Lived Experiences of Indigenous People Learners in English Written Proficiency

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Abstract

This phenomenological study aimed to explore the lived experiences of indigenous people (IP) learners in English writing. Qualitative data were gathered through a focus group discussion among the purposively selected IP learners. It was found out that IP learners were challenged to effectively express their thoughts in English writing despite of having the interest. Poor English vocabulary, spelling, word translation, and weak sentence construction were the challenges they have encountered in English writing. Aside from that, limited time and distracting environment affect the quality of their writings. Despite all uncertainties, IP learners felt proud and happy with what they have accomplished. Moreover, IP learners still prefer to read books to learn more about English language, but they were also able to utilize various online applications such as Google, YouTube, and Bilibili as supplemental learning resources in developing their English writing skills as they also drawn motivations from their families and teachers in writing in English. Proper implementation of the proposed writing intervention program could help IP learners improve their English writing skills.

Keywords: *lived experiences, indigenous people, learners, English writing, proficiency*

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Introduction

Being able to communicate using English language is one way of building good connections with people around the world. In fact, English is the third most widely spoken language in the world and being taught in over 118 countries—a language of science, aviation, computers, diplomacy and tourism (ETS Global, 2022).

Aside from the fact that English is one of the official languages of the Philippines, the Department of Education (2006) under DO 36, S. 2006 mandated that English language shall be used as the primary medium of instruction in all public and private schools in the secondary level (Cabigon, 2015). Even though English is widely used in the teaching and learning process, the Southeast Asia Primary Learning Metrics (SEA-PLM) 2019 revealed that 46% of learners had limited ability to present ideas in writing and only one percent (1%) of the Filipino learners have developed proficiency in writing.

Same concerns were observed in Libacao National Forestry Vocational High School wherein some learners were unable to present and express ideas into writing comprehensively (in English language). With such situation, the researcher is well-driven to explore the lived experiences—the challenges and difficulties and coping mechanisms of Indigenous People (IP) learners in English writing believing that this will provide ideas to the higher management and to the Department of Education in assessing the effectiveness of the new curriculum and/or provide more training programs to teachers as well as to learners in terms of English writing.

This study aims to explore the lived experiences of Indigenous People (IP) learners of Libacao National Forestry Vocational High School in English writing.

Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of the indigenous people (IP) learners in English writing?
2. What are the challenges encountered by the indigenous people (IP) learners in English writing?
3. What are the coping mechanisms to address the challenges faced by the indigenous people (IP) learners in English writing?
4. What intervention program can be proposed in order to solve the challenges faced by the indigenous people (IP) learners in English writing?

Methodology

This study was conducted among eight (8) purposively selected Grade 7 Indigenous People (IP) learners who were officially enrolled in School Year 2022-2023 at Libacao National Forestry Vocational High School (LNFVHS) in the District of Libacao, Division of Aklan. Moreover, the participants were chosen using the inclusion criteria set by the researcher as a basis. Criterion number 1, must be a Grade 7 indigenous people learner enrolled in school year 2022-2023 at Libacao National Forestry Vocational High School, District of Libacao, Division of Aklan; Criterion number 2, must be a resident of one of the 10 identified IP barangays in the Municipality of Libacao—Bato-Bato, Calacabian, Can-awan, Calamcan, Alfonso XII, Pampango, Rosal, Manika, Oyang and Dalagsaan; and, Criterion number 3, must be willing to share their experiences fit with the study being conducted to answer the research questions.

A researcher-made interview guide that was based on the statement of the problem was used to collect necessary information from the participants and was divided into four parts: Part I is gathering information on the profile of the participants; Part II is gathering information on lived experiences of Grade 7 IP learners in English writing; Part III is generating of answers on the challenges encountered by the Grade 7 IP learners in English writing; and, Part IV is surveying the coping mechanisms to address the challenges encountered by Grade 7 IP learners in English writing. This instrument has undergone a content validation by a jury composed of three members selected for their expertise. The jury was composed of one teacher major in English, one teacher school head, and the researcher's thesis adviser. The jury members were requested by the researcher to evaluate the instrument in terms of wording/grammar, format, and content. The suggestions, recommendations, and comments made by the jury were considered in the revision of the instrument to ensure its validity.

After ensuring the validity of the instrument, a permission to conduct the study was secured from the Indigenous People Mandatory Representative (IPMR) of each IP Barangay, Senior Education Program Specialist of the Division of Aklan and School Principal of Libacao National Forestry Vocational High School. Letters of informed consent explaining the purpose of the study and the extent of participation were given to the eight participants for their parents/guardian's signature. Hence, the researcher ensured the anonymity of the participants by using pseudonyms to conceal their real identity.

The phenomenological research design was utilized in collecting qualitative data—first hand experiences in English writing of the participants by means of focus group discussion during their most convenient time right after the approval of necessary permits to conduct the said study.

Consequently, all the gathered data were carefully recorded, transcribed, interpreted, and individually categorized according to themes using Colaizzi's (1978) descriptive phenomenological method which provide a concise and thorough description of the phenomenon under study, confirmed by the participants who lived it (cited in Meyers, 2019). First, each transcript was read several times to obtain a general understanding of the data; Second, identified and labeled significant statements that pertain to the phenomenon under study; Third, identified significant statements were extracted with corresponding meanings; Fourth, clustered and categorized meanings found throughout the data into common themes; Fifth, the findings of the study were incorporated with phenomenological research design and the fundamental structure of the phenomenological design was described; And lastly, validated the findings by verifying results with the participant's experiences.

Findings

After analyzing the data gathered from the participants, it was found out that IP learners like writing poems, stories and sentences although some do not like spelling, English translations and sentence construction. There were also some who only like taking down notes but unaware of how these sentences were constructed. Hence, they took English written work as a challenge and felt happy and proud right after they accomplish such task.

Furthermore, IP learners found spelling English words, translating Filipino words to English, and English sentences construction challenging due to limited English vocabulary. Aside from that, it was found out that limited time and distracting environment have contributed to the quality of their English written works.

With all of the challenges, IP learners were able to use online applications such as YouTube, Google, and Bilibili in doing researches and in improving their English vocabulary. On the other hand, there were some who still rely to printed reading materials like books. Aside from that, learners drawn motivations and support from their families and teachers in order to improve their English writing skills.

Lastly, in order to provide interventions to these learners who struggle in English writing, researcher proposed a writing intervention program entitled: Remedial Writing Program for Indigenous People (IP) Learners that will help and enable learners to broaden their English

vocabulary; write with correct capitalization of letters, correct spelling, correct punctuations and paragraphing; and, express emotion, idea, opinion, and message using clear sentences.

Conclusion

In view of the foregoing findings on the lived experiences of IP learners in English writing, it was found out that despite of having the interest in learning English, Indigenous People learners were challenged to effectively express their thoughts due to poor English vocabulary, spelling, word translation, and poor sentence construction. Aside from that, limited time and distracting environment affect the quality of their writings.

With all of the uncertainties, Indigenous People learners felt proud and happy right after accomplishing certain task. Moreover, Indigenous People learners still prefer to read books but they were able to utilize various online applications such as Google, YouTube, and Bilibili as supplemental learning resources in developing their English writing skills as they also drawn motivations from their families and teachers in writing in English

With this, proper implementation of the proposed writing intervention program could help Indigenous People learners improve their English writing skills.

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