



Article

Bridging Languages and Cultures: Teachers' Experiences in Integrating Filipino Literature into English 7 Instruction in Public Secondary Schools in San Mateo, Isabela

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Abstract

The integration of local literature into English language instruction has increasingly gained attention as an effective pedagogical approach that promotes language proficiency while strengthening learners' cultural identity. In the Philippine educational landscape, the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum emphasizes contextualized, inclusive, and culturally responsive teaching practices that connect learning with students' lived experiences. Within this context, Filipino literary texts serve as valuable instructional resources that enrich English language instruction by exposing learners to authentic cultural narratives while simultaneously developing communication skills, critical thinking, literary appreciation, and intercultural competence. Despite these curricular directions, English teachers continue to encounter challenges in integrating Filipino literature into English instruction, particularly in rural public secondary schools where contextual realities influence instructional decision-making. This qualitative phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of English 7 teachers in integrating Filipino literature into English instruction in public secondary schools in San Mateo, Isabela. Specifically, the study examined teachers' instructional practices, pedagogical experiences, perceived benefits, challenges encountered, adaptive strategies, and recommendations for strengthening culturally responsive language instruction. Twelve English teachers were purposively selected as participants based on their direct involvement in implementing the Grade 7 English curriculum. Data were gathered through semi-structured in-depth interviews and analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. The findings revealed that integrating Filipino literature enhanced learners' English language proficiency, cultural appreciation, critical thinking, classroom participation, and intercultural awareness. Teachers likewise demonstrated creativity by contextualizing literary texts, employing multilingual teaching strategies, and developing localized instructional materials despite limited instructional resources. However, they encountered challenges related to limited curriculum resources, varying learner language proficiency, time constraints, and insufficient professional development opportunities. The study concludes that integrating Filipino literature into English instruction provides meaningful opportunities for simultaneously developing linguistic competence and cultural literacy. Strengthening teacher preparation, instructional resource development, and institutional support is therefore essential for sustaining culturally responsive English language education in Philippine public secondary schools.

Keywords: Filipino literature, English language teaching, culturally responsive pedagogy, MATATAG Curriculum, qualitative research, English 7, multilingual education, Philippine education



1. Introduction

Globalization has transformed English into an indispensable language of international communication, higher education, scientific inquiry, technological advancement, and global economic participation. Consequently, English language education has become a central component of educational systems worldwide, including the Philippines, where English functions as one of the official languages and serves as a primary medium of instruction in numerous academic disciplines. Beyond developing communicative competence, contemporary English language instruction is increasingly expected to cultivate critical thinking, intercultural understanding, creativity, collaboration, and lifelong learning competencies that enable learners to participate effectively in both local and global communities.

While English remains an international language, contemporary language education has shifted from viewing language learning as the mere acquisition of grammatical competence toward recognizing language as inseparable from culture, identity, history, and social interaction. Scholars in applied linguistics argue that language learning becomes more meaningful when learners engage with culturally relevant texts that reflect their experiences, values, beliefs, and identities. Literature therefore occupies a significant position in language education because literary texts provide authentic linguistic input while simultaneously exposing learners to diverse cultural perspectives, human experiences, and moral values. Through literature, learners develop not only reading comprehension and vocabulary but also empathy, intercultural competence, interpretative skills, and critical literacy.

Within the Philippine educational context, the integration of Filipino literature into English instruction represents a culturally responsive pedagogical practice that acknowledges the multilingual and multicultural realities of Filipino learners. Rather than relying exclusively on foreign literary selections, teachers increasingly recognize the value of incorporating Philippine literary works that resonate with learners' cultural backgrounds, historical experiences, indigenous traditions, and community narratives. Such integration enables learners to appreciate their own cultural heritage while simultaneously developing English language proficiency through meaningful and contextually relevant learning experiences.

The Department of Education, through the implementation of the MATATAG Curriculum, reinforces the importance of contextualized instruction, foundational learning, learner-centered pedagogy, and the development of higher-order thinking skills. The revised curriculum encourages teachers to utilize locally relevant instructional materials and authentic learning resources that strengthen learners' understanding of both academic content and cultural identity. Within English language education, Filipino literary texts including short stories, folktales, legends, poems, essays, myths, oral traditions, and contemporary literary works provide authentic opportunities for learners to explore universal themes through culturally familiar contexts. These literary selections allow teachers to teach vocabulary, grammar, reading comprehension, speaking, writing, listening, and literary analysis while fostering appreciation of Philippine culture and national identity.

Research in culturally responsive teaching consistently demonstrates that learners become more engaged when instructional materials reflect their lived experiences and cultural backgrounds. Culturally relevant literature promotes learner motivation because students recognize themselves, their communities, and their values within the texts they study. Such recognition encourages meaningful classroom participation, deeper textual analysis, and stronger emotional connections with learning activities. Moreover, integrating local literature into English instruction supports multilingual education by validating learners' first language while facilitating second-language acquisition through familiar cultural contexts.

The integration of Filipino literature likewise contributes to the development of intercultural communicative competence, an increasingly important objective of twenty-first-century education. Learners exposed to culturally grounded literary texts develop the capacity to appreciate cultural diversity, examine multiple perspectives, and communicate respectfully across cultures. By examining Philippine literary traditions through the English language, learners simultaneously strengthen linguistic competence and cultural awareness. This dual emphasis aligns with international perspectives on language education, which advocate for the integration of language, culture, and identity within communicative language teaching.

Despite these pedagogical advantages, English teachers frequently encounter practical challenges when integrating Filipino literature into classroom instruction. The availability of appropriate literary resources, limited instructional time, diverse learner language proficiency, insufficient teacher preparation, and scarcity of contextualized teaching materials often influence instructional implementation. Teachers must therefore exercise professional judgment in selecting literary texts, designing learning activities, translating cultural concepts into accessible English instruction, and balancing curriculum competencies with learners' varying needs and abilities.

These challenges become even more pronounced in rural public secondary schools where limited educational resources, geographical isolation, and varying learner backgrounds require teachers to develop innovative and localized instructional approaches. Public secondary schools in San Mateo, Isabela represent educational contexts where English teachers continuously adapt instructional practices to ensure that literature remains meaningful, accessible, and culturally relevant. Their experiences provide valuable insights into how curriculum policies are translated into actual classroom practices and how teachers negotiate the relationship between language instruction and cultural education.

Although numerous studies have examined literature-based instruction, English language teaching, and culturally responsive pedagogy, relatively few qualitative investigations have explored teachers' lived experiences in integrating Filipino literature specifically into Grade 7 English instruction under the evolving Philippine basic education curriculum. Existing studies predominantly focus on learner achievement, reading comprehension, or curriculum implementation using quantitative approaches. Limited attention has been devoted to understanding teachers' instructional decision-making, pedagogical adaptations, classroom

realities, and professional reflections regarding the integration of Filipino literary texts into English instruction, particularly within rural public secondary schools.

Addressing this gap is important because teachers occupy a central role in translating curriculum intentions into meaningful classroom experiences. Their professional knowledge, creativity, cultural competence, and instructional decisions largely determine whether literature becomes an effective vehicle for language learning and cultural appreciation. Understanding teachers' experiences therefore contributes to the improvement of teacher education programs, curriculum development, instructional resource production, and educational policy concerning culturally responsive English language teaching.

Furthermore, this study contributes to the growing body of scholarship on culturally sustaining pedagogy, multilingual education, and literature-based language instruction in the Philippine context. As educational reforms continue to emphasize contextualization, inclusivity, and learner-centered approaches, empirical evidence regarding teachers' experiences becomes increasingly valuable for informing curriculum enhancement and professional development initiatives.

Ultimately, integrating Filipino literature into English instruction extends beyond improving learners' language proficiency. It represents an educational practice that nurtures cultural identity, historical consciousness, empathy, critical literacy, and appreciation of Philippine heritage while preparing learners to participate confidently in an increasingly interconnected global society. Through this pedagogical approach, English classrooms become spaces where language learning and cultural understanding intersect, allowing learners to recognize that mastering an international language need not occur at the expense of appreciating their own cultural traditions. Instead, Filipino literature serves as a bridge through which learners develop both global communicative competence and a deeper understanding of their national identity, thereby fulfilling the broader goals of holistic, culturally responsive, and transformative education.

Theoretical Framework

This study is primarily anchored on Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory (1978), which posits that learning occurs through meaningful social interaction and the construction of knowledge within authentic cultural contexts. According to Vygotsky, learners develop higher cognitive functions through interaction with more knowledgeable individuals, cultural tools, and language-mediated activities. Literature functions as one of these cultural tools, allowing learners to negotiate meaning, interpret experiences, and construct knowledge collaboratively. The integration of Filipino literary texts into English instruction therefore provides opportunities for learners to develop linguistic competence while engaging with culturally meaningful narratives.

The study is likewise anchored on Culturally Responsive Teaching Theory proposed by Gloria Ladson-Billings (1995). This theory emphasizes that effective instruction recognizes

and values learners' cultural backgrounds as assets rather than barriers to learning. Teachers are encouraged to integrate culturally relevant instructional materials that reflect learners' identities, traditions, and lived experiences. Within English language instruction, Filipino literature serves as a culturally responsive resource that strengthens learner engagement, cultural identity, and academic achievement simultaneously.

Furthermore, the study draws upon **Krashen's Input Hypothesis**, which argues that language acquisition occurs most effectively when learners receive comprehensible input within meaningful contexts. Literary texts provide authentic language exposure enriched by culturally familiar content, thereby reducing anxiety and facilitating language acquisition. Because Filipino literature reflects learners' cultural knowledge, students are better able to comprehend English texts while simultaneously expanding their vocabulary, reading comprehension, and communicative competence.

Together, these theoretical perspectives explain how language learning, cultural identity, and literature interact to produce meaningful educational experiences. They provide a comprehensive framework for understanding teachers' experiences in integrating Filipino literature into English 7 instruction.

Conceptual Framework

The study assumes that teachers' experiences in integrating Filipino literature into English instruction are shaped by multiple interacting factors, including teacher competence, pedagogical beliefs, curriculum requirements, availability of instructional materials, administrative support, learner characteristics, cultural relevance of literary texts, and school context. These factors collectively influence teachers' instructional practices, classroom experiences, learner engagement, language development, and cultural appreciation.

The integration of Filipino literature is expected to contribute to improved English language proficiency, enhanced literary appreciation, stronger cultural identity, increased classroom participation, critical thinking development, and intercultural competence among Grade 7 learners. Teachers' adaptive strategies, instructional creativity, and contextualized pedagogical practices serve as mediating factors that facilitate successful curriculum implementation.

Research Gap

Although extensive research has examined literature-based instruction, English language teaching, and culturally responsive pedagogy, limited qualitative studies have explored teachers' lived experiences in integrating Filipino literature into Grade 7 English instruction within Philippine public secondary schools. Existing investigations primarily focus on learner achievement, reading comprehension, or curriculum implementation using quantitative approaches, with relatively little attention given to teachers' instructional decision-making, classroom adaptations, contextual challenges, and professional reflections.

Furthermore, there remains a scarcity of empirical studies conducted in rural public secondary schools where contextual realities significantly influence instructional practices. The experiences of English teachers in San Mateo, Isabela remain largely undocumented despite the increasing emphasis on culturally responsive education under the MATATAG Curriculum. This study therefore addresses this gap by providing an in-depth qualitative exploration of teachers' experiences in integrating Filipino literature into English instruction, thereby contributing evidence that may inform curriculum enhancement, teacher professional development, instructional resource production, and culturally responsive educational policy.

Statement of the Problem

This study explored the lived experiences of English 7 teachers in integrating Filipino literature into English language instruction in public secondary schools in San Mateo, Isabela.

Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. How do English teachers integrate Filipino literature into Grade 7 English instruction?
2. What instructional practices do teachers employ in teaching Filipino literary texts?
3. What benefits do teachers perceive from integrating Filipino literature into English language instruction?
4. What challenges do teachers encounter in integrating Filipino literature into English classes?
5. What adaptive strategies do teachers employ to address these challenges?
6. What recommendations can teachers provide to strengthen the integration of Filipino literature into English instruction under the MATATAG Curriculum?

Significance of the Study

The findings of this study are expected to benefit English teachers by providing evidence-based instructional practices for integrating Filipino literature into language teaching. School administrators may utilize the findings to strengthen instructional supervision, provide appropriate learning resources, and design professional development programs focusing on culturally responsive pedagogy. Curriculum developers may use the results to improve English curriculum guides and develop localized literary resources aligned with the MATATAG Curriculum. Teacher education institutions may likewise integrate the findings into pre-service and in-service teacher preparation programs emphasizing literature-based language instruction and culturally responsive teaching. Finally, future researchers may use the study as a reference in conducting similar qualitative investigations concerning literature integration, multilingual education, and English language pedagogy in diverse Philippine educational contexts.

2. Research Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a **qualitative phenomenological research design** to explore the lived experiences of English 7 teachers in integrating Filipino literature into English language instruction in public secondary schools in San Mateo, Isabela. The phenomenological approach was considered the most appropriate because the primary objective of the study was to understand and describe the meanings teachers attached to their experiences of integrating Filipino literary texts into English instruction. Rather than examining measurable variables or testing predetermined hypotheses, phenomenology focuses on describing participants' lived experiences, perceptions, beliefs, and reflections regarding a particular phenomenon. Since the integration of Filipino literature into English language teaching is shaped by teachers' instructional philosophies, cultural beliefs, classroom realities, and professional experiences, this qualitative design enabled the researcher to capture rich, authentic, and context-specific narratives that could not be adequately represented through quantitative methods.

The qualitative approach also allowed the researcher to examine the complexities surrounding culturally responsive language instruction within the Philippine educational context. Teachers' decisions regarding literary text selection, instructional strategies, classroom interactions, and learner engagement are influenced by numerous contextual factors such as curriculum requirements, school resources, learner diversity, and community culture. Through in-depth exploration of these experiences, the study generated comprehensive descriptions that contributed to a deeper understanding of how English teachers bridge language learning and cultural education through Filipino literature.

Research Locale

The study was conducted in the **public secondary schools of San Mateo, Isabela**, one of the municipalities within the Schools Division of Isabela. The municipality comprises several public secondary schools serving learners from both urban and rural barangays. The schools operate under the Department of Education and have begun implementing the MATATAG Curriculum, which emphasizes foundational learning, contextualized instruction, learner-centered pedagogy, and culturally responsive educational practices.

San Mateo provides an appropriate setting for the study because English teachers continually adapt instructional practices to accommodate learners from diverse linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Many learners primarily communicate in Ilocano, Ibanag, Tagalog, or other local dialects before learning English as a second language. This multilingual environment presents both opportunities and challenges for integrating Filipino literature into English instruction. Teachers are therefore expected to design culturally meaningful learning experiences that simultaneously develop learners' English language proficiency and appreciation of Philippine literature and culture.

The participating schools likewise implement various reading enhancement programs, Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions, and curriculum enrichment initiatives that encourage teachers to contextualize instruction using locally relevant literary texts. These characteristics made San Mateo an appropriate locale for examining teachers' lived experiences regarding culturally responsive English language teaching.

Participants of the Study

The participants consisted of **twelve (12) English 7 teachers** from different public secondary schools in San Mateo, Isabela. The participants were selected through purposive sampling because they possessed direct experience in integrating Filipino literature into Grade 7 English instruction under the MATATAG Curriculum.

To ensure that participants could provide rich and relevant information, the following inclusion criteria were established: (1) currently teaching English 7 during the conduct of the study; (2) actively implementing the MATATAG Curriculum; (3) with at least two years of teaching experience in English language education; (4) experienced in integrating Filipino literary texts into classroom instruction; and (5) willing to participate voluntarily in the study.

The participants represented various professional backgrounds, teaching experiences, and academic qualifications ranging from Teacher I to Master Teacher positions. Such diversity enabled the study to gather multiple perspectives regarding instructional practices, pedagogical innovations, classroom challenges, and professional reflections related to literature integration.

Research Instrument

The primary research instrument utilized in this study was a **researcher-developed semi-structured interview guide** designed specifically to address the objectives of the investigation. The interview guide was subjected to content validation by three experts specializing in English Language Teaching, Philippine Literature, Curriculum and Instruction, and Qualitative Research to ensure its relevance, clarity, coherence, and alignment with the research questions.

The interview consisted of open-ended questions that encouraged participants to describe their instructional experiences in detail. The questions focused on teachers' approaches to integrating Filipino literature into English instruction, instructional strategies employed, perceived effects on learners' language development, cultural appreciation, learner engagement, challenges encountered during implementation, adaptive practices, administrative support, and recommendations for strengthening culturally responsive English language education.

To obtain richer descriptions, the researcher employed probing questions whenever participants introduced significant experiences or insights requiring further elaboration.

The flexibility of the semi-structured interview allowed participants to narrate authentic classroom experiences while ensuring that all essential topics relevant to the study were thoroughly explored.

Data Gathering Procedure

Prior to the conduct of the study, formal approval was secured from the Schools Division Superintendent of the Schools Division of Isabela and from the principals of the participating public secondary schools. After obtaining institutional approval, the researcher personally coordinated with prospective participants to explain the objectives, significance, procedures, and ethical safeguards of the study.

Each participant received an informed consent form describing the purpose of the research, voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality measures, anonymity procedures, expected duration of interviews, and participants' right to withdraw at any stage without any consequences. Sufficient time was provided for participants to read the consent form and raise questions before agreeing to participate.

Individual face-to-face interviews were conducted in quiet and comfortable locations within the participants' respective schools to facilitate open and uninterrupted conversations. Each interview lasted approximately **45 to 60 minutes**, depending on the depth of participants' responses. With participants' permission, all interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accurate documentation of their narratives. Field notes were likewise maintained to capture contextual observations, non-verbal expressions, emotional reactions, and significant reflections observed during the interviews.

After completing all interviews, the audio recordings were transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were carefully reviewed multiple times while comparing them with the original recordings to ensure transcription accuracy before commencing thematic analysis.

Data Analysis

The collected qualitative data were analyzed using **Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis**, one of the most widely accepted analytical frameworks in qualitative research. This analytical approach facilitated the systematic identification, organization, interpretation, and reporting of recurring patterns emerging from the participants' narratives.

The first phase involved familiarization with the data through repeated reading of interview transcripts while listening to the audio recordings to gain a comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences. During the second phase, significant statements related to literature integration, instructional practices, learner engagement, cultural responsiveness, instructional challenges, and teacher adaptations were assigned initial codes.

The third phase focused on grouping related codes into broader thematic categories that reflected recurring experiences among participants. Potential themes were continuously reviewed, refined, and compared against the original transcripts during the fourth phase to ensure consistency and representativeness. In the fifth phase, each theme was clearly defined and named according to its central meaning and contribution to understanding the phenomenon under investigation. Finally, the sixth phase involved writing the narrative report by presenting each theme alongside representative verbatim responses, detailed interpretations, and integration with relevant scholarly literature.

Throughout the analytical process, constant comparison, memo writing, peer debriefing, and repeated immersion in the data were employed to strengthen the credibility and analytical rigor of the findings.

Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure the rigor and quality of the qualitative investigation, the study adopted Lincoln and Guba's (1985) framework for establishing trustworthiness, specifically credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility was achieved through prolonged engagement with participants, member checking, and repeated verification of interview transcripts and thematic interpretations. Participants were provided opportunities to review the accuracy of their responses and clarify statements whenever necessary.

Transferability was enhanced through rich, detailed descriptions of the research setting, participants, instructional contexts, and research procedures. Such descriptions enable readers to determine the applicability of the findings to similar educational contexts.

Dependability was established through maintaining a comprehensive audit trail documenting every stage of the research process, including participant selection, interview procedures, transcription protocols, coding processes, thematic development, and analytical decisions. Peer examination further strengthened methodological consistency.

Confirmability was ensured through researcher reflexivity, reflective journaling, and peer debriefing. The researcher continuously examined personal assumptions and maintained transparency throughout data interpretation to ensure that the findings genuinely reflected participants' lived experiences rather than researcher bias.

Ethical Considerations

The study strictly adhered to the ethical principles governing qualitative educational research. Participation was entirely voluntary, and informed consent was obtained from every participant prior to data collection. Participants were fully informed regarding the

objectives of the study, interview procedures, anticipated benefits, possible risks, confidentiality measures, and their right to withdraw from the study without any adverse consequences.

To protect participants' identities, pseudonyms were assigned throughout the presentation of findings, and all identifying information was removed from interview transcripts and research reports. Audio recordings, transcripts, consent forms, and research documents were securely stored and accessed only by the researcher. The collected data were utilized exclusively for academic and research purposes.

The principles of beneficence and non-maleficence were likewise observed by ensuring that participation posed no psychological, professional, or personal harm to the participants. Throughout the research process, the researcher upheld the dignity, privacy, autonomy, and welfare of every participant while maintaining the highest standards of honesty, integrity, and professional responsibility in conducting and reporting the study.

3. Findings and Discussion

The analysis of the interview transcripts generated six major themes that describe the lived experiences of English 7 teachers in integrating Filipino literature into English language instruction. The themes illustrate how teachers perceive Filipino literary texts as valuable instructional resources that promote language development, cultural appreciation, learner engagement, and higher-order thinking while revealing the challenges and adaptive strategies associated with implementing culturally responsive pedagogy in public secondary schools in San Mateo, Isabela.

Theme 1. Filipino Literature as a Bridge Between English Language Learning and Cultural Identity

One of the most prominent themes that emerged from the interviews was the teachers' belief that Filipino literature functions as a bridge connecting English language acquisition with learners' cultural identity. Participants consistently explained that integrating Filipino literary texts enables learners to develop English communication skills without becoming detached from their own cultural heritage. Teachers observed that learners become more engaged when classroom texts portray familiar traditions, family values, historical experiences, community practices, and Filipino ways of life.

Participant 3 shared:

"When students read stories that reflect Filipino culture, they become more interested because they can relate to the characters and situations. They are learning English while appreciating their own identity."

Participant 7 explained:

"English is easier to understand when learners already know the culture behind the story. They focus on understanding the language instead of struggling with unfamiliar contexts."

Participant 10 remarked:

"Students realize that English is simply another language for expressing Filipino experiences."

Teachers consistently emphasized that Filipino literary texts reduce learners' anxiety because the cultural contexts are already familiar. Instead of struggling to understand foreign traditions, customs, and social practices, learners concentrate on comprehending vocabulary, sentence structures, figurative language, and literary devices. This familiarity facilitates comprehension while encouraging learners to express their ideas confidently during classroom discussions.

Several participants noted that integrating local literature also strengthened learners' appreciation of Philippine history, traditions, indigenous knowledge, and cultural diversity. Students became increasingly aware that literature serves as a repository of collective memory, preserving the experiences, struggles, and aspirations of Filipino communities. Through stories, poems, legends, and folktales, learners developed deeper appreciation for Filipino values such as resilience, respect, compassion, family solidarity, and social responsibility.

Participant 5 shared:

"Our students become proud of their culture because they see that Filipino stories are worthy of being studied in English classes."

The findings indicate that literature integration promotes dual learning outcomes: linguistic competence and cultural identity formation. Rather than viewing English as a replacement for local identity, teachers positioned English as a medium through which Filipino culture can be explored, appreciated, and communicated internationally.

These findings strongly support Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory, which emphasizes that learning occurs within social and cultural contexts. Language development is inseparable from cultural interaction, making Filipino literature an effective cultural tool that facilitates both language acquisition and identity construction. Likewise, Culturally Responsive Teaching Theory explains that learners perform better academically when instruction validates their cultural experiences and acknowledges their identities as valuable learning resources.

The findings further support previous research emphasizing that culturally relevant literature enhances learner engagement, reading comprehension, motivation, and intercultural competence. Integrating Filipino literature enables learners to become confident English users while remaining firmly connected to their cultural heritage.

Theme 2. Contextualized Literary Instruction Enhances Learner Engagement and Communication Skills

Another significant finding revealed that integrating Filipino literature substantially improved learners' classroom participation, communication skills, and engagement during English lessons. Participants consistently observed that learners became more active when literary texts reflected situations familiar to their daily lives.

Participant 2 stated:

"Students participate more actively because they understand the situations presented in the stories. They are eager to share their own experiences."

Participant 9 explained:

"Even shy students become confident because they already know the cultural background of the stories."

Participant 11 shared:

"Class discussions become more meaningful because students compare the literary situations with their own experiences."

Teachers reported that literature-based activities encouraged learners to express opinions, ask questions, justify interpretations, and engage in collaborative discussions. Reading activities were frequently followed by debates, reflective journals, dramatizations, storytelling, role-playing, group presentations, and creative writing exercises that required students to communicate extensively in English.

Participant 4 remarked:

"Instead of simply answering comprehension questions, students explain why characters acted in certain ways. They support their answers using evidence from the text."

Teachers observed notable improvements in learners' vocabulary development, oral fluency, reading comprehension, and writing abilities. Exposure to authentic literary language enabled learners to acquire new vocabulary naturally while appreciating figurative expressions, descriptive language, and various writing styles.

Participants likewise explained that contextualized literary instruction reduced learners' fear of speaking English because discussions centered on familiar cultural experiences rather than unfamiliar foreign contexts. This familiarity increased learners' confidence in expressing ideas despite grammatical imperfections.

Participant 6 stated:

"Students become less afraid of making mistakes because they already know what they want to say. English becomes a tool for expressing familiar ideas."

The findings demonstrate that contextualized literature promotes communicative language teaching by providing authentic opportunities for meaningful interaction. Learners use English to discuss ideas that are personally relevant, thereby strengthening both linguistic competence and critical thinking.

These findings align with Krashen's Input Hypothesis, which argues that language acquisition is facilitated when learners receive comprehensible input within meaningful contexts. Filipino literary texts provide culturally familiar content that enables learners to focus on language acquisition without being overwhelmed by unfamiliar cultural references.

Moreover, literature-based instruction promotes higher-order thinking because learners interpret symbolism, evaluate character decisions, identify themes, compare perspectives, and connect literary experiences with real-life situations. Consequently, literature serves not merely as reading material but as a powerful medium for developing communication skills, analytical thinking, and reflective learning.

Theme 3. Teachers Demonstrate Creativity Through Localized and Multimodal Instructional Practices

The third theme revealed that teachers continuously demonstrated creativity and instructional innovation while integrating Filipino literature into English classes. Participants emphasized that meaningful literature instruction required careful adaptation of texts, contextualized learning activities, multimedia resources, and learner-centered pedagogical strategies.

Participant 8 explained:

"We don't simply ask students to read stories. We create activities that make literature come alive."

Participant 1 shared:

"Sometimes we translate difficult concepts into the learners' first language before discussing them in English."

Participant 12 remarked:

"Videos, storytelling, dramatization, and digital presentations help students appreciate the literary texts more deeply."

Teachers described numerous instructional approaches employed during literature integration, including role-playing, dramatic performances, readers' theater, collaborative

storytelling, digital storytelling, reflective journals, concept mapping, vocabulary games, multimedia presentations, podcast creation, and community-based literary projects.

Several participants likewise developed localized instructional materials by incorporating local folktales, oral traditions, indigenous stories, and community narratives into classroom instruction. These locally developed resources complemented prescribed learning materials while strengthening learners' appreciation of regional cultural heritage.

Participant 5 narrated:

"Sometimes we invite community elders to share traditional stories before students analyze similar literary themes in English."

Teachers emphasized that multimodal instructional strategies accommodated diverse learner preferences and abilities. Visual learners benefited from illustrations and videos, auditory learners from storytelling and oral presentations, while kinesthetic learners actively participated in dramatizations and collaborative projects.

The findings illustrate teachers' remarkable professional creativity despite limitations in instructional resources. Rather than relying exclusively on textbooks, teachers transformed literature instruction into interactive learning experiences that encouraged exploration, creativity, collaboration, and cultural appreciation.

These findings support Universal Design for Learning principles, which advocate providing multiple means of representation, engagement, and expression to accommodate diverse learners. The findings also reinforce the MATATAG Curriculum's emphasis on learner-centered, contextualized, and inclusive teaching approaches.

The first three themes demonstrate that integrating Filipino literature into English instruction creates meaningful opportunities for simultaneously developing language proficiency, cultural identity, learner engagement, communication skills, and higher-order thinking. Teachers' experiences reveal that literature functions not merely as instructional content but as a dynamic pedagogical resource capable of transforming English classrooms into culturally responsive learning communities.

Theme 4. Navigating Challenges in Integrating Filipino Literature into English Instruction

Although the participants unanimously recognized the pedagogical value of integrating Filipino literature into English language instruction, they also acknowledged numerous challenges that complicated its effective implementation. The interviews revealed that these challenges were associated with limited instructional resources, inadequate teacher preparation, learners' varying English language proficiency, curriculum constraints, and time limitations. These factors required teachers to exercise considerable flexibility, creativity, and professional judgment in delivering meaningful literature-based lessons.

Participant 6 explained:

"One of the biggest challenges is finding Filipino literary texts that are appropriate for Grade 7 learners and aligned with the curriculum competencies."

Participant 1 shared:

"Sometimes we spend many hours searching for stories that match both the language objectives and the cultural themes required in our lessons."

Participant 9 remarked:

"The available textbooks are not always enough. We need to search online, modify texts, or prepare our own instructional materials."

Teachers consistently reported that although Filipino literary texts are abundant, many available resources are either linguistically too difficult, culturally outdated, or misaligned with the competencies prescribed in the MATATAG Curriculum. Consequently, teachers often devote significant personal time to identifying, adapting, translating, simplifying, or contextualizing literary texts suitable for Grade 7 learners.

Another frequently cited challenge involved the varying English proficiency of learners. Participants explained that many students possessed limited vocabulary and reading comprehension skills, making it difficult to analyze literary texts written entirely in English.

Participant 4 explained:

"Some students understand the story in Filipino, but they struggle to express their ideas in English."

Participant 11 added:

"We often need to scaffold discussions because learners hesitate to speak English even when they understand the story."

Teachers emphasized that balancing language instruction with literary analysis required careful instructional planning. They needed to teach vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and communication skills while simultaneously encouraging literary interpretation and cultural appreciation.

Time constraints likewise emerged as a recurring concern. Participants explained that meaningful literary instruction requires extensive classroom discussions, collaborative activities, dramatizations, reflective writing, and critical analysis. However, limited instructional time often forced teachers to shorten activities or reduce opportunities for deeper literary exploration.

Participant 7 stated:

"Literature deserves more discussion, but sometimes we need to move quickly because of curriculum pacing."

Several participants also identified insufficient professional development as a major concern. While teachers appreciated the educational value of culturally responsive instruction, many expressed the need for additional training on literature-based pedagogy, multilingual teaching strategies, and literary text selection.

Participant 3 remarked:

"We need more workshops focusing specifically on integrating Philippine literature into English instruction."

These findings indicate that successful literature integration requires more than teachers' personal commitment. Sustainable implementation depends upon curriculum support, instructional resources, professional learning opportunities, and institutional recognition of teachers' instructional realities.

The findings support previous studies demonstrating that curriculum reforms often place additional instructional responsibilities upon teachers without simultaneously expanding access to appropriate instructional materials and professional development. Teachers' experiences therefore highlight the importance of strengthening systemic support for culturally responsive language education.

Theme 5. Teacher Adaptability and Professional Commitment Sustain Culturally Responsive Language Teaching

Despite numerous instructional challenges, participants consistently demonstrated remarkable adaptability and professional commitment in ensuring that Filipino literature remained an integral component of English instruction. Rather than allowing resource limitations to hinder learning, teachers continuously modified instructional practices, developed localized learning materials, and adopted innovative pedagogical approaches that responded to learners' needs.

Participant 5 shared:

"If the prescribed materials are not available, we develop our own. The important thing is that learners still experience meaningful literature."

Participant 2 explained:

"We simplify difficult passages without changing the essence of the literary text."

Participant 10 remarked:

"Sometimes we combine digital resources, storytelling, role-playing, and collaborative activities to make literature more interesting."

Teachers described numerous adaptive strategies employed during classroom instruction. These included preparing localized reading guides, creating vocabulary organizers, translating culturally unfamiliar concepts into learners' first language before discussing them in English, utilizing community stories as supplementary learning materials, developing multimedia presentations, and encouraging peer-assisted learning during literary discussions.

Participants likewise highlighted the importance of continuous reflection and instructional evaluation. After each lesson, teachers assessed learners' participation, comprehension, and engagement before modifying succeeding instructional activities.

Participant 12 shared:

"Every class is different. We constantly adjust our strategies depending on learners' responses."

Collaboration also emerged as an essential adaptive practice. Teachers frequently exchanged lesson plans, instructional materials, activity sheets, assessment tasks, and digital resources through Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions and informal professional discussions.

Participant 8 explained:

"We help one another because sharing instructional materials benefits both teachers and learners."

These narratives demonstrate teachers' strong sense of professional responsibility and commitment to learner-centered education. Rather than viewing curriculum limitations as barriers, participants perceived them as opportunities for instructional innovation and continuous professional growth.

The findings strongly support Schön's concept of the reflective practitioner, which emphasizes that effective teachers continually analyze classroom experiences, evaluate instructional decisions, and modify pedagogical approaches based on learners' evolving needs. Teachers' adaptability likewise reflects principles of culturally responsive pedagogy, wherein instructional decisions are continuously adjusted to accommodate learners' linguistic, cultural, and educational contexts.

Theme 6. Integrating Filipino Literature Cultivates Holistic Learner Development

The final theme illustrates teachers' shared belief that integrating Filipino literature contributes not only to English language acquisition but also to learners' holistic development. Participants consistently described literature as an educational resource capable of nurturing cultural identity, moral reasoning, empathy, creativity, critical thinking, and responsible citizenship alongside communicative competence.

Participant 9 shared:

"Literature teaches students how to understand people, not just grammar."

Participant 6 explained:

"Many stories encourage learners to reflect on family values, respect, perseverance, and compassion."

Participant 1 remarked:

"Students become more open-minded because literature exposes them to different perspectives."

Teachers observed that literary discussions frequently extended beyond language instruction into conversations concerning social justice, environmental stewardship, historical awareness, gender equality, indigenous traditions, community cooperation, and national identity. Such discussions encouraged learners to examine contemporary social issues critically while appreciating the enduring relevance of Philippine literary traditions.

Participants further noted improvements in learners' creativity through reflective essays, poetry writing, storytelling, dramatization, and multimedia literary projects. These activities enabled students to express personal interpretations while applying English communication skills within authentic creative contexts.

Participant 4 stated:

"Students become more confident writers because literature inspires them to share their own experiences."

Teachers likewise emphasized that literature promoted empathy by encouraging learners to understand the emotions, motivations, and struggles of literary characters. This emotional engagement fostered deeper interpersonal understanding and strengthened learners' social-emotional competencies.

The findings demonstrate that literature integration extends beyond academic achievement by contributing to learners' intellectual, emotional, social, ethical, and cultural development. Such holistic outcomes align closely with the objectives of the MATATAG

Curriculum, which advocates education that develops competent, resilient, values-oriented, and culturally grounded Filipino learners.

Discussion

The findings collectively demonstrate that integrating Filipino literature into English language instruction represents a culturally responsive pedagogical approach that strengthens both linguistic competence and cultural identity among Grade 7 learners. Teachers consistently perceived Filipino literary texts as authentic instructional resources that facilitate vocabulary development, reading comprehension, oral communication, critical thinking, literary appreciation, and intercultural understanding. Their experiences further reveal that learners become more engaged when instructional materials reflect familiar cultural experiences, community traditions, and Philippine realities.

The study likewise highlights teachers' remarkable professionalism, creativity, and resilience. Despite encountering limitations related to instructional resources, learner diversity, curriculum demands, and professional preparation, teachers continuously adapted their instructional practices to ensure meaningful learning experiences. Their commitment demonstrates that effective curriculum implementation depends not only on curriculum design but also on teachers' pedagogical expertise, cultural competence, and reflective practice.

Moreover, the findings reinforce the significance of culturally responsive education in multilingual societies such as the Philippines. Language learning becomes more meaningful when learners recognize that English functions not as a replacement for local identity but as a medium through which Filipino culture, history, and values can be communicated globally. Integrating Filipino literature therefore contributes simultaneously to language development, cultural preservation, and holistic learner formation.

4. Conclusion

This phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of English 7 teachers in integrating Filipino literature into English instruction in public secondary schools in San Mateo, Isabela. The findings revealed that teachers perceive Filipino literature as a powerful pedagogical resource that effectively bridges English language learning and cultural education. Through culturally relevant literary texts, learners developed stronger communication skills, deeper literary appreciation, enhanced critical thinking, greater classroom participation, and increased awareness of Philippine culture and identity.

Despite challenges related to limited instructional resources, varying learner language proficiency, insufficient professional development, and curriculum constraints, teachers demonstrated remarkable creativity and adaptability by contextualizing literary instruction, developing localized learning materials, utilizing multimodal teaching strategies, and collaborating with colleagues. These instructional practices enabled teachers to sustain meaningful, learner-centered, and culturally responsive English language education.

The study concludes that integrating Filipino literature into English instruction supports the broader objectives of the MATATAG Curriculum by promoting foundational literacy, cultural identity, intercultural competence, and holistic learner development. However, sustaining these instructional innovations requires continuous institutional support, appropriate instructional resources, and ongoing teacher professional development.

5. Implications of the Study

The findings have important implications for educational policy and instructional practice. English teachers may further strengthen literature integration through collaborative lesson planning, contextualized instructional material development, and reflective teaching practices. School administrators should provide sustained instructional support by investing in culturally relevant literary resources, digital learning materials, and professional development opportunities focusing on literature-based language instruction. Curriculum developers may use the findings to enrich English curriculum guides with more localized literary selections that reflect the cultural diversity of the Philippines. Teacher education institutions should strengthen pre-service and in-service programs on culturally responsive pedagogy, multilingual education, and literature-based language teaching. Finally, educational policymakers may consider expanding institutional support for schools implementing culturally responsive instructional practices under the MATATAG Curriculum.

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are offered:

1. English teachers should continue integrating Filipino literary texts that reflect learners' cultural backgrounds and community experiences while promoting English language proficiency.
2. Public secondary schools should establish school-based repositories of contextualized Filipino literary resources that teachers can readily access and adapt for classroom instruction.
3. The Department of Education should provide continuous professional development focusing on culturally responsive pedagogy, literature-based language teaching, multilingual instructional strategies, and literary text selection.
4. Additional instructional materials, multimedia resources, and digital literary repositories should be developed to support English teachers implementing the MATATAG Curriculum.
5. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and Learning Action Cell (LAC) sessions should prioritize collaborative development of literature-based instructional materials and innovative teaching strategies.
6. Future researchers may conduct mixed-methods or longitudinal studies examining the effects of integrating Filipino literature on learners' English language achievement, intercultural competence, reading motivation, and values formation across different educational settings.

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