, 2011). These points could be supported by Omar *et al.* (2020), whose analysis yielded positive results by integrating a task-based approach and tapping the multiple intelligences of students to improve the learning process of students.

In terms of the content of the English Program, results revealed that the methods used in teaching English in the program are effective (M=4.50, SD=.52). The total mean shows that the students agreed to the effectiveness of the content of the English program in enhancing their English proficiency (Mean=4.44, SD=.64).

The interviews revealed that the program provided students with the opportunity to reinforce their English language skills. Participant 2 stated that "*I believe the strength of the English program allows learning and to helping the students to enhance their English skills, and this English proficiency program gives the learning that students need, which they can use shortly.*" In addition, Participant4 stated that "*The training helped me a lot, and it made me realize the importance of English in other subjects.*" Thus, the program served as an avenue for the students to further enhance their English skills, and use these knowledge and skills in their other subjects.

On the other hand, the students pointed out some of their deficiencies, which may properly be addressed if the length of the weekly English program is extended to accommodate more lessons and activities in key learning areas, such as writing (Participants 7 and 9). Furthermore, the students claimed that they had a great experience in the program because of the teachers and the teaching methods they employed. Participant 7 said that "*The teachers of our English program provided more knowledge by giving simple instructions that the students can understand.*" This method may have been successful because poorer students struggling with simple concepts would benefit from more simple teaching, which entails more examples and more assistance that will help learners to process material in such a way that all students can make sense despite their varying abilities (Ho, 2016; Chetty *et al.,* 2020).

In terms of teachers' effectiveness, Participant 8 said that "*The strength of the English program is that the teachers motivated the students to learn English, and that built our confidence in speaking English.*" Participant 9 added that "*The English program is effective because the teachers are proficient in English, which is their strength.*" Finally, when it comes to the effectiveness of the teaching materials used, Participant 2 said that "*Based on my opinion, the strength of the English program is they have lots of learning materials for the tasks and activities for us to use in learning.*" Participants 8, 9, and 10 also stated that the program made them value the importance of learning the English language because it is the international language and the language of communication.

The findings cited support Vygotsky's Mediation Theory of Learning (Munene *et al.,* 2017), which emphasizes how the social environment affects the learning process and that learning should take place through the interactions between the learners and their peers, teachers, and other experts. In addition, teachers

should create a learning atmosphere that maximizes learners' ability to communicate with each other through conversations and communication and use remedial services to help students develop what was not fully understood during regular classroom teaching/ learning activities (Tomlinson, 2012).

The overall result shows that the students have agreed that the reading, grammar, oral and aural, and the content of the program were effective in enhancing their proficiency skills in English (Mean= 4.44, SD= .65). Of the four skills, the respondents felt that their reading skills had been greatly improved. In terms of grammar, most students assumed that the curriculum exposed them to ways to examine the structure of sentences in texts and to use grammatically correct sentences. The student's overall experience in the Remedial English Program is different from their usual English class. Interviews revealed that they learned a lot of theoretical knowledge in basic vocabulary and grammar through the different instructional materials, particularly the speaking and listening activities, which included watching video clips with subtitles and oral drills that they participated in, and the different teaching strategies and approaches that their teachers had utilized (Ho, 2016).

The English Program taught them to speak confidently in their class as they tried their best to confidently speak in English to express their feelings despite a few ungrammatical sentence structures (Participants 6 and 10). Thus, interventions in the learning process, such as remedial instruction, can enable less effective learners to develop not only their language skills but also their motivation and self-efficiency (Cheng, 2014; Ho, 2016). In turn, students will have the ability to revise the materials learned in class on an individual basis or in small groups which can boost self-confidence and enhance their sense of self-efficiency (Omar *et al.,* 2020; van Uden *et al.,* 2013; Yang, 2010). Participant 10 also said that "*I recommend that they will continue to provide this program for those who are not experts in the English language like me so that they will enhance the skills and apply what they learn in the future in their everyday lives.*" With this, students feel the need to train themselves in enhancing their English skills so they communicate better, understand unfamiliar words better, and properly speak English words using proper accent, stress, and diction.

Research shows that remedial courses, when delivered correctly,may contribute to major changes in students' language use (Al Othman & Shuqair, 2013; Simonez, 2016; Omar *et al.,* 2020). However, fundamental skills in the use of English as a second language can only be imbued in students' minds if they are subjected to extended periods of language learning; thus, a well-designed course with a teacher's encouragement and supportive attitude may help the students enhance their English proficiency to survive in a college learning environment and be prepared for future social challenges after they complete their college education (Jadal, 2012; Jangid & Inda, 2015).

4.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, the English proficiency program had a significant impact in improving the English skills of the students in the Experimental Group, resulting in higher performance in the post-test when compared to the Controlled Group. The program was effective in enhancing reading comprehension, writing skills, including punctuation usage, and oral skills, as reported by the students in the Experimental Group. The students' improved English skills suggest that the program can be a useful tool for educators and institutions seeking to improve English proficiency levels among students.

Additionally, the positive feedback from the students regarding the program's content and teaching methods indicates that these factors play a critical role in enhancing learning outcomes. The program's emphasis on correcting student errors and providing feedback can also be valuable for students seeking to improve their English skills.

Overall, the effectiveness of the English proficiency program highlights the importance of targeted interventions that address student learning deficits, which provide opportunities for improvement. It also emphasizes the significance of effective teaching methods and content in enhancing learning outcomes.It has been established that the Remedial Learning Program for underprivileged students in English is beneficial. Still, it is advised to measure real progress apart from post-testing and to demonstrate tangible results which are closely connected with academic performance. It has also been established that remediation increases students' skills in English. Thus, a corrective curriculum, which provides students with long-term consistency and further studies on other aspects of the program, such as teaching methods and learning materials used in the implementation of the program and input from the teachers on their other subjects, should be undertaken to further validate the program's effectiveness.

Acknowledgment

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