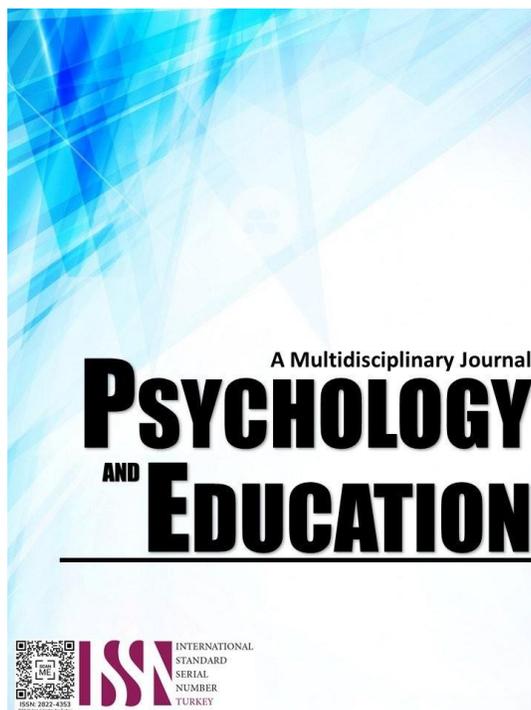


# **EXPLORING THE VOICES OF FILIPINO-MAJOR TEACHERS TEACHING SUBJECTS IN ENGLISH MEDIUM IN THE PHILIPPINES: A PHENOMENOLOGY**



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## Exploring the Voices of Filipino-Major Teachers Teaching Subjects in English Medium in the Philippines: A Phenomenology

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### Abstract

The lived experiences of Filipino teachers teaching subjects in English medium are pivotal in understanding the essence of vertical and horizontal articulation of expertise. This study explicated the voices of Filipino teachers teaching subjects in English medium. The various stories behind every classroom discussion are narrated to determine coping strategies and techniques for sustaining the delivery of quality education. This study utilized the Heideggerian Phenomenology research design wherein the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) will be used to understand the meaning of the Filipino Teachers' experience. This study used a purposive sampling technique to establish the inclusion criteria. 6 Filipino teachers served as the research participants. Bracketing was conducted to avoid biases. There were 4 emerging themes captured in understanding the lived experiences of the participants. These are (1) Shift; (2) Scarcity; (3) Standards; and (4) Surreal. These four themes provided a clear picture of the lived experiences of the teachers majoring in Filipino and asked to teach subjects in English medium. It is pivotal to assist these teachers when they are asked to teach English subjects in terms of instructional and pedagogical resources. If it is possible, Filipino teachers should teach Filipino subjects to have vertical and horizontal articulation of their expertise so that quality education can be forwarded to the learners. If misalignment is inevitable, the upper management can at least provide instructional resources and relevant training and seminars to augment this gap.

**Keywords:** *filipino teachers, english medium, quality education, horizontal articulation of subject*

### Introduction

Every learner deserves a quality education as Section 1, Article XIV of the 1987 Philippine Constitution stipulates. This promise can be fulfilled when everyone responsibly plays a part in the learners' academic progress as it takes a village to raise a child. Inside the classroom, teachers are accountable for teaching the learners with updated pedagogical approaches that can sharpen their skills and increase their academic performance (Pandey et al., 2023). With the undying problem of educational mismatches, teachers face pressing issues of forwarding the best learning experiences to the learners (Battu & Bender, 2020; Sam, 2020). Educational mismatch is defined as the misalignment of the field of expertise that the teacher finished in contrary to what they are teaching (Montero et al., 2022; Esposito & Scicchitano, 2022). One of the perfect examples is when a Filipino-major teacher is asked to teach English, Science, and Mathematics subjects and the medium of instruction is English. This is where the gap of the study is coming from where there is no study in the literature that uncovers the experiences of the Filipino-major teachers teaching not their expertise with language as the major challenge.

Going back to the moment when choosing a college course in education, the factors interplayed were myriad and one of these was the level of confidence that one can surmount whatever challenges that may come across (McMillan, 2024). After finishing college, one can say that all the learning experiences and subject matter content being mastered can be applied in the field. This adds confidence and self-esteem to teach. However, this expectation is not always happening in the Department of Education in the Philippines. Most of the new teachers are given subjects that are not their field of expertise (Backfisch et al., 2020; Smith & Gillespie, 2023). This becomes one of the stressors and causes of burnout because they still need to study and master the subject matter (Amzat et al., 2021). The major of the course they took in college will soon be forgotten while embracing new subjects to be taught in the classroom. This negates the concept or purpose of college preparation. When they are teaching, they are also learning. This posed a question of how one can ensure that the teacher should be a page ahead of the learners.

The study of Montero et al. (2022) elaborately discussed the misalignment of the teachers' expertise to the subjects they are teaching. Further, their study claimed that this arrangement violates the Department of Education Policy, outlined in DO. 13, s. 1994- Guidelines for Matching Areas in Teaching Preparation with Teaching Assignments for Public School Teachers. While this is true, it is also the reality that public school teachers have no choice at all but to accept and be responsible in adjusting and learning the subjects given to them (Albert et al., 2023). According to De Castro et al. (2015) and Abbafati and Rosano (2024), the education mismatched, and skills mismatched of employees are tantamount to affect negatively to job satisfaction and productivity. This means that it is imperative if this misalignment will not be addressed, at least the upper management in the Department of Education can do something such as the attendance of teachers at relevant training and seminars that can improve their knowledge of the subject matter assigned to them.

This study focused deeply on the lived experiences of the Filipino-major Teachers teaching subjects in English Medium. Their experiences, the strategies and techniques they used, their challenges, and coping mechanisms are essential in creating management plans for the school administrators to augment these most pressing issues. If this challenge still surfaces in the Department of Education, the promise of forwarding quality education to all learners would still be compromised. The researcher hopes that this will be given

appropriate action wherein the horizontal and vertical articulation of the teacher's expertise will be managed well and if so, that this will still happen, the needed resources, administrative support, certification process, and relevant training and seminars will be given to them.

### Research Questions

This study explored the lived experiences of teachers who finished Education majors in Filipino teaching English subjects such as English, Mathematics, and Science in the country. Specifically, this study elicited pertinent information in answering the following questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of the participants?
2. What are their challenges in teaching English subjects?
3. What are their coping mechanisms in dealing with the challenges?
4. What is the meaning of their experience?

### Methodology

#### Research Design

This study utilized the Heideggerian Phenomenology as the research design. This design uncovers the lived experiences of the participants to a phenomenon. This study delved into the lived experiences of Filipino-major teachers who are teaching subjects such as English, Science, and Mathematics using English as the medium of instruction.

#### Participants

The location of the study is the entire Visayas and Mindanao Region. These two regions captured the majority of the Philippines. The researcher opted to exclude Luzon and the National Capital Region (NCR) teachers because they are using Tagalog (Wikang Filipino) daily as their language whereas the teachers from Visayas and Mindanao are using different dialects except the Tagalog language.

#### Select sampling technique

This study utilized the purposive sampling technique. This sampling technique is a non-probability sampling method that chooses participants based on specific criteria relevant to the phenomenon of the study wherein deep insights are elicited.

#### Inclusion Criteria

The participant should be a teacher teaching in a public school. This present school year. The undergraduate course of the participants should be a Bachelor of Secondary Education major in Filipino. The participant should be teaching at least one subject in English medium. The participant is willing to be interviewed face-to-face by the researcher. 6 participants successfully participated in the study.

#### Research Rigor

This study utilized Whitemore et al. (2001) as the foundation for observing the validity of the data. For this primary data gathered from the participants through interviews, credibility, authenticity, criticality, and integrity are sustained. Bracketing was also initiated to avoid biases (Alase, 2017).

#### Instrument

The main instrument of this study is the researcher, herself, with a semi-structured interview guide to gather information from the participants. The questions in the semi-structured interview guide were screened and validated by the experts. There was only one main question with 4 sub-questions.

#### Procedure

The researcher created a letter to ask permission from the authorities in Visayas and Mindanao. After securing permission to conduct the study where classes were not disturbed, the researcher arranged for an interview. Following the schedule, the researcher was able to get in touch with the participants through mobile communication and Facebook Messenger. During the interview, the consent of the participants was secured and the permission to record the interview was also permitted. After interviewing, the researcher reassured that the data would be deleted right after the publication of the study. The process of analyzing the data commenced.

#### Data Analysis

The study utilized the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) popularized by Moustakas and modified by Van Kaam. The following are the steps in analyzing the data and how the meaning of the lived experiences of the participants is determined. These are the steps in analyzing the data. The following steps are horizontalization, Reduction, and elimination, Thematising the Invariant Constituents, Checking the Themes Against the Data, Creating the Individual Textural Descriptions, Creating Individual Structural Descriptions, Creating Composite Textural Descriptions, Making the Composite Structural Descriptions, and the Creation of the Composite Structural-Textural Description.

## Ethical Considerations

The researcher observed ethical principles throughout the conduct of the study. The researcher acknowledged the protection of privacy, anonymity, and dignity of respondents involved in the study as it is of paramount importance. The researcher also ensured that the gathered data from the participants were given with the highest degree of confidentiality. The participants were neither harmed nor coerced throughout the study.

## Results and Discussion

After the analysis, the four emerging themes were seen as the meaning of the lived experiences of Filipino-major Teachers teaching subjects using English medium and these are the (1) Shift; (2) Scarcity; (3) Standards; and (4) Surreal. These themes are comprehensively discussed below.

### The Shift

This theme represents the teachers' experiences in embracing changes and transformations in the field of teaching. It is the shift not just in the transition from studying in college to teaching in the classroom or knowing and studying the theories and applying those theories to mold the learners to their best version but more so on how to accept the reality that there are learning experiences that can be taken into account once a teacher is in the field (Rachmadtullah et al., 2023). Pedagogical and instructional challenges are inevitable in the field of education (Levine et al., 2023; Li & Zhou, 2024). This is what everyone is expected to face and experience. One of these is when a teacher is teaching not in their field of expertise. This is a major shift aside from studying to teaching. Not all new teachers are experiencing the misalignment of subject articulation. The experiences of these teachers are laid down below.

#### Participant 1:

*Medyo nahihirapan akong umintindi ng English lalo na kapag nagdidiscuss ako kasi Tagalog ang major ko. Nachallenge ako kasi minsan hindi ako marunong mag-english sa ibang salita. Sa pagpalit ko ng mga salita galing sa wikang Filipino to English, nababago ko ang konteksto o mensahe na dapat ipapahayagsa mga bata.*

I find it a bit difficult to understand English especially when I am discussing because my major is Tagalog. I am challenged because sometimes I don't know how to speak English in other words. When I change words from the Filipino language to English, I change the context or message that should be expressed to the children.

#### Participant 3:

*It is challenging talaga and I think this is just part of the learning curve because there is no choice. Anuman ang ibigay ng punong-guro ng paaralan upang ituro ay tatanggapin pa rin, salamat. Kailangan mo lang mag-aral bago pumasok sa silid-aralan.*

It is really challenging and I think this is just part of the learning curve because there is no choice. Whatever the school principal gives to teach will still be accepted, thank you. You just need to study before entering the classroom.

#### Participant 5:

*Minsan ay tumatagal ng mahabang panahon upang talakayin ang paksa dahil sa transisyon at pagsasalin. Minsan nalilito ang mga bata sa paraan ng pagtalakay ko sa mga aralin lalo na sa English subject. I would say that I know how to discuss it in English but I'm used to it in Tagalog especially the topics na familiar sa akin. Nadadagdagan ang kalituhan sa silid-aralan.*

Sometimes it takes a long time to discuss the topic due to transition and translation. Sometimes the children are confused by the way I discuss the lessons, especially in the English subject. I would say that I know how to discuss it in English but I'm used to it in Tagalog especially the topics that are familiar to me. Confusion in the classroom increases.

#### Participant 6:

*Yung una taon okay lang kasi nakakapag-aral at nakapagtuturo ako ng English subject lalo na sa first year of teaching pero matatagalan kasi mapapagod ako lalo na kung magpapalit ako ng subject at hindi Filipino.*

The first year is okay because I can study and teach an English subject, especially in the first year of teaching but it will take a long time because I will get tired especially if I change subjects and it is not Filipino.

The impact of teaching not within one's field of expertise can be very confusing and tiring yet one of the participants said that this is part of the learning curve (Dvir & Schatz-Oppenheimer, 2020). Every teacher has a story to tell on how they embrace the shifting of language from what they usually use to how they discuss the subjects (Golombek & Johnson, 2021). This is not easy, especially in building up trust and rapport among learners because communication really matters inside the classroom, but the shift or major change can test how flexible and dedicated the teachers are in forwarding quality education despite all the challenges (Miller et al., 2020).

### The Scarcity

In every classroom, scarcity or lack of something is always an issue (Wiggan et al., 2021; Donnelly et al., 2021). Everyone lives in an

imperfect world and education is no exception. In the Philippines, scarcity in every school is boldly manifesting (Garcia & Acosta, 2019). This is the challenge not just of the government but to all stakeholders to help one another build a venue conducive to academic progress (Basaluddin, 2021). This picture of reality depicts the experiences of the teachers who are forced to teach subjects they are not inclined to. The instructional resources, the administrative support, and the exposure to how things are done are not something that is within their reach. This creates a gap on how teachers forward quality instruction when there is lacking. The experiences of the teachers are laid down below.

Participant 2:

*Ang pagtanggap sa katotohanan na ito ay mas mabuti kaysa wala akong trabaho. Lahat ng bagong teachers ay nakakaranas ng misalignment. Higit 4 na taon ko na itong hinihintay at sa wakas ay nakapagtrabaho na ako sa DepEd. Makakaya ko to kung mayroon sanang exposure at training and seminars kasi kahit magkaparehas lang sila ng subject pero iba ang discussion, hindi ako nila mapadala kasi yung iba malapit sa school principal. Kung may enough na slot lang sana para sa lahat.*

Accepting this fact is better than not having a job. All new teachers experience misalignment. I have been waiting for this for more than 4 years and I finally got to work at DepEd. I can do it if there is exposure and training and seminars because even if they have the same subject, but the discussion is different, they can't send me because the others are close to the school principal. If only there were enough slots for everyone.

Participant 4:

*Kung mayroon lamang mga mapagkukunan tulad ng mga handa na kagamitang panturo, mga plano sa aralin, mga audio-visual na materyales, at mga diskarte at pamamaraan na nakabatay sa pananaliksik upang hindi mo na kailangang maghanda ng marami. Hindi na sana ako naging abala sa paghahanda ng lahat ng kailangan ko kinabukasan para sa aking klase. Pero marami ang kulang kahit school supplies.*

If only resources such as ready-made teaching materials, lesson plans, audio-visual materials, and research-based techniques and methods are available so that you don't have to prepare much. I wouldn't have been too busy preparing everything I needed the next day for my class. But many lack even school supplies.

Participant 6:

*Hiniling sa akin ng principal ng paaralan na magturo ng Mathematics, Science, at English kahit natapos ko ang education major sa Filipino dahil wala ng iba. Walang makakahawak sa mga paksang ito sa paaralan. Kailangan ko maghintay ng mga bagong guro upang makakahawak nga mga asignaturang ito. Mahigit 5 taon na ang lumipas hanggang sa nasanay na ako at nakalimutan ko na ang major ko ay Filipino.*

The principal of the school asked me to teach Mathematics, Science, and English even though I finished the education major in Filipino because there was nothing else. No one can handle these subjects in school. I have to wait for new teachers to handle these subjects. More than 5 years passed until I got used to it and forgot that my major was Filipino.

Teachers are looking for solutions to remedy the situation they are in. Since they have no choice at all but to accept the challenge of teaching subjects, not their expertise, they are looking for instructional support and resources to augment this (Chew & Cerbin, 2023). However, this is not possible because it is not given to them for some reason. One of the participants mentioned that if you are not close with the school principal, you will not be sent to relevant training and seminars. One of the participants said that waiting for new teachers who can teach these subjects in English medium is the best solution to their clamor. Scarcity is not just about the material things that can be seen in a school or classroom but also deep inside the teacher (Osai et al., 2021). When the teacher lacks pedagogical expertise and attitude to adjust to changes, forwarding the quality education to the learners will be compromised.

### The Standards

The Department of Education (DepEd) is committed to adhering to what is stated in Section 1, Article XIV of the 1987 Philippine Constitution. Every learner deserves equitable, accessible, and quality education wherein the teachers can aggrandize such promise (Shaeffer, 2019). This can be put into reality when the standards are being followed. Teaching subjects in which the medium of instruction is English can be very disappointing but when a teacher follows the standard set by the Department, this can lessen the stressors or the things to be considered as a problem. The experiences of Filipino teachers are presented below to shed light on how the standards help them go through their challenges.

Participant 1:

*Hindi na bago sa amin ang pagtuturo ng iba't ibang asignatura sa paaralan dahil tinatanggap ng lahat ang ibinigay sa aming punong guro dahil wala naman sa appointment nakalagay kung anong tiyak na asignatura ang aming ituturo. Ang atin obligasyon bilang isang guro ay subukang itaguyod ang mga pamantayan sa pagtuturo.*

The teaching of different subjects in school is not new to us because everyone accepts what is given to our head teacher. After all, the appointment does not state what specific subject we will teach. Our obligation as a teacher is to try to promote the teaching standards.

## Participant 5:

*Ang pagtuturo ng mga paksa tulad ng English at Math ay isang bagay na wala sa aking kadalubhasaan. Gayunpaman, sa mga natukoy na kakayahan at istraktura ng pagtuturo ng paksa, ito ay nagiging mas madaling gamitin para sa akin. Sa tingin ko, ginagawa ng Kagawaran ng Edukasyon ang lahat ng makakaya upang magbigay ng gabay sa kurikulum para tayo ay magabayan kung paano mapanatili ang mga pamantayan na dapat nating matugunan sa pagbibigay ng de-kalidad na edukasyon sa lahat ng mga mag-aaral.*

Teaching subjects like English and Math is something that is not within my expertise. However, with the identified competencies and the structure of teaching the subject matter, it becomes more handy for me. I think that the Department of Education is doing its best to provide a curriculum guide for us to be guided on how to sustain the standards that we should meet in providing quality education to all learners.

## Participant 6:

*Ang pinakamainam na paraan para mawala ang stress sa pagtuturo ng mga asignaturang Matematika, Agham, at Ingles ay tingnan ang mga kakayahan na ibinigay nila sa amin. Dito ko sinusunod kung ano ang ituturo at ang nilalaman ng pagtatasa kung paano i-assess ang ating mga estudyante. Mahirap man magturo sa loob ng aking kadalubhasaan, basta't mayroon tayong curriculum guide bilang pamantayan sa pagtuturo ng mga asignatura, handa akong pumunta.*

The best way I get over stress in teaching Mathematics, Science, and English subjects is to look into the competencies that they gave us. This is where I follow what to teach and the content of the assessment on how to assess our students. Even if it is difficult to teach within my expertise, so long as we have the curriculum guide as the standard in teaching the subjects, I am good to go.

Standards in education are crucial for ensuring a consistent, equitable, and high-quality learning experience across various educational contexts (Darling-Hammond, 2021; Leithwood, 2021). Standards provide a common framework that ensures students receive a consistent level of education, regardless of where they are educated (Madani, 2019; Mahoney et al., 2021). This helps maintain uniform expectations and outcomes across different schools, districts, and regions. Standards are essential for ensuring that education is consistent, equitable, and of high quality (Riordan et al., 2019; Novak et al., 2020). They provide a framework for curriculum development, instructional planning, assessment, and accountability, helping to ensure that all students have access to a meaningful and effective education (Evans et al., 2021).

**The Surreal**

This theme elaborates on the emotional expression of the teachers, their victory over distress, how they challenge conventional expectations, and the way they overcome the language barrier by thinking of their profession as the catalyst for change (Kopinathan et al., 2020). Encountering different levels and kinds of challenges in the teaching practice can be dealt with positive mindset when one understands the true nature of teaching (Du Plessis, 2020; Mintrop & Zumpe, 2019). Teaching not within your expertise can be very frustrating but when one is a teacher by heart, this difficulty can be eradicated. The lived experiences of the teachers on how they feel surreal in the teaching practice are indicated below.

## Participant 1:

*Ang makapagturo ay hilig ko na mula noong bata pa ako. Gusto kong ituro lahat ng subject pero nung nag-entrance examination, sabi nila ang pinakamadaling makapasa ay ang major sa Filipino mahirap din, pero sinusubukan kong tapusin at master ang subject. Pagka-graduate ko, hindi ako pinaturo ng Filipino. Mahirap pero very fulfilling kasi hindi ko comfort zone yung tinuturo ko. May pagkalito pero kung committed ka sa trabaho mo, magiging okay ang lahat lalo na kung passionate ka.*

Being able to teach has been my passion since I was young. I want to teach all subjects but when I took the entrance examination, they said that the easiest to pass is the major in Filipino it is also difficult, but I am trying to finish it and master the subject matter. After I graduated, I was not assigned to teach Filipino. It's difficult, but it's very fulfilling because what I'm teaching is not my comfort zone. There is confusion but if you are committed to your job, everything will be okay especially if you are passionate.

## Participant 4:

*Ang pagiging guro na may major sa Filipino ay hindi madali lalo na kapag ikaw ay nasa paaralan kung saan karamihan sa iyong mga estudyante ay nagsasalita ng Ingles. Tinatrato nila ang asignaturang Filipino bilang pinakamababang paksa, nakakabagot, at walang kahalagahan sa kanilang buhay. Pero dito ko mapapatunayan na kaya kong magturo ng kahit anong subject. Ang pagtuturo ay wala na sa paksa o sa ituturo mo, kung wala ito sa puso ng isang guro. Kung ito ay naiintindihan ng sinuman, kahit anong problema ang dumating, ito ay magagawa.*

Being a teacher with a major in Filipino is not easy especially when you are in a school where most of your students speak English. They treat the Filipino subject as the lowest subject, boring, and of no importance in their lives. But here I can prove that I can teach any subject. Teaching is no longer in the subject or what you teach, if it is not in the heart of a teacher. If it is understood by anyone, no matter what problem comes, it can be done.

The best way to be a teacher is when the world is your burden and still a smile manifests in one's countenance in carrying it (Clandinin,

2019; Allen et al., 2020). Teaching is truly not just a profession but also a vocation. Intellect with the heart should be in place once a teacher is inside the classroom (Zhou & Dai, 2019; Abnisa & Zubairi, 2022). Being challenged by not sharing the field you are in is a pedagogical constraint (O-Connor, 2022). However, understanding the need to continue education is within the hands of a teacher. Adjusting and learning to the demands of the subjects not well-familiarized is a journey worth remembering. The feeling of surreal in the field of education exemplifies a message of embracing imperfections which the teacher's heart to accept is the only antidote.

## Conclusions

The lived experiences of the teachers who finished majoring in Filipino and currently teaching subjects using English as a medium of instruction are fascinating and very interesting. At a glance, everyone would expect to have negative answers and discussions regarding their personal experiences inside the classroom but there are positive reflections that can be learned from them. These are the emerging themes that Filipino teachers experienced a SHIFT on how they adjust and embrace what SCARCITY a classroom has in following the STANDARDS established by the Department of Education to allow the teachers to experience SURREAL in providing quality education and the best learning experiences every learner deserves to have.

This study highly recommends conducting a quantitative study specifically a correlation research design establishing the significant relationship between and among the teachers' knowledge of the subject being taught which is not their field of expertise, attitude, behavior, demographic profile, and work performance. This is to determine if these variables can indeed affect the dependent variable which is work performance. Future research can be conducted to identify what other factors affect the lived experiences of the teachers teaching not their field of expertise. It can be a science teacher teaching Filipino or history subjects or a teacher who finished an education major in English who will teach Filipino subjects. Their experiences and personal encounters may have different findings or emerging themes which can help in making management and action plans.

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