

The Effectiveness of Paraphrastic Approach in Teaching Philippine Literary Prose to Grade 9 Students of Tabaco National High School

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International Journal of Science and Research Archive, 2026, 20(01), 738–741

Publication history: Received on 14 June 2026; revised on 19 July 2026; accepted on 22 July 2026

Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30574/ijrsra.2026.20.1.1517>

Abstract

This study investigated the effectiveness of the paraphrastic approach in teaching Philippine literary prose to Grade 9 students at Tabaco National High School during School Year 2025–2026. Using a quasi-experimental design, sixty-six students were divided into control and experimental groups. The control group was taught using traditional methods, while the experimental group was exposed to paraphrastic strategies. A teacher-made pre-test and post-test assessed performance across seven competencies, including identifying bias, analyzing partiality, and relating literary messages to real-life issues. Results revealed no significant difference between groups in the pre-test, but a statistically significant improvement was observed in the experimental group's post-test scores. The paraphrastic approach enhanced mastery in competencies such as analyzing content and reacting to critical issues, though challenges remained in relating literature to real-life concerns and evaluating truthfulness of ideas. Findings suggest that paraphrastic strategies foster deeper comprehension, critical thinking, and communicative competence. Enhanced lesson plans were developed to address least mastered skills. The study concludes that paraphrastic pedagogy is a viable intervention for improving literacy and appreciation of Philippine prose.

Keywords: Paraphrastic Approach; Philippine Literary Prose; Quasi-Experimental Study; Grade 9 English

1. Introduction

The teaching of English in the Philippines has long been shaped by historical, cultural, and policy contexts. From the bilingual mandate of the 1987 Constitution to the recent enactment of Republic Act No. 12027 (2024), language instruction has continually evolved to balance national identity with global competitiveness. The discontinuation of mandatory Mother Tongue instruction in early grades re-established Filipino and English as primary media of instruction, reinforcing the importance of English proficiency in literacy, science, and mathematics. Despite these reforms, the Philippines' ranking in the English Proficiency Index has steadily declined, reflecting gaps in higher-order linguistic processing and critical comprehension.

Philippine literary prose, deeply rooted in social realism and resistance traditions, offers a rich medium for cultivating analytical and reflective skills. However, traditional teaching methods often rely on rote memorization and literal translation, limiting students' ability to synthesize meaning. The paraphrastic approach, which emphasizes rephrasing and re-encoding ideas into accessible forms, provides a promising alternative. By focusing on the communicative essence of texts, it enables learners to grasp complex themes, internalize moral lessons, and connect literature to real-life issues.

This study explores the effectiveness of the paraphrastic approach in teaching Philippine prose to Grade 9 students. It aims to determine whether this method enhances comprehension, critical thinking, and communicative competence compared to traditional strategies, thereby addressing persistent challenges in English language pedagogy.

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1.1. Materials Used

The primary material utilized in this study was a teacher-made test designed to measure student performance in seven unpacked competencies of Grade 9 English. These competencies included analyzing partiality, identifying bias, relating messages to real-life issues, evaluating truthfulness of ideas, and reacting to critical issues. The test was administered as both pre-test and post-test to the control and experimental groups. A Table of Specifications guided the construction of the instrument, ensuring alignment with the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs). Validation was conducted by Master Teachers from the English Department, who refined objectives and practice drills for clarity and alignment. A dry-run was performed with non-participant Grade 9 students, leading to the exclusion of low-discriminatory items and the finalization of a 40-item test.

Secondary materials included literary texts in Philippine prose, such as short stories and essays, which served as instructional content. These texts were selected for their thematic relevance to socio-cultural issues and their potential to elicit critical reflection. Lesson plans incorporating paraphrastic strategies were also developed to scaffold comprehension. Together, these materials provided a structured framework for assessing the impact of paraphrastic pedagogy on student learning outcomes.

1.2. Methods

This study employed a quasi-experimental design with control and experimental groups. Sixty-six Grade 9 students of Tabaco National High School were purposively selected and divided into two groups of thirty-three each. Grouping was based on academic performance in English during the second quarter. The control group received instruction through traditional “read and discuss” methods, while the experimental group was taught using the paraphrastic approach, which emphasized rephrasing and re-encoding literary texts for deeper comprehension.

Data collection involved administering a validated teacher-made pre-test and post-test. The pre-test established baseline performance, while the post-test measured learning gains after a six-week intervention totaling thirty contact hours. Instructional sessions for the experimental group integrated paraphrastic strategies, including rewording complex passages, code-switching, and contextual rephrasing. The control group followed conventional methods without paraphrastic intervention.

Statistical analysis included computation of mean scores, percentages, and performance levels. A t-test for independent samples was applied to determine significant differences between groups in pre-test and post-test results. Performance levels were categorized into mastery ranges, from “no mastery” to “full mastery.” This methodological framework allowed for systematic evaluation of the paraphrastic approach’s effectiveness in enhancing student performance in Philippine literary prose.

2. Results

The pre-test results indicated that both control and experimental groups demonstrated “no mastery” across most competencies. The control group achieved an overall performance level of 21%, while the experimental group scored slightly higher at 23%. Both groups showed low mastery only in reacting to critical issues, with performance levels of 40% and 44%, respectively. Statistical analysis confirmed no significant difference between the two groups in the pre-test.

Post-test results revealed marked improvement in both groups, but with significant differences favoring the experimental group. The control group attained an overall performance level of 62%, described as “near mastery.” In contrast, the experimental group achieved 77%, interpreted as “mastery.” Competencies such as analyzing partiality, identifying bias, and reacting to critical issues reached mastery levels in the experimental group, while the control group remained at near mastery. The least mastered competencies in the experimental group were relating messages to real-life issues (65%) and determining truthfulness of ideas (68%), both categorized as near mastery.

The t-test confirmed a significant difference between groups in the post-test, with the null hypothesis rejected. These findings demonstrate that the paraphrastic approach significantly enhanced student performance compared to traditional methods.

3. Discussion

The findings highlight the effectiveness of the paraphrastic approach in bridging comprehension gaps in Philippine literary prose. While both groups improved after instruction, the experimental group's significant gains underscore the pedagogical value of paraphrasing as a cognitive scaffold. By rephrasing complex texts into accessible language, students were able to internalize themes, analyze bias, and engage critically with literature. This aligns with theories of communicative competence, which emphasize meaning-making over rote memorization.

The least mastered competencies—relating literature to real-life issues and evaluating truthfulness of ideas—suggest that while paraphrastic strategies aid comprehension, higher-order critical thinking requires additional reinforcement. These skills demand not only linguistic clarity but also socio-cultural awareness and evaluative judgment, areas where students may need extended practice. Enhanced lesson plans targeting these competencies can provide structured opportunities for application.

The study also reflects broader educational reforms in the Philippines, particularly the reintroduction of English as a primary medium of instruction. The paraphrastic approach complements this policy shift by ensuring that students not only decode English texts but also grasp their deeper meanings. Overall, the results affirm paraphrastic pedagogy as a strategic intervention for improving literacy, critical thinking, and appreciation of Philippine prose.

4. Conclusions

This study concludes that the paraphrastic approach is an effective pedagogical strategy for teaching Philippine literary prose to Grade 9 students. Both control and experimental groups began with low performance levels, demonstrating “no mastery” in most competencies during the pre-test. However, after the intervention, the experimental group achieved significant improvements, reaching mastery in several competencies, while the control group attained only near mastery. Statistical analysis confirmed a significant difference in post-test performance, validating the effectiveness of paraphrastic instruction.

The approach proved particularly beneficial in enhancing competencies such as analyzing partiality, identifying bias, and reacting to critical issues. These gains suggest that paraphrasing fosters cognitive flexibility, enabling students to re-encode complex ideas into accessible forms and engage critically with literary texts. Nonetheless, challenges remained in competencies requiring higher-order evaluation, such as relating literature to real-life issues and determining truthfulness of ideas. These areas highlight the need for targeted lesson plans and extended practice to strengthen critical thinking and socio-cultural awareness.

The study affirms that paraphrastic pedagogy aligns with national educational reforms emphasizing English proficiency and global competitiveness. By moving beyond rote memorization, it cultivates deeper comprehension and communicative competence. For educators, the findings underscore the importance of integrating paraphrastic strategies into classroom practice. For policymakers, the results provide evidence supporting innovative approaches to language instruction. Ultimately, the study demonstrates that paraphrastic teaching not only improves academic performance but also empowers students to connect literature with lived realities, fostering holistic literacy development.

Compliance with ethical standards

Acknowledgments

The researcher gratefully acknowledges the support of Cawayan National High School, its faculty, and students in the conduct of this study.

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest should be disclosed.

Statement of ethical approval

This study was conducted in compliance with institutional ethical standards and approved by the Schools Division Office of Albay.

Statement of informed consent

All participants were informed of the study's purpose, procedures, and confidentiality measures. Written consent was obtained from students and their parents prior to participation.

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