

Stories of the English language learners in the printed modular instruction

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Abstract: This study explores the lived experiences of senior high school English language learners using printed modular instruction during the pandemic. Employing a qualitative descriptive phenomenological approach, the research delves into the challenges, coping mechanisms, and the pedagogical implications of this learning modality. Findings reveal that learners struggle with comprehension, lack of feedback, and home distractions but manage through family support and self-initiative. The study underscores the need for interactive content and strong home-school collaboration to improve English language learning in modular settings.

Keywords: Modular instruction, English language learners, Lived experiences

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INTRODUCTION

The pandemic has posed significant challenges in educational activities on a daily basis. The immediate impact has been lockdowns and the forced closure of schools, colleges, and universities over the last year (Watermeyer et al., 2020). However, this has not resulted in a cessation of learning, teaching, and assessment; rather, learning contingency plans have been developed to continue teaching and assessment, allowing students' studies to progress (Rapanta et al., 2020). This is the first global pandemic in recent history to disrupt educational institutions, and the experience has been difficult for both academics and students.

Learning and developing the four macro skills –listening, speaking, reading, and writing—are the primary goals of teaching English (Shamsitdinova, 2018). Language skills cannot be taught using isolated and discrete structural components (Corder, 1971; 1978; Kaplan, 1970; Stern, 1992). They ought to be combined. Speaking as a productive skill and receptive skills are different from writing as a linguistic ability. Students should be able to concentrate on comprehending the message when learning listening skills. When speaking, students should use as much English as they can without stopping to fix their inevitable mistakes. Students should also not focus too hard on each word when reading.

Almost all languages, according to Widdowson (1978), are used in discourse and within certain social situations. Discourse-oriented curricula and teaching techniques for English for specific purposes and English for academic purposes have emerged as a result of Widdowson's (1978) emphasis on the integration of the four skills and discourse-based instruction.

Moreover, using printed modular instruction can make it difficult for English Language Learners to fully engage with the material. This is due to the fact that many of these students may have difficulties with reading comprehension or limited English proficiency. As a result, they may struggle to comprehend the module content and complete the required tasks. For instance, Chiang and Dunkel (2017) discovered that ELLs who utilized printed modular instruction in a college-level ESL course struggled to comprehend the vocabulary and concepts presented in the modules.

Printed modular instruction can also be isolating for English Language Learners. Because they are working independently through the modules, they may miss out on opportunities for

collaborative learning that are common in traditional classroom settings. This can make it difficult for ELLs to practice their English speaking and listening skills, which are crucial for language acquisition. Zhou (2018) discovered that ELLs who utilized printed modular instruction felt they had limited opportunities to practice their English language skills and lacked the necessary feedback and support to improve.

In addition to these obstacles, there are also concerns regarding the quality and relevance of printed modular instruction's content. Some educators contend that these materials may not be current or relevant to the needs of ELLs in the contemporary society. For instance, Kim and Kim (2019) discovered that the content presented in printed modular instruction was frequently obsolete and did not reflect the cultural diversity of the student population.

Since the DepEd implemented distance learning employing printed modular in this new normal, the learners have challenges in continuing their education. Some of the challenges include comprehension of modules which tend to be lengthy and hard to understand. They also lose the immediate feedback from teachers since there is no interaction between them in real time. Aside from that, the learners also struggle with time management because of self-procrastination, distractions, mismanagement of workload and no proper scheduling. The learners overcome these challenges through seeking help from relatives and neighboring peers if their parents are unable to help them with the modules due to work reasons or lack of knowledge on the topic. Sometimes, they send text messages or private messages in social media platform to ask the teachers for clarification (Gueta and Janer, 2021).

The most common type of distance learning is printed modular instruction. This also takes into account learners in rural areas where the internet is not available for online learning (Bernardo, 2020). However, it can be seen that the majority of English language learners are struggling with this new learning mode. Ninety percent (90%) of participants struggled to answer their modules. Half of them do not have enough time in a week to complete all of their modules. They frequently receive at least eight modules in all subjects, with each module containing 3-5 activities (Laura, 2020). The questions are also difficult, and there aren't enough examples. English language students struggle to understand the lessons, and teachers do not respond to questions about the lessons immediately.

The researcher observes that the learners indeed have a hard time with answering their modules especially teachers are not around to explain and translate the lessons to be more comprehensible. Learners also don't have the opportunity for social interaction in practicing English language for they are doing self-learning. The absence of immediate feedback from the teacher in developing the learners' macro skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—makes it more challenging for the learners.

This qualitative research study would explore how the senior high school students survive learning English in the new normal using the printed modular instruction. This is the first study of its kind to be carried out in Getafe, Bohol. The study's findings could show that printed modular instruction is effective in the education and learning system. The modular approach has been shown to be most effective in large classes of up to eighty English language students, as well as in seminar classes of ten to fifteen people. It can be used to demonstrate the interaction of various legal disciplines or principles. However, the challenges that learners face in this learning approach must be overcome in order for them to improve their learning processes.

Notably, this research differed from all of those previously mentioned since this study will explore the stories of the English language learners in the printed modular instruction. Also, there were no published researches yet with exactly similar topic found in the institution for these types of studies. Thus, in this study, the researcher delves into this matter.

Statement of the problem

This study explores the lived experiences of English language learners in modular instruction, and its implications to English Language teaching.

Specifically, this seeks to answer the following questions:

- 1) What are the lived experiences of English language learners in modular instruction?
- 2) What are the implications of modular instruction to English Language teaching?
- 3) What are the challenges of English language learners in modular instruction?
- 4) What are the insights which may be shared to the community and to the audiences?

METHODOLOGY

Research design

This research is qualitative in nature using descriptive phenomenology. Qualitative research is the study of things in their natural setting, perceptions, feelings, insights, or interpretations of phenomena in terms of the meanings people assign to them (Denzin and Lincoln, 2018). A phenomenological study describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon. In other words, it focuses on describing a phenomenon shared by all participants (Creswell, 2018). This is the best design for the study because the researcher can collect untold stories about modular instruction from learners. An in-depth interview will be used to gather the necessary information, which will serve as the primary source of data for this phenomenological study. This will be the most effective design for answering the research questions.

Respondents and locale of the study

The study will be conducted in a public national high school in Getafe, Bohol. It was established in 1995 as a public high school. In the School Year 2022-2023, it has a total population of 1,122 and 165 of it comprises the senior high school population. Learners of this national high school come from feeder barangays which some are located as far as seven kilometers away from the school. When classes resumed on October 5, 2020, TNHS also adapted the distance learning using printed modular instruction.

The participants of the study are the selected ten (10) Senior High School students, are considered as average learners and coming from Tulang National High School, Tulang, Getafe, Bohol following the advice of Creswell (2018) having 5 to twenty-five (25) participants in a phenomenological study. These participants are non-students of the learners. All ten (10) participants will undergo in an in-depth interview (IDI) to meet data saturation. The interview will last for 45 minutes each. In this study, the researcher will apply intensity sampling in selecting the participants as suggested by Foley (2018). Intensity sampling uses the same logic as extreme case sampling – that much can be learned from the ends of the distribution range – but with less emphasis on the extremes. In composing an intensity sample, an evaluator would select cases that exhibited a particular phenomenon intensely. Intensity sampling can allow the researcher to select a small number of rich cases that provide in depth information and knowledge of a phenomenon of interest. As Patton (2001) points out, intensity sampling requires prior information and exploratory work to be able to identify intense examples.

Research instrument

By interacting with the participants in a variety of senses, the researcher-the main instrument-becomes an active respondent in the research process. A conversational space is established by the researcher's facilitative interaction, that is, setting where respondents feel comfortable sharing tales about their experiences and daily lives (Owen, 2006). Qualitative researchers

typically used different forms of data gathering procedures such as interviews, observation and documents (Creswell, 2018). The data for this study will be taken from the participants' experiences and observations which will be obtained through individual in-depth interview. Aside from writing responses of the participants, video recorder through online platform such as google meet or zoom meeting will be used to make sure that responses will not be misinterpreted. The written and video recorded responses will be analyzed carefully.

Moreover, the researcher will formulate the guide questions. These guide questions will be aligned to the statement of the problem to attain the purpose of the study. These will be subject for validation for greater reliability. The experiences, personal beliefs and views of the participants will be included during the interview.

In this study, the sources of the data will be taken from the participants' experiences and observation. The setting of the study will be in one of the selected public schools in Getafe, Bohol.

Data analyses procedure

Analyzing other people's experiences will reveal previously unknown insights. The use of Colaizzi's data analysis approach will reveal a positive effect on learning and provide insights into experiences. All transcripts will be reviewed and re-read to gain a general understanding of the entire content. Meanwhile, using the audio tape to aid in the accuracy of the transcription, these assertions will be separated on separate papers. Transcripts will be chosen for important remarks on the phenomenon under investigation. Transcripts should be thoroughly explained to participants. Definitions will be generated using key terms. Terms should be defined and discussed. The stated meanings will be classified into themes and topic clusters. It will take time to eliminate irrelevant data or concepts. Facts must be integrated into a comprehensive description.

Colaizzi's (1978) analytic method which is consistent with descriptive phenomenology has seven steps. These seven steps are: 1. Read all protocols to acquire a feeling for them. 2. Review each protocol and extract significant statements. 3. Spell out the meaning of each significant statement (e.g., formulate meanings). 4. Organize the formulated meanings into cluster of themes. Refer these clusters back to the original protocols to validate them. Note discrepancies among or between the various clusters, avoiding the temptation of ignoring data that do not fit. 5. Integrate results into an exhaustive description of the phenomenon under study. 6. Formulate an exhaustive description of the phenomenon under study in as unequivocal a statement of identification as possible. 7. Ask the participants about the findings thus far as a final validating step.

The concept of data collection is achieved when themes and categories in the data become recurrent and similar to the point where additional data collection yields no new information. The phenomenon's theoretical component is described. There should be data consolidation or the development of a comprehensive description of the phenomenon under investigation, validity of the research participants' findings, and the conduct of validation procedures, which include returning to participants and discussing insights with them to determine whether the researcher's theme analysis will be compatible with their lived experiences.

FINDINGS

Lived experiences of English language learners in modular instruction

Difficulty in learning

The lived experiences of English language learners in modular instruction were marked by significant challenges, primarily due to the inherent difficulties of this learning mode. Participants consistently highlighted the struggle to comprehend material without the direct guidance of a teacher. One participant noted, "It was difficult, ma'am," reflecting a sentiment shared by many. The absence of face-to-face interaction made it harder for students to grasp complex concepts and maintain their motivation. The literature supports this observation, emphasizing that the pandemic-induced shift to modular learning disrupted traditional learning processes, leading to increased difficulty for students (Watermeyer et al., 2020). Additionally, the self-directed nature of modular learning required students to be more independent, which many found challenging due to the lack of immediate feedback and support.

Moreover, participants expressed that the modular format often left them feeling isolated and unsupported. One participant stated, "No matter how I read, I couldn't learn because face-to-face was different from modular instruction." This highlights the limitations of modular instruction in providing the interactive and engaging environment necessary for effective learning. According to Rapanta et al. (2020), the lack of real-time interaction and immediate feedback in modular instruction can significantly hinder the learning process, especially for subjects that require active engagement and practice, such as language learning.

To support this, these were some statements made by the participants:

Participant 1: "It was difficult, ma'am."

Participant 1: "No matter how I read, I couldn't learn because face-to-face was different from modular instruction."

Participant 3: "Modular instruction was a bit hard especially when there was no one to help me."

Participant 6: "It wasn't easy to understand. There's a part you didn't understand and there's a part that you understand."

Implications of modular instruction to English Language teaching

Impact on grades and learning

The study found that the transition to modular instruction had substantial implications for English language teaching, particularly in terms of student performance and learning outcomes. Participants reported that their grades were negatively impacted due to the challenges associated with understanding and completing the modules independently. One participant mentioned, "It has a big effect on my grades. For example, if you cannot understand the questions in the module, you cannot answer well, so your grades will be affected." This indicates that the comprehension difficulties experienced by students directly translated into lower academic performance.

The findings suggest that modular instruction may not adequately cater to the diverse learning needs of students, particularly those who require more interactive and guided learning experiences. Kim and Kim (2019) highlighted that the content in modular instruction is often outdated and not tailored to the specific needs of English language learners, which can further exacerbate comprehension issues. Therefore, educators need to consider revising and updating modular materials to ensure they are relevant and accessible to all students, potentially integrating more interactive elements to support learning. To further back these up, the following statements from the participants are also noted:

Participant 4: "It has a big effect on my grades. For example, if you cannot understand the questions in the module, you cannot answer well, so your grades will be affected."

Participant 5: "I felt like I wasn't learning as much as I should have."

Participant 9: "I preferred face-to-face learning because it was easier to understand the material."

Challenges of English language learners in modular instruction

Home environment challenges

Participants identified the home environment as a significant challenge to their learning during modular instruction. Many found it difficult to concentrate and stay focused on their studies due to numerous distractions and household responsibilities. One participant remarked, "I found it very hard to concentrate at home with so many distractions." This issue was compounded by the lack of a structured learning environment, which is typically provided in a classroom setting. The literature corroborates these findings, noting that the home environment can introduce various distractions that impede students' ability to concentrate and manage their time effectively (Gueta and Janer, 2021).

Furthermore, the need to balance academic work with household chores added to the student's stress and reduced the time available for studying. Participants mentioned that the absence of a conducive study environment made it challenging to keep up with the demands of modular instruction. This struggle is consistent with the findings of Bernardo (2020), who noted that learners in rural areas or those without dedicated study spaces face additional barriers in distance learning scenarios. As a result, the home environment significantly impacted the effectiveness of modular instruction for English language learners, highlighting the need for supportive measures to help students manage their academic responsibilities. To support this, these were some statements made by the participants:

Participant 5: "I found it very hard to concentrate at home with so many distractions."

Participant 9: "Balancing schoolwork with household chores was challenging."

Participant 1: "It was difficult ma'am worse it was a pandemic and you must help your parents."

Participant 3: "It was tough to focus on studies with all the distractions at home."

Insights which may be shared to the community and to the audiences

Importance of family support

The role of family support emerged as a critical factor in the success of students navigating modular instruction. Participants frequently mentioned relying on family members for assistance with their studies. For example, one participant stated, "I asked her what's that about," referring to seeking help from an older sister. This reliance on family members provided essential support that was otherwise missing from the educational framework of modular instruction. The literature supports this finding, indicating that family involvement can play a crucial role in mitigating some of the challenges associated with distance learning by providing additional resources and emotional support (Laura, 2020).

Family support not only helped students understand their lessons better but also provided the emotional encouragement needed to persist in a challenging learning environment. Another participant highlighted "My siblings, my parents, and my siblings" as sources of support. This underscores the importance of a supportive home environment in enhancing the learning experience and outcomes for students. According to studies by Ong (2020), involving family in the educational process can significantly improve student motivation and engagement, suggesting that schools and educators should encourage and facilitate greater family involvement in modular instruction. The following statements were made by the participants, supporting the discussion:

Participant 1: "I asked her what's that about."

Participant 6: "My siblings, my parents and my siblings."

Participant 5: "I relied heavily on my older sibling to help me with my studies."

Participant 9: "My family helped me a lot with my studies."

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of this study reveal significant insights into the lived experiences of English language learners engaging with modular instruction. It is evident that while modular instruction offers a necessary alternative to traditional face-to-face learning, particularly during times of disruption such as the COVID-19 pandemic, it also presents substantial challenges. The difficulties in understanding the material, lack of immediate feedback, and the struggle to stay motivated and focused highlight the need for improvements in the design and delivery of modular content. Additionally, the negative impact on student's grades and overall learning outcomes underscores the necessity for revising and updating instructional materials to better meet the diverse needs of learners.

Furthermore, the study highlights the critical role of the home environment and family support in the success of students navigating modular instruction. The challenges posed by household distractions and the need for a conducive study environment are significant barriers to effective learning. However, the involvement and support of family members can mitigate some of these challenges, providing essential academic and emotional assistance. By fostering a collaborative effort between schools, educators, and families and by incorporating more interactive and engaging elements within the modular content, the educational experience of English language learners can be significantly enhanced. These findings emphasize the importance of addressing both the academic and environmental factors to ensure the success and well-being of students in a modular learning context.

To enhance the learning experiences of English language learners in modular instruction, it is recommended to incorporate more interactive and engaging elements within the modules. This includes the use of multimedia resources, interactive exercises, and opportunities for virtual discussions with teachers and peers. Such additions can help replicate elements of face-to-face learning, making the content more accessible and engaging for students. Moreover, to mitigate the negative impact of modular instruction on grades and learning outcomes, educators should consider revising and updating modular content to ensure it is relevant and comprehensible for all learners. This involves tailoring materials to address diverse learning needs, providing clear instructions, and incorporating regular assessments with constructive feedback. Equally important is the training of teachers to effectively support students in a modular learning environment, thereby enhancing the overall quality of instruction.

Addressing the challenges posed by the home environment requires a collaborative effort between schools, teachers, and families. Schools should provide guidelines and resources to help families create conducive study environments at home, including strategies for managing distractions, establishing dedicated study spaces, and maintaining a consistent study schedule. Offering flexible learning schedules and additional support for students who struggle to balance academic and household responsibilities can also ease the stress associated with modular learning. Lastly, the critical role of family support should be recognized and strengthened through active involvement. Schools are encouraged to organize workshops and informational sessions for parents and guardians to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to support their children's education. Providing resources such as guides for assisting with assignments, access to educational tools, and ensuring consistent communication with teachers

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can empower families to take a more active and effective role in their children's learning journey.

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