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UTILIZATION OF MERIT CARDS FOR STRATEGIC TRACKING AND ASSESSING RECITATION FOR PASSIVE ENGLISH 9 LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

This study aligned with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4 on Quality Education and addressed the challenge of ensuring equitable learning opportunities for students with diverse engagement styles. Traditional classroom assessment often favored active learners through recitation and participation, disadvantaging passive learners who preferred listening and internalizing content. This imbalance raised concerns about fairness in evaluating student performance.

Using a quantitative quasi-experimental one-group pretest–posttest design, forty (40) Grade 9 passive English learners at Calamba City Science Integrated School participated in the intervention. Pretest scores revealed an overall mean of 38.3, verbally interpreted as Beginning, with 65% of students in the lowest proficiency category. After the implementation of merit cards, posttest scores increased to 60.4, verbally interpreted as Approaching Proficient, with 45% of students reaching Proficient. Statistical analysis yielded a p-value of .001, below the .05 significance level, leading to rejection of the null hypothesis and confirming the effectiveness of the intervention.

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The findings highlighted the merit card system as a structured tool that promoted participation, confidence, and oral communication skills among passive learners. With an overall mean score of 60.4 and a standard deviation of 2.52, nearly half of the learners attained proficiency, while only a small proportion remained at lower levels. Based on these outcomes, the proposed action plan, Project STARS, was recommended for institutional adoption to advance equitable participation and strengthen effective English instruction.

Keywords: *merit cards, strategic tracking, recitation assessment, passive learners, and English proficiency*

INTRODUCTION

Education had long been recognized as a powerful force for change. It broke the cycle of poverty, drove economic growth, and fostered innovation. This was one of the end goals of the United Nations General Assembly and Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education) in the 2015 UN General Assembly, where the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was adopted, including 17 SDGs. More recently, global gatherings such as the 2025 UNESCO Global Education Coalition Annual Meeting in Paris and the Global Sustainable Development Congress in Istanbul reaffirmed the urgency of innovative approaches to strengthen student engagement and achievement worldwide by expanding educational opportunities for all. These opportunities included strategies that teachers employed in classrooms.

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As it is, recitation and participation remain traditional bases for assessing performance. Learners who frequently recited often gained teachers' approval, as their active engagement demonstrated mastery of lessons. However, this approach posed challenges: teachers struggled to track performance fairly, and parents questioned low grades attributed to limited participation. The issue was particularly complex for passive learners, who preferred listening and internalizing content rather than actively engaging. As explained by Melio Education (n.d.), passive learning was teacher-centered, with students absorbing information quietly, while active learning emphasized student-centered engagement and frequent participation. This distinction highlighted the risk of undervaluing passive learners despite their ability to process knowledge effectively.

Meanwhile, motivation played a critical role in bridging the gap between passive and active learning. Research showed that highly motivated students were more likely to engage in learning activities, persist in challenging tasks, and achieve higher academic outcomes (Ryan & Deci, 2000, as cited in Springer, 2012). Motivation also influenced students' willingness to participate in discussions and collaborative tasks. Class participation, including asking questions, sharing ideas, and engaging in dialogue, was considered an important indicator of student engagement and active learning (Rocca, 2010, as cited in Alghamdi, 2021). Therefore, the challenge for teachers was to identify motivational strategies that encouraged participation while recognizing that some learners preferred reflective or less overt forms of engagement.

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In response, the use of Merit Cards for Strategic Tracking and Assessing Recitation for Passive English 9 Learners at Calamba City Science Integrated School was proposed. The intervention aimed to strengthen learners' recitation and participation and sought to transform them from passive to active learners by completing tasks indicated on the merit cards. Merit cards were considered a form of recognition used to acknowledge students' positive behavior and academic performance. Studies suggest that reward and recognition systems serve as effective motivational tools that encourage engagement and participation. For instance, recent research found that implementing reward-based strategies increased motivation and participation, leading to improved academic performance and more active involvement in learning tasks (Viray-Castillejos, 2023). Thus, merit cards also functioned as a strategy for teachers to track and assess students' performance and participation.

Hence, the limited local research on the use of merit cards for strategic tracking and assessment of recitation underpinned the need for a study to confirm their value in increasing students' performance, particularly in Philippine educational contexts. The researcher endeavored to design a merit card for the English class and examine its effectiveness and impact as a tool for Strategic Tracking and Assessing Recitation for Passive English 9 Learners.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This chapter details the methodological framework of the study, including the research design, the selection of participants, the procedures for gathering data, the instruments utilized, and the strategies for data analysis. The primary objective of this research was to

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enhance the academic performance of learners utilizing merit cards for strategic tracking and assessing recitation to address passive learning habits among English 9 student at Calamba City Science Integrated School. These insights served as the foundation for developing enhancement initiatives during the 2025–2026 academic year.

Research Methodology

The study employed a quantitative quasi-experimental nonequivalent design to evaluate the effectiveness of merit cards in tracking and assessing recitation among passive English 9 learners. An experimental group was observed using merit cards, which functioned as positive reinforcement to encourage participation while providing a structured mechanism for monitoring engagement. Learners' performance was measured using a pretest–posttest design, with baseline scores collected before the intervention and post-intervention scores collected after its implementation. The differences between the two sets of scores were analyzed using a paired t-test to determine whether the merit card system produced statistically significant improvements in recitation performance. This approach provided empirical evidence on the potential of merit cards to enhance engagement and achievement among passive learners in English 9 at Calamba City Science Integrated School.

The study focused on 40 Grade 9 learners, who exhibited passive behavior and demonstrated limited participation in English class recitations. The target population included English 9 learners from different Grade 9 sections to ensure a diverse range of abilities and engagement. In this quasi-experimental nonequivalent study titled "Utilizing Merit Cards for

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Strategic Tracking and Assessing Recitation for English 9 Passive Learners," purposive sampling was employed. Learners were selected by writing their names on slips of paper, placing them in a box, and drawing lots; 10 students from each section were chosen to form the 40 participants in the experimental group. The group underwent a pretest to assess their initial recitation performance. During the intervention, the experimental group utilized merit cards to track and encourage participation. After the intervention period, a posttest was administered to measure changes in performance. The comparison of pretest and posttest results showed that the merit card strategy effectively improved the oral recitation skills of passive learners.

The first instrument of the study was a 50-item teacher-made pretest and posttest, aligned with the K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum for English 9 during the second grading period. These tests were administered to measure the respondents' performance before and after the intervention.

The second instrument was the Merit Card System, which was designed to track learners' recitation, participation, and overall performance. This structured card system allowed students to earn merit points based on their participation, accuracy, and confidence in recitation, thereby serving both as a motivational tool and an assessment mechanism.

The instruments employed in the study were validated by five experienced evaluators: two professors from the School of Graduate Studies of LCBA, two English teachers, and one Master Teacher. The validators assessed the test items and the expected learner activities indicated in the merit card for clarity, relevance, and alignment with the Grade 9 English

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learning competencies. The validation process yielded a Content Validity Index (CVI) of 1.00, indicating perfect agreement among the evaluators regarding the appropriateness and relevance of the instruments for assessing and enhancing student performance.

The data gathering procedure followed a structured and ethical process to ensure accuracy, reliability, and validity of the findings. Formal approval was first secured through a letter of request submitted to the Schools Division Superintendent of DepEd Calamba City and the School Head of Calamba City Science Integrated School. Once institutional approval was granted, consent forms were distributed to the parents or legal guardians of the participants. These forms explained the study's objectives, procedures, duration, and ethical considerations, including voluntary participation and data confidentiality, in compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (RA 10173).

A researcher-made pretest was then administered to the experimental group to establish baseline performance in English 9. Following the pretest, the group began using the merit card system, which was designed to motivate learners, strategically track recitation, and assess participation and academic performance. The merit card included specific criteria aligned with the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) for English 9. Over a 4–8-week intervention period, the teacher-researcher monitored and documented student performance, updating the merit cards weekly to reflect engagement and progress. At the end of the intervention, a posttest identical in format to the pretest was administered to measure improvement in performance.

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Finally, all collected data, including pretest and posttest scores, merit card records, and Likert scale responses, were encoded, securely stored, and subjected to statistical analysis to evaluate the effectiveness of the merit card system in strategically tracking and assessing recitation among passive English 9 learners.

The analysis of pretest and posttest scores provided clear evidence of the impact of the merit card system on learner performance. All statistical procedures were conducted using SPSS software, ensuring accuracy and validity of interpretation.

Specifically,

1. The mean pretest score established the baseline level of achievement, reflecting the initial proficiency of the group.

2. In the posttest, the standard deviation highlighted the variability of scores, while the distribution revealed how learners shifted across proficiency levels after the intervention.

3. A paired sample t-test confirmed that the difference between pretest and posttest scores was statistically significant at the 0.05 level, indicating that the observed improvement could be attributed to the merit card system.

The study adhered to the ethical guidelines outlined in the LCBA Research Manual. Participants were provided with a clear explanation of the study's objectives and significance, and confidentiality measures were implemented to protect their identities. Proper citation was given to all authors of the literature and studies used to establish the rationale and background of the research, as well as to support its findings. The MS Copilot application was utilized to assist in sourcing related studies and formatting the list of references.

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Strict compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (RA 10173) guaranteed the protection and confidentiality of all collected data. Measures were implemented to secure participants' personal information, including anonymizing responses, securely storing research materials, and restricting access to authorized personnel only. Data handling procedures were aligned with established ethical standards and legal requirements, with protocols for processing, retention, and disposal in place to prevent unauthorized access or breaches. These efforts reflected the researcher's strong commitment to upholding data privacy and maintaining integrity throughout the research process.

Research Design

This study utilized a quantitative quasi-experimental one-group pretest–posttest design. In this design, the same group of respondents was measured before and after the intervention, without random assignment. Forty (40) Grade 9 English learners from Calamba City Science Integrated School, identified as passive learners, served as the respondents. Their recitation performance was assessed prior to the introduction of the merit card system (pretest) and again after its implementation (posttest).

This design was appropriate because it allowed the researcher to evaluate the effectiveness of the merit card intervention within a naturally existing group, while acknowledging that randomization was not feasible in the classroom setting. Recent methodological discussions affirm that the one-group pretest–posttest design remains a

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practical and widely used approach in educational research when random assignment is not possible (Creswell & Guetterman, 2021).

Participants of the Study

The study focused on 40 Grade 9 learners who exhibited passive behavior and demonstrated limited participation in English class recitations. The target population included English 9 learners from different Grade 9 sections to ensure a diverse range of abilities and engagement. In this quasi-experimental nonequivalent study titled "Utilizing Merit Cards for Strategic Tracking and Assessing Recitation for English 9 Passive Learners," purposive sampling was employed.

Research Instrument

The first instrument of the study was a 50-item teacher-made pretest and posttest, aligned with the K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum for English 9 during the second grading period. These tests were administered to measure the respondents' performance before and after the intervention.

The second instrument was the Merit Card System, which was designed to track learners' recitation, participation, and overall performance. This structured card system allowed students to earn merit points based on their participation, accuracy, and confidence in recitation, thereby serving both as a motivational tool and an assessment mechanism.

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Validity of the Research Instrument

To ensure the research instrument employed in the study were validated by five experienced evaluators: two professors from the School of Graduate Studies of LCBA, two English teachers, and one Master Teacher. The validators assessed the test items and the expected learner activities indicated in the merit card for clarity, relevance, and alignment with the Grade 9 English learning competencies. The validation process yielded a Content Validity Index (CVI) of 1.00, indicating perfect agreement among the evaluators regarding the appropriateness and relevance of the instruments for assessing and enhancing student performance.

Data Gathering Procedures

The data gathering procedure followed a structured and ethical process to ensure accuracy, reliability, and validity of the findings. The study was conducted during the second grading period of Academic Year 2025–2026 at Calamba City Science Integrated School, focusing on selected Grade 9 passive English learners. Formal approval was first secured through a letter of request submitted to the Schools Division Superintendent of DepEd Calamba City and the School Head of Calamba City Science Integrated School. Once institutional approval was granted, consent forms were distributed to the parents or legal guardians of the participants. These forms explained the study's objectives, procedures, duration, and ethical considerations, including voluntary participation and data confidentiality, in compliance with the Data Privacy Act of 2012 (RA 10173).

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A researcher-made pretest was then administered to the experimental group to establish baseline performance in English 9. Following the pretest, the group began using the merit card system, which was designed to motivate learners, strategically track recitation, and assess participation and academic performance. The merit card included specific criteria aligned with the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) for English 9. Over a 4–8-week intervention period, the teacher-researcher monitored and documented student performance, updating the merit cards weekly to reflect engagement and progress. At the end of the intervention, a posttest identical in format to the pretest was administered to measure improvement in performance.

Finally, all collected data, including pretest and posttest scores, merit card records, and Likert scale responses, were encoded, securely stored, and subjected to statistical analysis to evaluate the effectiveness of the merit card system in strategically tracking and assessing recitation among passive English 9 learners.

Data Analysis

The analysis of pretest and posttest scores provided clear evidence of the impact of the merit card system on learner performance. All statistical procedures were conducted using SPSS software, ensuring accuracy and validity of interpretation.

Specifically,

1. The mean pretest score established the baseline level of achievement, reflecting the initial proficiency of the group.

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2. In the posttest, the standard deviation highlighted the variability of scores, while the distribution revealed how learners shifted across proficiency levels after the intervention.

3. A paired sample t-test confirmed that the difference between pretest and posttest scores was statistically significant at the 0.05 level, indicating that the observed improvement could be attributed to the merit card system.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of using merit cards for strategic tracking and recitation assessment in passive English 9.

The research method utilized in the study was a quantitative quasi-experimental one-group pretest–posttest design. In this design, the same group of respondents was measured before and after the intervention, without random assignment.

The study used quantitative quasi-experimental one-group pretest–posttest design.

The participants of the study were the 40 Grade 9 learners who exhibited passive behavior and demonstrated limited participation in English class recitations. at Calamba City Scince Integrated School.

The research instrument utilized in the study was a 50-item teacher-made pretest and posttest, aligned with the K to 12 Basic Education Curriculum for English 9.

The second instrument was the Merit Card System, which was designed to track learners' recitation, participation, and overall performance.

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A panel of experts validated the interview schedule, and all comments and suggestions were considered in the final revision of the tool.

Permits from the research adviser, Graduate School Dean, Schools Division Superintendent, School Head, and individual participants were obtained to allow the researcher to conduct the study.

The information gathered was analyzed using using SPSS software, ensuring accuracy and validity of interpretation.

The following are the findings of the study:

1. The Pretest Score of the English 9 Passive Learners before the Utilization of Merit Cards for Strategic Tracking and Assessing Recitation

It had a general assessment of 38.3, verbally interpreted as Beginning.

2. The Posttest Scores of the English 9 Passive Learners after the Utilization of Merit Cards for Strategic Tracking and Assessing Recitation

It had a general assessment of 60.4, verbally interpreted as Approaching Proficiency.

3. Test of Significant Difference between the Pretest Scores and Posttest Scores of English 9 Passive Learners before and after the Utilization of Merit Cards for Strategic Tracking and Assessing Recitation

There was a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores of the English 9 passive learners. The statistical analysis revealed a mean difference of –22.10 between the pretest and posttest scores, with a standard deviation of 5.13. The computed t-

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value of –27.28 and the p-value of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$) indicate that the difference was highly significant. Thus, the null hypothesis was rejected.

4. Proposed Action Plan

The proposed action plan for Project STARS can be adopted and institutionalized in English 9 instruction. The structured strategies outlined in the plan, such as consistent recitation tracking, merit-based recognition, and regular feedback, should be implemented school-wide to foster active learning and improve oral communication skills.

Recommendations

Based on the outlined findings and finalized conclusions, the following recommendations have been drawn:

1. Teachers may integrate structured motivational tools such as merit cards into their daily classroom practice to stimulate engagement, build confidence, and reduce passive learning behaviors. By consistently applying these tools, teachers can provide learners with equitable opportunities to participate, thereby addressing the baseline condition of limited proficiency and ensuring that students' progress beyond basic performance levels.

2. School administrators may support the implementation of merit cards by allocating resources, organizing recognition programs, and encouraging teachers to adopt motivational strategies. Administrative backing ensures that the merit card system is not only sustained but also institutionalized, creating a culture of active participation and equitable growth across varying learner abilities.

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3. English teachers may consistently track and evaluate student participation using the merit card system to ensure measurable academic gains. Through systematic monitoring, teachers can validate the effectiveness of merit cards as both a behavioral and instructional tool, while also identifying learners who require additional reinforcement to achieve proficiency in oral recitation.

4. The school community may institutionalize Project STARS as a sustainable intervention by aligning it with curriculum goals, reinforcing communication and critical thinking skills, and fostering a participatory classroom environment. This collective effort ensures that the project is not a one-time initiative but a long-term strategy that transforms passive learners into confident, interactive participants.

5. Future researchers expand the study by exploring the long-term effects of merit card systems across different grade levels, subjects, and contexts. They may also investigate variations in implementation, such as digital merit cards or integration with other motivational frameworks, to strengthen the evidence base and provide broader insights into how structured reinforcement can enhance student performance and engagement.

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