



TEACHERS' STRATEGIES AND EXPERIENCES IN CULTURAL INTEGRATION IN ENGLISH TEACHING: BASES FOR TRAINING WORKSHOP

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative-phenomenological study was conducted to find out the teachers' strategies and experiences in integrating culture into English teaching among six (6) Junior High School teachers as bases for training workshops. The result revealed that the teachers' strategies were: using authentic materials; integrating local culture in teaching vocabulary, grammar, and reading; and using multimedia apps and materials. The experiences of the teachers were: successful conduct of English lessons, improved language skills of learners, cross cultural understanding, lessons becoming meaningful and attractive, and language becoming relatable to learners. The challenges were: limited resources and learning materials, balancing cultural integration with language instruction, learners' resistance or lack of interest, presence of slow learners and non-readers and slow internet connectivity. Teachers overcome the challenges through respecting learners' diverse backgrounds; balanced teaching of local and foreign culture; collaborating with colleagues; being flexible, resilient, and open-minded; and using a variety of reading material.

Keywords: *Teachers' Strategies, Cultural Integration, Language Teaching*

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INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Cultural integration in English language teaching has grown as classrooms throughout the world become more varied and connected. Teaching language skills is simply one aspect of effective language instruction; another is having awareness of the cultural settings that affect communication. A more comprehensive learning process is promoted by the inclusion of culture in language instruction, which also improves language acquisition (Byram, 2022).

With millions of learners striving to become fluent in this worldwide language, learning English has become a global phenomenon. One of the key factors influencing learning English is culture. For many years, a variety of research fields have examined one of the most significant and comprehensive subjects: culture. Different definitions of the idea have been offered by academics from different fields. But according to Spencer-Oatey and Kádár (2020), it is a difficult undertaking because different fields have different definitions for it. Culture, according to Spencer-Oatey, H., & Kádár, D. Z. (2020), is "... a hazy mix of attitudes, beliefs, behavioral norms, fundamental beliefs, and common values that shape a community and impact each individual's actions and perceptions of the 'meaning' of the actions of others". Thus, the English teaching community generally accepts that culture plays an important part in learning a language.

This can be achieved by means of culture integration in the curriculum. In English, there are several teaching strategies that the teacher uses in cultural integration. In line with this, the Department of Education has implemented integration of local culture into English

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instruction. It has become a new trend in the current curriculum where culture is crucial to helping students become more proficient communicators. The ability to see, explain, and act appropriately in accordance with the culture associated with a language is a prerequisite for communicating in that language, so linguistic competency and culture are closely and dynamically related. Thus, culture must be the primary focus of language training in order for learners to be able to communicate as much as feasible. If the main goal of communicative language training is to provide learners with meaningful interactions in authentic situations with native or nearly native speakers of the target language, then teaching about culture is crucial. This will enable students to achieve their communicative needs.

In the past, it was believed that culture and language education seemed to be two different worlds distinctly apart from each other. But studies have revealed that integrating culture into language instruction resulted in increased performance among students. This is so, because learning language structures becomes easy and natural as the students enjoy the stories about local beliefs, values, artifacts, folktales, songs, lives of heroes, and everyday happenings which they experience everyday. In this case, comprehension becomes easy and language structures are learned unconsciously and naturally (Byram, 2022).

It was for these reasons that the researcher examined the cultural integration used by the teachers teaching English in order to find out the strategies used and its importance in English instruction.

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RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research method, research design, respondents of the study, data-gathering procedures, research instrument, and data analyses used in the study. The purpose of the study was to identify the teachers' strategies, experiences, and challenges in integrating culture into the teaching of English.

Research Method

In the study, the descriptive research method using in-depth interviews was utilized to determine and interpret the teachers' strategies and experiences in integrating culture into the teaching of English.

McCombes (2019) explained that descriptive research aims to describe a population, situation, or phenomenon accurately and systematically. It can provide answers to what, where, when, and how questions. She further stated that a descriptive research method investigates one or more variables.

Research Design

This study used qualitative research using the phenomenological approach. According to Qutoshi (2018), a phenomenological method to research can be applied for single or numerous cases, with a clear emphasis on minimum structure and maximum depth to maintain a balance of study focus within time and other resource constraints. This type of research, like other qualitative research, uses many methods including interviews, observations, other research, discussions, focus group meetings, and analyses of the text.

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The emphasis is on gaining a thorough grasp of phenomena contained in the research participants' viewpoints and perspectives.

Narrative inquiry was also employed to provide in-depth information to determine the teachers' strategies and experiences in integrating culture into the teaching of English bases for a training workshop, SY 2024-2025, in the Municipality of San Rafael, Division of Iloilo.

Participants in the Study

The participants were the total of six (6) Junior High School teachers who provided the best and needed information about the strategies, experiences and challenges that English teachers encountered in integrating culture. These participants were teachers particularly who integrate culture in their teaching of English.

Research Instrument

An In-depth interview guide was the research instrument used. It was a 4-item questionnaire that allowed the participants to answer freely their strategies, experiences, and challenges.

The interview guide was given to the six Junior High School English teachers during their school meeting and conference. Right after answering the questionnaire, they notified the researcher and gave back the answered forms.

Validity of the Research Instrument

The validity of an interview guide assesses the extent to which it measures what is designed to measure (Robson, 2011). The researcher-made interview guide was submitted

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to the adviser for review and revision. After the corrections were considered and acted upon, the prepared interview guide was forwarded to the panel of experts for content-and-face validation. The guide was considered valid when checked by the panel of experts. Revisions were made after validation by the panel of experts and all their suggestions and corrections were incorporated. The final draft was submitted again to the panel for approval. The final interview guide was administered to the participants.

Data-Gathering Procedures

When the interview guide was found valid and finalized, a letter of permission to conduct the actual study was signed by the Dean of the Graduate School, PHINMA UI, the thesis adviser, and the researcher. Upon the consent of the participants, it was given to them. With proper communication, the answers were given back to the researcher for analysis. Interviews were planned and carried out in a setting that encouraged open and honest conversation once participants gave their permission. With the use of the completed interview guide, the researcher conducted organized discussions with the participants, thus giving them the freedom to dig more into their strategies, experiences, and challenges in integrating culture into English teaching.

In order to promote an in-depth study of the relevant topics, the researcher took notes during the interviews and followed up with questions based on the answers.

Once the data were complete, the researcher carefully examined the answers to find recurring themes, strategies, experiences and challenges employed by the participants.

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Thereafter, the results were presented in a comprehensible and thorough way while maintaining the objectives of the research, the identities of the participants, and ethical confidentiality criteria.

Data Analyses

The data were analyzed and interpreted using the thematic approach. Emergent themes were identified and discussed comprehensively.

The result of the analysis is a theme explaining people's experiences, perceptions, views, or representations of a given topic. Thematic analysis is an approach to analyzing qualitative data to answer broad or narrow research questions about people's experiences, views and perceptions, and representations of a given phenomenon (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Summary

The purpose of the study was to determine the teachers strategies and experiences in integrating culture into English teaching in the Municipality of San Rafael, Iloilo.

The participants in the study were the six (6) Junior High School English teachers teaching English for Academic and Professional Purposes subject in integrating local culture in secondary schools in the Municipality of San Rafael, Iloilo. They were chosen through purposive sampling.

The study used an In-depth Interview Guide under the qualitative research method.

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A researcher-made interview guide was used to obtain the information. The instrument was subjected to content-and-face validation by a panel of expert jurors and was found by the validators to be valid and appropriate to use. Thematic analyses were used to analyze and interpret the responses of the participants.

The following were the findings of the study:

The strategies of the Junior High School English teachers in integrating local culture were the following: (1) Using authentic materials, (2) Integrating culturally embedded topics, and (3) Using multimedia apps and materials,

The experiences encountered by the Junior High School English teachers in integrating local culture were the following: (1) Successful conduct of English lessons, (2) Improved language skills of students, (3) Achieved cross-cultural understanding among students, (4) Lessons becoming more meaningful and interactive, and (5) Language becoming more relatable to learners.

The following were the generated challenges: limited resources and learning materials, balancing cultural integration with language instruction, learners' resistance or lack of interest in unfamiliar culture, presence of slow learners and non-readers, diverse learners' backgrounds, and slow internet connectivity.

Teachers manage the challenges by: respecting learners diverse background; balancing teaching of local and foreign culture; collaborating with colleagues; being flexible, resilient, and open minded; and using a variety of reading materials.

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Based on the result of the study, a proposed training workshop for teachers was formulated. This training workshop was envisioned to support and guide teachers who encounter challenges while they integrate local culture in teaching English. The focus was on providing teachers with knowledge on how to apply classroom scenario techniques and strategies for students to fully benefit from the topic on integrating culture.

Insights

Based on the findings of the study, the followings insights were gathered:

Junior High School English teachers employ various strategies in integrating culture into English instruction. These strategies make the lessons interesting, foster interactive learning development, and develop deeper understanding of the lessons. With the advent of technology and various social media apps on the internet, like Google, Facebook, Messenger and the latest META AI, Chat GPT, and other multimedia software, cultural integration is at the fingertips of not only the teachers but also the learners. These social media develop independent learning and self motivation to succeed in whatever endeavor the learners are involved in. Moreover, to improve student engagement and comprehension, teachers may integrate culture into their English lessons by employing strategies including culturally responsive teaching, incorporating diverse resources, fostering inclusive environments, and utilizing technology to investigate various cultures.

Teachers that incorporate cultural aspects into their teaching methods frequently share more improved learning as learners relate to the material more deeply, thus facilitating

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engagement and creating a better learning environment. Learners typically acquire language skills more when contexts from cultures are introduced as they connect grammar and vocabulary to multicultural, real-world situations, which improve comprehension and fluency. By encouraging learners to share their own stories and viewpoints, cultural integration fosters empathy and increases global knowledge, which in turn fosters cooperation and respect for one another.

Furthermore, lessons become more applicable to learners' lives when cultural diversity is incorporated, thus enabling discussions, conversations, and activities that encourage critical thinking and active engagement. Learners view language as a way of expressing practical ideas instead of simply vague ideas when teachers incorporate culturally appropriate materials, which makes language learning more interesting and useful.

Considering the challenges that teachers encounter—such as a lack of resources and training—professional development programs that focus on improving ways of teaching may be extremely important in overcoming these obstacles. These programs give educators the tools they need to design more interesting and pertinent lessons. Teachers can strengthen their relationships with learners, encourage respect for different viewpoints, and encourage a deeper comprehension of the material by refining their teaching strategies. This will ultimately improve the learning process as a whole.

Targeted professional development programs are necessary to overcome obstacles such as lack of resources and insufficient training. By improving their teaching techniques,

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these programs help teachers provide more interesting, timely, and culturally sensitive classes.

Teachers can improve their ability to interact with learners, meet the requirements of a varied learners, and promote a deeper comprehension of the material by emphasizing instructional techniques and practical skills. Peer collaboration and technology use are also powerful ways to get around resource constraints, hence guaranteeing that teachers can continue to provide a dynamic and inclusive learning environment in spite of obstacles.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations may be considered:

The training workshop in integrating culture should be implemented to give teachers the tools they need to successfully integrate local and international cultural components into their lessons. Practical tools for lesson planning, resource production, and modifying teaching strategies to accommodate different cultural needs should be incorporated into the training.

To share heritage and instructional techniques, promote cooperation between educators in and outside of fields, and to provide learners with more varied and stimulating information, schools should establish platforms where teachers could share resources and ideas that represent local cultural contexts.

School heads should incorporate the use of digital technologies and internet resources. Platforms that provide culturally diverse content, like articles, films, and virtual cultural encounters, can improve education and increase accessibility to cultural integration.

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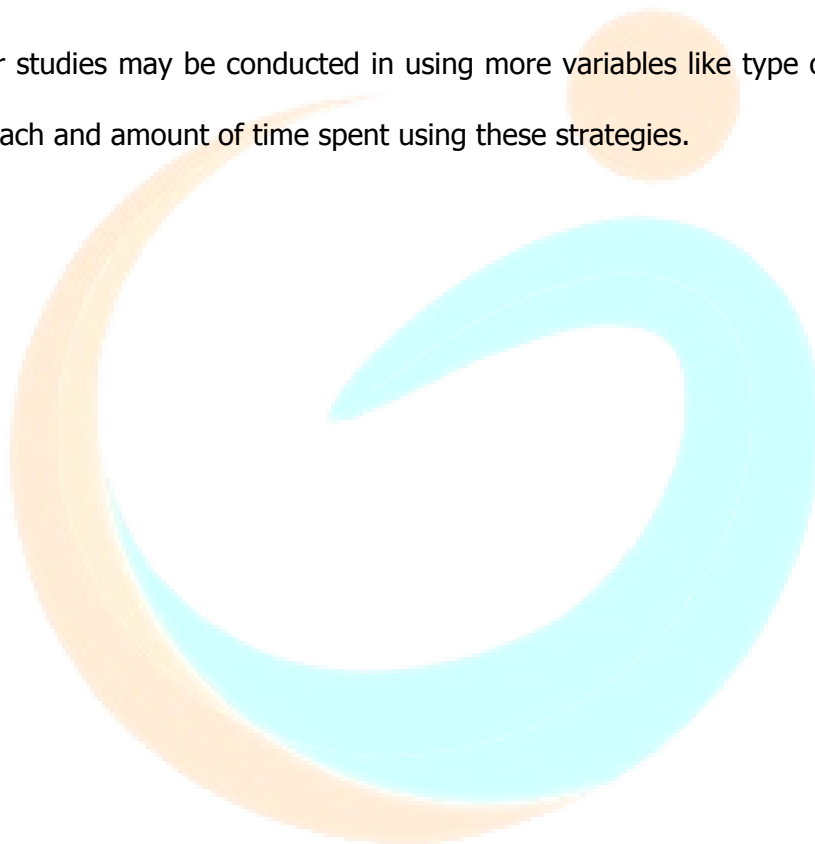
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The Department of Education (DepEd) should give top priority to and financial support for professional development initiatives that teach teachers how to include local and international cultural elements into English lessons. Workshops, seminars, and online courses that offer useful tactics, materials, and real-world instances of culturally responsive instruction should be a part of these programs.

Further studies may be conducted in using more variables like type of school where participants teach and amount of time spent using these strategies.



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