



EXPLORING TEACHERS' LIVED EXPERIENCES, INSTRUCTIONAL CHALLENGES, AND INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES IN FILIPINO EDUCATION IN PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS OF THE CITY OF ILAGAN, ISABELA

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Publication Date: 06-05-2026

ABSTRACT

This qualitative phenomenological study explored the lived experiences, instructional challenges, and innovative pedagogical practices of Filipino teachers in public elementary schools in the City of Ilagan, Isabela. The study sought to understand how teachers navigate instructional realities, respond to classroom challenges, and implement innovative teaching strategies in Filipino education. Data were gathered through semi-structured in-depth interviews with twelve purposively selected elementary Filipino teachers. Thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's framework was employed in analyzing the data. Findings revealed that teachers encountered instructional difficulties related to learner reading comprehension, vocabulary limitations, multilingual classroom contexts, learner engagement, and insufficient instructional resources. Despite these challenges, teachers demonstrated pedagogical adaptability through contextualized instruction, collaborative learning, differentiated teaching, technology-assisted strategies, and culturally responsive classroom practices. Teachers also emphasized the importance of patience, emotional commitment, and reflective teaching in sustaining effective Filipino instruction. The findings underscore the significance of innovative and learner-centered pedagogies in addressing diverse classroom realities in Filipino education. The study further highlights the need for institutional support, instructional resource enhancement, and professional development programs that strengthen pedagogical innovation among Filipino teachers.

Keywords: *Filipino education, pedagogical practices, instructional challenges, lived experiences, qualitative research, elementary teachers, contextualized instruction*

Received: 03-02-2026

Revised: 03-23-2026

Accepted: 05-30-2026

Published: 06-05-2026

ISSN:3116-2991





I. INTRODUCTION

Filipino education plays a crucial role in strengthening learners' linguistic competence, cultural identity, critical thinking, and communicative abilities within the Philippine educational system. As a core subject in elementary education, Filipino serves not only as a medium for language acquisition but also as a vehicle for cultural preservation, social understanding, and national identity formation. Consequently, Filipino teachers are expected to facilitate meaningful, engaging, and contextually relevant learning experiences that respond to diverse learner needs and contemporary educational demands.

However, the teaching of Filipino in public elementary schools is increasingly challenged by multilingual classroom settings, varying learner literacy levels, limited instructional materials, learner disengagement, and evolving curriculum expectations. Teachers frequently encounter difficulties in developing learners' reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, oral communication skills, and critical appreciation of Filipino language and literature. These instructional realities become more complex in classrooms where learners possess diverse linguistic backgrounds and varying academic abilities.

Despite these challenges, Filipino teachers continue to demonstrate professional resilience and instructional adaptability by implementing innovative pedagogical practices that enhance learner participation and language learning. Innovative teaching strategies such as contextualized instruction, collaborative learning, differentiated teaching, storytelling, multimedia integration, and culturally responsive pedagogies have become increasingly important in addressing classroom diversity and promoting meaningful learning experiences. Existing studies on Filipino education commonly focus on learner performance, language acquisition, and instructional effectiveness using quantitative approaches. However, limited qualitative studies have explored the lived experiences of Filipino teachers, particularly how they navigate instructional challenges and develop innovative pedagogical responses within localized public school settings. Understanding teachers' lived experiences is essential in capturing the realities,

struggles, and pedagogical creativity embedded in Filipino language instruction.

This study explored the lived experiences, instructional challenges, and innovative pedagogical practices of Filipino teachers in public elementary schools in the City of Ilagan, Isabela. Specifically, the study aimed to examine the challenges teachers encounter in Filipino instruction and the strategies they employ to sustain meaningful and responsive language education. The findings may contribute to improving instructional support systems, professional development initiatives, and pedagogical practices in Filipino education.

Review of Related Literature

Instructional Challenges in Filipino Education

Teaching Filipino in elementary schools involves complex instructional demands related to language development, literacy acquisition, and learner engagement. According to Bernardo (2020), Filipino teachers frequently encounter challenges associated with reading comprehension difficulties, vocabulary limitations, and learner motivation. Multilingual learning environments further complicate language instruction as teachers address varying linguistic competencies among learners.

In Philippine public schools, insufficient instructional resources and overcrowded classrooms also contribute to instructional difficulties. Garcia and Santos (2021) noted that teachers often compensate for limited learning materials through improvised and contextualized instructional strategies.

Innovative Pedagogical Practices in Language Education

Innovative pedagogical practices promote active learning, learner participation, and meaningful language acquisition. Constructivist teaching approaches emphasize learner-centered instruction where students actively construct knowledge through interaction, collaboration, and contextual experiences (Vygotsky, 1978). In Filipino education, contextualized and culturally responsive instruction helps learners connect language learning with their lived experiences and local culture.

Research by Reyes and Cruz (2022) emphasized that differentiated instruction, storytelling, collaborative learning, and multimedia integration positively influence learner engagement and comprehension in Filipino classes.



Teachers who utilize innovative pedagogies are more capable of addressing diverse learner needs and sustaining classroom participation.

Teachers' Lived Experiences and Professional Adaptability

Teachers' lived experiences significantly shape instructional decision-making and pedagogical practices. According to Day and Gu (2020), teachers continuously negotiate professional responsibilities, emotional demands, and classroom realities while maintaining instructional effectiveness. Reflective teaching practices and professional adaptability enable educators to respond effectively to changing educational contexts and learner diversity.

In Filipino education, teachers' emotional commitment, patience, and cultural sensitivity influence the quality of language instruction and learner interaction. Understanding these lived experiences provides deeper insights into the realities of language teaching in public elementary schools.

Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory (1978), which explains that learning occurs through social interaction, collaboration, and contextualized experiences. The theory supports the use of learner-centered and collaborative pedagogical practices in Filipino education.

The study also utilized Culturally Responsive Pedagogy by Gay (2018), which emphasizes the importance of integrating learners' cultural backgrounds, experiences, and linguistic contexts into classroom instruction. This framework guided the exploration of innovative and contextualized pedagogical practices among Filipino teachers.

II. METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences, instructional challenges, and innovative pedagogical practices of Filipino teachers in public elementary schools in the City of Ilagan, Isabela. Phenomenology was appropriate because it enabled the researcher to

understand teachers' perceptions, instructional realities, and pedagogical experiences within their natural educational settings.

The study was conducted in selected public elementary schools in the City of Ilagan, Isabela, Philippines. The participants consisted of twelve Filipino teachers selected through purposive sampling. Inclusion criteria required participants to: (1) currently teach Filipino in public elementary schools; (2) possess at least three years of teaching experience; and (3) be willing to share their instructional experiences and pedagogical practices.

Data were gathered through semi-structured in-depth interviews focusing on teachers' instructional experiences, classroom challenges, learner engagement concerns, and innovative teaching strategies. Ethical considerations including informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation were strictly observed throughout the conduct of the study.

The gathered data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis framework. Interview transcripts were coded and categorized to identify recurring themes and patterns related to instructional challenges and pedagogical practices. Trustworthiness was established through member checking, triangulation, audit trails, and thick description.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Theme 1: Navigating Learner Language Difficulties and Diverse Classroom Realities

Participants described persistent instructional challenges associated with learners' reading comprehension difficulties, limited Filipino vocabulary, and varying levels of language proficiency. Teachers explained that many learners struggled to understand deep Filipino terminologies, figurative expressions, and contextual meanings, particularly in lessons involving literature, comprehension activities, and interpretive tasks. Participants further emphasized that multilingual classroom settings significantly affected learners' confidence and participation during Filipino instruction. Since many learners primarily used local dialects or mixed languages at



home, some experienced difficulty expressing ideas fluently in Filipino during classroom discussions.

One participant shared:

“Marami sa mga bata ang nahihirapang umunawa ng malalim na salitang Filipino kaya kailangan pang isa-isahin at i-contextualize.”

Another participant stated:

“Iba-iba ang linguistic background ng learners kaya kailangan talagang mag-adjust sa pagtuturo.”

A participant further explained:

“May mga learners na mas sanay magsalita ng Ilocano o Ibanag kaya minsan hirap silang magpahayag gamit ang purong Filipino.”

Some teachers also observed that literacy gaps became more evident during reading comprehension activities and written assessments. Learners who lacked reading fluency often became hesitant to participate in oral recitations and collaborative tasks.

One participant remarked:

“Kapag mahina ang reading comprehension ng bata, naaapektuhan pati ang confidence niya sa pagsagot at pakikilahok.”

Teachers responded to these challenges by simplifying lessons, contextualizing difficult concepts, using code-switching strategies, and providing additional examples to improve learner understanding. The findings suggest that linguistic diversity, literacy gaps, and multilingual realities significantly shape instructional experiences and classroom interactions in Filipino education. These findings support Vygotsky’s Social Constructivist Theory, which emphasizes the importance of contextualized and socially mediated learning experiences in promoting language development.

Theme 2: Addressing Learner Engagement Through Interactive and Contextualized Teaching

Participants emphasized that sustaining learner engagement in Filipino classes required interactive, relatable, and contextualized teaching approaches. Teachers observed that learners became more interested

and participative when lessons were connected to their daily experiences, local culture, and familiar community situations. Participants explained that traditional lecture-based instruction often resulted in learner passivity, whereas interactive activities encouraged active participation and collaborative learning.

One participant explained:

“Mas nagiging active ang learners kapag inuugnay ang lesson sa kanilang pang-araw-araw na buhay.”

Another teacher shared:

“Kapag may storytelling, role-playing, o group activities, mas nae-enjoy nila ang Filipino subject.”

Participants frequently utilized contextualized examples, games, dramatization, collaborative learning, songs, and experiential activities to make lessons more meaningful and engaging. Teachers also integrated local experiences and culturally familiar situations to strengthen learners’ comprehension and emotional connection with the lesson.

One participant stated:

“Kapag halimbawa ay tungkol sa pamilya o komunidad ang examples, mas nakaka-relate ang learners.”

Another participant added:

“Mas mabilis nilang naiintindihan ang lesson kapag nakikita nila na konektado ito sa totoong buhay.”

Teachers noted that interactive pedagogies not only improved participation but also enhanced learners’ confidence in speaking and expressing ideas in Filipino. Learners who were initially hesitant became more willing to participate during collaborative and activity-based instruction.

The findings indicate that contextualized and learner-centered pedagogical approaches significantly enhance learner engagement, classroom participation, and language comprehension in Filipino education. These findings align with culturally responsive pedagogy, which emphasizes the integration of learners’ cultural experiences and realities into instructional practices.

Theme 3: Demonstrating Pedagogical Creativity Amid Limited Instructional Resources



Teachers revealed that insufficient instructional resources and limited access to learning materials encouraged them to become resourceful and innovative in their teaching practices. Participants explained that the lack of textbooks, visual aids, and technological resources often required them to improvise instructional materials and develop creative classroom strategies to sustain effective instruction.

One participant shared:

“Kapag kulang ang materials, gumagawa na lang kami ng sarili naming instructional materials.”

Another teacher remarked:

“Minsan sariling gastos pa namin para makapag-print ng visual aids at activities.”

Participants described creating localized visual materials, improvised flashcards, contextualized reading passages, and interactive classroom activities using available and low-cost resources. Some teachers also utilized recycled materials and community-based examples to support instruction.

One participant stated:

“Ginagamit namin kahit simpleng larawan o local examples para mas maintindihan ng learners ang lesson.”

Another participant explained:

“Kahit limited ang resources, gumagawa kami ng paraan para maging interesting pa rin ang klase.”

Teachers emphasized that creativity and adaptability became essential professional qualities in responding to institutional limitations. Despite resource constraints, participants remained committed to providing meaningful and engaging learning experiences for their learners.

The findings highlight teachers’ pedagogical creativity, adaptability, and resilience in sustaining Filipino instruction despite material and institutional limitations. These findings demonstrate the important role of teacher innovation in maintaining instructional quality within resource-constrained educational settings.

Theme 4: Integrating Technology and Multimedia in Filipino Instruction

Participants described the growing integration of technology and multimedia resources in Filipino instruction to improve learner participation, comprehension, and motivation. Teachers explained that videos, digital storytelling, PowerPoint presentations, interactive online materials, and multimedia activities made Filipino lessons more engaging and accessible to learners.

A participant stated:

“Mas interesado ang mga bata kapag may videos at interactive presentations sa lesson.”

Another participant shared:

“Kapag gumagamit ng multimedia, mas nakukuha ang attention nila lalo na sa pagbabasa at panonood.”

Teachers observed that technology-assisted instruction enhanced learners’ interest, especially among visual and auditory learners. Multimedia resources also helped simplify difficult concepts and improved classroom interaction during discussions and collaborative activities.

One participant explained:

“Mas madaling maipaliwanag ang lesson kapag may visuals at audio kasi mas naiintindihan nila.”

Another teacher added:

“Nakakatulong ang digital storytelling para mas ma-appreciate nila ang mga kwento at aralin sa Filipino.”

Despite the benefits of technology integration, participants also acknowledged challenges such as unstable internet connectivity, insufficient digital devices, and limited technological resources in some schools. Nevertheless, teachers continued to maximize available technology to enrich classroom instruction.

The findings demonstrate the increasing role of technology-assisted pedagogies in contemporary Filipino education. Multimedia integration supports learner motivation, participation, and comprehension while enabling teachers to implement more dynamic and interactive instructional approaches.

Discussion

The findings revealed that instructional challenges in Mathematics education are strongly associated with



learners' weak numeracy foundations, low confidence, diverse learning abilities, and limited engagement in abstract mathematical tasks. Teachers experienced significant difficulties in addressing varying learner needs while sustaining active classroom participation and comprehension.

Despite these challenges, participants demonstrated strong pedagogical adaptability through contextualized instruction, differentiated teaching, collaborative learning, manipulative-based activities, and reflective classroom practices. Teachers' instructional creativity and learner-centered approaches enabled them to create more meaningful and engaging Mathematics learning experiences.

The study further highlights the importance of supportive instructional environments, responsive pedagogical strategies, and continuous professional reflection in improving Mathematics education in public elementary schools.

Theme 5: Sustaining Teaching Commitment Through Reflective and Learner-Centered Practices

Teachers emphasized that patience, emotional commitment, empathy, and reflective teaching were essential components of effective Filipino instruction. Participants described teaching as both an instructional and relational process that requires understanding learners' emotional, academic, and social needs. Teachers highlighted the importance of continuously reflecting on classroom experiences and adjusting instructional practices according to learners' responses and learning difficulties.

One teacher explained:

“Kailangan talagang maintindihan mo ang learners para malaman mo kung paano sila matutulungan.”

Another participant shared:

“Hindi lang basta pagtuturo ang ginagawa namin kundi paggabay din sa learners.”

Participants also emphasized the importance of emotional connection and positive classroom relationships in promoting learner participation and confidence. Teachers

viewed empathy and patience as necessary qualities in addressing diverse learner needs and sustaining classroom engagement.

One participant remarked:

“Kapag nakita ng learners na supportive ka, mas nagiging open sila sa pag-aaral.”

Another teacher stated:

“Bilang teacher, kailangan marunong kang mag-adjust at maging patient lalo na sa mga struggling learners.”

Teachers described reflective teaching practices such as evaluating classroom strategies, modifying instructional approaches, and identifying learners' strengths and weaknesses to improve instruction. Participants considered continuous adaptation and professional reflection as essential in responding to evolving classroom realities.

The findings suggest that reflective, empathetic, and learner-centered teaching practices strengthen instructional responsiveness, classroom relationships, and meaningful language learning experiences in Filipino education. These findings further highlight the emotional and relational dimensions of teaching that contribute to effective and inclusive classroom instruction.

IV. CONCLUSION

The study revealed that Filipino teachers in public elementary schools in the City of Ilagan encounter instructional challenges related to learner literacy difficulties, multilingual classroom contexts, learner engagement concerns, and insufficient instructional resources. Despite these challenges, teachers demonstrated pedagogical adaptability and creativity through contextualized instruction, collaborative learning, multimedia integration, differentiated teaching, and culturally responsive classroom practices.

The findings further showed that teachers' emotional commitment, reflective teaching, and learner-centered approaches significantly contribute to meaningful Filipino instruction. Innovative pedagogical practices enabled teachers to address diverse learner needs and sustain active classroom participation despite instructional limitations.



The study underscores the importance of strengthening institutional support systems, instructional resources, and professional development programs that promote pedagogical innovation and responsive language teaching practices in Filipino education.

Implications of the Study

The findings may guide educational leaders, curriculum developers, and policymakers in enhancing support systems for Filipino teachers through professional development programs focusing on innovative pedagogies, contextualized instruction, and technology integration. Schools may also strengthen instructional resource provision and collaborative teacher support initiatives to improve Filipino language instruction.

The study further highlights the need for learner-centered and culturally responsive pedagogical approaches that address linguistic diversity and varying literacy levels among elementary learners. Future studies may explore the long-term impact of innovative Filipino pedagogies on learner engagement and language proficiency across diverse educational settings.

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International Journal of Education, Literacies, and Curriculum Studies

ISSN: 3116-2991

<https://ijelcs.minduraresearch.com/journal/index>



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ISSN: 3116-2991

<https://ijelcs.minduraresearch.com/journal/index>
