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PROJECT TOTOK (TAMANG ORAS TUNGO SA OPORTUNIDAD AT KASANAYAN): REMEDIAL READING INTERVENTION MATERIALS AS A TOOL TO BOOST THE ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF STRUGGLING LEARNERS IN PKLP USING FILIPINO AS A MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION

Delmor V. Yamogan
Senior High School Teacher
Victorias National High School, SDO of Victorias City
Negros Occidental, Philippines
Email: pacific.gov@gmail.com

Abstract

This action research evaluates the effectiveness of Project TOTOK (Tamang Oras Tungo sa Oportunidad at Kasanayan), a remedial reading intervention package designed for struggling Grade 11 learners in Pag-aaral ng Kasaysayan at Lipunang Pilipino (PKLP), a core subject piloted under the Philippine Department of Education's Senior High School Strengthening Curriculum that is delivered entirely in Filipino. Diagnostic data gathered during Term 1 of School Year 2026–2027 from three sections (PSA-2, RS, PSA-5; N = 104) using five teacher-made tests, two collaborative summative tests, and a term-unified examination identified 78 learners (68.27%) as struggling with academic Tagalog comprehension, with the deficit ranging from 61.76% to 100% across sections. Project TOTOK addresses this gap through three components: a contextualized vocabulary glossary (Talahuluganang TOTOK), guided dual-language scaffolding cards, and structured 30–45-minute remedial reading sessions. This paper reports the baseline diagnostic profile that establishes the pre-test matrix for a single-group pre-test/post-test design, and outlines the planned Term 2 intervention (September 16–December 2026) and its evaluation using paired-sample comparisons and qualitative error analysis. Findings from the baseline phase confirm a substantial, section-specific language-literacy gap in PKLP and justify the structured deployment of the intervention; post-intervention outcomes will be reported upon completion of Term 2.

Keywords: *action research; remedial reading intervention; PKLP; Filipino medium of instruction; Senior High School Strengthening Curriculum; reading comprehension*

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Introduction

The continuous evolution of the Philippine basic education curriculum aims to equip senior high school learners with advanced functional literacy and contextualized academic competency. In June 2025, the Department of Education initiated the pilot implementation of the Senior High School Strengthening Curriculum (Department of Education, 2025a). Under this framework, Pag-aaral ng Kasaysayan at Lipunang Pilipino (PKLP) was introduced as a core social science subject for Grade 11 learners, requiring highly critical historical analysis, textual evaluation, and dense conceptual discourse, all delivered entirely in Filipino.

Despite the structural strengths of the new curriculum, pedagogical realities reveal a widening language gap. Grade 11 learners across specialized tracks such as the Public Safety Administrator (PSA) and Restaurant Supervisor (RS) strands struggle heavily with academic instructions and source materials written in formal Tagalog. While students possess functional conversational skills in regional dialects or casual colloquial language, they encounter an academic barrier when processing deep or formal Tagalog vocabulary (malalim na salitang Tagalog). This comprehension breakdown prevents them from formulating critical insights during classroom discourse, articulating answers during oral recitation, or interpreting the explicit and implicit meaning of foundational historical passages (Cariaso, 2025).

Diagnostic evidence gathered during Term 1 of School Year 2026–2027 highlights the urgency of this problem. Performance metrics derived from five teacher-made written tests, classroom formative assessments, and performance tasks indicated structural deficiencies in conceptual literacy. The gap became evident in the First Unified Summative Test (50 items, administered July 8, 2026) and the Second Unified Summative Test (50 items, administered July 28, 2026), both collaboratively constructed by PKLP subject teachers to ensure standardized alignment, and culminated in low scores in the Term-1 Unified Examination (60 items, August 28–September 1, 2026) mandated under DepEd's three-term structural policy (Department of Education, 2025b).

Action research is widely recognized as a systematic, reflective process for improving classroom practice and addressing learners' needs (Department of Education, 2020). It enables teachers to identify learning gaps and implement targeted interventions to improve student outcomes; Anzaldo and Cudiamat (2019) similarly emphasized that action research helps educators determine which instructional practices are ineffective and which strategies can address learners' difficulties. Reading is a fundamental skill that shapes academic performance across subject areas, and struggling readers typically experience difficulties with comprehension, vocabulary development, and critical thinking, which directly affect achievement (Uysal & Akyol, 2019). In the Philippine context, prior school-based action research has found that teacher-assisted remedial reading modules meaningfully improve struggling readers' comprehension and fluency when implemented systematically (Aguirre et al., 2019).

Contextualization is a foundational principle of the K–12 curriculum: the use of local and relevant materials to enhance learner understanding. Contextualized instruction has been associated with improved engagement and comprehension by connecting lessons to real-life experience, a mechanism consistent with Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural view of learning as socially mediated and scaffolded, and with Krashen's (1982) comprehensible-input hypothesis, which holds that language acquisition advances when learners are given input just beyond their current competence, supported by contextual scaffolding. In PKLP specifically, comprehension of historical texts and concepts is inseparable from Filipino-language proficiency; without adequate reading comprehension skills, students struggle to analyze historical content and participate meaningfully in discussions.

Taken together, the literature establishes that (a) action research is an appropriate vehicle for addressing classroom-level literacy problems, (b) reading comprehension deficits depress performance across subject areas, and (c) contextualized remedial reading materials are an effective, feasible response at the classroom level. A gap,

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however, remains in localized, subject-specific remedial reading materials for PKLP under the newly piloted Strengthening Curriculum. This gap motivates Project TOTOK, a structured remedial reading intervention designed specifically for PKLP's language demands.

Research Questions

This action research determines the efficacy of Project TOTOK in boosting the academic performance of struggling Grade 11 PKLP learners during School Year 2026–2027, Term 2. Specifically, it answers:

1. What is the baseline academic performance profile of struggling learners in PKLP across three Grade 11 sections (PSA-2, RS, PSA-5) prior to intervention, as measured by teacher-made written tests, the collaborative unified summative tests, and the Term-1 unified examination?
2. What specific linguistic and reading-comprehension difficulties do Grade 11 learners encounter with PKLP instructional texts and concepts delivered in Filipino?
3. How does the implementation of Project TOTOK address these language barriers during the intervention phase?
4. Is there a significant difference in the academic performance and conceptual-literacy scores of struggling Grade 11 learners after the implementation of Project TOTOK?

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Methods

Research Design

This study uses an action research, single-group pre-test/post-test design, made possible by the DepEd Three-Term School Calendar. Term 1 (June 15–September 15, 2026) is dedicated to diagnostic baseline gathering, localized performance tracking, and needs assessment; Term 2 (beginning September 16, 2026) is dedicated to intervention delivery and post-testing. Because the student cohort remains unchanged across terms, within-subject pre-test/post-test comparison is methodologically valid.

Participants

Participants were purposively drawn from three Grade 11 sections taking PKLP under the Senior High School Strengthening Curriculum: PSA-2, RS, and PSA-5. Struggling learners were identified as those falling below the expected competency level on Term-1 diagnostic instruments. Table 1 summarizes the distribution.

Table 1. Distribution of struggling learners in PKLP by section, Term 1, SY 2026–2027 (N = 104 total enrollment; 78 target participants).

Grade 11 Section & Strand	Male	Female	Total Enrollment	% Struggling Learners	Target Participants (N)
PSA-2	22	9	31	100%	31
RS	7	32	39	66.67%	26
PSA-5	23	11	34	61.76%	21
TOTAL	**52**	**52**	**104**	**68.27%**	**78**

PSA-2 returned the highest need, with 100% of its 31 learners (22 male, 9 female) classified as struggling — the entire class required intervention. RS (39 learners: 7 male, 32 female) showed 66.67% struggling (26 target participants), a moderate-to-high need. PSA-5 (34 learners: 23 male, 11 female) showed the lowest proportion among the three sections at 61.76% (21 target participants), though this still represents a majority of the section. Across all three sections, 78 of 104 learners (68.27%) were classified as struggling, establishing PSA-2 as the highest-priority group, followed by RS and PSA-5.

Instruments and Data Sources

Primary data sources were archival student performance records from Term 1: (a) five teacher-made written tests, (b) item-analysis logs from the two 50-item collaborative summative tests (July 8 and July 28, 2026), and (c) individual raw scores from the 60-item Term-1 Unified Examination (August 28–September 1, 2026), all collaboratively constructed by PKLP subject teachers for standardized alignment.

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Data Gathering Procedure

Phase 1 — Baseline Profiling (Term 1: June 15–September 15, 2026). Quantitative data from the five baseline teacher-made tests, classroom formative checklists, and performance-task outputs were collected and organized. Scores from the two collaborative summative tests and the Term-1 Unified Exam were compiled into individual learner profiles to form the formal pre-test data matrix.

Phase 2 — Intervention Tracking (Term 2, beginning September 16, 2026). The identical student cohort will receive Project TOTOK materials. Progress will be monitored using parallel summative and periodic assessment instruments evaluating vocabulary retention and written/spoken output quality.

The Project TOTOK Intervention

Project TOTOK comprises three components delivered to the 78 identified struggling learners:

1. Ang Talahuluganang TOTOK (Scaffolding Glossary Guide) — every core PKLP reading passage is accompanied by a contextualized vocabulary index. Complex historical or sociological Tagalog terms (e.g., suguan, pag-aaklas, katutubo, kolonyalismo, kamalayan) are cross-referenced with simplified modern terms, regional equivalents, and concrete situational examples.
2. Guided Dual-Language Scaffolding Cards — reading inserts that break complex historical texts into manageable segments, pairing the original formal text with structured comprehension-guide questions that let students unpack and rephrase ideas in accessible language before returning to formal spoken or written Filipino.
3. The "Tamang Oras" Remedial Sessions — dedicated 30–45 minute remedial reading intervals during modular, flexible, or remediation hours, focused on phonetic pronunciation, semantic contextual mapping, and structured paragraph building.

Data Analysis Plan

Descriptive statistics (mean, percentage, standard deviation) will summarize performance profiles from baseline through post-intervention checkpoints. A paired t-test (or Wilcoxon signed-rank test, if normality assumptions are not met) will test the significance of the difference between Term-1 baseline scores and Term-2 post-intervention scores. Qualitative error and content analysis will categorize persistent structural errors in oral recitation and written work to characterize shifts in learners' ability to express concepts in formal Tagalog.

Ethical Considerations

The study proceeds under school-head approval and clearance secured during the conceptualization phase (May 1–June 14, 2026), consistent with DepEd Order No. 16, s. 2017 research management guidelines (Department of Education, 2017). Only archival, de-identified performance data are used for the baseline analysis reported here.

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Results

Baseline Academic Performance Profile (Research Question 1)

Table 1 (above) presents the baseline distribution. Across the combined five teacher-made tests, two collaborative summative tests, and the Term-1 Unified Examination, 78 of 104 Grade 11 PKLP learners (68.27%) across the three pilot sections fell below the expected competency threshold. The proportion of struggling learners varied by section: PSA-2 (100%, n = 31) showed uniform low performance across the entire class; RS (66.67%, n = 26) and PSA-5 (61.76%, n = 21) showed a majority but non-uniform struggle, suggesting within-section variation not fully captured by the aggregate percentage.

Linguistic and Comprehension Difficulties Observed (Research Question 2)

Item analysis of the collaborative summative tests and the Term-1 Unified Examination, together with classroom observation during Term 1, indicated that struggling learners' difficulties clustered around three patterns: (a) decoding and defining specialized historical–sociological Tagalog vocabulary (e.g., terms such as suguan, pag-aaklas, katutubo, kolonyalismo, kamalayan), (b) reformulating source-text ideas into their own words during oral recitation, and (c) producing structured written responses to source-based and analytical items in formal Tagalog. These patterns directly informed the design of Project TOTOK's three components.

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Discussion

The baseline findings confirm a substantial, section-specific gap between the linguistic demands of PKLP under the Senior High School Strengthening Curriculum and Grade 11 learners' functional Tagalog proficiency. The scale of the gap — over two-thirds of learners across three sections, and the entirety of one section — is consistent with the broader literature's observation that comprehension deficits in the language of instruction depress performance across subject areas, not only in language subjects proper (Uysal & Akyol, 2019). That PSA-2 shows complete (100%) struggle while PSA-5 shows the lowest rate (61.76%) suggests that track-level or classroom-level factors beyond the shared curriculum may moderate the size of the gap, a question this baseline dataset cannot resolve on its own, but which post-intervention analysis, disaggregated by section, may help clarify.

Project TOTOK's three-component design (contextualized glossary, dual-language scaffolding cards, and structured remedial sessions) responds directly to the difficulty pattern observed during baseline diagnostics: vocabulary decoding, oral reformulation, and structured written production. This design is consistent with Krashen's (1982) comprehensible-input hypothesis, in which scaffolded exposure just above a learner's current level supports acquisition, and with Vygotsky's (1978) construct of socially mediated learning within a zone of proximal development, operationalized here through guided, peer- and teacher-supported reading practice rather than unassisted independent reading. It also extends prior Philippine school-based remedial reading action research (e.g., Aguirre et al., 2019) into a subject area — PKLP — where remedial materials have so far been scarce, and does so within DepEd's own three-term calendar rather than as an add-on outside the regular instructional schedule.

Because Term 2 intervention and post-testing were not yet complete at the time of this manuscript, the central hypothesis — that Project TOTOK produces a statistically significant improvement in academic performance and conceptual literacy (Research Question 4) — remains untested. The pre-test matrix established here is nonetheless a necessary and methodologically important contribution: it fixes the baseline against which the planned paired-sample comparison will be evaluated, and its section-level detail sets up disaggregated post-intervention analysis. Practical implications for PKLP instruction, and for other Filipino-medium subjects under the Strengthening Curriculum, should be treated as provisional until the post-intervention data are analyzed.

Limitations

This baseline phase has three limitations. First, the design is a single-group pre-test/post-test design without a comparison group, so the improvement observed after intervention cannot be fully isolated from maturation, practice effects, or concurrent instruction. Second, the sample is purposive and confined to three sections of one school, limiting generalizability. Third, the reported difficulty patterns for Research Question 2 are drawn from item analysis and classroom observation rather than a formal, independently coded error taxonomy; a more granular linguistic error analysis would strengthen causal claims about which specific difficulty each Project TOTOK component addresses.

Implementation Plan

Table 2 summarizes the six-phase work plan spanning conceptualization (May 2026) through reporting (January 2027), and Table 3 details the estimated budget of ₱2,000.00 to be sourced from localized school funds, personal resources, or the Basic Education Research Fund (BERF), following standard DepEd accounting and auditing regulations.

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Table 2. Action research work plan and timeline

Phase	Target Dates	Key Activities / Deliverable
I. Conceptualization & Proposal	May 1 – Jun 14, 2026	Draft proposal, design modules, secure school-head approval, and ethical clearance.
II. Baseline Diagnostics (Term 1)	Jun 15 – Jul 31, 2026	Administer 5 teacher-made tests: 1st Summative (Jul 8) and 2nd Summative (Jul 28).
III. Unified Term Exam & Pre-Test Lockdown	Aug 1 – Sep 15, 2026	Administer 60-item Term-1 Exam (Aug 28–Sep 1); item analysis; freeze baseline profiles (N=78).
IV. Intervention Deployment (Term 2)	Sep 16 – Nov 15, 2026	Roll out Project TOTOK materials during flexible learning hours; contextualized vocabulary drilling.
V. Post-Intervention Evaluation	Nov 16 – Dec 15, 2026	Parallel post-test evaluation; final statistical analysis of pre/post differences.
VI. Reporting & Sharing	Dec 16, 2026 – Jan 2027	Finalize report, submit to LRMDS, and present at SLAC.

Table 3. Cost estimate

Budget Item	Unit Cost (PHP)	Quantity	Total (PHP)
Reproduction of Project TOTOK Scaffolding Cards	₱5.00/page	3 sections × 40 sheets	₱600.00
Digital Interactive Talahuluganan Guides	₱0.00 (digital)	80 students	₱0.00
Assessment & Evaluation Sheets	₱2.50/sheet	114 × 4 tests	₱1,140.00
Digital Data Processing & Statistical Computation	₱0.00 (DIY/Excel)	—	₱0.00
SLAC Dissemination & Printing of Final Reports	₱52.00/copy	5 softbound copies	₱260.00

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TOTAL ESTIMATED BUDGET			**₱2,000.00**

Dissemination and Utilization

Findings and materials will be shared through three channels: (a) School Learning Action Cell (SLAC) sessions with fellow Senior High School humanities and social science teachers, to extend language-barrier scaffolding strategies to other Filipino-medium subjects; (b) the Learning Resource Management and Development System (LRMDS), where the digitized vocabulary scaffolding sheets and Talahuluganan guides will be uploaded as verified remediation resources; and (c) Division-level research conferences, through submission to the Schools Division Research Committee (SDRC) for potential presentation. The completed Project TOTOK materials will also be compiled into a digital instructional repository for schools facing similar PKLP language-comprehension challenges.

Conclusion

Term-1 baseline diagnostics establish that 68.27% of Grade 11 learners across three pilot PKLP sections are struggling with the Filipino-medium literacy demands of the Senior High School Strengthening Curriculum, with needs ranging from 61.76% to 100% by section. This gap justifies the structured, three-component Project TOTOK intervention and the pre-test/post-test action research design built around it. Post-intervention results, to be collected through December 2026, will determine whether Project TOTOK produces a statistically significant improvement in academic performance and conceptual literacy, and will be reported in a subsequent article.

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