Plurilingualism and Foreign Language Education: A Review of the FL Curriculums in the Philippines

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Plurilingualism and
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in the Philippines

This report is of 2 parts. Part I discusses the Foreign Language Curriculums in the Philippines mandated by the Department of Education (DepEd), the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA), the result of a survey conducted by the researcher on the satisfaction and preferences of student learners with regard to the teaching and learning foreign languages, and the language teaching and learning issues and challenges in the country. Part II reports on the lived experiences of Filipino Learners of Spanish from the perspective of plurilingual learners.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

CEFR   -   Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

CHED   -   Commission on Higher Education

CMO   -   CHED Memorandum Order

COD   -   Centers of Development

COE   -   Centers of Excellence

DepED   -   Department of Education

FL   -   Foreign Language

LSI   -   Language Skills Institute

MEP   -   Madrasah Education Program

MOI   -   Medium of Instruction

SPFL   -   Special Program in Foreign Language

TESDA   -   Technical Education and Skills Development Authority

Part I: Foreign Language Curriculums in Philippine Education

Introduction

As plurilingualism and linguistic diversity are seen as more and more advantageous in many areas of the world, the Philippine education supports effective communication as key to sustaining an interconnected world, making foreign language skills the "ultimate 21st century social skill (Stein-Smith, K. 2017)" and global competency. The country also recognizes that the contribution to the development of global citizenship and the ability to use foreign languages offer many personal benefits to the language learners. It is one with the World Economic Forum (2017), as it views foreign language learning as one which fosters perspective-taking skills and cultural intelligence or the ability to understand and be flexible to different world views, hence allowing for easy transition to and engagement in varied new situations. Furthermore, plurilingual learners have been consistently found to be more cognitively advanced displaying creativity, problem-solving, divergent thinking, and social skills (O'Brien et. al., 2017) and those who participate in foreign language programs have academic gains in all learning areas (Abbott. 2018). Thus to prepare students for employment with plurilingual competence, and to engage in meaningful interactions in a linguistically and culturally diverse global workplace, the Philippine education put forth the inclusion of foreign language courses in its already multilingual classrooms.

In light of the above, this report reviews the Foreign Language Curriculums of the country to reveal how the national education systems can better support plurilingualism in schools. It attempts to answer the following questions:

- What foreign language education policies and practices in the Philippines appear to be inclusive approaches promoting plurilingualism and continuity of language learning?

- How is the teaching and learning of foreign language understood in the different contexts, the learning satisfaction and preferences of learners and the issues and challenges involved in promoting plurilingualism in schools?

- What key recommendations can be made that can serve as important steps to improve present language policies in the country?

The teaching and learning of Foreign Languages in the Philippines are governed by the country's education sectors: the Department of Education (DepEd) which formulates, implements, and coordinates Language policies, plans, programs and projects in basic education, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) which supervises the language curriculums of both public and private higher education institutions as well as degree-granting programs in all of the country's post-secondary educational institutions, and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) which manages and supervises the language curriculum for technical-vocational education and training.

One of the limitations of this report was a lack of empirical evidence, particularly longitudinal research in the Philippines that looks into comprehensive plurilingual

approaches of teaching highly diverse student population in schools. Because of the pandemic, the survey on the satisfaction and preferences of students in learning foreign languages was conducted only within Western Visayas. The researcher also made use of online available resources. Using content analysis, the researcher determined answers to questions using the different memorandums (where the text implies something, and not necessarily explicit) issued by the different education sectors of the country.

Department of Education's (DepEd) Foreign Language Curriculums

The implementation of the Department of Education's Special Program in Foreign Languages (SPFL) institutionalizes a range of foreign languages (FL) in the Philippines. The Special Program on Foreign Languages (SPFL) of the Department of Education (DepEd) in the Philippines has been implemented since 2009 to introduce foreign languages such as Spanish, Nihongo, French, German, Mandarin, and Korean, among others into basic education. In 2010 and 2017, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) also issued Memorandums on Foreign Languages (FL) that created guidelines for the teaching of foreign languages in higher education beyond English in the educational setting of the country. The SPFL of DepED and CHED Memorandums are particularly expedient to addressing considerable challenges and to providing resources to fulfill the resulting need for foreign language teachers.

In a study of Agcaoili et. all in 2019, the DepEd's Special Program in Foreign Languages (SPFL) aims to produce "globally competitive" multilingual Filipino learners who are "equipped with 21st–century skills" and who can move around in a "culturally diverse environment while preserving their national identity" so that the learners may be prepared for a "career in higher education, or entrepreneurship." These goals may be achieved by providing an "enhanced, research-based curriculum, a competent roster of teachers, supportive administrators, and a strong collaboration with program partners" (Agcaoili et al. 2019).

Instituted in 2009 in selected schools, the SPFL offered Spanish as its sole language offering. Through DepEd Order No. 46, s. 2012, it was subsequently officially recognized as part of its Special Curricular Programs. The program is implemented at the secondary level specifically the grades 7 to 12 students who have shown competence in English through their National Achievement Test scores (DepEd 2017a). However, these language courses will be taken by students as electives and are not part of the core curriculum. As such, these courses are allotted four hours per week as stipulated in DepEd Order No. 46, s. 2012. Moreover, the medium of instruction is English or the target language.

Presently, its language course offerings have expanded to three Asian and three European languages: Spanish, French, and Japanese which were offered in 2009, followed by German in 2010, Mandarin in 2011, and Korean in 2018. The objective of the SPFL is to

prepare students for higher education and employment with competence in a foreign language, and to engage in meaningful interactions in a linguistically and culturally diverse global workplace. The move to further increase each of the region's ownership of SPFL by taking part in the cost-sharing scheme and intensifying support for teachers' professional foreign language development is stated in DepEd Order No. 5, s. 2015 or the "Integration of travel expenses of SPFL teachers attending local training on teaching foreign language in the budget of the region/division/school. DepEd works with institutional partners for each language which assist in capacity building efforts, especially in training teachers in both the language and teaching methods, and to provide learning materials. Teacher training activities include providing face-to-face and distance courses on the language and the training of teachers on teaching methods with the partner institutions.

Immersion programs abroad for French and Spanish, are also available, such as master's degree scholarships in Spain for Spanish teachers. Table 1 lists the institutional partners for each language. Table 2 shows statistics on the nationwide implementation of the program. Current data on the SPFL show that the program is implemented in 16 out of 17 regions in the Philippines. There is a total of 630 FL teachers and 12,038 FL learners distributed among 254 schools all over the country.

A MODEL FOR IMPLEMENTING THE SPFL CURRICULUM
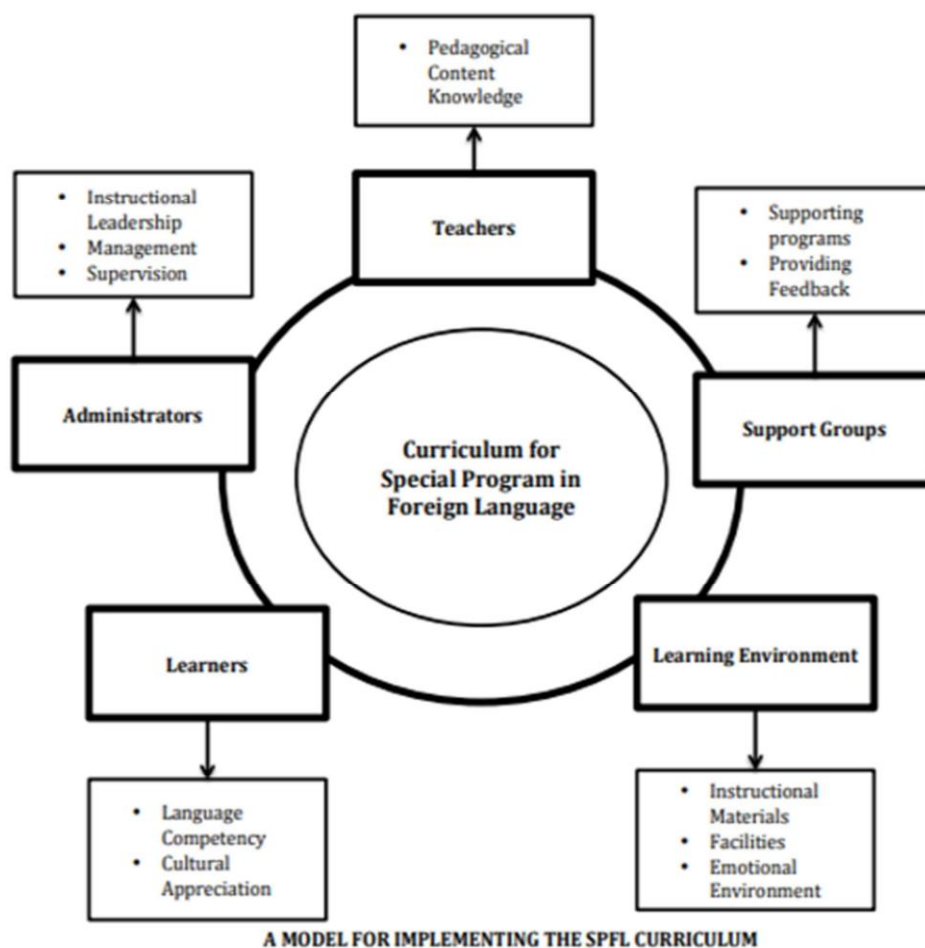
Figure 1. DepEd's Model for Implementing SPFL Curriculum.

The DepEd's model for implementing SPFL curriculum is cyclic in structure and includes four agents of implementation coined as "drivers", which include students, teachers, administration and support group. Each of them has a specific description synchronized with the practices needed for the effective implementation of SPFL.

Institutional Partners of Department of Education's Special Program in Foreign Language

Foreign Language	Institutional Partners
Mandarin	➢ Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Philippines ➢ Confucius Institute at Angeles University Foundation
Japanese	➢ Embassy of Japan in the Philippines ➢ Japan Foundation, Manila
Korean	➢ Embassy of the Republic of Korea in the Philippines ➢ Korean Cultural Center in the Philippines
French	➢ Embassy of France in Manila ➢ Alliance Française de Manille
German	➢ German Embassy Manila ➢ Goethe-Institut Philippinen
Spanish	➢ Embassy of Spain in the Philippines ➢ Instituto Cervantes Manila

Table 1. List of Institutional Partners of DepEd's SPFL

Nationwide Implementation of the Special Program in Foreign Language

Language Courses	Number of Teachers	Number of Schools	Number of Students	Number of Regions
Mandarin Chinese	269	94	2,580	10 (I, III, IV-A, IV-B, V, VI,IX, XI, NCR)
Japanese	92	38	3,020	4 (I, NCR, VII,XI)
Korean	36	18	812	3 (NCR, IV-A,VI)
French	23	12	1,112	2 (NCR, VII)
German	20	9	983	1 (NCR)
Spanish	190	83	3,531	16 (all regions)
Total	630	254	12,038	16 regions

Table 2. 2020 Statistics on the nationwide implementation of the SPFL according to Region[1]

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[1] NCR: National Capital Region, CAR: Cordillera Administrative Region, Region 1: Ilocos Region,Region 2: Cagayan Valley, Region 3: Central Luzon, Region 4A: Calabarzon, Region 4B: MIMAROPA / Southwestern Tagalog, Region 5: Bicol Region, Region 6: Western Visayas, Region 7: Central Visayas, Region 8: Eastern Visayas, Region 9: Zamboanga Peninsula, Region 10: Northern Mindanao, Region 11: Davao Region, Region 12: Soccskargen, Region 13: Caraga Region, Armm: Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao

Table 2 shows that only Spanish is implemented in sixteen regions and followed by Mandarin Chinese, which is implemented in ten regions while German is taught only in Metro Manila. Mandarin has the largest number of teachers and schools, but Spanish and Japanese have the highest number of student enrollees. Korean is taught in three regions while German which is taught in only 1 region has more students but with fewer teachers and schools. This difference could be attributed to the Korean language which is the most recent offering in some schools. In terms of the number of learners, Mandarin which is one of the more recent language offerings, has exceeded French. The data reveal that more learners are studying Asian languages than European languages.

DepEd's Madrasah Education Program (MEP) which is stablished earlier than the SPFL, also offers the teaching of Arabic language in addition to religious and cultural topics. Piloted in 2005, MEP aims to engage Muslim learners through culturally relevant content. The program's policy guidelines are expressed in DepEd Order 41, s. 2017 (DepEd 2017b). Under the program, Arabic and Islamic Values Education are taught from kindergarten until grade 6. The government sponsors the training of Madrasah teachers. The MEP is offered only to Muslim learners.

Commission on Higher Education's FL Curriculums

CHED, just like DepEd, also provides opportunities for students to take FL courses as electives. CHED regulates higher education institutions (HEIs) in the country but adopts a less - supervision approach to teaching and learning FLs than its basic education counterpart. CHED's approach to supporting FL teaching and learning is concretized in two memorandums: Memorandum No. 23, s. 2010 and CHED Memorandum No. 23, s. 2017.

Memorandum No. 23, s. 2010 formalizes foreign language electives in higher education curriculums to boost the marketability of local graduates seeking employment overseas. This directive enables students to enroll in a maximum of six units, or two subjects of FL and envisions students as capable of communicating with international interlocutors. CHED Memorandum No. 23, s. 2017 lays out the policies, standards, and guidelines for institutions now wishing to offer a full-fledged degree program in foreign languages. The purpose of instituting a Bachelor of Arts (BA or AB) in Foreign Language program is to create professionals who can work in education, translation, business, industrial, and international institutions (CHED 2017). Graduates of the program must be well-versed in oral and written communication, textual analyses, and intercultural communication, while being responsible, appreciative of "Filipino historical and cultural heritage," and engaged in lifelong learning (2017). While the said memorandum grants academic freedom to HEIs to design their curriculums, philosophy, and typology, it stipulates the minimum expected outcomes for all FL graduates, which can be summarized into the following capabilities: engagement in lifelong learning, language, and research proficiency; communication skills

and humanist thinking as well as personal, professional, and social responsibility. The document also provides the prescribed units, model learning experiences, physical and human resource requirements, recommendations on instructional delivery, and samples of the curriculum and performance indicators.

Degree-granting HEIs for FL and FLT can be found in select universities throughout the country, as seen in table 3. Aside from degree programs, most of these institutions in table 3 also offer short courses. The Department of European Languages and the Department of Linguistics in University of the Philippines, Diliman offer European and Asian language courses under their respective extension programs while the Center for Foreign Languages in West Visayas State University, offers all foreign language teaching to the public. The Confucius Institutes exclusively teach Chinese, and the Mindanao universities offer Arabic.

Higher Education Institutions offering degree-granting programs in FL and FLT

HEIs	Program
Confucius Institute at Angeles University Foundation	BSEd Major in English and Chinese Language Teaching
University of the Philippines-Diliman	BA European Languages
Confucius Institute at the Ateneo de Manila University	Masters in Teaching Chinese as a Foreign Language
West Visayas State University	AB in Foreign Languages
Mindanao State University	BEEd in Islamic Studies and Arabic Language
	BS in Teaching Arabic
Western Mindanao State University	Diploma in Arabic Language

Table 3. HEIs with degree-granting programs in Foreign Language and Foreign Language Teaching

In 2012, CHED established in accordance with the pertinent provisions of Republic Act No. 7722, otherwise known as the "Higher Education Act of 1994," the Centers of Excellence (COEs) and Centers of Development (CODs) that serve as potent catalysts in Foreign Language education needed for the development of world-class scholarships and nation building. The national development, the criteria and implementing guidelines for the identification, support and development of COEs and CODs for the Foreign Language program are embodied in CHED Memorandum (CMO) No. 55, series of 2006 and CHED Memorandum Order No. 26, series of 2012. However, in 2015, per Commission en Banc Resolution No. 139-2015, CHED amends the Criteria for the Selection of Centers of Excellence (COEs) and Centers of Development (CODs) for the Foreign Language Program of CMO No. 26, series of 2012. The following is the amended criteria:

Criteria	Operational indicators of COE/COD	Points
I. Instructional Quality – 45%		
A. Administration 1. Chair/Coordinator	Full time tenured faculty; Holder of at least a Master's degree, (or its equivalent), in at least one (1) foreign language or related fields (any one of the following disciplines with foreign language component: Literature, Cultural Studies, International Studies, International Relations, European Studies, Asian Studies, Linguistics, Teacher Education)	5 points
B. Faculty		
1. Qualifications	50% of the fulltime faculty members have graduate degrees.	3.5 points
2. Performance	50% of faculty have foreign language or foreign language education training (at least three (3) months intensive training)	3.5 points
	At least 80% of faculty members have student evaluation of Very Satisfactory.	4 points
	National or International recognition of the faculty members to include awards, fellowships and scholarships (related to foreign language teaching)	4 points
C. Quality of the Curriculum	Substantive coverage of the discipline (foreign language plus related topics such as FL literature, cultural studies, translation)	2.5 points
	Covers basic, intermediate and advanced level of foreign language.	2.5 points
	Relevance of the curriculum to local and regional conditions and needs.	2.5 points
	Should have an evaluation instrument based on international standards.	2.5 points

D. Laboratory and Equipment (may be university or college- based as long as FL students have access to them)	Must have computers for use of students and faculty. Access to the internet. Availability of software used in the discipline. Language Laboratory / Room for students and faculty.	3 points: If all 4 indicators are available 0.5 point deduction for each missing indicator
E. Library (may be university or college- based as long as students have access to it)	Library with recent (acquisitions for the last five years) national and international language textbooks (grammar, FL literature, cultural studies and related resources), workbooks (exercise books), journals and dictionaries (published for the last five years, on-line subscriptions or hard copy)	5 points
F. Instructional Facilities (may be university- or college- based as long as students have access to them)	Must have multimedia classrooms (equipped with LCD projectors, screen, audio equipment)	3 points
G. Retention	Must have clear retention policies	2 points
H. Graduate Profile (may be university- or college base	The department/college should have available database of their graduates and their employment at least for the last five (5) years	2 points
ll. Research and Publication — 30% A. Organization B. Budget C. Output	Must exhibit a strong commitment to undertake research activities in FL teaching, learning and education. Should have access to funding for research, writing of instructional materials, and teaching enhancement activities. At least 30% of the faculty has published books research monographs or academic articles in reputable journals (topics must be related to FL teaching, translation, literature, linguistics, and cultural studies). National or international recognition of the faculty members to include awards and scholarships	5 points 5 points 15 pts - 30% 10 pts - 25% 5 pts 5 points

III. Linkages and Extension — 20%
 	
A. Institutional linkages
B. Community and
   C. Extension Services
     D. Consultancy
(must be institutionalized, i.e. between faculty and agency/ institution; not between faculty and individuals)
	The college/department should have linkages with national/international universities, embassies and other foreign language institutions through faculty/student exchange programs, consortia, and other collaborative activities.	4 points - Local
		4 points - National
		4 points - International

	The college/department should have an established extension service program geared towards the teaching, promotion and development of foreign languages. The administration and faculty should lend their expertise to other schools I agencies/ industries through training, seminar, workshop, etc.	4 points 4 points
IV. Institutional Qualifications — 5% A. Vision/Mission B. Institutional Planning and Development	Should have an academic program that stems from a clear and achievable vision/mission of the institution, of the college and of the department geared towards excellence and quality, and the institution/college should have established itself as a leader in Foreign Language Teaching	2 points
	Should have clear educational, administrative and student plans for the next 5 years. Should include teacher-training programs as part of faculty development plans.	3 points

Foreign Language Curriculums of the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA)

TESDA offers FL courses for free through its Language Skills Institute (LSI), which provides workplace-based language training (TESDA 2014). In the current economy, English has become a "minimum requirement" in maintaining the country's competitiveness in labor export, hence the need for FL proficiency to provide distinction and added value to its "products" (Duchêne and Heller quoted in Lorente 2012, 184). Languages taught in the LSI include Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, and Spanish. All languages are taught for four hours

daily for 100 hours except for Japanese, which is taught for 150 hours. Language Skills Institutes (LSIs) are found nationwide across the country's 16 regions. The following are the language courses offered by TESDA:

Basic Japanese Language and Cultures - (150 hours)

Basic English Language - (100 hours)

Basic Korean Language and Cultures - (100 hours)

Basic Mandarin Language and Cultures - (100 hours)

Basic Arabic Language and Saudi/Gulf Cultures- (100 hours)

Basic Spanish Language for Different Vocations- (100 hours)

Learning Satisfaction and Preferences

In a recent survey conducted by the researcher on the satisfaction and preferences of student learners with regard to the teaching and learning a foreign language, she surveyed 96 foreign language students across the Western Visayas Region[2]. The respondents were the University students who have had taken any foreign language courses during the academic year 2020-2021. The challenges that the pandemic brings to accessing respondents and collecting data resorted the researcher to gather data from a conveniently available pool of respondents. Thus of the 96 respondents, 20 of them were students of French, 25 were students of Korean, 11, Nihongo and 40, Spanish.

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[2] Western Visayas is an administrative region in the Philippines, numerically designated as Region VI. It consists of six provinces and two highly urbanized cities. The regional center is Iloilo City. The region is dominated by the native speakers of four Visayan languages: Kinaray-a, Hiligaynon, Aklanon and Capiznon.

The inability of the researcher to conduct research face-to-face during the pandemic required her to condense and simplify the questions asked in the survey. The questionnaire highlighted pertinent issues in relation to learning styles and teaching strategies the respondents preferred. The respondents also were asked to describe their lived experiences in the course of learning a foreign language and on their insights on good practices of the teachers which would make foreign language learning relevant to college students.

The following are the results of the survey:

Question 1. Are you satisfied with your performance in your Foreign Language class?

Satisfaction with classroom performance	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	89	92.7
No	7	7.29

Question 2. What is your preferred style when learning a foreign language?

Preferred Style of Learning	Frequency	Percentage
Individual	4	4.16
Pair	10	10.42
Group	76	79.16
Large Group	6	6.25

Question 3. Do you prefer having homework?

Homework Preferences	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	82	85.42
No	14	14.58

Question 4. What is your most preferred way of learning a foreign language?

Preferred Way of Learning	Frequency	Percentage
TV/video/films	69	71.88
radio/audio	11	11.46
written materials	10	10.41
Blackboard	3	3.12
pictures/posters	3	3.12

Question 5. What is your most preferred way of vocabulary learning?

Preferred Way of Vocabulary Learning	Frequency	Percentage
Using new words in a sentence	11	11.45
Writing or saying new words repeatedly	79	82.29
Avoiding verbatim translation	6	6.25

Question 6. How would you like your mistakes to be corrected in class?

Preferred Error Correction	Frequency	Percentage
Immediately in front of others	80	83.33
At the end of activity in front of others	0	0.00
In private	16	16.7

Question 7. What is your most preferred media in Foreign Language Learning?

Preferred Media Usage	Frequency	Percentage
TV/video/films	69	71.88
radio/audio	11	11.46
written material	10	10.41
Blackboard	3	3.12
pictures/posters	3	3.12

Question 8. What is your most preferred learning activity in foreign language Learning?

Preferred Learning Activity	Frequency	Percentage
Games	35	36.46
Role Play	4	6.16
Interaction with other students	37	38.54
Memorizing Dialogue	6	6.25
Writing a Diary	2	2.08
Songs	12	12.5

While most respondents were satisfied with their experiences, it is significant to note that respondents prefer the facilitated group activities than the usual individual or pair work set-ups. This was seen as an opportunity to highlight collaboration and cooperation among students who start learning FL at the same proficiency level. Assigning homework was also highly preferred to supplement learning outside the classrooms.

One of the major contributions of this study was articulating how a healthy and helpful classroom environment could help facilitate learning. Being in a positive environment, FL learners appreciate being corrected immediately in front of others whenever they commit mistakes.

The study affirmed how to enhance students' experiences when it comes to foreign language learning. Experience obtained in FL classrooms expands the richness of human life: new vocabulary words, new culture, new sentence structures, new ways of thinking were introduced. It offers new opportunities for people to add value to their life experiences, and eventually to use their new found abilities.

Televisions, videos, and films were seen to be the most preferred media in the classrooms. This could also be supported by tapping contents that are interesting to students – cultural content, for example. Teachers of FL may tap available online resources that pertain to foreign popular culture. In the end, this aids in language learning, and may serve as a tool in developing awareness and cultural sensitivity among students.

Games and student-to-student interaction provided opportunities for students in regular classroom activities. A foreign language class can be seen as a window to break the traditional approach towards learning. By integrating essential activities such as games and other interesting elements, learning could be facilitated towards the desired achievement of a goal.

Learning a foreign language offers promising approaches for teachers and students. It could serve as a venue in advocating cultural appreciation, while one's own identity is emphasized. From the four walls of the classroom, students may be brought to a completely new world: new language and new culture, through concrete and research-based teaching and learning strategies. Moreover, the study has provided a vital contribution in planning, designing, and implementing foreign language curriculums in the Philippines. The findings also provided valuable inputs regarding effective teaching and learning.

Language Teaching and Learning Issues and Challenges

In a study of Andaya et.al. on the evaluation of the Philippine National Foreign Language Program in Public Secondary Schools, the results show that stakeholders, particularly students, teachers and principals, are generally satisfied with the implementation of SPFL, with majority of the student-respondents reporting that they observe good teaching and assessment practices, and teacher- and principal-participants reporting that enough

support for program implementation is given through the provision of activities for professional development and distribution of resources. However, it was noted in the study that a good number of students proceeded with their college education upon graduation from SPFL. This raises the questions of whether or not their pursuit of the foreign language was continued or if yes, how was the program helpful in higher education? If not, what happens to what was learned in the program? The ultimate goal of SPFL is to produce learners who are communicatively competent in the foreign language they specialize in, and able to display their knowledge of the language in the workplace. In this case, the success of the program could not be gauged entirely.

Another important issue which may have grave consequences is, if the process of learning and using a foreign language is discontinued, the language learned will be forgotten (Kupske, F. 2020). Although studies on L2 or foreign language attrition are inconclusive, researchers agree that the process is not linear and sets in rapidly, targeting the loss of productive skills such as speaking and writing (Schmid, M. & Mehotcheva, T. 2012).

It can also be noted that the official FL policies of the country's education system underpins the ideal of global competitiveness which serves as a common thread in offering FL as early as the secondary level up to the vocational education levels. While the policy rationalizes nation building and preserving the Filipino identity, the DepEd, CHED, and TESDA policies demonstrate government support for exporting local graduates by

modifying the curriculum to serve international labor needs (Ortiga 2015; Lorente 2012). FL competence allows the country to transact with more markets abroad and maintain its competitive edge in the international labor market (Lorente 2012).

It is also observed that aside from English, the target language is also used as a medium of instruction in SPFL classes. The researcher noted that while most universities employ native speakers and Filipino professors who speak almost like native speakers, DEpEd teachers' initial training in the language lasted for only a month. They were then immediately tasked to teach as early as a month after the initial training despite having only reached the beginner or A1–A2 level of proficiency described in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). This is reflected in the 2010 CHED memorandum where students are conceived as being able to fully and easily communicate with native speakers after a mere two subjects of FL electives, where students, at a minimum, will reach the A1 level of proficiency. Such optimism in the expected proficiency of SPFL teachers and college graduates point to the government's urgency in providing skills to FL students of DepEd and CHED programs, who may then be candidates for overseas labor.

The DepEd recommends monolingual policies at the basic level to expose the students to the target language as much as possible (Agcaoili et al. 2019). Thus, Filipino teachers run the risk of patterning the FL classroom, suppressing the local languages, and rendering

them and their respective speakers inferior in the process. In any case, DepEd's non preference for local languages is evident in its push for English as an alternative medium of instruction (MOI) in SPFL since apart from the target FL, the only other language recommended is English.

The content and usage of FL materials used in the classrooms are also issues in the teaching and learning of foreign languages. There are numerous teaching materials used for foreign language courses. However, majority of such materials like textbooks whether in print or electronic copies, emphasize teaching grammar and vocabulary as the main part of learning the target language. These books teach grammar and vocabulary in isolated sentences though they also provide reading texts and focus only on accuracy rather than fluency.

Summary of Key Findings

Foreign language learning needs support. When students move from one level to another, or from one school to another, they develop new sets of knowledge in the target language. Also, when students transfer to a new school environment or when students are already in the workplace, they require support to successfully transfer their existing knowledge of the foreign language learned. Thus they need support to continue to practice communicating and developing cognitively through the medium of the target language.

Intensification of the Teacher professional development program. Teacher initial education and continuous professional development program need to be intensified to equip teachers with knowledge and competences to support plurilingual education. The government inadequate support and relevant training for teachers should be looked into. Research shows that simply giving teachers a month of training does not help to improve the situation.

DepEd's monolingual policy. DepEd's monolingual policy and its non-preference for local languages makes English as an alternative medium in SPFL since apart from the target FL, the only other language recommended is English. This is contrary to research evidence which suggest that valuing local languages and cultural background of each student promotes academic success by boosting self-confidence and self-esteem.

Foreign Language materials. The content of FL materials used in the classroom are also issues in the teaching and learning of foreign languages where majority of such materials like textbooks whether in print or electronic copies, emphasize teaching grammar and vocabulary in isolated sentences though they also provide reading texts and focus only on accuracy rather than fluency.

Students' most preferred media. Televisions, videos, and films were seen to be the most student-preferred media in the classrooms. These aid in language learning, and may serve as a tool in developing awareness and cultural sensitivity among students. Games and student-to-student interaction also provided opportunities for students in regular

classroom activities. By integrating essential activities such as games and other interesting elements, learning could be facilitated towards the desired achievement of a goal.

Recommendations

Teacher Training Modules on continuity should be developed by schools. These modules can serve as the basis for developing teacher training courses and conferences adapted to the needs and contexts of individual students. This is to facilitate communication among foreign language teachers and to improve continuity in language teaching and learning between the two levels. Further study arising from continuity issues should include a more comprehensive study of the responsibility of institutions for enabling its future graduates more opportunities to continue to acquire adequate FL knowledge and skills.

It is a priority to re-examine teacher education and training in gaining linguistic awareness and acquiring teaching strategies for supporting learners in diverse settings. Teachers' training is critical in this respect, to ensure a pool of highly qualified foreign language teachers. All teachers should have a profound knowledge about the target language and language learning, pedagogical approaches and assessment strategies and support. This includes the scaffolding of each student in learning the target language and the planning of instruction in the classroom.

Short term foreign language immersion courses should be given to foreign language teachers at all levels. Short-term programs interfere less with extensive teacher education

and training processes and provide significant exposure to the target language and culture for the teachers. They also cost less, allowing scarce resources to be allocated efficiently to teachers and to universities, colleges and schools in basic education. In a series of studies of Georgetown University Medical Center (2012), researchers demonstrated that the kind of exposure one has to a foreign language can determine whether one achieves communicative competence brain processing, and that learning under immersion conditions may be more effective in reaching this goal than typical classroom training.

Teachers should not be dependent on foreign cultural institutes and their materials or books. In light of this, it is crucial to acknowledge and validate the role of local educators and students alike in crafting and shaping FL materials and practices in the Philippines that will encourage authentic and meaningful dialog, enabling true intercultural and transcultural learning. Teachers should also share best practices and self-reflective activities and materials, thus diminishing the dependency on foreign cultural institutions.

It is also recommended that teachers should use authentic materials to help prepare learners for the 'real' world of communication, to guide learners toward the language they need for their particular context, and to motivate them to communicate, because authentic materials help make communication 'real'. These materials can be extremely useful when teaching a foreign language class. While it is of course necessary to use traditional textbooks to approach many grammar topics, using authentic materials in the target language has many varied benefits such as exposing learners to the language as it is spoken in the real world. The use of authentic materials in the language classroom must

be strongly encouraged as they have a positive impact on the students' linguistic and affective domains (Losada et.al., 2017)

The use of technology such as televisions in the language classroom enhances students' learning experience. Students should be taught to think and speak in a real-world environment. Teachers should prepare their students for the real world conversation by using television, film, and videos. While they will not exactly understand what is being said on such mediums, they will at least get a hint of the flow of the language, the use of gestures, and the quick conversation of native speakers.

The intensification of use of translanguaging pedagogies will enrich learning across all of the languages in a student's repertoire creating spaces for students to make connections across languages and deepening student understanding of content knowledge. Translanguaging pedagogies can help to facilitate this transfer, activating the interdependency among students' different linguistic resources and enabling students to flexibly negotiate meaning and develop deeper metalinguistic knowledge.

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Part II: The Lived Experiences of Filipino Students of Spanish: The Perspective of Plurilingual Learners

Introduction

In the Spanish language classrooms, Filipino students in the tertiary level usually face a situation in which they have to learn the target language (Spanish) through another language (English) which is not their first language and using the home language (Hiligaynon or Capizeño or Aklanon, or Kiniray-a [1]) in one part of an activity and the school language in another part. They listen to information in one language and explain the gist of it orally or make written notes about it in another. Similarly, they might read a text in one language and talk about it or summarize it in writing in another. Despite the translanguaging activities in the classrooms which according to studies represents a more efficient and effective teaching and learning technique than is possible in one language only, it is very difficult for some students to learn and use Spanish as they show very little progress over time. In big universities in the Philippines particularly in Western Visayas, every learner of Spanish as a foreign language enjoys the luxury of learning in ideal and advantageous learning situations considering that a lot of Spanish words are also present in the Hiligaynon dialect (common language used by people in Western Visayas) thus, Filipino learners should be reasonably able to attain plurilingual competence in Spanish with other languages and should at least be able to make modest progress.

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[1] The Hiligaynon language is the language of Iloilo province, which has come to be spoken throughout the Western Visayas region. Other parts of Western Visayas have their own distinct dialects/languages (Capizeño, Aklanon, and Kiniray-a), but these are mutually intelligible with most Hiligaynon speakers (one can understand/speak the other). The narrow straits link Panay and western Negros, and Hiligaynon is spoken on both shores.

Not many students are aware that the Spanish language has endured and permeated their daily lives from the months of the year, the days of the week, the hours in a day and many, many more. It is ubiquitous and there is no escaping Spanish.

However, student learners who experience difficulty and made slow progress in learning Spanish are unaware of the causes behind the lack of progress or how to resolve them. Teachers of Spanish may not also be aware of the reasons for or solutions to the difficulties a learner experiences. It is crucial then that FL teachers help learners, who do not make expected progress, to determine the reasons for their predicament and make recommendations, and if possible, implement accommodations to help them overcome barriers to learning.

The language learning profile of the learners should be studied by FL teachers and school administrators in order to help learners determine the possible causes of their slow progress, and also to address issues on their self-esteem, motivation, and confidence so they may continue the language learning process (Wold, 2006).

The purpose of this study is to explore and describe the lived experiences of students and their difficulties and struggles in learning Spanish as a foreign language. Information gathered from the study will provide a foundation for understanding a variety of possible reasons for the difficulties and struggles they experienced.

The Informants

The informants in this qualitative study were the college students enrolled in Spanish 1 and/or 2 in the 2nd semester of AY 2019-20 and in the 1st semester of AY 2020-21 in five big universities in Western Visayas, Philippines. They are emergent plurilinguals who can use English, Chinese (three of the twelve informants are Filipino-Chinese), Filipino[2], Hiligaynon and other dialects of the Region depending on the social context.

Spanish 1 is a 3 unit course that aims to develop in the beginners an understanding of the fundamentals of the Spanish language through the functional study of common expressions (greetings, farewells, expression of courtesy), nouns, articles, adjectives, the simple tenses of common regular and irregular verbs in the indicative mood, pronouns, adverbs, and the simple imperative. Emphasis is placed on the development of the listening and speaking skills through practical conversation lessons, oral reading of simple selections, and oral exercises. The alphabet, syllabication, and vowel combinations such as diphthongs, are also studied incidentally.

Spanish 2 is also a three unit course which is a systematic review of Spanish language, practical applications; and a functional study of the compound tenses of regular verbs in the indicative mood, the imperative mood, the progressive tense; irregular, reflective and reciprocal verbs, comparison of adjectives and adverbs; prepositions, conjunctions and interjections. Stress is given on vocabulary building, sentence construction, and further graduate oral reading exercises and for the purpose of expanding the students' working knowledge and manipulation of the language.

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[2] Filipino, the standardized form of Tagalog, is the national language of the Philippines and used in formal education throughout the country.

The informants were those students who were enrolled in the undergraduate programs in their respective universities and who wish to pursue Law education after graduation. The researcher identified a phenomenological methodology as the best means for this type of study. Twelve students were selected based on purpose. These students represented the college students with low Spanish proficiency streamed by the classroom performance as reflected in their grades.

The data collection methods included a document analysis of informants' essays, individual interviews and focus group discussions. Each of these experiences offered unique insights and different levels of information. The first scheduled data collection was a document analysis of the essays of the informants during which the researcher analyzed informants' thoughts about their difficulties in the classroom and the learning language component which they appear to struggle with most. The researcher then interviewed the informants to learn more about what they perceived to be the biggest hurdles they face in the writing and speaking components of language learning skills. Finally, the researcher gathered the informants in focus group discussions. Informants were free to talk with other group members as the discussions encourage other participants to share further their experiences. The researcher acted as the moderator (interviewer) using loosely structured questions. The three methods provided an in-depth look at the communicative competence in the informants' college foreign language education.

The focus group discussions were carefully planned to create a non-intimidating environment, so that the informants felt free to talk openly and give their honest opinions. The informants were encouraged to not only express their own opinions, but also to actively respond to the other members and to questions posed by the moderator. The researcher was able to gather in-depth information from the informants' s thoughts and opinions on the question.

During the individual interviews, the researcher used unstructured interview with the informants' essays operating as the 'jumping -off- points' into discussion. The researcher asked the same questions to all the informants on separate occasions, but the order of the questions, the wordings, and the type of follow-up questions were varied considerably. The researcher first established rapport with the informants to ensure that they describe their true feelings, thoughts, and intentions. Complete rapport was established over time as informants and the researcher get to know and trust one another. The researcher asked questions in such a way that the informants were able to talk freely. The interviewer focused on both verbal and nonverbal messages and was flexible in rephrasing and pursuing certain lines of questioning. The interviewer used words that were clear and meaningful to the informants so that they understood what was being asked.

In order to ensure ethical research, the researcher modified the use of informed consent (research support. 2020). The researcher verbally discussed to the informants that they were participating in this study. The procedures of the research, the risk and benefits of the research, and the procedures used to protect confidentiality (2020) were also explained by the researcher to the informants.

Combining three qualitative methods (essays, individual interviews, and focus group discussions), the researcher used triangulation to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question. Instead of relying on one method as an end-all representation of the data, the researcher sought compatibilities across three qualitative methods which allowed for a higher validity of the data.

Extracted from each interview, the list of units of relevant meaning was carefully scrutinized and the clearly redundant units were eliminated (K. Klenke, 2016). The researcher also

considered the literal content, the number of times a meaning was mentioned and also how non-verbal or para-linguistic cues were stated.

The units of meaning to form themes were then clustered and in order to remain true to the phenomenon, the list of non-repetitive units of meaning were bracketed. Then the researcher elicited the essence of meaning of units within the holistic context by a rigorous examination of the list of units of meaning.

The researcher also made a summary that incorporated all the themes elicited from the data to give this study a holistic context. At this point, the researcher conducted a 'validity check' by returning to the informants to determine if the essence of the interview had been correctly 'captured' (Dumay, 2011).

The researcher concluded the explication by writing a composite summary, which reflected the context from which the themes had emerged. The researcher "transformed the everyday expressions of the informants into expressions appropriate to the scientific discourse supporting the research" (Sadala, 2001).

Thematic Insights

Informants' Difficulties

The following statements were noted from the informants through their essays and through their answers in the interviews in terms of the difficulties they had encountered in the process of developing their communicative competence in the Spanish language.

Making a mistake is looking foolish in front of others

Informants fear making mistakes in front of classmates because they are worried that their classmates will laugh at them. They are also afraid to receive negative feedback from their peers if they make mistakes in speaking Spanish. In addition, informants do not want to look foolish or sound silly in front of their classmates.

Anne: *I find it difficult to speak because if I speak maybe my classmates will laugh at my answer especially my Spanish. Maybe I will look and sound foolish in front of them and I don't that thing to happen to me*.

Mario: *What is most difficult in Spanish class for me is speaking the language if I am in front of the people because I felt scared, and I think that somebody would laugh at my grammar, pronunciation and diction, …. I feel down….I think if I will show them my answer maybe they will laugh at my grammar.*

Lourdes: *I think that when I speak about my opinion or when I tell my answer to the class maybe its wrong. I don't want to look foolish in front of my classmates that is why I don't recite in class.*

Shyness is students' perception of their inabilities

Informants lack confidence and tend to be shy when they are in the classroom and find it very difficult to speak in Spanish in front of their classmates and teachers. Students feel shy when they speak the language because they think that their Spanish is limited and

they are adamant that they would make mistakes when they speak and write. The informant's perception of their own language inabilities is the reason for their being shy.

Lourdes: *Nahuya ko magshare sg ideas ko kay indi ko kabalo mag hambal English. (I am ashamed to share my ideas with others because I don't know how to speak Spanish).*

John: *I find it difficult to write because I cannot explain my thoughts in the particular way. I feel ashamed to express myself in writing because I don't know how to write well. Sometimes my writing is not in the right point of the discussion and I fumble for words. I cannot express clearly because of my poor imagination and even if I am interested with the topic, I can't write because I am not sure of the rules in grammar and just attempting to write something in order to pass.*

Rodel: *I have stage fright. I am very shy person. I really get nervous when it's my turn to speak because I feel that I am not good in speaking. My palms are getting sweaty and my heart beats so fast. There was one time when I was in high school where we had impromptu speech activity. While I was waiting for my turn, I got really dizzy because of nervousness. My classmates said my hands were so cold and my lips were turning white. I thought I was going to faint but fortunately I didn't.*

James: *I always have the idea of what to say in my mind but I don't have the guts to say it because I am not good in Spanish. I feel that people who listen to me and who read my work will not understand my message so I'm just keeping it to myself. I don't express myself*

well. One of the reasons is I am shy. I am shy since elementary. Shy to express myself and shy in everything I do.

Mario*: I really felt jealous when my classmates talk Spanish, I just keep quiet in the corner like a boy who doesn't understand what is happening in the society because I am shy because I am not sure if my Spanish is correct.*

Anxiety predicts fluency and accuracy

According to F. Djafri (2018), language anxiety is the feeling of tension, apprehension and nervousness associated with the situation of learning a foreign language. In this study, anxiety stood out as one difficulty in language learning. It influenced the quality of speech production and made students appear less fluent than they really were.

Rhodora: *… in speaking, my difficulties are: I am conscious of my Spanish and lead me to mental block. I cannot also speak spontaneously in Spanish because I stutter and stammer.*

Rodel: *Also when I speak Spanish, I am nervous. I usually can't speak right. I stutter a lot. I just hope one day I won't get nervous anymore. I need to overcome this difficulty.*

Luisa: *I cannot practice my Spanish because if there is oral recitation I feel so nervous. My hands are wet and cold and sometimes I tremble so when I am tense, I cannot anymore*

understand my teacher. I cannot pronounce the words correctly like I don't know how to speak Spanish.

John: *I feel so tensed when my classmates tease me if I answered something wrong. I cannot listen well and cannot express myself well in class discussion kay daw indi nako dayon ka hambal (because I can no longer speak up).*

Silence means no self-confidence

When the informants perceive that they cannot be understood by their teachers or classmates, they lose self-confidence and they keep quiet while others do the talking. Because informants lack confidence in their Spanish language ability, they suffer from communication apprehension.

Amanda: *Sometimes I can't speak thoroughly because I feel that the words that I want to utter are not just suitable to the opinion of others. So sometimes I keep quiet. I think it is just because I lack confidence and perseverance because I am afraid to be judged even though it is normal criticizing people because in this case, you will grow as a mature one and can stand up on your own.*

Mario: *I don't want to talk because I don't have enough self-confidence….*

James: *I am not confident. I always have the idea of what to say in my mind but I don't have the guts to tell it. I just keep it to myself.*

Lourdes: *It is difficult for me to speak because I am not sure of my answer.*

Students who are talkative are disruptive

Students dislike classmates who carry out the discussion for the entire class. A norm in the classroom is that people should not talk too much in class because they destroy the normative arrangement of the classroom. Talkative students hurt some classmates in the long run because they disrupt other students' concentration.

Lourdes: *I can't understand her (teacher) because my focus is on my classmates who are talking and laughing. It's difficult for me to listen because sometimes some of my classmates are talking. They talk in their seats. They whisper to me. They giggle when the teacher sounds funny. They react too much during class discussion. They talk and talk in class especially when they get excited of the discussion. I want a very quiet classroom when the teacher is talking.*

Abbie: *In writing, I need a place where I can think without any disturbance or noise because I cannot concentrate in writing when my surroundings is noisy especially when my classmates talk loud. …I get disturbed easily with noisy classmates. If I am not in the mood hindi ko kaya magcompose sang essay (If I am not in the mood, I cannot compose an essay).*

Pietro: *I have the difficulties with my lesson because my classmates are very noisy and sometimes they are moving around in the room…During speaking activities they go from one group to another to ask some answers or to make comments of our work. Even when they talk softly, they are annoying… Indi ka na ka think mayo kay ka samok sa ila (I cannot think well because they are disrupting my concentration). When I speak, indi ko ka (I cannot) concentrate kay (because) I lost focus so I don't know what to say next.*

James: *I am easily distracted by everyone. I'm out of focus. I have classmates who monopolize the discussion. Indi ka na ka (I cannot) butt in. Sometimes an idea that you want to say is already said by my outspoken classmates. Ila na lng tanan sabat, lawig lawig pa maski layo na sa discussion. I would lost my focus dayon (then).*

Eloisa: *Sometimes my problem is not giving my whole attention to improving my skills, though I have to, for me to understand… My classmates are a disturbance that give me distraction. I cannot write well because I am out of focus. My classmates are noisy.*

Language familiarity affects proficiency

Students who have less exposure to the Spanish language have poor proficiency. These students have limited understanding of the written and the oral language and limited Spanish vocabulary.

Lourdes: *When our teacher is speaking, sometimes her pronunciation is not clear because she is too fast… Sometimes the words my teacher use are not familiar to me. Sometimes my meaning is not the same with the meaning of my teacher. Kadamo bala meaning sang isa ka word (A word has so many meanings). So ka difficult kon kis a mag understand what the teacher means when she speak Spanish. Kag ang English speaker pa guid sa video (Also I cannot understand the speaker in the video).*

James: *Sometimes, I can't get the point when it is deep Spanish…. I can't express myself in Spanish because I do not know the terms in Spanish so when I write it took me long because I have to look for words and sometimes ask my classmates the Spanish equivalent of my Ilonggo. When I speak, I stop because I have to think of the right terms of what I mean. Sometimes I do not know the Spanish word for what I am thinking in Ilonggo. I want to be good in Spanish para mayo man ang pagtan-aw sa imo sg iban (so people will look up to me).*

Pam: *Also nabudlayan ko mag (it is difficult to) speak Spanish because I have Ilonggo intonation. Daw Indi ko ka follow sg correct Spanish nga intonation (I cannot mimic the correct intonation)… I think it is due to the accent usage of the speaker in the listening activity…It is difficult to understand some Spanish speakers because they talk so fast. They seem to have different accent and pronunciation from that of our teacher.*

Eloisa: *Sometimes, I experience hardship to give the appropriate answer because the enunciation, pronunciation and diction and especially speed is too fast… The native speakers bala, Ms. Kadasig sa ila maghambal (speak so fast). Daw nagasululugpon lang ang ila mga words. I follow how they talk, but daw kabudlay (idifficultt seems) because first I am lost for words because my vocabulary is limited and indi ko (I am not) familiar sg ila (with their) accent.*

Rhodora: *It is difficult to understand people talking to me because they are fast in talking. When they ask questions I cannot not answer because Im so slow to understand what was asked.*

Poor facility is a difficulty

Students have difficulty to form sentences and to put ideas fluently into words which are manifestations of poor language facility.

Abbie: N*abudlayan ko magframe sang sentence biskan ara na sa akon utok hindi ko sya gihapon mahambal confidently kay gapangita pa ko way kon paano ko sya iplastar so my listeners will understand what I want to say kag ga process pa ang utok ko sang Spanish translation sang paragraph or sentence nga ihambal ko galing daw kahinay guid sg utok ko mag process. I need time para makapanumdum kung ano ang akon isabat kag as long as wala ako ginapressure para masabat ko ang pamangkot. (It is difficult for me to frame my sentences even if the idea is already in my head because I am still figuring out how to arrange the words so that my listeners would understand me. I need time to think of what to say and for as long as I am not pressured, I can answer the questions).*

Rhodora: *Nabudlayan ako kay tungod nga halin man lng ako sa public high school kag wala ako masanay sa Spanish (I find it difficult to speak Spanish because I come from a public high school and I am not used to speak Spanish). Indi ko kon kaisa ma explain mayo ang akon nga ihambal kay (I cannot explain well what I have to say because) I am looking for the right words to say and how to make my sentences clear. I find it difficult to write or speak because daw forever ako kon manumdum (it takes me forever to think) of how to arrange my thoughts and put it into sentences.*

Pietro: *I can't explain and write well the things I wanted to write about.*

Eloisa: *It is difficult for me to write because I cannot explain my point.*

John: *I find it difficult to write because I cannot explain my thoughts in the particular way. I feel ashamed to express myself in writing because I don't know how to write well. Sometimes my writing is not in the right point of the discussion and I fumble for words. I cannot express clearly because of my poor imagination and even if I am interested with the topic, I can't write because I am not sure of the rules in grammar and just attempting to write something in order to pass. Because I am low always in the test, my classmates made fun me.*

Grammatically Conscious; Students' Misuse

For the informants, when they think of learning a language, they always think of grammar. They painstakingly deliver their speeches or write their essays with less grammatical errors. However, this does not mean that these students speak or write Spanish in a grammatically better way. Students' attention to form hinders than to help the process of language acquisition. They are so conscious of their grammar only to have them misuse this point in speaking or writing spontaneously.

Rhodora: *It is difficult to write and speak because I think first of my grammar. Basi bala magasala ko (I might commit a mistake). Daw ka mortal sin daan kon magasala ka sa grammar (It seems like a mortal sin to commit a mistake in grammar). Everybody laughs at you and it will be a controversy in the classroom.*

Amanda: *Another difficulty I have encountered in learning Spanish particularly in writing is also how to use properly the grammar and how to correct it within each other. Because in writing you need to be vivid and direct so the readers could understand what you want to point out and sometimes my sentence or words are really redundant because I think I lack vocabularies.*

Rodel: *My difficulty in writing is that I think a lot about my grammar. I'm super grammar conscious. That's why sometimes, I cannot finish on time because I used up the allotted time for writing.*

Rhodora: *My difficulty that I have encountered is how to say a sentence in correct grammar and I'm so embarrassed with my wrong grammar.*

Informants' Struggles

The essays and interview transcripts of the informants were read and reread to come up with the following insights from the informants' lived experiences:

Making an effort to be a good and successful writer

Rhodora: *Ginapilit ko gid nga maka sulat sg maayo (I struggle to write well) so I can write a poem that can give lessons and insights to others. The poem should be written in Spanish that can amaze my readers.*

John: *In the midst of difficulties, I want to achieve to be a good and successful writer. Not just for the sake of being successful but also to inspire people through my writings. I want to be read by young people.*

Striving to Speak Spanish fluently

Rhodora: *Even if sometimes I feel I could die of shame, I strive to talk to my classmates in Spanish so that I will not be left out. I feel happy to be with my classmates who speak Spanish well because I feel that I'm also good in Spanish.*

Pietro: I am trying to speak Spanish well and I am trying hard so people will not look down on me. My score in the speaking test is low so I get irritated.

Anne: Even if I have limited vocabulary, I give extra effort to speak Spanish. Sometimes I cannot speak fast because I stop to think of the words that I will say next. For me it is a struggle but it is okay because in the end kabalo guid ko nga maka (I know that it will) benefit me so I practice a lot to speak Spanish para i-respect man ko sang iban (so people will respect me) if I can speak English fluently.

Exerting oneself to be a good listener/ to be listened to

Mario: *I want to be a good listener to professional Spanish speakers so that I can re-create my vocabulary in Spanish so I can be a good speaker and people will admire me.*

John: *Na ga strive guid ko ya nga mag mayo sa Spanish kay (I strive hard to be good in Spanish because) it's a good feeling if people listen to me indi nga daw wala ka guid ya voice kay law ay ka magspeak.*

Making strenuous effort to overcoming difficulties

Lourdes: *I want to develop my self-confidence. I will strengthen my feelings to open up my opinion and idea to the class. Though it is hard at times, I try my best to focus my attention to the lecture of our teacher. I avoid myself to be tempted by others.*

Pam: *I want to surpass difficulties so that in the near future I can be a skilled student when it comes to my Spanish course. In Spanish class we are being train to become well educated in dealing in the certain situation like talking and entertaining foreigners and other people without putting ourselves in shame because of our improper etiquette in dealing with them.*

Striving for acceptance

Rhodora: Sometimes I pretend to be good in Spanish to be accepted by others and to feel good about myself too.

Doing one's best to be understood

Amanda: *In speaking, though I always stutter, I am trying to make sure that my listeners would understand and get my point. I strive to have a voice in the classroom but I really*

need courage to speak. So tani maskin indi diretso akon panghambal, I hope ang mga tawo nga gapamati makainchindi sang ginahambal ko (I cannot speak in straight Spanish but I wish somehow people will understand clearly what's my point).

Rodel: Since my dream is to work abroad, I should expect that my future patients will speak in English. I need to too. So to avoid misunderstandings, I must be the one to adjust. It's never too hard to learn if you try.

Eidetic Insight 1

Long is the way and hard,
But one has to move forward.
He who overcomes struggle,
Wins the battle.

Struggles lead students to feelings of empowerment and create a sense of hope because they allow students to make learning goals feel attainable, efforts seem worthwhile, and yield results. Despite of the difficulties students grapple in the Spanish classroom, they were able to make solutions themselves to their difficulties and developed persistence and resilience in pursuing and attaining the learning goal. Students had developed the necessary strategies for working through something difficult.

Pietro: …*in learning you have the power to have strength of being not afraid of difficulties and you know how to face it with faith in God. Also, if you learn from the bad things that*

you have done you know that you will not to do it again because it's bad and you will do the right thing. Difficulties are just a challenge for all of us, it is a way of measuring our faith and how strong we are in our lives.

James*: If I lost focus, I just keep quiet. Take a deep breath while I close my eyes. Maka bulig gd sya (It really helps) to concentrate on what I am trying to say.*

Pam: *In the pretest, I was disappointed with my score so I practiced and practiced for the post test. Honestly, the test is really difficult. But my hard work paid off.*

Anne: *Even if I have limited vocabulary, I give extra effort to speak Spanish. Sometimes I cannot speak fast because I stop to think of the word that I will say next. For me it is a struggle but it is okay because in the end kabalo guid ko nga maka (I know that it will) benefit me so I practice hard to speak in Spanish…*

Mario*: Naga practice na ko (I am already practicing my) Spanish for my future. I really wanted to be a good speaker someday. I like to inspire others.*

John*: Despite of my nervousness, I am trying to do my best not to be affected if possible of their taunting me. I Know that someday I will learn from my mistakes and be a good speaker.*

Rhodora*: I start practicing my Spanish so I will not have difficulty communicating to people when I apply for a job in Spanish speaking countries.*

Eidetic Insight 2

Life is a difficulty,
If one has language disability.
Be competent communicatively,
And earn credibility.

Credibility resides in students who are exceptional in their language competence. Students are measured as much on their communicative competence as their knowledge or expertise. There are many ways students can overcome language difficulty to change the level of their reputation and make people look up to them. Being absolutely confident, acting highly intelligent as well as exceptionally competent communicatively are always the best ways to make their classmates like them and, what is more important, respect them.

James*: I want to be good in Spanish para nga mayo man ang pagtan-aw sa imo sang iban (so others will look up to me).*

John: *…it's a good feeling if people listen to me indi nga daw wala ka guid ya voice kay law ay ka magspeak…. Because I am low always in the test, my classmates made fun of me.*

Anne*: For me it is a struggle but it is okay because in the end kabalo guid ko nga maka (I know that it will) benefit me so I practice hard to speak in Spanish…*

Mario: *so I can be a good speaker and people will admire me…*

Pietro: *I am trying to speak Spanish well and I am trying hard so people will not look down on me.*

Amanda: *Naga struggle gd ako mag learn Spanish because gusto ko gd nga people will respect me for being a good speaker and writer. It is a good feeling when people admire you of being good in Spanish rather than they admire you because you are beautiful.*

Rodel: *Then in the end, people will respect me especially the foreigners because even if I am a Filipino I can speak Spanish well.*

Language Issues Defined

Most informants, as revealed by this study, have psychological, linguistic, and physical difficulties in the process of developing their communicative competence in Spanish. One psychological difficulty is that informants don't want to speak in front of their classmates because they are afraid to make mistakes. In fact, fear of making mistakes is one of the many difficulties of students in language classrooms, as claimed by many theorists (Robby, 2010). According to Aftat (2008), this fear is linked to the problem of correction and negative evaluation. He further states that students are also afraid of being laughed at by classmates or being criticized by the teacher. As a result, students commonly are not motivated to participate in the speaking activity (Hieu, 2011).

Another psychological issue that students also suffer from when they are required to speak in class is shyness. This could be a source of problem in students' speaking and writing

activities in class. According to Baldwin (2011), the feeling of shyness causes them mental block. This theory is also supported by the result of this research in which some students fail to perform the speaking and writing tasks at their best. Students' perception of their inability to speak and write causes the feeling of shyness.

Students are also anxious to speak and write in Spanish. Anxiety affects students' learning according to (Horwitz.1991) as cited in Tiono and Sylvia (2004). Horwitz believed that anxiety about speaking a certain language can affect students' performance and can influence the quality of oral language production which makes individuals appear less fluent than they are.

Students' quiet mode in class is not because they do not know the lesson but because they do not have self- confidence. This is supported by Tridinanti (2018) when he states that the main cause of students' lack of confidence is their low ability in speaking a language. Students think that their Spanish is bad and feel that they cannot speak Spanish well thus they keep quiet in the classroom.

Aside from psychological difficulties, students experienced language learning issues in the aspect of linguistics. They are not confident of their grammar, pronunciation, spelling, and diction. Students struggle to understand patterns in language that they called grammar. For students, grammar can also mean anything that has to do with the structure of language.

Still another difficulty experienced by students is in the physical state. The documents in this study show that noisy classmates do have an effect on student's performance in the

classroom. Students are annoyed by talkative classmates especially those who monopolize class discussions. According to Klatte et. al, the damaging effect of noise, particularly classroom noise caused by students or students' activities, is the degradation of speech intelligibility in the classroom (2013).

In the midst of difficulties, students struggle to make efforts to become good and successful writers in the future. They strive to speak Spanish fluently. They exert themselves to be good listeners, to be listened to and to be understood. They strive for acceptance and for them being good in Spanish or in any foreign language is a ticket for acceptance.

Notable in this study is that most of the informants' difficulties and struggles were internal learner factors rather than external ones resulting from teaching and lack of training.

Implications

The world is changing so fast that just staying informed is a constant game of catching up. The challenges teachers face pale in comparison with the towering 21st Century expectations confronting today's students.

For students to succeed in the world of tomorrow, they need to critically evaluate and synthesize unprecedented volumes of information, create and innovate, and solve problems collaboratively and independently, all in an environment with multiplying and increasingly competitive demands of their attention. Educators need to ensure that Spanish language learners move beyond basic comprehension to acquisition of the complex skills 21st Century citizens need. Students need to improve their communicative competence, among

other skills, to survive the 21-st century. Teachers and other people directly and indirectly involved in language teaching should have the sensitivities and knowledge to negotiate language in the classroom. Future classrooms can be places where linguistic diversity is valued and where diverse classrooms are informed not only by cognitive principles, but also affective traits when language teachers have knowledge of research in linguistics, psychology, and the physical environment.

Teacher preparation programs must consider therefore the incorporation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) into their Foreign Language curricula to ensure that teachers develop cross-cultural understandings that provide a variety of pedagogy and communication styles so students of the future will achieve their highest communicative competence in their productive skills.

Communicative competence increases the personal, social, and economic capacities of both individuals and communities. It also assists learners in shaping, engaging with, and making meaning from the new learning environments. Learners with knowledge of the Spanish language and cultures will be able to shape and navigate their own environments. Further, communicative competence increases students' capabilities to communicate, interact successfully with others, access and use information, respond creatively to change and emerging global possibilities.

Through learning the Spanish language as an integral part of school education, students will develop an understanding of the nature of language, a linguistic awareness that enables them to perceive the power of language, an understanding of the cultures embedded in the

Spanish language, including the skills and sensitivity to 'meaning making' and the exchange of meaning through communication, an understanding of themselves and their own identities, a plurilingual and intercultural awareness as citizens who will continue to develop their understanding of and engagement with diversity in the 21st century world. Students leaving school with knowledge and skills in Spanish language will contribute to the cultural and linguistic richness of the society, to personal fulfillment, mutual understanding, economic growth and global citizenship.

Recommendations

This study recommends the following:

School administrators should plan training programs and seminar- workshops especially in-service training for fresh graduate teachers, newly hired teachers and experienced teachers so that they articulate the potential and actual language difficulties of students and discuss ways on how students can overcome or, at least, cope with these difficulties.

More focus should be placed on speaking and writing since the students expressed that these are the skills they found difficult. These skills should, therefore, be strengthened and intensified in the curriculum, and lessons should give students more opportunities to develop their communicative competence.

Language curricularists should show an understanding of learners' difficulties, and provide sufficient guidance and help to show how these potential psychological, linguistic and physical difficulties could be addressed in planning their classroom activities. Teachers

should be given examples of mediating tasks for them to use in their classrooms to mitigate students' difficulties

Teachers should make students read extra texts, such as newspaper or magazine articles, poems, short stories, and make the learners sum them up, paraphrase them, and speak about them in writing and or in speaking to reinforce the speaking and writing skills of students. They should also encourage students to bring their own texts, and choose topics for their oral presentations, and essays. Pair work activities like role plays, group work activities and project work should be reinforced or enriched. According to Richards (2006), these are beneficial classroom strategies which provide an opportunity for genuine communication.

Scaffolding strategies could yield good results too if properly controlled with the presence and participation of a teacher. It is evident that student-centered learning becomes a necessary teaching approach to be practiced to help students' language challenges.

Particularly, Spanish teachers should teach students the productive skills of speaking and writing through communicative language teaching approaches and other methodologies, to cater to their individual learning styles. They should also consider students' attitudes and perceptions towards the target language when making decisions about how to teach speaking and writing as well as listening and reading. To increase the level of students' communicative competence, teachers should understand and address their students' concerns in planning their lessons and classroom activities, and use supplementary

materials, if necessary, to help students cope with the difficulties of learning the target language.

Spanish teachers should improve the quality of assessment on students' Spanish communicative competence to identify their needs and to advise planning for instruction. They should also conduct ongoing assessment on communicative competence to make sure that students are developing their competence and knowledge expected of them based on their individual abilities and circumstances. Occasionally, additional assessment by teachers should be employed to identify if their students have additional learning needs that may hinder their acquisition of their communicative competence.

A more comprehensive study on students' communicative competence and how to develop it should be conducted by other researchers. Also, a similar study should also be conducted to students of other universities in the country.

The researcher also recommends that this study should be replicated for use and benefit of others in the future. Further study should be conducted by other researchers on aspects of the research issues not covered in this study.

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