



ACE WORKBOOK (ACHIEVING COMPETENCE IN ENGLISH GRAMMAR) IN ENHANCING GRAMMAR PROFICIENCY

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ABSTRACT

Grammar proficiency is a fundamental component of effective communication and a critical competence for pre-service teachers who are expected to model accurate language use in academic and professional settings. However, many first-year education students enter tertiary education with varying levels of grammatical competence, which may hinder their academic performance and future teaching effectiveness. This study examined the effectiveness of the ACE Workbook (Achieving Competence in English Grammar) in enhancing the grammar proficiency of first-year Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSEd) English major students at West Visayas State University–Calinog Campus during the First Semester of Academic Year 2025–2026. The study employed an experimental one-group pre-test–post-test research design. A total of twenty-seven (27) first-year BSED English majors participated in the study through purposive sampling. Data were gathered using an adopted grammar proficiency test administered before and after a seven-week implementation of the ACE Workbook. Mean and dependent t-test was used to analyze the data. Results revealed that the respondents' pre-test performance was at an average level, indicating moderate grammar proficiency prior to the intervention. After the implementation of the ACE Workbook, post-test results showed a high level of grammar proficiency. These findings confirm that the ACE Workbook was effective in improving the grammar proficiency of first-year education students. The study concludes that structured, practice-based instructional materials grounded in established language learning theories significantly enhance grammar competence among pre-service teachers. The findings suggest that workbook-based interventions may be effectively integrated into teacher education programs to strengthen foundational English

grammar skills and better prepare future educators for academic and professional demands.

Keywords: *Grammar Proficiency, ACE Workbook, English Grammar Instruction*

INTRODUCTION

English grammar proficiency remains a fundamental pillar of effective communication, academic success, and professional readiness, especially for pre-service teachers who are expected to model accurate language use in future classrooms. For many first-year education students transitioning from secondary to tertiary education, proficiency levels in English grammar often vary widely. These inconsistencies can impede their ability to write coherent academic texts, understand complex instructional materials, and develop confidence in teaching the language to others (Mohammed & Nasri, 2023). Weak grammar skills can also undermine their credibility as future educators, making it critical to address such gaps early in their academic journey.

In response to these challenges, educators and researchers have increasingly explored structured and practice-oriented learning tools as effective means to reinforce grammar skills. Workbooks, in particular, have been recognized for their capacity to scaffold learning, encourage repetitive practice, and support self-paced mastery. Unlike traditional textbooks, which often emphasize rules and memorization, well-designed workbooks provide contextualized exercises that allow learners to apply grammatical rules in meaningful ways, bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical use (Rahimi & Zhang, 2023).

The ACE Workbook (Achieving Competence in English Grammar) was specifically developed to address these needs by offering a comprehensive, learner-centered approach. It incorporates drills for skill reinforcement, context-based grammar tasks that simulate real-world language use, and reflective exercises that prompt students to analyze their own errors and progress. Furthermore, its design aligns with communicative and task-based language teaching principles, which emphasize active engagement and meaningful interaction in learning grammar (Ellis, 2021). By integrating modern theories of second language acquisition and cognitive learning, the ACE Workbook seeks to make grammar instruction both interactive and effective.

This study investigated the effectiveness of the ACE Workbook in enhancing grammar proficiency among first-year education students. By providing empirical evidence on its impact, the research not only evaluates the workbook as an instructional tool but also contributed to ongoing discussions on improving language instruction in teacher education programs. The findings are expected to inform curriculum developers, English professors, and educational policy makers—such as the Commission on Higher Education (CHED)—on best practices for equipping pre-service teachers with the grammar skills essential for their academic and professional success.

Research Questions

This study aimed to determine the effectiveness of the ACE Workbook in enhancing the grammar proficiency of first-year education students.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of pre-test performance of the respondents?
2. What is the level of post-test performance of the respondents?
3. Is there a significant difference between pre-test and posttest performance?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed an experimental research design, specifically a one-group pre-test–post-test design, to determine the effectiveness of the ACE Workbook (Achieving Competence in English Grammar) in improving the grammar proficiency of first-year education students. The study was conducted during the first semester of Academic Year 2025–2026 in a state university in Western Visayas, Philippines. The respondents consisted of 27 first-year Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSEd) students majoring in English, selected through purposive sampling because they represented the specific group targeted by the intervention. Participation in the study was voluntary, and all respondents were provided with informed consent forms prior to their involvement in the research.

The primary instrument used in the study was a 50-item grammar proficiency test composed of multiple-choice questions covering essential grammar topics such as sentence structure, verb usage, agreement, and modifiers. The instrument was researcher-made and underwent expert validation by specialists in English language teaching to ensure content validity. The same instrument was administered as both the pre-test and post-test to measure changes in students' grammar proficiency. The data gathering process began with the administration of the pre-test to determine the respondents' baseline grammar proficiency. The ACE Workbook was then implemented as a supplementary learning material over a seven-week period, during which students completed guided exercises, drills, and contextualized grammar activities. After the intervention, the post-test was administered, and the scores were collected, organized, and prepared for analysis.

The gathered data were analyzed using appropriate descriptive and inferential statistical tools. The mean was used to determine the level of the respondents' pre-test and post-test performances, while the standard deviation was used to determine the variability of their scores. To determine whether there was a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test results, a dependent (paired-samples) t-test was applied since the same group of respondents participated in both assessments. All statistical analyses were processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), with the level of significance set at 0.05 using a two-tailed test. The study was limited to the participating

students and the duration of the intervention, and the findings may not be generalized to other populations or settings.

RESULTS

Inferential Data Analysis

The Difference between the Respondents' Pre-Test and Post-Test Performances

The difference in the performances of the respondents during pre-test and post-test is shown in Table 4. The Dependent t- Test result revealed that there is a significant difference ($p=0.000$) between the performances of the respondents during the pre-test and post-test. The p value is less than .05. The null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the pre-test and post- test performances of the respondents was rejected. This result indicated a highly significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the respondents. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected. The findings clearly demonstrate that the intervention had a statistically significant effect on improving the respondents' performance.

Table 4

Dependent t- Test for the Significance of the Differences between the Respondents' Pre-Test and Post-Test Performances

Paired Variables	Mean	Mean Difference	t	df	Sig.
Group		5.15	9.548***	25	.000
Pre-Test	27.85				
Post-Test	33.00				

*** $p < .001$

Table 4 shows that prior to using the ACE workbook, students experienced considerable difficulty in grammar-related reading comprehension, particularly in identifying main ideas and understanding grammatical structures within texts. Many relied on repeated reading, memorization, and surface-level analysis, leading to confusion and cognitive overload. These findings indicate the absence of structured instructional support and highlight the need for visual scaffolding to enhance grammar proficiency.

Table 4

Students' Experiences Before Using the ACE Workbook

Themes	Frequency Count	Percentage (%)	Sample Excerpts
Difficulty identifying main ideas affecting grammar understanding	9	33.33%	"I found it hard to identify main ideas, which made it difficult to understand grammar use in the text." (Student 4); "I always got lost in long paragraphs and couldn't focus on grammar structures." (Student 7);
Confusion and cognitive overload in grammar-focused reading	8	29.63%	"Reading grammar texts before using the ACE workbook was hard." (Student 18); "Grammar explanations were all jumbled in my head." (Student 27)
Reliance on linear reading strategies for grammar learning	6	22.22%	"I tried to understand grammar by analyzing the instructions only." (Student 5); "I read each passage repeatedly and analyzed it sentence by sentence." (Student 8)
Memorization of grammar rules without organization	5	18.52%	"I simply read the grammar rules and tried to remember them." (Student 1); "I read several times and tried to memorize the rules." (Student 12)
Low motivation toward grammar learning	4	14.81%	"Learning grammar through reading felt like a chore." (Student 22)

Table 5 indicates that during the implementation of the ACE workbook, students initially experienced difficulty adapting to grammar-focused graphic organizers. Challenges included selecting appropriate organizers and reorganizing grammar concepts visually. However, with teacher guidance, repeated practice, and peer collaboration, students gradually adjusted and demonstrated increased clarity and confidence in grammar learning. These findings align with Vygotskian scaffolding principles, which emphasize guided support during the early stages of learning until learners achieve independence (as cited in Ellis, 2021). Empirical support is also found in Hattie and Donoghue (2019), who noted that teacher modeling and guided practice significantly enhance students' cognitive engagement during transitional learning phases. Furthermore, Chen and Zhang (2021) reported that students initially struggle with visual grammar tools but show marked improvement as they internalize organizational strategies through repeated exposure and collaborative learning.

Table 5

Students' Experiences During the Use of ACE Workbook

Themes	Frequency Count	Percentage (%)	Sample Excerpts
Initial confusion in using grammar organizers	10	37.04%	"It's really hard to understand at first." (Student 3); "Hard to think of grammar ideas to put." (Student 21)
Difficulty selecting appropriate grammar organizer	7	25.93%	"One challenge was choosing the right type of organizer." (Student 11); "I struggled to pick the right organizer for grammar lessons." (Student 23)
Cognitive adjustment to visual grammar organization	6	22.22%	"At first confusing but later I learned how to organize grammar ideas." (Student 14)
Peer collaboration as support in grammar learning	5	18.52%	"Practicing grammar with classmates helped." (Student 13); "Collaboration helped me understand grammar clearer." (Student 117)
Gradual improvement and confidence in grammar tasks	6	22.22%	"From struggling to something manageable." (Student 26)

Table 6 demonstrates that after using the ACE workbook with graphic organizers, students showed significant improvements in grammar comprehension, focus, motivation, and confidence. The visual organization of grammar concepts facilitated clearer understanding of grammatical relationships and reduced cognitive load, leading to higher engagement and sustained attention. These results strongly support Cognitive Load Theory, which asserts that visual representations help learners integrate complex information more efficiently (Sweller et al., 2019). The findings are also consistent with Larsen-Freeman (2021) and Larsen-Freeman and Celce-Murcia (2023), who emphasized that grammar instruction is most effective when learners can visually and conceptually see how forms and meanings are connected. Moreover, the role of teacher modeling observed in this study echoes findings by Ellis (2020) and Nassaji (2019), who concluded that explicit instruction combined with scaffolding significantly improves grammatical accuracy and learner confidence. Collectively, these results confirm the effectiveness of the ACE workbook as an instructional scaffolding tool that enhances grammar proficiency through structured, visually supported learning.

Table 6

Students' Experiences After Using the ACE Workbook

Themes	Frequency Count	Percentage (%)	Sample Excerpts
Improved grammar comprehension and clarity	11	40.74%	"Helped me see grammar structure clearly." (Student 15); "I understood how grammar ideas are connected." (Student 24)
Better organization of grammar concepts	8	29.63%	"Helped me see how grammar rules are related." (Student 19)
Improved focus and reduced cognitive load	7	25.93%	"Grammar lessons became easier to follow." (Student 6)
Increased motivation and confidence in grammar proficiency	9	33.33%	"Proud that I understand grammar faster now." (Student 9); "I enjoy learning grammar more." (Student 10)
Teacher modeling and guidance	6	22.22%	"The teacher's examples helped me understand grammar better." (Student 14); "More examples made grammar easier." (Student 16)

DISCUSSION

This study investigated the effectiveness of the ACE Workbook (Achieving Competence in English Grammar) in enhancing the grammar proficiency of first-year Bachelor of Secondary Education (BSED) English major students at West Visayas State University–Calinog Campus during the First Semester of Academic Year 2025–2026. Guided by Krashen’s Input Hypothesis, Cognitive Load Theory, and Behaviorist Learning Theory, the study addressed the following research questions: (1) the level of pre-test performance of the respondents, (2) the level of post-test performance, and (3) whether a significant difference exists between pre-test and post-test performances.

Using an experimental one-group pre-test–post-test design, data were gathered from 26 respondents through a validated grammar proficiency test. Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (dependent t-test) were employed to analyze the data.

Findings revealed that the respondents’ pre-test performance was at an “Average” level, indicating moderate baseline grammar proficiency prior to the intervention. After the implementation of the ACE Workbook, the post-test performance improved to a “High” level, reflecting a notable enhancement in grammar skills. The dependent t-test results showed a statistically significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores ($p < .001$), leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. These results confirm that the ACE Workbook was effective in improving the grammar proficiency of the respondents.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. First-year BSEd English students initially possessed only an average level of grammar proficiency, suggesting the need for targeted instructional support at the early stage of tertiary education.
2. The implementation of the ACE Workbook significantly improved students' grammar proficiency, as evidenced by the increase from average pre-test performance to high post-test performance.
3. There is a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test performances of the respondents, confirming that the improvement in grammar proficiency can be attributed to the ACE Workbook intervention.
4. Structured, practice-based instructional materials grounded in established language learning theories are effective in enhancing grammar competence among pre-service teachers.

Recommendations

In light of the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Teachers are encouraged to use the ACE Workbook or similar structured grammar materials as supplementary instructional tools to reinforce grammar lessons and provide students with ample practice opportunities.
2. Institutions may consider integrating workbook-based grammar interventions into first-year English courses to address early proficiency gaps among pre-service teachers.
3. Students are encouraged to actively engage with grammar workbooks beyond classroom requirements to strengthen accuracy, confidence, and long-term language competence.
4. Future studies may replicate this research using larger samples, control groups, or longer intervention periods. Researchers may also explore the effects of the ACE Workbook on other language skills such as writing, reading comprehension, or speaking proficiency.
5. Further enhancement and validation of the ACE Workbook may be undertaken by incorporating digital or blended-learning components to increase accessibility and learner engagement.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

The study was adhered to ethical standards for educational research. Permission was obtained from the university administration and faculty. Informed consent was secured from all respondents, ensuring that participation is voluntary and that withdrawal may occur at any time without penalty. All information was kept confidential by removing any details that could identify the participants. The findings were used solely for academic and research purposes, and the participants were not subjected to any harm or undue pressure throughout the study.

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