
Perception in implementing English as a medium of instruction: A phenomenological study in Upper Secondary Levels S. Y. 2022-2023

Jezelle Aron-Salvacion^{1*} ¹Unida Christian Colleges, Philippines. jaron@ucc.ph

*Corresponding author

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Abstract: This study focuses on the perception of Senior High School learners in implementing English as a medium of instruction. The goal is to assess how the students appreciate the use of English as a medium of instruction and how willing they are to have the instruction in full English. The researcher examines the students using an interview to gather data on how the learners are ready in having a full English class in specific subjects. The study promotes the importance of the English language in developing the learner's academic and personal growth. This targeted the informants that have experiences in limited use of a second language in class discussion and how it impacts their progress in mastering the English language. The problem of this study is how mixed languages developed a gap in the learning process of the learners that also hinders them to practice the second language. Based on the conducted study, the students prefer to have a second language as a medium of instruction despite the challenges they encounter such as in communicating with other people, constructing sentences, conceptualizing ideas, and the like. The reason behind the willingness of the students was they believed that for them to learn the language, practicing it should be the best option. This study is conducted to address the phenomenon that concerns the vocabulary and communication of the learners in using English and effectively encourage its benefit that they can take advantage of in the future.

Keywords: English language, Medium of instruction, Second language, Students, Upper Secondary Levels

Biographical notes: Jezelle Aron-Salvacion is a licensed Senior High School Research Teacher from Unida Christian Colleges located at Anabu I-F, Imus City, Cavite, Philippines.

1. Introduction

Good communication can solve problems in both cultural, societal, economic, and education. According to new research (Clemencia, 2022), the Language provision in the 1987 Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines which is embodied in Article XIV, Sec. 6 and 7 provided the legal basis for the languages implemented in the country, which pertains to the use of both Filipino and English language.

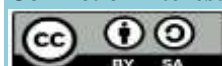
This Bilingual Education aims to achieve equal competence in both Filipino and English languages, with both languages as a medium of instruction. Language is the core of communication that connects people, educates one another, and most importantly builds relationships. Filipinos can communicate using their native language (NL) and their second language (SL), English. Both languages were taught to (L1) learners from kinder up to higher year levels.

Learning starts at home. As the learners grow, the child's development gets wider as well. Entering schools and meeting new people allows a learner to be exposed to multiple beliefs, cultures, norms, and identities. As time passes, English is primarily used as a medium of instruction rather than the national language. Academic subjects such as Mathematics, Science, etc., are courses that use English languages. A common misconception among learners is that English starts with A-B-C and ends with a good self-introduction, but English is more than just a basic alphabet to remember, sing, and pronounce but rather a language that connects a continent to another continent; hence it is called the universal language.

According to the report of the Programme for International Student Assessment or PISA (2018), the Philippines scored the lowest in reading comprehension in subjects like Reading, Mathematics, and Science. The average reading score was 340, which was 200 points below China. China is known as non-English speakers and clearly shows difficulty in phonetics compared to the Philippines, which has over 90 million, or 88% of the population who can speak and use English as their second language (Temelkova, 2022). The Philippines placed second lowest in Mathematics (353) and

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Science (357) among 79 participating countries. It is alarming to see several learners left behind, considering that the Philippines has over 10,000 ESL teachers. On the other hand, Filipinos also have problems correcting their native Filipino grammar. The use of "ng", "nang", "sila", "sina", and even the Filipino translations of English words that are considered borrowed terminologies are needed to be enhanced as well.

With the study being conducted, Unida Christian Colleges has approximately 5,000 students in Imus, Cavite, and half are Senior High School learners. Among the average class size of 40 to 55 students, 70% can read and write, 20% cannot compose their own writings, and 10% have problems in reading based on the assessment of the learners and the percentage of the Unida Christian Colleges Achievement Test or UCCAT. Senior High School is a good preparation for college; as early as now, they are considered young professionals. Most students do not use the English language; hence, "Taglish" or *Tagalog-English* is the common language used in the class, which somehow confuses the student's progress.

To address this ongoing phenomenon, this phenomenological study aims to assess how the students respond, adapt, and participate in subjects applying English as a medium of instruction primarily, in English, Math, and Science (EMS). The researcher gave the selected learners a maximum of 1 month for assessment with 100% English instructions. After the said timeframe, the researcher will evaluate the students to see how far they improve from the moment they begin the assessment. The selected informants will be chosen based on the informants' validation to be conducted by the researcher. The main goal of this study is to assess the impact of the implementation of English as a medium of instruction if English is used continuously within the target timeframe. The researcher grounded this study on B.F Skinner's Operant Conditioning Theory, which targets the increase in pairing performance and behaviour to obtain a positive and successful outcome.

2. Literature review

From 1898 to 1901, over 70,000 American soldiers came under the supervision of Admiral John Dewey, who influenced Filipinos to the English language. In the late 1950s, UNESCO proclaimed the need to use "mother tongue" as a medium of instruction since students can easily understand the discussion. According to Porciuncula (2011), then English can be taught as a subject but not as a medium of instruction refer to (Bernardo, 2009: 31).

Going back to where it began, English was formally introduced to the Philippines during the US colonial occupation, and in the early 1900s, it was officially declared as the second language of the Filipinos. In the present year, learners were taught to speak English from the time they went to school, starting from the basic pronunciation of the alphabet to the most complex use of the English language. Through the years, English has been a widely used language inside the classroom. However, challenges in applying the language are still evident among learners from different cultures. Students need motivation in building an attitude toward the target language to attain the process of learning. (Mantiri, 2015; Kazantseva et al., 2016).

2.1. Reading comprehension

One of the skills that a learner must acquire in learning the English language is the ability to comprehend. Hence, the most significant reason affecting reading inefficiency among L2 learners is the lack of reading strategy (Sahmadan & Ajam, 2020). Given that the learners have prior knowledge of the target language, the effectivity will be shown based on the awareness set by the students (Yapp et al., 2021). Inadequate reading exercises and inconsistent training in language delivery and usage can result in poor academic performance (Abdelrahman & Bsharah, 2014; Alroud, 2015). Concerning the study conducted by the researcher, the possible factor why the informants are experiencing challenges in the English language is the inconsistent use of the language during classroom interaction. Inconsistency may lead to a habit of not using English as a medium of instruction. The essence of reading effectively is highly applied and adapted during the primary grade levels (Ankrum, Genest, & Morewood, 2017) and later applied to a much higher degree of learners, such as secondary and upper secondary students.

This study bridges communication and the language teachers to conduct training to assess the learner's capacity to comprehend and read a text on a day-to-day basis.

2.2. English for instruction

The English language is ordinary in the Philippines but, then, but despite it being used for so many years, it is evident that the result of the target language is not attained yet. There are many factors why linguistic barriers still exist in a classroom setting. In this situation, it can be the method, delivery, or sometimes the instruction itself. Language policy implementation and field practices can somehow be the problem. However, even when they do not include the teachers in the decision-making processes, language teachers are still accountable for this never-ending issue. Another problem with language is the time when a foreign language was learned. (Bayyurt, 2012).

In Philippine classrooms, a second language is more difficult to learn depending on the dialect more familiar to the learner. The challenge of lecture delivery in English commonly started with the application of both native languages (NL) and second language (SL). The confusion began when the teacher explains the English subject using the native language and when they teach the Filipino subject in "taglish" or *Tagalog-English*. Teachers and the school should apply the subject they are teaching accordingly.

2.3. English for professional purposes

In this modern era, effective communication has become a professional and personal advancement for individuals. The use of English as a second language is widely used not only academically but much more in the professional world. Based on the findings of Rahman (Rahman, 2012) from the author (Akther, 2022), most companies are largely based on one's ability to communicate effectively in English and other critical professional skills. Job seekers are having a hard time finding opportunities and experiencing setbacks because they lack the ability to communicate effectively in the professional and corporate world.

3. Research methodology

The research study was conducted using the phenomenological approach. This approach was used to examine the lived experiences of the target informants along with the qualitative approach that was maximized to analyze the data gathered from interviews, scholarly journals, internet-based articles, and various international journals.

3.1. Research objectives

The objective of the study is to develop the competencies of the learners in using English as a Second Language. It promotes appreciation of the English language to create advanced, quality, and globally competitive students.

4. Findings and discussions

This section will provide the formulated research findings.

Reading comprehension

Research Question 1: *How is the learner's performance during class discussions while continuously using English as a medium of instruction?*

The Informants mostly mentioned that they are having a hard time collaborating since they cannot comprehend or speak the language used. This type of research question aims to see how a certain phenomenon affects the growth of each learner and provide a new concept in coming up with any pedagogical approaches that will certainly assist student development.

Presented are the following themes and sub-themes in data analysis. Bold letters are the themes presented in the table below and the italics represent the sub-themes. The statements below share the informants' lived experiences in class while using English as a medium of class instruction. The table also presented the summary of themes and sub-themes along with a discussion of the result.

The first theme that emerge was about an understanding of context. Informants mentioned that the use of the English language in class instruction helped them improve their vocabulary but somehow weakens their confidence in communication.

"The use of English language in our class discussion makes us more open in learning the second language. The only thing that bothers us is the delivery of the English language each time we have class recitation and reporting." (Informant A)

Informants mentioned their confidence in speaking the second language; particularly in class reporting and recitation. Informants' main concern is that they can understand English but cannot speak or use the language fluently which also hinders them to try practicing the language.

"I am not good in English. Most words used in the discussion are words with deeper meaning. There are times that I cannot fully understand the discussion due to the choice of words used. Primarily, we are required to recite and speak in English but it makes me feel so anxious each time that the ideas in my head are not the same as the ideas I wanted to present verbally since I cannot translate it in English." (Informant B)

Theme 1.1: Lack of Language practice

The common experiences that the informants are sharing were their challenges in second language delivery. Most of the students can say that they can understand but cannot effectively speak or use the language. In that situation, the English language is not verbally developed. Technically speaking, the use of English as a second language can be learned more if it is used or practiced daily. In relation to classroom delivery, informants shared that they are fond of listening to the English language better than the native language. The only problem is that some teachers are using "Taglish" or the Filipino language in class delivery to assure that other students can follow. This strategy may be effective for some but for students who are into English language discussion, this may cause confusion about the subject matter.

"I personally understand English language better than Filipino." (Informant B)

"I am okay with English language as medium of instruction so... I can practice my vocabulary." (Informant C)

"It is better to use both languages so it can benefit not just specific students but all types of students. Most of us can understand and speak English but sadly, we have some classmates who are challenged in using the second language." (Informant D)

"I prefer full Filipino instruction or taglish because I am personally challenged in English." (Informant E)

Theme 1.2: Exposure to second Language

Other informants are saying that fluency in the second language is a common problem since most of them are not using the English language daily and a sudden gap in language development occurs if the participant is not fully exposed to a second language since the start of their academic journey.

"Enjoy but sometimes pag malalalim na salita ay di masyado makuha but pag may sentences nakukuha ang ibig sabihin." (Informant A)

"Deep meaning of the word, that's makes me feel bad about myself 'cause I don't have a full knowledge in English language." (Informant B)

"When they speak fast using English, my brain is loading so... sometimes I don't understand." (Informant C)

"Some of the words are new to me so there are sometimes that I can't understand." (Informant D)

Research Question 2: *What are the assessments and learning strategies to apply to make retention work effectively when using English as a medium of instruction?*

English for instruction

Theme: Consistency of action plan or strategies

Addressing the phenomenon faced by learners in using the English Language is the main solution to lessen or eliminate the progress in a second language. Most of the time, the limited knowledge of the use of the English language affects not only verbal skills but also writing skills. Since the informants shared their willingness in using English as a medium of instruction, the hindrance is the implementation of how the use of the second language in classroom discussion becomes beneficial not just to some learners but to all types of students. Some strategies were mentioned during the interview with the chosen informants.

"Our teaching tried to speak English the whole time and see how we will react to it." (Informant A)

"We have collaborative activities and each one of us are assigned to explain our part in English which is very uncomfortable.. I might.. say wrong words or grammar." (Informant B)

"My friends and classmates are laughing in times I used English and mispronounced words." (Informant C)

"We decided to pay each time we use our native language instead English. The money will go directly to our class fund." (Informant D)

"My teachers are speaking "taglish" or Filipino mix with some English. That sounds confusing and sleepy since our mind is not working well because there is nothing to comprehend and was discussed by the teacher." (Informant E)

"Regardless of the subject, most teachers are using Filipino language." (Informant F)

"We are tasked to speak English then the teacher will translate if we mistakenly say the word in Filipino." (Informant G)

Relying on the use of both English and Filipino language caused positive and negative outcomes for the learners. Using "Taglish" and Filipino in subjects like Science and Math is inappropriate for some learners. It was mentioned that the more teachers are not following the English Only Policy rule in a class setup, the more it gets confusing to learners and even forget the reason why they need to practice the second language.

Research Question 3: *How is the use of English as a medium of instruction beneficial to learners in both academic and real-life applications?*

English for professional purposes

Theme: Defining the other benefits of English Language

"It is evident that enough exposure to second language improves self-development and trust of each learner. The more they are open to use the second language, the more they have a chance to expand their vocabulary and skills in both verbal and written language communication."

"It provides input for the learner."

"If I hear good English speakers, it inspires me to become a better speaker too."

“I am personally not good in English, but applying English in class discussion can help me improve myself.”
(Informant A)

“I mostly get ideas to use other terms and translate my Filipino word into English. It will help us on class reporting or research defense.” (Informant B)

“In the future, we will need to speak English since this is universal and most job interviews are English.” (Informant C)

Research Question 4: *What are the possible recommendations based on the assessment of the selected learners at the end of the study?*

Examining the data gathered, the best recommendation for future researchers is to expand the informants more and look for a bigger locale. The study is limited to the Anabu 1-F, Senior High School students. What is good for them may not be good to others, and what might be a challenge for them, may not be a challenge to other language users.

Since the willingness of the learners to learn the second language, the researcher should begin examining the impact of this action plan to address the phenomenon and adjust if the goal of the plan will not meet the exact target results and expectations.

5. Conclusion

Based on the data in the results and discussion, the researcher concluded that the learners are not hating English at all nor are bothered by using English as a medium of instruction but rather open and convinced that the use of a second language can be more beneficial for them in enhancing their vocabulary, language competencies, and knowledge in delivery. The only factors that prevent the learners from cooperating are self-doubts or the intense feeling of being rejected once they use a wrong word, sentence, and pronunciation. Another thing is the use of deep or hifalutin words that only a few learners can understand. It was also mentioned that the speed of discussion while using the English language makes the learners uninterested, and lastly the familiarity and consistency of the teachers in using English as the medium of discussion. Hence, it is important to build a class environment that can accommodate all types of learners.

In connection with the theory of Classroom as Complex Adaptive System (Burns & Knox, 2011), learning the lived experiences of the informants can promote a good environment for students where they can freely practice the second language. Developing behaviour should be part of the pedagogical strategies of the teachers to assure that learners can still adapt to the lesson or if the use of English as a medium of instruction can stimulate communication anxiety or can build self-trust and confidence.

To profoundly understand the variety of perceptions among Senior High School learners in using English as a medium of instruction, below are the researcher recommendations:

- Teachers should start practicing the use of English as a medium of instruction consistently most importantly to subjects like Mathematics, Science, and others.
- Students should start applying English as they communicate or participate in classroom discussions primarily to subjects that require the use of a second language.
- Teachers must avoid using hifalutin words and start using common terms that all types of learners can understand.
- Teachers should decelerate their speech level and make sure all learners can fully grasp the discussion before moving on to the next.
- Teachers should assess all types of learners and develop an activity that can engage the learner’s interest in a second language.
- Future researchers should not limit the number of informants and start working on a bigger population and locale to assess the perception of the students in using English as a medium of instruction that can be utilized in the fullness of time.

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ORCID

Jezelle Aron-Salvacion  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8145-2030>

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