



ENGLISH TEACHERS' CHALLENGES IN USING ACTIVE LEARNING STRATEGIES AT THE PHINMA UNIVERSITY OF ILOILO: GROUNDWORK FOR STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative-phenomenological study aimed at determining the views and challenges experienced by English teachers on the use of Active Learning Strategies. The study was conducted with all nine English teachers at the College of Education of PHINMA University of Iloilo who were purposively chosen according to the need set at the beginning of the study. The following themes were generated from the views of English teachers on active learning strategies: help promote interactive learning, improve learners' creativity and critical thinking skills, foster understanding, and enhance retention. Also, active learning strategies help teachers in gauging learners' participation, as an effective form of formative assessment, for successful achievement of learning outcomes, and accommodating diverse learners. In addition, active learning strategies used by English teachers are think-pair-share and peer-teaching, role-playing and debates, and reporting and mini-lectures. On the other hand, challenges were identified as: limited academic time, inconsistent learners' participation, consistency of active learning implementation, and

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excessive class size. To further address the challenges experienced by teachers, the researcher proposed a Strategic Action Plan for Teachers.

Keywords: *Challenges, Active Learning Strategies*

INTRODUCTION

Active learning promotes student engagement by facilitating activities that require participation, critical thinking, and interaction with the course content. It is a student-centered approach that emphasizes experiential learning and practical application of knowledge, encouraging students to contribute to discussions and collaborate with peers. A shift from a teacher-centered to a student-centered approach in education fosters a better learning environment that promotes retention and comprehension. Educators play a crucial role in shaping the learning process for students. By placing students at the center of the educational journey, they act as facilitators, providing guidance and support throughout the process. This approach allows students to gain a deeper understanding of the subject matter and fosters a sense of ownership over their learning experience. This approach promotes critical thinking and problem-solving abilities, making it a popular tool for creating an engaging learning experience. Theobald (2020) defined active learning as a useful tool for enhancing student engagement and motivation, while also helping to reduce achievement gaps. It emphasizes higher-order thinking and often

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involves group work. It often includes group discussions, problem-solving exercises, hands-on projects, and other interactive methods to promote deeper learning and student engagement. Active learning can enhance students' motivation, improve their communication skills, and lead to more effective learning outcomes.

According to Promethean (2021), there are twelve active learning strategies, namely: Think-pair-share, One-sentence Summary, Role Play, Just-in-time Teaching, The Muddiest Point, Three-step Interviews, Game-based Learning, Minute Paper, Fishbowl, Problem-based Learning, The Pause Procedure, and Posters and Gallery Walk.

The Philippines is one of the world's major English-speaking countries. English is one of the Philippines' official languages. However, based on the EF English competency Index, in the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), the average score of Filipino IELTS takers shows a progressive degradation in English language competency among Filipinos over time (Santos, A., Fernandez, V., & Ilustre, R., 2022).

However, a program of the Commission on Higher Education (CHED), The National Roadmap for Global Competitiveness in Communication Skills, is a three-year project that is intended to be the country's response to different issues and possibilities related to the country's level of English language competence and communication skills. It aims to enhance the English language skills and communication of Filipinos to contribute to the country's progress towards a globally competitive knowledge economy. It is in this connection; that the researcher conducted

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this study to determine the English teachers' challenges in using active learning strategies as
groundwork for a strategic action plan.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Methodology

This chapter presents the underlying processes of qualitative research and discusses the parts, namely: Research Method, Research Design, Participants in the Study, Sampling Design, Research Instrument, Validity of Research Instrument, Data-gathering Procedures, and Data Analyses.

Research Method

This study employed the descriptive research method using in-depth interview that ascertained the challenges experienced by English teachers in using active learning strategies as bases for strategic action. According to Moore (2022), instead of focusing on how or why something occurs, descriptive research methods are intended to describe or explain what occurs to whom and where. Researchers and psychologists utilize descriptive study methods to acquire data and describe the intricacies of behaviors, patterns, and other phenomena.

Research Design

The study used the qualitative design using phenomenological approach. As explained by Tassone (2017),

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phenomenology is an in-depth, methodical effort to comprehend the structures of first-person lived experience. Smith (2013) mentioned that Edmund Husserl, the principal founder of phenomenology, describes it as a study of "phenomena", a variety of experiences, including verbal activity as well as perception, thinking, memory, imagination, emotion, desire, and volition, as well as bodily awareness and embodied action.

Moreover, this study used this approach by identifying the challenges experienced by English teachers in using active learning strategies. To get the necessary data, the researcher requested the respondents to respond to the questions freely and meaningfully.

Participants of the Study

The selection of the participants in the study was based on a strategy referred to as "purposeful selection". According to Palinkas, et al. (2016), it is a sampling technique used by qualitative researchers to find participants who can offer comprehensive and in-depth information about the phenomenon being studied. The participants were the total population of College of Education English teachers who were using active learning strategies at PHINMA University of Iloilo during the School year 2023-2024.

Research Instrument

The researcher used in-depth interview guide questions as research instrument in order to get comprehensive and in-depth information during the interview process.

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The interview guide questions had two parts. Part I was their short profile. Part II contained the major questions related to the study, focusing only on the challenges experienced by English teachers in using active learning strategies. Respondents were encouraged to freely and meaningfully respond to the questions presented.

Validity of the Research Instrument

Britannica (2008) said that the validity of the interview guide refers to whether or not it measures what it is supposed to measure.

The research instrument underwent validity to eliminate the possibilities of ambiguity among the questions and to maximize possible responses from the participants.

The researcher-made interview guide was submitted to the adviser for review and revision, then to a panel of experts for content-and-face validation using the Eight-point criteria of Good and Scates (1972). Revisions were carefully noted, and suggestions and corrections were thoroughly incorporated.

Data Gathering Procedures

The data-gathering procedure began after the study was approved by the panel of experts. Thereafter, the

researcher secured permits to conduct the study from the

Dean of Graduate School, and the Dean of College of Education.

The researcher set a convenient schedule with the

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participants, and asked them to answer the provided interview-guide questions. The researcher assured the respondents that their answers would be treated with utmost confidentiality. After the interview, the researcher transcribed, interpreted, and analyzed all the comprehensive and in-depth information collected.

Data Analyses

The data gathered for the study were transcribed, interpreted, and analyzed using thematic analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006; in Blanza, 2022) defined thematic analysis as "a qualitative analytic method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data. It minimally organizes and describes data set in rich detail."

Therefore, the researcher followed the six-step thematic analysis as it is considered as the most influential and widely accepted approach (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). These steps include becoming familiar with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This study aimed at ascertaining the challenges experienced by English teachers in using active learning strategies at the PHINMA University of Iloilo.

The participants in the study were all nine English teachers at the College of Education of PHINMA University of Iloilo.

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A researcher-made interview guide was used to gather data. This tool was subjected to validity test.

The following are the findings of the study:

Active learning strategies were viewed as (1) helps promote interactive learning, (2) improves learners' creativity and critical thinking skills, and (3) fosters understanding and enhance retention.

Active learning strategies used by the teachers were: think-pair-share and peer-teaching, role-playing and debates, and reporting and mini-lectures.

Different ways to use active learning were identified as: gauge learners' participation, effective form of formative assessment, successful achievement of learning outcomes, and accommodate diverse learners.

The challenges identified on the use of active learning strategies were: limited academic time, inconsistent students' participation, consistency of active learning implementation, and excessive class size.

Based on the findings, the following insights were drawn:

With the many demands of 21st-century education, the use of active learning strategies was viewed as an effective tool to enhance the engagement of learners among themselves, their teacher, and to the whole teaching and learning process. These strategies consist of differentiated activities to cater to diverse learners and their different learning styles.

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Also, active learning strategies have positive use and can be most beneficial in encouraging learners' participation in class since they are being withdrawn from the traditional ways of teaching which make them passive learners. Using them as part of formative assessment is another innovative way of using active learning strategies, thus, providing teachers bases for instruction and assessment of students' learnings. Lastly, these strategies provide a great contribution by helping learners achieve the intended learning outcomes which can lead them to achieve higher academic performance and increase their possibility of individual success.

Despite these helpful contributions of active learning to teachers, challenges were also encountered. These challenges are a combination of those within and beyond the capabilities of teachers to solve. Limited academic time is primarily the main challenge for teachers which calls for deans and school administrators to revisit the curriculum to align it to the needs of the learners. The challenge in the limited learners' participation signifies that some of the active learning activities implemented were not suited to some learning styles of the learners or some were inappropriately aligned to the content of the lessons that the teachers intended to teach. In view of this, teachers should be given enough time to get to know their students and strategize their plan of implementing active learning tasks to their classes. Also, there were challenges in terms of consistency of teachers to integrate active learning in classes because they must prioritize the content of the lessons rather than having fun games which can only entertain the students but not to increase their motivation to be more engaged in the learning process. These

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were also set aside because planning and preparing for activities that are not repeated is an arduous task for teachers. In this connection, it is better to produce a manual for teachers containing suggested active learning strategies and activities which they would also design before the schoolyear or a semester begins to save time in teachers' preparation and to enrich themselves with the subject matter before they deliver it to their students. Lastly, the challenge in handling excessive class size is an opportunity for the school registrar to reduce class size and to provide more trainings for the teachers to maximize their classroom management skills.

The need to address the challenges experienced by the teachers identified in this study necessitated the proposal for a strategic action plan that specifically focuses on the implementation of active learning strategies.

CONCLUSION

In light of the findings and insights arrived at in this study, the following recommendations are forwarded:

Teachers should be given a strategic action plan highlighting the integration of active learning strategies in the curriculum and in the classroom.

The plan may provide enlightenment that would encourage collaboration among their peers to come up with better ideas to cater to the needs of the learners and the teachers as well.

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Also, a strategic action plan on the integration of active learning strategies may be crafted regularly and updated depending on its effectiveness among learners.

The curriculum should be reviewed, and curriculum planners may structure it from the learners' perspectives.

PHINMA Team Learning and School Administrators in partnership with the Commission on Higher Education should provide trainings and seminars on the integration of active learning strategies in the curriculum and in the classroom.

The use of active learning strategies should be continued, developed, and updated to produce more competent graduates and to cater to the needs of 21st-century workforce.

Appropriate trainings and seminars for teachers should be conducted in order to provide more appropriate and engaging activities for the learners.

The strategic action plan formulated and designed by the researcher must be continually assessed and improved to achieve optimal results.

Similar studies may be conducted in other subject areas, departments, and programs to validate the result of using active learning strategies and may use these activities as reference for implementation.

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