

Examining the Middle Ground Teaching Strategy: A Quasi-Experimental Study of Learning Gains Among Multilingual English Education Students

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ABSTRACT: This study examined whether the Middle Ground Teaching Strategy produced greater learning gains than regular instruction among multilingual students at a Philippine state university. A quantitative quasi-experimental pre-test–post-test control-group design was used with two intact language education classes. The control group included 39 students who received regular classroom instruction, while the experimental group included 41 students who received instruction using the Middle Ground Teaching Strategy. Students completed a researcher-developed achievement test before and after the intervention. Scores were analyzed using descriptive statistics, paired-samples t-tests, and an independent-samples t-test. Both groups obtained significantly higher post-test scores. The control group improved significantly from pre-test to post-test, $t(38) = -7.25$, $p < .001$, as did the experimental group, $t(40) = -11.60$, $p < .001$. The experimental group had a numerically higher mean gain score ($M = 7.12$, $SD = 3.92$) than the control group ($M = 5.38$, $SD = 4.64$). However, the difference in gain scores was not statistically significant, $t(78) = -1.81$, $p = .075$. Thus, although students taught through the Middle Ground Teaching Strategy showed a larger average improvement, the findings did not provide sufficient evidence that the strategy was more effective than regular classroom instruction. Studies involving additional classes, longer intervention periods, and stronger controls for initial group differences are needed to estimate the strategy's comparative effectiveness more precisely.

KEYWORDS: Middle Ground Teaching Strategy; multilingual learners; learning gains; English language education; quasi-experimental research; higher education

I. INTRODUCTION

Students in the language-education classes examined in this study came from varied linguistic backgrounds and differed in their confidence in using academic language. This diversity presented a practical instructional problem: students required clear explanations of unfamiliar concepts, but they also needed opportunities to discuss ideas, ask questions, and apply their learning. An instructional approach that relies exclusively on teacher presentation may restrict these opportunities, whereas activities with insufficient guidance may create additional difficulty for students who are still developing conceptual and academic-language knowledge.

Two bodies of research inform this instructional problem. Studies of guided instruction emphasize the importance of explanation, modeling, and scaffolding when students have limited prior knowledge (Kirschner et al., 2006; Mayer, 2004). Research on active learning, in contrast, demonstrates the value of structured participation and application rather than exclusive reliance on lectures (Freeman et al., 2014; Kozanitis & Nenciovici, 2023). In multilingual education, translanguaging and culturally and linguistically responsive teaching further emphasize that students' language resources can contribute to meaning-making and participation rather than being treated solely as obstacles to learning (Prilutskaya, 2021; Yoon, 2023). In this study, the term Middle Ground Teaching Strategy refers to an instructional sequence that combines teacher-guided explanation, modeling, guided practice, collaborative application, and independent work. The term does not refer simply to alternating between lecturing and group work; it describes a planned progression from explicit support to increasingly active student participation. Its proposed value for multilingual students lies in providing sufficient conceptual and linguistic support while creating opportunities for interaction and application. Although the literature reviewed for this study supports guided instruction, active learning, and language-responsive pedagogy individually, it does not establish whether their integration in the Middle Ground Teaching Strategy produces greater achievement gains than regular classroom instruction in the study setting.

The present research therefore examined pre-test–post-test changes in two intact language-education classes and compared the gain scores of students who received the strategy with those who received regular instruction. Thus, this study examined whether the Middle Ground Teaching Strategy produced greater learning gains than regular classroom instruction among multilingual university students. It assessed changes in the pre-test and post-test scores of the control and experimental groups and

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determined whether the groups differed significantly in their gain scores. It was hypothesized that students taught through the Middle Ground Teaching Strategy would demonstrate greater learning gains than students who received regular instruction.

II. METHODOLOGY

Research Design and Setting

The study used a nonrandomized pre-test–post-test control-group design involving two existing third-year English-education classes at a state university in the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, Philippines. Students remained in their officially assigned sections; therefore, they were not individually randomized. The sections were designated as the experimental and control groups by maintaining their assigned section set by the university. Both groups studied the same course in campus journalism class and similar instructional unit, followed the same syllabus, and received 15 hours of instruction over five weeks. The same instructor taught the two classes. The experimental group received the Middle Ground Teaching Strategy, whereas the control group received the course's usual instructional approach. Pre-test scores were used to describe the groups' performance before instruction, and changes in achievement were examined after the intervention.

Participants

The participants were 80 third-year students enrolled in their degree, Bachelor of Secondary Education major in English program and taking their course, Allied 321 - Campus Journalism during the second semester and academic year 2024-2025. The control section had 39 students, and the experimental section had 41 students. Students were included when they were officially enrolled in one of the two sections, completed both tests, and willing to participate in the study. Students who were not present during the test were excluded in the analysis. The two sections covered the same course outcomes and used the same prescribed learning materials. Because the study involved intact classes, baseline equivalence could not be assumed. The groups' pre-test scores and relevant participant characteristics were therefore examined before the outcome analyses.

Achievement Test

Achievement was measured using a 30-item researcher-developed test covering topics on the general evaluation of a campus paper. The test contained 10 item-multiple choice, 10 item-short answers, and 10 item-practical evaluation tasks, and scores could range from a minimum of 0 and 30 as the maximum. Test content was mapped against the course outcomes through a table of specifications. Three specialists in English language independently evaluated each item for its relevance, coherence, clarity, alignment, and completeness using the form, institutional approved quantitative rating method. Their evaluation produced a general mean rating of 4.18 interpreted as Very Good. The revised test was piloted with 20 number of student participants who were not part of the main sample. Item analysis examined 60 percent easy, 20 percent average, and 10 percent difficult, and internal consistency was estimated using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded a coefficient of 0.956. Students completed the test within a time limit of 30 minutes. The same scoring key was used for the pre-test and post-test.

Instructional Intervention

The experimental group was exposed to the Middle Ground Teaching Strategy during the midterm period. In this study, the strategy was used as a structured but participatory approach to teaching multilingual learners. Each lesson began with teacher-led presentation of the target concepts, followed by guided analysis of examples, clarification of difficult terms, and discussion of lesson content. After the teacher's explanation and modeling, students were given opportunities to work with peers, ask questions, clarify meanings, and apply the lesson through collaborative and individual learning tasks.

The Middle Ground Teaching Strategy was developed by the researcher as an instructional approach for multilingual learners. The project was approved by the administration through the Office of the Research Program in coordination with the College of Teacher Education and English Department. The intervention was intended to address the learning needs of students who came from multilingual backgrounds and who may have differed in their confidence and proficiency in using academic language. For this reason, the teacher provided direct guidance at the beginning of the lesson, while the latter part of the session allowed students to process ideas, interact with classmates, and demonstrate understanding through guided and independent activities. The approach therefore maintained a balance between teacher support and student participation.

The control group, on the other hand, was taught using the usual classroom instruction during the same midterm period. Regular instruction included teacher explanation, class discussion, analysis of examples, and individual practice activities. To ensure comparability, both the experimental and control groups covered similar course content, syllabus, learning competencies, and amount of instructional time. The difference between the two groups was limited to the instructional approach used in delivering and processing the learning activities.

Data Gathering Procedure

Permission to conduct the study was first obtained. After the approval was granted by the administration through the Office of the Research Program via Notice to Proceed, two intact third-year Bachelor of Secondary Education major in English classes

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were selected as participants of the study. One class served as the control group, while the other class served as the experimental group. Since the study used intact classes, the grouping was based on the existing class sections rather than individual random assignment.

Before the intervention, both groups were given the pre-test using the researcher-made achievement test to determine their initial academic performance. After the pre-test, the control group was taught through regular classroom instruction, while the experimental group was exposed to the Middle Ground Teaching Strategy. The intervention was conducted during the midterm period. To maintain comparability between the two groups, both classes followed the same syllabus, covered the same lesson topics, addressed the same learning competencies, and received the same amount of instructional time.

After the completion of the midterm instructional period, the same achievement test was administered to both groups as the post-test. The test scores were then encoded, reviewed, and checked for accuracy before statistical treatment. Gain scores were computed by subtracting each student's pre-test score from the corresponding post-test score. These gain scores were used to determine the extent of improvement in the academic performance of the control and experimental groups from pre-test to post-test.

Data Analysis

The data gathered from the pre-test and post-test were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The mean, median, standard deviation, standard error, and 95% confidence interval were computed to describe the academic performance of the control and experimental groups before and after the instructional period. These descriptive measures provided the basis for comparing the students' initial performance, post-intervention performance, and observed improvement. Prior to inferential analysis, the Shapiro Wilk test was used to assess whether the relevant score distributions met the assumption of normality. The results indicated that the normality assumption was satisfied; therefore, parametric tests were applied. A paired-samples t-test was used to determine whether the pre-test and post-test scores differed significantly within the control group and within the experimental group. To examine the extent of improvement, gain scores were computed by subtracting each student's pre-test score from the corresponding post-test score. An independent-samples t-test was then conducted to determine whether the mean gain score of the experimental group differed significantly from that of the control group. Cohen's *d* was also computed to determine the magnitude of the observed effect (Cohen, 1988; Field, 2018) and to support the interpretation of the statistical results. The hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance. The data were analyzed using Excel and Jamovi version 2.6.41.

Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted with due regard for ethical standards in educational research. Before the data-gathering activities were carried out, permission was secured from the Office of the Research Program. The participants were informed about the purpose of the study, the procedures involved, and the manner in which their test scores would be used. They were also assured that their participation would be treated with confidentiality and that their identities would not be revealed in any part of the study. To protect the privacy of the participants, names and other identifying information were not used in the presentation, analysis, and discussion of findings. The data gathered from the pre-test and post-test were used only for research purposes and were reported in aggregate form. Care was taken to ensure that the conduct of the study would not place any student at an academic disadvantage. Both the control and experimental groups received instruction based on the same syllabus, lesson coverage, learning competencies, and instructional time. Participation was handled with respect and fairness. The students were informed that the study was intended to evaluate an instructional approach and not to judge them personally. All records were checked and kept with confidentiality, and the results were interpreted only in relation to the objectives of the study.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores of Students in the Control and Experimental Groups

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the pre-test and post-test scores of students in the control and experimental groups. The results show that both groups obtained higher mean scores in the post-test than in the pre-test, indicating improvement in academic performance after the midterm instructional period.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores of Control and Experimental Groups

Group	Test	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Mdn</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>SE</i>	95% CI (LL, UL)
Control	Pre-Test	39	14.10	14.00	4.62	0.739	[12.60, 15.60]
	Post-Test	39	19.50	20.00	4.08	0.654	[18.20, 20.80]
Experimental	Pre-Test	41	16.50	16.00	3.13	0.489	[15.50, 17.50]
	Post-Test	41	23.60	24.00	3.61	0.563	[22.40, 24.70]

Note. CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit.

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The control group obtained a pre-test mean score of 14.10 (SD = 4.62), which increased to 19.50 (SD = 4.08) in the post-test. This shows an observed mean increase of 5.40 points. The experimental group, on the other hand, obtained a pre-test mean score of 16.50 (SD = 3.13), which increased to 23.60 (SD = 3.61) in the post-test, showing an observed mean increase of 7.10 points. Descriptively, both groups improved, but the experimental group obtained a higher post-test mean and a larger mean increase than the control group.

The improvement in both groups may be attributed to their exposure to the same course content, syllabus, learning competencies, and instructional time during the midterm period. The increase in the control group suggests that regular classroom instruction supported student learning. However, the larger observed increase in the experimental group suggests that the Middle Ground Teaching Strategy may have provided additional support for students, particularly because it combined teacher-guided explanation with opportunities for student participation, discussion, and application.

This pattern may be relevant in the context of multilingual learners. Since the experimental group was taught through a strategy that balanced direct instructional support and learner-centered activities, students may have had more opportunities to clarify concepts, process academic language, and interact with peers during the learning tasks. These features may have helped them engage more actively with the lesson content and contributed to their higher descriptive gain. Moreover, the improvement in the control group implies that regular classroom instruction contributed to students' learning during the midterm period. This is reasonable because the control group was also exposed to the prescribed course content, syllabus, learning competencies, and instructional time. However, the larger increase observed in the experimental group suggests that the Middle Ground Teaching Strategy may have offered additional instructional support. This intervention may have been especially useful for multilingual students who may need both clear teacher guidance and opportunities to process lesson content through interaction and application.

In this approach, teacher-guided explanation helped students understand key concepts, clarify difficult terms, and follow the direction of the lesson. At the same time, learner-centered activities gave them opportunities to discuss ideas, ask questions, work with peers, and apply what they had learned. This combination of direct support and active participation may have helped students engage more meaningfully with the lesson content. This interpretation is consistent with Kozanitis and Nenciovici (2023), who reported that active learning supports achievement among college students when learners are provided opportunities to engage with content and participate in learning tasks.

In relation to multilingual learning, the higher descriptive gain of the experimental group may also be understood through culturally and linguistically responsive instruction. As elaborated by Yoon (2023), culturally and linguistically responsive teaching supports multilingual learners by recognizing their language and cultural resources while promoting their academic development. Similarly, recent discussions on translanguaging emphasize that multilingual learners' language resources may support comprehension, participation, and meaning-making in classroom learning contexts (Lu et al., 2025; Moraru et al., 2025). In this study, the Middle Ground Teaching Strategy may have supported students by combining teacher assistance with opportunities for collaborative processing of ideas.

Overall, Table 1 shows that both the control and experimental groups demonstrated improvement from pre-test to post-test. The experimental group showed a larger descriptive increase, suggesting a promising trend in favor of the Middle Ground Teaching Strategy. However, this descriptive result must be interpreted together with the inferential analysis, particularly the paired-samples t-tests within each group and the independent-samples t-test comparing the gain scores of the two groups. Thus, while the descriptive results favor the experimental group, the statistical tests are necessary to determine whether the observed difference in improvement was statistically meaningful.

Normality Test for Pre-test and Post-test Scores

Before conducting the inferential analyses, the normality of the pre-test and post-test score distributions was examined using the Shapiro–Wilk test and visual inspection of the histograms. This preliminary procedure was conducted to determine whether the score distributions showed serious departures from normality. Normality assessment is important in quantitative analysis because parametric procedures require the relevant distributions, particularly the difference scores or gain scores used in the analysis, to be approximately normal (Ghasemi & Zahediasl, 2012; Mishra et al., 2019). The Shapiro–Wilk test was used because it is commonly recommended for detecting departures from normality, especially for small to moderate sample sizes (Shapiro & Wilk, 1965).

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Table 2. Shapiro–Wilk Test for Normality of Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores

Group	Test	W	df	p
Control	Pre-Test	0.974	39	.431
Control	Post-Test	0.981	39	.612
Experimental	Pre-Test	0.968	41	.289
Experimental	Post-Test	0.976	41	.505

Note. W = Shapiro–Wilk statistic. A nonsignificant result ($p > .05$) indicates that the distribution does not significantly deviate from normality.

As shown in Table 2, the Shapiro–Wilk results for the pre-test and post-test scores were all nonsignificant. For the control group, the pre-test scores, $W = 0.974$, $p = .431$, and post-test scores, $W = 0.981$, $p = .612$, did not show a significant departure from normality. A similar pattern was observed in the experimental group, where the pre-test scores, $W = 0.968$, $p = .289$, and post-test scores, $W = 0.976$, $p = .505$, were also nonsignificant. Since all p values were greater than .05, the results indicate that the pre-test and post-test score distributions were approximately normal.

The visual inspection of Figure 1 supported the statistical results. The histograms with superimposed normal curves showed generally symmetrical distributions, with no severe departure from the expected normal pattern. This graphical inspection was considered necessary because normality should not be evaluated based on a statistical test alone. Instead, researchers are encouraged to consider both numerical and visual evidence when deciding whether the data meet the assumptions for parametric analysis (Ghasemi & Zahediasl, 2012; Kim, 2013; Mishra et al., 2019).

Taken together, the Shapiro–Wilk results and the visual inspection suggest that the pre-test and post-test score distributions were sufficiently normal for further analysis. These findings provided preliminary support for the use of parametric tests in analyzing the students' performance. However, because the paired-samples t -test involves the difference between pre-test and post-test scores, and the independent-samples t -test compares gain scores between groups, the normality of the relevant difference or gain scores should also be considered when interpreting the inferential results.

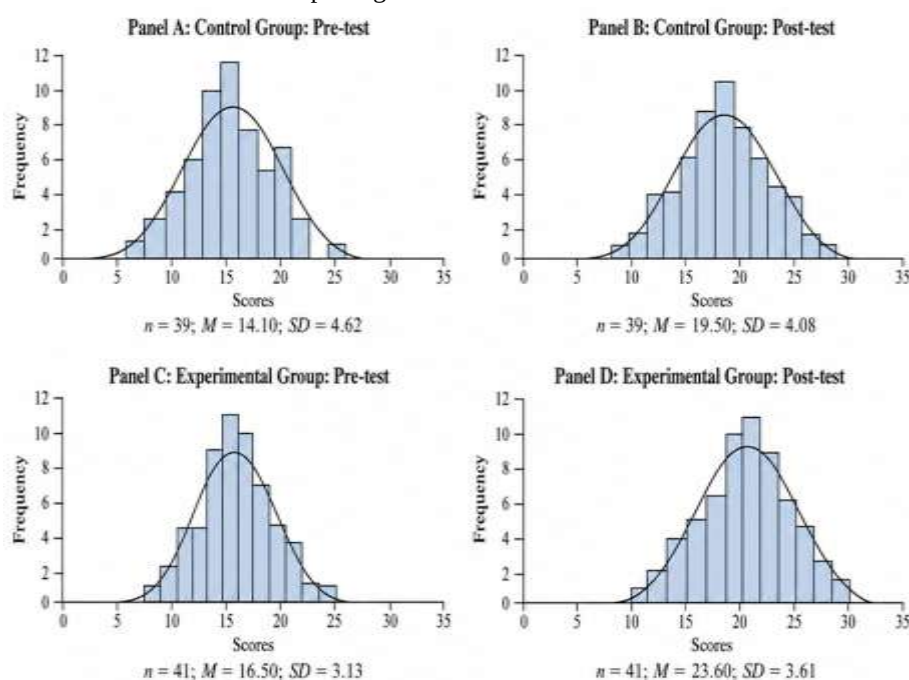


Figure 1. Distribution of Pre-test and Post-test Scores of the Control and Experimental Groups

Note. The histograms show the distribution of pre-test and post-test scores for the control and experimental groups. The superimposed normal curves indicate that the score distributions were approximately normal, supporting the use of parametric tests.

Significant Difference Between the Pre-test and Post-test Scores of Students in the Control Group

Table 3 presents the paired-samples t -test result for the control group. The test was conducted to determine whether the students' post-test scores differed significantly from their pre-test scores after receiving regular classroom instruction during the midterm period.

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Table 3. Paired-Samples t-Test Results for Control Group

Measure	Mean Gain	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CI	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Post-test – Pre-test	5.38	7.25	38	< .001	[3.88, 6.89]	1.16

Note. Mean gain was computed as post-test score minus pre-test score. CI = confidence interval. Cohen's *d* was interpreted using the absolute value of the effect size.

The result showed a significant increase in the control group's performance, $t(38) = 7.25, p < .001$. The mean gain of 5.38 points indicates that the students obtained higher scores in the post-test than in the pre-test. The 95% confidence interval, [3.88, 6.89], did not include zero, which supports the presence of a significant improvement. The effect size was large, Cohen's $d = 1.16$, suggesting that the increase in performance was meaningful. This finding shows that regular classroom instruction supported the learning progress of students in the control group. Although they were not exposed to the Middle Ground Teaching Strategy, the students still received instruction through teacher explanation, guided discussion, analysis of examples, and individual practice. These activities may have helped them understand the lesson content and perform better after the instructional period.

However, this result should be interpreted only as evidence of improvement within the control group. It does not show that regular classroom instruction was more effective than the Middle Ground Teaching Strategy because the analysis compared only the control group's own pre-test and post-test scores. The comparison between the two instructional approaches should be based on the gain-score analysis between the control and experimental groups. Previous research has shown that instruction with clear teacher guidance can support student learning, especially when learners need structured explanation and practice before independently applying new concepts (Kirschner et al., 2006; Mayer, 2004). Similarly, Stockard et al. (2018) reported that direct and structured instruction can produce positive achievement outcomes when lessons are organized, explicit, and focused on mastery.

Thus, based on the result, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the control group is rejected. Therefore, the control group demonstrated a significant improvement in academic performance after regular classroom instruction.

Significant Difference Between the Pre-test and Post-test Scores of Students in the Experimental Group

Table 4 presents the result of the paired-samples t-test for the experimental group. The test was conducted to determine whether the students' post-test scores differed significantly from their pre-test scores after their exposure to the Middle Ground Teaching Strategy during the midterm instructional period.

Table 4. Paired-Samples t-Test Results for Experimental Group

Measure	Mean Gain	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	95% CI	Cohen's <i>d</i>
Pre-Test vs Post-Test	7.10	11.60	40	< .001	[5.50, 8.70]	1.82

Note. Mean gain was computed as post-test score minus pre-test score. CI = confidence interval. Cohen's *d* was interpreted using the absolute value of the effect size.

As gleaned from the table, experimental group showed a significant increase in performance, $t(40) = 11.60, p < .001$. The mean gain of 7.10 points indicates that the students obtained higher scores after the intervention. The 95% confidence interval, [5.50, 8.70], did not include zero, which supports the presence of a significant improvement. The effect size was very large, Cohen's $d = 1.82$, suggesting that the increase in performance was substantial.

This result implies that students in the experimental group improved after being taught through the Middle Ground Teaching Strategy. The improvement may be related to the structure of the strategy, which provided both teacher support and student participation. During the intervention, teacher-guided explanation helped students understand key concepts, clarify difficult terms, and follow the lesson direction. The learner-centered activities then allowed them to discuss ideas, ask questions, collaborate with classmates, and apply what they had learned.

The finding may be viewed in relation to active learning. Kozanitis and Nenciovici (2023) reported that active learning can improve achievement among college students, especially when learners are given opportunities to participate in meaningful learning tasks. In the present study, the Middle Ground Teaching Strategy did not rely only on teacher explanation. It also required students to process and apply lesson content through guided and independent activities, which may have contributed to their higher post-test performance. The result may also be understood in the context of multilingual learning. Yoon (2023) explained that culturally and linguistically responsive teaching supports multilingual learners by recognizing their language backgrounds and helping them access academic content. Since the participants came from multilingual backgrounds, the combination of teacher guidance and participatory tasks may have helped them clarify meanings, connect ideas with prior knowledge, and participate more confidently in class. Recent literature on translanguaging and multilingual pedagogy also

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suggests that students' language resources can support comprehension, interaction, and meaning-making in learning contexts (Lu et al., 2025; Prilutskaya, 2021). Although this study did not directly measure translanguaging practices, the improvement in the experimental group suggests that a balanced instructional approach may create learning conditions that are supportive of multilingual students' academic engagement.

Based on the result, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of students in the experimental group is rejected. Therefore, students exposed to the Middle Ground Teaching Strategy demonstrated significant improvement from pre-test to post-test. However, this result should be interpreted only as evidence of improvement within the experimental group. It does not yet prove that the Middle Ground Teaching Strategy was significantly more effective than regular classroom instruction. The relative effectiveness of the two approaches should be determined through the comparison of gain scores between the control and experimental groups.

Visual Presentation of Pre-test and Post-test Mean Scores

Figure 2 presents the pre-test and post-test mean scores of the control and experimental groups. The figure shows that both groups obtained higher mean scores after the midterm instructional period.

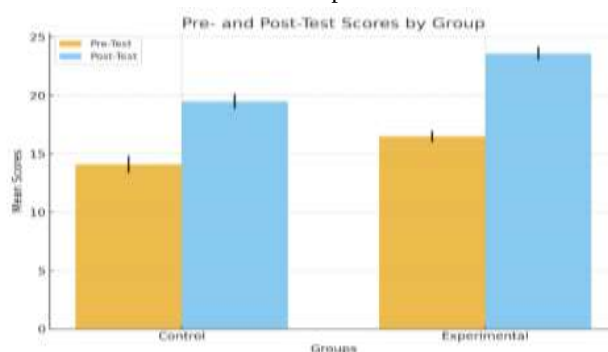


Figure 2. Pre-test and Post-test Mean Scores of the Control and Experimental Groups

Note. The figure presents the mean scores of the control and experimental groups before and after the instructional period. The experimental group obtained higher mean scores in both the pre-test and post-test and showed a larger descriptive gain.

The control group increased from 14.10 in the pre-test to 19.50 in the post-test, while the experimental group increased from 16.50 to 23.60. The visual pattern supports the paired-samples t-test results, which showed significant improvement within both groups. The experimental group had a larger observed increase, suggesting a favorable descriptive pattern for the Middle Ground Teaching Strategy. However, this result should be interpreted with caution because the experimental group already had a higher pre-test mean than the control group. Thus, Figure 2 should be treated only as a visual summary of performance change, not as conclusive evidence that the intervention was superior. The comparison of gain scores in the succeeding table provides a more appropriate basis for examining the relative effectiveness of the two instructional approaches.

Significant Difference in the Gain Scores Between the Control and Experimental Groups

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to determine whether the gain scores of the control and experimental groups differed significantly. Gain scores were computed by subtracting the pre-test scores from the post-test scores. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Independent-Samples t-Test for Gain Scores Between the Control and Experimental Groups

Group		N	Mean Gain		SD	
Control		39	5.38		4.64	
Experimental		41	7.12		3.92	
Comparison	Mean Difference	t	df	p	95% CI	Cohen's d
Experimental – Control	1.74	1.81	78	.075	[-0.17, 3.65]	0.41

Note. Gain scores were computed as post-test score minus pre-test score. The mean difference was computed as experimental group gain minus control group gain. CI = confidence interval.

As shown in Table 5, the experimental group obtained a higher mean gain score ($M = 7.12$, $SD = 3.92$) than the control group ($M = 5.38$, $SD = 4.64$). The mean difference of 1.74 points favored the experimental group, indicating that students exposed to the Middle Ground Teaching Strategy showed a larger average improvement than those who received regular classroom instruction.

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However, the independent-samples t-test showed that the difference in gain scores was not statistically significant, $t(78) = 1.81$, $p = .075$. The 95% confidence interval, $[-0.17, 3.65]$, included zero, which means that the observed difference was not statistically conclusive at the 0.05 level. The effect size, Cohen's $d = 0.41$, suggests a small-to-moderate difference in favor of the experimental group. This result means that the Middle Ground Teaching Strategy showed a favorable descriptive pattern, but the evidence was not strong enough to establish that it produced significantly greater improvement than regular classroom instruction. The higher mean gain of the experimental group may suggest that the strategy provided helpful learning conditions, particularly through its combination of teacher-guided explanation and learner-centered activities. However, because the result was not statistically significant, this interpretation should remain cautious.

The finding may be viewed in relation to studies on active and language-responsive instruction. Kozanitis and Nenciovici (2023) reported that active learning can support achievement among college students, while Yoon (2023) emphasized that culturally and linguistically responsive teaching can help multilingual learners access academic content and participate meaningfully in classroom learning. In the present study, the Middle Ground Teaching Strategy may have supported students by providing both structure and participation. Still, the gain-score comparison indicates that this possible advantage was not statistically confirmed. Several factors may have influenced the nonsignificant result. Since the study used intact classes, the two groups were not randomly formed at the individual level. The experimental group also had a higher pre-test mean than the control group, which suggests an initial difference in academic performance. In addition, the sample size, score variability, and limited duration of the intervention may have affected the statistical result. These conditions are important in interpreting the findings and in planning future validation of the strategy.

Based on the result, the null hypothesis stating that there is no significant difference in the gain scores between the control and experimental groups is not rejected. Therefore, although the experimental group obtained a higher mean gain score, the findings do not provide sufficient statistical evidence to conclude that the Middle Ground Teaching Strategy was significantly more effective than regular classroom instruction in improving students' academic performance.

Visual Presentation of Gain Scores

Figure 3 presents the mean gain scores of the control and experimental groups. The control group obtained a mean gain of 5.38 points, whereas the experimental group obtained a mean gain of 7.12 points.

Based on the figure, the experimental group displayed a higher mean gain than the control group. This visual pattern is consistent with the descriptive results in Table 5. However, the figure should be interpreted only as a visual summary of the observed gains. Although the experimental group showed a higher mean gain, the independent-samples t-test indicated that the difference between the two groups was not statistically significant. Therefore, the figure suggests a favorable descriptive trend for the Middle Ground Teaching Strategy, but it does not provide sufficient evidence to conclude that the strategy was significantly more effective than regular classroom instruction.

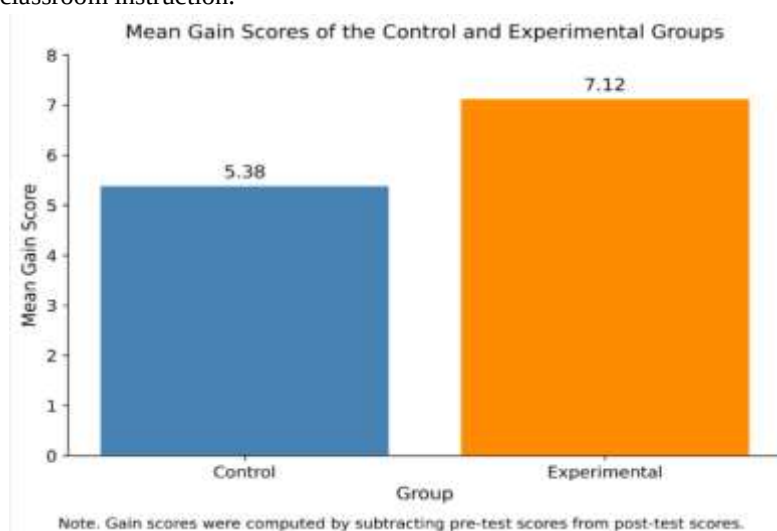


Figure 3. Mean Gain Scores of the Control and Experimental Groups

Note. Gain scores were computed by subtracting pre-test scores from post-test scores. The experimental group obtained a higher descriptive mean gain than the control group; however, the difference was not statistically significant at the 0.05 level.

IV. CONCLUSION

This study examined the effect of the Middle Ground Teaching Strategy on the academic performance of multilingual students using a quasi-experimental pre-test-post-test control group design. The findings showed that both the control and

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experimental groups demonstrated significant improvement after the midterm instructional period. This indicates that learning gains occurred under both regular classroom instruction and the Middle Ground Teaching Strategy. Although both groups improved, the experimental group obtained a higher mean gain score than the control group. This descriptive result suggests that the Middle Ground Teaching Strategy may have provided additional instructional support for multilingual students. Its combination of teacher-guided explanation and learner-centered activities gave students opportunities to understand key concepts, clarify meanings, participate in classroom tasks, interact with peers, and apply learning more actively. However, the difference in gain scores between the two groups was not statistically significant. Therefore, the findings do not provide sufficient evidence to conclude that the Middle Ground Teaching Strategy was significantly more effective than regular classroom instruction.

Despite this limitation, the study offers useful insight into the teaching of multilingual learners. It shifts attention from merely identifying the challenges experienced by multilingual students to exploring an instructional approach that balances structure and participation. In classrooms where learners differ in language background, academic confidence, and proficiency, such a balance may help create learning conditions that support comprehension, interaction, and classroom engagement. The findings may also be understood in relation to guided instruction, scaffolding, active learning, and culturally and linguistically responsive teaching. The Middle Ground Teaching Strategy does not rely solely on teacher-directed instruction or on fully independent learning. Instead, it treats learning as a guided and participatory process in which students receive instructional support while also engaging actively with lesson content. In this sense, the strategy may be viewed as a balanced and language-responsive approach for multilingual classrooms.

Overall, the Middle Ground Teaching Strategy may be considered a promising pedagogical approach for supporting multilingual students' academic performance. While the present study did not establish its statistically significant superiority over regular classroom instruction, the higher descriptive gain of the experimental group suggests that the strategy has potential instructional value. Future studies may further validate the strategy using larger samples, longer implementation periods, more comparable groups, and additional measures such as classroom engagement, language participation, retention of learning, and students' confidence in academic communication.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This study was supported by institutional research funding from a state university in the Philippines through its research and development office. The researcher also acknowledges the administrators, teachers, students, validators, and colleagues who supported the conduct and completion of the study.

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