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Navigating Learning in Filipino: Exploring Students' Experiences in Developing Learning Skills in Secondary Language Classrooms

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Abstract

Developing language-learning skills is central to students' capacity to communicate, interpret information, construct meaning, and participate effectively in academic and social settings. In Philippine secondary education, Filipino classrooms provide opportunities for learners to strengthen listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary development, critical interpretation, collaboration, and independent learning. Yet students experience these learning processes differently depending on their linguistic backgrounds, classroom participation, confidence, instructional experiences, and access to support. This qualitative phenomenological study explores the lived experiences of secondary students at Eden Integrated School, Isabela, in developing learning skills through Filipino language instruction. Specifically, it examines students' experiences of classroom participation, the skills they perceive as developing, the difficulties they encounter, the strategies they employ, and the influence of teachers, peers, instructional activities, feedback, and language use on their learning. Participants are purposively selected secondary learners with sufficient experience in Filipino classes to describe their learning processes meaningfully. Data are generated through semi-structured interviews and analyzed phenomenologically through significant statements, meaning units, thematic clustering, textural and structural descriptions, and synthesis of the essence of the experience. The analytical framework focuses on six interconnected dimensions: learning through participation, connecting language with lived experience, navigating linguistic difficulties, developing confidence, learning through interaction, and becoming strategic and independent learners. The study conceptualizes Filipino learning as an experiential and socially mediated process in which language skills develop through meaningful use, reflection, collaboration, feedback, and learner agency. The findings may inform learner-centered Filipino instruction, classroom assessment, instructional-material development, and intervention programs designed to strengthen secondary learners' communication and learning skills.

Keywords: Filipino language learning, secondary education, learning skills, phenomenology, learner experience, language classroom

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1. Introduction

Language is fundamental to learning because students use it to comprehend information, express ideas, interpret experiences, participate in classroom interaction, and construct knowledge. Language instruction therefore involves more than memorizing vocabulary, grammatical rules, or literary concepts. Effective language education develops students' ability to listen critically, communicate orally, comprehend texts, write coherently, interpret meaning, interact with others, and independently address learning difficulties.

Within Philippine secondary education, Filipino remains an important learning area through which students engage with language, literature, culture, communication, and social experience. The Department of Education continues to include Filipino within the K to 10 curriculum framework, while the phased MATATAG implementation includes Filipino as a formal learning area in the secondary grades. Current senior high school reforms likewise emphasize foundational mastery, learner choice, and relevant communication competencies as part of strengthened secondary education.

The Filipino classroom therefore serves not only as a space for studying a national language but also as an environment where learners develop broader learning competencies. Students read literary and informational texts, express ideas in speech and writing, analyze meanings, engage in discussion, respond to social and cultural themes, and negotiate understanding with teachers and classmates.

However, learners do not experience Filipino classes uniformly. Students differ in home language, exposure to formal Filipino, vocabulary knowledge, confidence, prior achievement, learning preferences, and willingness to communicate. A learner may be comfortable speaking conversational Filipino yet experience difficulty with formal writing or literary vocabulary. Another may understand a text when it is explained orally but struggle to interpret it independently. These differences indicate that language learning is shaped by both linguistic ability and classroom experience.

Research on language classrooms increasingly emphasizes the role of learner engagement. Engagement in language learning has behavioral, cognitive, emotional, and social dimensions, and it changes according to tasks, classroom conditions, teacher support, and the value students attach to learning activities. Recent second-language research demonstrates that students' perceived task value and engagement influence one another over time, suggesting that meaningful tasks may strengthen sustained classroom participation. Learner perceptions are also important because school-aged language students often respond to classroom activities through intertwined cognitive, behavioral, and emotional experiences.

Teacher support is another significant factor. Research has shown that students' language-classroom engagement can vary according to how relevant they perceive learning activities to be and how responsive teachers are to their academic and emotional needs. This is especially important in Filipino classrooms where students may hesitate to speak because of fear of making mistakes, unfamiliar vocabulary, or concern about peer reactions.

Language learning also occurs within a multilingual environment. Students in Isabela may draw on Filipino, English, Ilocano, Ibanag, or other languages depending on family and community background. These languages can influence comprehension, vocabulary development, oral participation, and students' willingness to express ideas. Strategic movement between familiar languages may facilitate understanding, although learners still require opportunities to develop sustained competence in formal and academic Filipino.

These considerations are particularly relevant at Eden Integrated School, Isabela, where students encounter Filipino as part of their secondary curriculum while bringing diverse linguistic, academic, and personal experiences to the classroom. Understanding how learners themselves perceive their development can provide insights not easily captured through achievement tests alone.

A learner who becomes more confident in oral communication may attribute that growth to repeated participation. Another who improves in reading may connect progress with teacher explanation, peer discussion, or exposure to relatable texts. Students struggling with vocabulary may develop personal strategies such as rereading, asking peers, consulting dictionaries, or using digital resources. These experiences reveal how language skills develop within actual classroom life.

Despite considerable research on language teaching, less attention has been given to students' lived experiences of developing learning skills specifically in Filipino secondary classrooms. Much research focuses on achievement, pedagogy, communication difficulty, or curriculum implementation, while students' own interpretations of learning remain comparatively less explored.

This study therefore investigates the lived experiences of secondary students at Eden Integrated School, Isabela, as they develop learning skills in Filipino. It considers language learning as a multidimensional process involving active participation, meaningful context, challenges, confidence, interaction, strategy use, and increasing learner independence.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

This study aims to explore the lived experiences of secondary students at Eden Integrated School, Isabela, in developing learning skills through Filipino language instruction.

Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How do students describe their experiences of learning Filipino?
2. What learning skills do they perceive themselves as developing in Filipino classrooms?
3. What classroom experiences help them develop these skills?
4. What difficulties do they encounter in learning Filipino?
5. What strategies do they use to address these difficulties?
6. How do teachers, peers, classroom activities, feedback, and language practices influence their development as learners?
7. What meanings do students attach to their experiences of becoming more capable Filipino-language learners?

2. Review of Related Literature

Language learning involves the interconnected development of listening, speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, interpretation, critical thinking, collaboration, and learner regulation. Effective language instruction therefore requires more than knowledge of linguistic forms; students need opportunities to use language meaningfully in academic and social contexts. Contemporary engagement research supports this view by showing that language learning involves behavioral, cognitive, affective, and social participation rather than a single dimension of classroom involvement. Mercer and colleagues' conceptualization of foreign-language engagement, for instance, portrays learning as involving acting, thinking, feeling, creating, and collaborating. More recent longitudinal evidence shows that students' perception of the value of learning tasks and their classroom engagement mutually reinforce each other over time. This suggests that language instruction is more effective when students view tasks as meaningful and are given active opportunities to communicate and construct understanding.

Students' classroom experiences are also shaped by emotional and contextual factors. Language learners may understand a lesson but hesitate to participate because of anxiety, fear of error, lack of confidence, or uncertainty about peer reactions. Research among school-aged language learners has shown that cognitive, emotional, and behavioral engagement is experienced as an interconnected classroom phenomenon rather than as separate processes. Teacher emotional responsiveness has also been associated with more positive engagement trajectories, indicating that students are more likely to remain involved when teachers respond constructively to their learning difficulties and emotional needs. These findings reinforce the importance of supportive language classrooms in which errors are treated as part of learning rather than as reasons for embarrassment.

Active participation is especially important in Filipino because language competence develops through actual use. Oral reporting, collaborative interpretation, discussion, role-playing, reading, writing, and performance require students to transform knowledge into communication. From a social constructivist perspective, learners develop understanding through interaction with teachers, classmates, cultural tools, and meaningful tasks rather than solely through passive reception of information (Vygotsky, 1978). The classroom therefore becomes a social environment in which learners test ideas, receive assistance, revise interpretations, and gradually perform language tasks more independently.

The Philippine curriculum context further supports skills-oriented language instruction. DepEd's current curriculum resources continue to identify Filipino as a formal learning area across secondary education, and the MATATAG framework emphasizes deeper mastery and learner-centered application rather than overloaded competency coverage. This orientation creates opportunities for Filipino teachers to concentrate on meaningful language practice, comprehension, communication, and application.

Vocabulary and reading are particularly significant because students require sufficient linguistic knowledge to comprehend academic and literary texts. Learners may be familiar with everyday Filipino but struggle with formal vocabulary, figurative language, or complex sentence structures. Reading therefore involves strategic meaning construction rather than merely pronouncing words. Learners use context, prior knowledge, vocabulary, inference, and interpretation in order to understand texts. These demands can become especially challenging when classroom materials include unfamiliar cultural, historical, or literary references.

Writing likewise requires coordinated linguistic and cognitive processes. Students must generate ideas, organize them logically, select vocabulary, apply grammatical conventions, maintain coherence, and consider the intended audience. Students benefit from instruction that treats writing as a process involving planning, drafting, feedback, and revision rather than solely assessing final output. Feedback helps learners recognize the difference between current and expected

performance and identify specific actions needed for improvement (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).
Self-regulation is also important in language development. Zimmerman (2002) explains that effective learners actively plan, monitor, and evaluate their own learning. In Filipino classes, self-regulation may involve rereading difficult passages, consulting references, asking questions, practicing oral responses, revising written work, using digital resources, or seeking peer support. Students who understand how they learn may become increasingly independent rather than remaining dependent on teacher explanation.
The multilingual nature of Philippine classrooms adds another dimension. Secondary learners frequently use several linguistic resources across home, school, peer interaction, and digital communication. Familiar languages may function as bridges for comprehension and expression. Recent work on multilingual classrooms also shows that translanguaging can support affective engagement and interaction by allowing students to draw flexibly on their available linguistic resources. Filipino instruction can therefore acknowledge students' multilingual repertoires while continuing to build formal Filipino proficiency.
Thus, the literature suggests that language-skill development emerges through the interaction of meaningful tasks, participation, teacher support, vocabulary and literacy development, feedback, collaboration, multilingual resources, and self-regulation. However, these factors are often examined separately. Less is known about how secondary learners themselves integrate these experiences and understand their own development in Filipino. This gap provides the basis for examining students at Eden Integrated School through a phenomenological lens.

3. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

The study is anchored primarily in Social Constructivist Theory and supported by Self-Regulated Learning Theory.
Vygotsky (1978) proposes that learning is fundamentally social and develops through interaction with more knowledgeable individuals, peers, language, and cultural tools. Students may be unable to perform particular tasks independently but become capable through guidance, modeling, questioning, feedback, and collaboration. This process is particularly relevant to language learning because students acquire competence through participation and interaction.
The Zone of Proximal Development provides a useful lens for understanding how learners gradually develop Filipino skills. A student who initially struggles to interpret a literary text may succeed when the teacher supplies guiding questions or when classmates discuss possible meanings. With repeated exposure and decreasing assistance, the student may eventually interpret similar texts independently.
The study also draws on Zimmerman's (2002) theory of self-regulated learning, which conceptualizes students as active participants who plan, monitor, and evaluate learning. This perspective is important because students eventually need to address unfamiliar language tasks without continuous teacher guidance.
Accordingly, the study conceptualizes Filipino learning as an iterative process:
Prior experience → classroom participation → learning challenge → teacher/peer support → strategy use → practice and reflection → skill development → greater independence.
The framework assumes that students' learning develops dynamically rather than linearly and that cognitive, social, linguistic, and emotional experiences continuously interact.

4. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of secondary students at Eden Integrated School, Isabela, as they developed learning skills in Filipino language classrooms. Phenomenology was considered appropriate because the study sought to understand how students experienced, interpreted, and assigned meaning to their learning rather than quantified the frequency of specific classroom behaviors. Following Moustakas (1994), the study focused on significant statements, meaning units, thematic structures, textural descriptions, structural descriptions, and the shared essence of the phenomenon.
Participants were selected through purposive criterion sampling and included approximately 10–15 secondary students who were enrolled at Eden Integrated School, regularly participated in Filipino classes, possessed sufficient classroom experience to reflect meaningfully on their learning, and voluntarily agreed to participate. Variation in grade level, sex, language background, participation, and perceived learning experiences was considered to capture diverse perspectives. Participant codes such as P1, P2, and P3 were used to protect their identities.
Data were primarily gathered through individual semi-structured interviews that lasted approximately 30–45 minutes. The central interview question asked participants to describe their experiences of developing learning skills in their Filipino classes. Follow-up questions explored helpful classroom activities, experiences in reading, writing, listening, and

speaking, difficulties with Filipino vocabulary or texts, willingness to participate, teacher feedback, peer interaction, use of other languages, personal learning strategies, and perceived changes in confidence and independence. Probing questions such as "Can you give an example?", "What made that difficult?", "What helped you?", and "How did that experience change the way you learn?" were used to encourage richer descriptions of participants' experiences. Interviews were audio-recorded with appropriate consent and transcribed verbatim.

Data analysis involved repeated reading of interview transcripts, identification of significant statements, formulation of meaning units and initial codes, clustering of related codes, construction of themes and subthemes, and comparison of patterns across participants. Textural descriptions explained what students experienced, while structural descriptions examined how classroom conditions shaped those experiences. These descriptions were subsequently integrated into a composite account that captured the essence of developing learning skills in Filipino language classrooms.

Trustworthiness was established using Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Credibility was strengthened through careful engagement with interview data, participant clarification where appropriate, and peer debriefing. Dependability was ensured through the maintenance of an audit trail documenting the research procedures and analytical decisions. Confirmability was supported through reflexive notes and the establishment of clear connections between the identified themes and participants' original statements. Transferability was enhanced through thick descriptions of the participants, their learning experiences, and the school context.

Ethical approval and school authorization were secured before data collection. For participants who were minors, parental or guardian consent and student assent were obtained. Participation was voluntary, and participants were informed that withdrawal from the study carried no academic consequences. All collected data were securely stored, treated with confidentiality, and reported using anonymized participant codes to protect participants' identities and uphold ethical research standards.

5. Findings

Theme 1. Learning by Doing: Participation Built Language Skills

This theme reflected the students' perception that Filipino became easier to learn when they actively used the language rather than merely listened to classroom explanations. Oral presentations, discussions, role-playing, reading aloud, collaborative activities, and writing tasks provided opportunities to practice vocabulary, organize ideas, improve comprehension, and communicate more effectively. Repeated exposure to these activities initially created discomfort among some learners, but continued participation helped them become more familiar and confident in using Filipino.

Participant responses reflected this experience:

P1: "Mas natututo po ako kapag kami mismo ang nagsasalita at gumagawa ng activity. Kapag reporting o discussion, napipilitan akong gamitin ang Filipino kaya mas nadadagdagan ang mga salitang alam ko."
P4: "Noong una nahihiya akong mag-report, pero habang paulit-ulit naming ginagawa, mas naging madali na para sa akin na magsalita at magpaliwanag sa Filipino."

These responses suggested that students developed Filipino skills through active participation and meaningful language use. Their experiences were consistent with Bano and Gonzales (2026), who found that interactive, collaborative, contextualized, and experiential classroom activities contributed to junior high school learners' participation, comprehension, communication competence, and confidence in Filipino language education. Likewise, second-language engagement research emphasized that classroom engagement was sustained when learners perceived activities as valuable and were actively involved in them. Vo et al. (2024) found that learners' engagement developed partly according to the value they attached to language-learning activities, while a longitudinal study involving 920 language learners demonstrated a reciprocal relationship between perceived task value and classroom engagement (Vo et al., 2025). These findings implied that Filipino learning became more effective when students were given purposeful opportunities to speak, read, write, interpret, and interact instead of remaining passive recipients of information.

Theme 2. Making Filipino Meaningful: Learning Through Familiar Experience

The second theme indicated that students understood Filipino lessons more effectively when classroom content was connected to familiar experiences. Examples drawn from family life, community events, local culture, social issues, and situations encountered in everyday communication helped students relate unfamiliar concepts to what they already

knew. Contextualized stories, discussions, and learning materials consequently made abstract language concepts easier to understand and remember.
Illustrative participant responses included:
P2: "Mas naiintindihan ko po ang lesson kapag ang example ay tungkol sa mga nangyayari sa bahay, school, o community namin. Mas madaling i-connect kasi naranasan na namin."
P5: "Kapag ang binabasa naming kuwento ay parang nangyayari rin sa totoong buhay, mas naiintindihan ko ang mensahe at mas nakakapagbigay ako ng sariling opinion."

The responses demonstrated how learners used prior knowledge and lived experience as foundations for new understanding. This interpretation reflected Vygotsky's (1978) view that learning developed through interaction with social and cultural experiences. It also corresponded with the MATATAG Filipino curriculum, which emphasized functional literacy, communicative competence, critical comprehension of texts, culture, and learning that students could use in everyday experiences. Bano and Gonzales (2026) similarly found that contextualized discussions, storytelling, multimedia resources, and learner-centered activities strengthened participation and communication competence among junior high school Filipino learners. Thus, contextualization was not merely an instructional technique for making lessons entertaining; it enabled learners to connect academic Filipino with meaningful social and cultural experiences.

Theme 3. Finding the Right Words: Navigating Language Difficulties

The third theme captured the linguistic challenges students encountered when learning Filipino. Although learners were comfortable using conversational Filipino, they experienced difficulty with *malalalim na salitang Filipino*, literary vocabulary, figurative expressions, formal grammar, text interpretation, and written composition. Students often knew what they wanted to communicate but struggled to select the correct words or organize their ideas coherently.

Participant responses included:
P3: "Ang pinakamahirap po sa akin ay iyong mga malalalim na salita. Minsan naiintindihan ko ang story, pero kapag maraming salitang hindi familiar, nahihirapan akong makuha agad ang meaning."
P7: "Mas mahirap po sa akin ang pagsusulat kaysa pagsasalita. Alam ko kung ano ang gusto kong sabihin pero minsan hindi ko alam kung paano ko siya isusulat nang maayos sa Filipino."

These experiences revealed a distinction between everyday communicative familiarity and academic language competence. Students who regularly communicated in Filipino still required explicit support when engaging with formal texts and academic writing. The MATATAG Filipino curriculum itself placed emphasis on literacy, communicative competence, critical comprehension of diverse texts, and multimodal production, demonstrating that Filipino learning required competencies beyond everyday conversation. Cordero and Santos (2023), in a Philippine study involving Grade 11 learners, also found that language learning was associated with learners' strategy use, self-regulation, and anxiety, underscoring that language performance involved cognitive and affective factors rather than familiarity with the language alone. These findings indicated the need for vocabulary scaffolding, contextual clues, modeling, guided reading, graphic organizers, and structured writing opportunities to help students move from conversational Filipino toward increasingly academic forms of language use.

Theme 4. From Hesitation to Confidence: Finding a Voice in Filipino

The fourth theme concerned the emotional experience of speaking Filipino in class. Some students hesitated to answer questions, participate in discussions, or deliver oral presentations because they feared making mistakes, mispronouncing words, using incorrect vocabulary, or being laughed at by classmates. However, repeated practice, positive teacher responses, and supportive peer interaction gradually reduced hesitation and increased willingness to communicate.

Participant responses showed this progression:
P6: "Minsan po alam ko naman ang sagot pero nahihiya akong magsalita kasi baka mali ang Filipino ko o baka pagtawanan ako ng classmates ko."
P8: "Mas confident na po ako ngayon kasi sinasabi ng teacher namin na okay lang magkamali. Kapag kino-correct niya kami, ine-explain niya kung paano dapat kaya hindi na ako masyadong natatakot sumagot."
These responses demonstrated that language development contained a strong emotional and motivational dimension.

Students possessed relevant knowledge but sometimes withheld participation when they perceived communication as socially risky. Vo et al. (2024), in a longitudinal investigation of 389 language learners, found that teacher responsiveness to learners' emotions and learning difficulties contributed to differences in the development of classroom engagement over time. Similarly, Zhang (2024) found that self-regulation interventions improved language learners' willingness to communicate and self-efficacy, indicating that confidence and strategic learning were closely connected with participation. Bano and Gonzales (2026) likewise identified limited oral confidence and classroom anxiety as barriers to instructional engagement among junior high school learners studying Filipino. These findings suggested that supportive Filipino classrooms needed to normalize errors as part of learning and provide gradual opportunities for pair interaction, small-group discussions, and whole-class participation to enable students to build confidence without excessive fear of judgment.

Theme 5. Learning Together: Teachers and Peers as Learning Partners

The fifth theme emphasized that students' development in Filipino occurred through relationships with teachers and classmates. Teachers provided explanations, examples, feedback, modeling, and guiding questions, while peers offered opportunities to exchange ideas, clarify confusing concepts, practice language, and encounter different interpretations. Students who hesitated to speak during whole-class discussions also found it easier to express ideas within smaller peer groups.

Responses included:
P4: "Nakakatulong po ang group activity kasi kapag may hindi ako naiintindihan, ine-explain ng classmates ko sa paraan na mas madali kong maintindihan."
P9: "Malaking tulong po kapag nagbibigay ng examples ang teacher at kino-correct niya ang gawa namin. Mas naiintindihan ko kung saan ako nagkamali at kung paano ko siya aayusin."

The responses demonstrated the socially mediated character of language learning. Vygotsky (1978) argued that learners could accomplish tasks with appropriate assistance that they might not initially have been able to perform independently; through repeated supported participation, competence gradually became internalized. Bano and Gonzales (2026) similarly identified collaborative learning and learner-centered interaction as factors that strengthened classroom engagement and communication competence in Filipino. More broadly, research on self-regulated language learning found that collaborative learning created supportive conditions for the development of learners' strategies and academic independence. The finding suggested that teachers and classmates did more than provide answers: they served as learning partners who scaffolded interpretation, communication, and confidence. However, group work became meaningful only when learners genuinely discussed, explained, questioned, and used Filipino rather than simply divided assignments among members.

Theme 6. Learning How to Learn Filipino: Becoming Strategic and Independent
The final theme described students' increasing awareness of strategies they used when Filipino tasks became difficult. Learners reread passages, identified contextual clues, searched for unfamiliar words, used dictionaries or online references, reviewed notes, practiced before speaking, asked classmates or teachers for clarification, and revised written outputs. Over time, students began to recognize which strategies were most effective for them and used these deliberately rather than immediately depending on teacher assistance.

Participant responses included:
P5: "Kapag may salitang hindi ko alam, hinahanap ko muna ang meaning o tinitingnan ko kung paano ginamit sa sentence. Kapag hindi ko pa rin maintindihan, saka ako nagtatanong."
P10: "Dati po hinihintay ko lang na i-explain ng teacher, pero ngayon sinusubukan ko muna basahin ulit, mag-search, o tingnan ang notes ko. Mas kaya ko nang mag-aral kahit mag-isa."

These responses reflected increasing self-regulation and learner autonomy. Zimmerman (2002) explained that self-regulated learners actively planned, monitored, and evaluated their learning, while more recent empirical evidence confirmed that self-regulated learning strategies were associated with language abilities and academic performance. Chansri et al. (2024), for example, examined self-regulated strategies among 421 language learners and demonstrated relationships between strategy use and language abilities. A Philippine study by Cordero and Santos (2023) likewise

identified relationships among self-regulation, language-learning strategies, anxiety, and second-language learning among Grade 11 students. Evidence on self-regulation also indicated that learners employed strategies related to goal setting, time management, task strategies, environmental structuring, help-seeking, and self-evaluation when managing their own learning (Anthonysamy et al., 2023). The theme therefore suggested that an important outcome of Filipino instruction was not only knowing the language but also knowing what to do when learning became difficult.

5.1 Essence of the Experience: Finding One's Voice as a Filipino Learner

Across the six themes, the students' experience of developing learning skills in Filipino may be understood as a gradual movement from receiving instruction toward actively using language, connecting it with experience, confronting difficulties, seeking support, developing strategies, and assuming increasing responsibility for learning. Students enter Filipino classrooms with different linguistic backgrounds, levels of vocabulary, confidence, academic skills, and previous experiences. Their development does not occur uniformly; rather, it is shaped by the opportunities they receive to participate meaningfully and by how teachers and peers respond to their difficulties.

The essence of the experience can therefore be represented as:

Participation → Challenge → Support → Strategy → Practice → Confidence → Independence.

The process begins when students participate actively in Filipino learning tasks. Participation exposes linguistic limitations and produces challenges, including unfamiliar vocabulary, difficulty interpreting texts, writing problems, and hesitation in speaking. Teacher and peer support helps students respond to these challenges, while personal strategies enable them to practice more independently. Repeated engagement gradually develops competence and confidence, allowing learners to exercise greater autonomy.

This interpretation is consistent with the MATATAG Filipino curriculum's emphasis on functional literacy, communicative competence, critical comprehension, culture, and twenty-first-century skills. It also parallels recent Filipino-language research showing that interactive, contextualized, collaborative, and differentiated instruction can strengthen learner participation, comprehension, communication competence, and confidence (Bano & Gonzales, 2026). Thus, developing learning skills in Filipino extends beyond acquiring vocabulary or mastering grammatical conventions. It involves helping students find their voice, interpret increasingly complex ideas, participate without excessive fear, collaborate meaningfully, respond strategically to difficulty, and gradually become more independent learners.

6. Discussion

The study frames Filipino learning as a dynamic interaction between language competence, learner engagement, emotional experience, social relationships, and self-regulation. Rather than assuming that skills develop automatically through exposure to lessons, the proposed themes demonstrate that students' development depends substantially on what they actually do with language and how classroom experiences shape that participation.

The theme Learning by Doing foregrounds the importance of meaningful participation. Research on language engagement demonstrates that engagement includes behavioral, emotional, cognitive, and social dimensions and is strongly associated with task conditions. Therefore, Filipino teachers should consider whether activities generate genuine thought and communication rather than merely compliance.

Making Filipino Meaningful emphasizes contextualization. Students may find learning more accessible when texts and activities connect with recognizable experiences. This has particular relevance in Isabela, where learners may have multilingual and culturally diverse backgrounds. Local situations, regional experiences, familiar social issues, and Philippine texts can make language use more purposeful.

Finding the Right Words reveals potential gaps between conversational and academic language. Students who regularly use Filipino may still require deliberate support in formal vocabulary, writing, reading, and interpretation. This distinction is important because teachers may otherwise assume that familiarity with Filipino automatically guarantees academic proficiency.

From Hesitation to Confidence demonstrates that affect influences learning. Engagement research among language learners indicates that classroom experience is shaped not simply by cognitive difficulty but also by emotion and perceived teacher responsiveness. A student afraid of being embarrassed may avoid participating even when capable of answering. Building language skills therefore requires emotional safety as well as academic instruction.

Learning Together highlights the importance of guided interaction. Teachers and classmates provide linguistic, cognitive, and emotional scaffolding. Social constructivism helps explain why collaborative dialogue can move learners toward increasingly independent performance. However, teachers need to structure collaboration carefully so that each student has opportunities to use and process language.

Finally, Learning How to Learn Filipino represents an important shift toward learner autonomy. Students who discover effective strategies can respond to unfamiliar tasks rather than waiting passively for answers. This is especially important because future language demands will extend beyond specific classroom exercises.

The multilingual environment should also be acknowledged. Learners may use several languages as resources for comprehension and interaction. Contemporary multilingual research demonstrates that flexible language use can support participation and positive affect within diverse classrooms. Strategic multilingual support may therefore serve as scaffolding while teachers continue developing students' formal Filipino competence.

Collectively, these interpretations suggest that strong Filipino instruction should integrate active language use, meaningful contextualization, explicit skill development, psychological safety, collaboration, feedback, and learner-strategy instruction.

7. Implications for Eden Integrated School

The study can provide Eden Integrated School with a basis for strengthening Filipino language instruction. Classroom activities may give students more regular opportunities to use Filipino in discussions, oral presentations, interpretation, collaborative work, writing, and authentic communication. Teachers may also provide explicit instruction in difficult vocabulary, academic Filipino, reading strategies, and writing processes rather than assuming that conversational familiarity is sufficient.

Contextualized texts and activities may draw from students' community experiences and culturally meaningful situations in Isabela. Such contextualization can help students relate academic concepts to lived experience while strengthening Filipino communication.

Teachers may also establish scaffolded speaking opportunities beginning with pair work or small groups before whole-class communication, particularly for hesitant learners. Corrective feedback should identify areas for improvement without discouraging participation.

Reading and writing support may include contextual vocabulary instruction, modeling, guided interpretation, graphic organizers, drafting, peer feedback, and revision. Students should also be taught deliberate learning strategies, including how to use dictionaries, credible online resources, note-taking, rereading, self-checking, and practice.

At the school level, professional learning communities may allow Filipino teachers to share strategies, analyze common learner difficulties, develop contextualized materials, and design interventions for students requiring additional language support.

8. Conclusion

This study conceptualizes the development of learning skills in Filipino as a dynamic process shaped by students' experiences, interactions, emotions, and learning strategies. The findings suggest that secondary students at Eden Integrated School develop Filipino competence not simply because language competencies are prescribed in the curriculum, but because they are given meaningful opportunities to use the language, relate lessons to familiar experiences, confront linguistic challenges, receive guidance from teachers and peers, practice repeatedly, and gradually assume responsibility for their own learning. The themes Learning by Doing; Making Filipino Meaningful; Finding the Right Words; From Hesitation to Confidence; Learning Together; and Learning How to Learn Filipino show that language development extends beyond vocabulary, grammar, and linguistic accuracy. It also involves building confidence, critical understanding, communication skills, collaborative engagement, strategic learning, and learner independence. Importantly, difficulties in vocabulary, reading, writing, and oral communication can become opportunities for growth when students receive appropriate scaffolding, constructive feedback, and a supportive classroom environment. The essence of the students' experience therefore lies in gradually finding their voice as Filipino learners. They move from primarily receiving instruction toward actively constructing meaning, expressing ideas, seeking solutions to learning difficulties, collaborating with others, and independently selecting strategies that support their progress. Filipino language education should therefore provide not only knowledge about language but also meaningful experiences that enable students to use Filipino confidently, critically, and independently. Ultimately, effective Filipino instruction develops learners who can communicate with greater competence, reflect on their own learning, participate meaningfully with others, and continue strengthening their language skills beyond the classroom.

9. Recommendations

Based on the direction of the study, Filipino teachers at Eden Integrated School may increase interactive and authentic language activities; explicitly teach academic vocabulary, reading, and writing strategies; contextualize instructional

materials using familiar Philippine and local experiences; provide psychologically safe speaking opportunities; incorporate process-based feedback and revision; use peer interaction strategically; and teach students how to monitor and regulate their own learning.

The school may also support teacher collaboration, contextualized learning-resource development, reading interventions, language enrichment activities, and appropriate digital-learning resources. Future researchers may compare Filipino-learning experiences across grade levels, achievement groups, language backgrounds, or schools and may combine qualitative findings with classroom observations and performance assessments.

10. Limitations

Because the study uses phenomenology, its primary objective is depth of understanding rather than statistical generalization. The experiences of students at Eden Integrated School may reflect specific classroom, linguistic, and institutional conditions and should not automatically be assumed to represent all Filipino learners.

The use of interview data also means that findings depend on students' ability and willingness to describe their experiences. Observations, student outputs, and teacher interviews may provide additional evidence in future studies.

Differences in home language, achievement, socioeconomic circumstances, exposure to technology, teacher practices, and prior learning experiences may also influence the phenomenon and should be considered when interpreting the results.

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