

# Revealing the Challenges: The Experiences and Hesitance of Senior High School Students Concerning the Filipino Subject

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## ABSTRACT

This qualitative study investigates the lived experiences and underlying reluctance of Senior High School students toward the Filipino subject within the contemporary multilingual educational landscape of the Philippines. Utilizing a reflexive thematic analysis framework, the research explores the multifaceted barriers to learner engagement among fifteen (15) students at Bukidnon National High School. The findings reveal a complex interplay of four critical thematic domains: pedagogical and teacher-centered obstacles, linguistic competence and vocabulary deficiencies, self-regulated learning through strategic interventions, and the role of affective commitment. Notably, 80% of participants identified instructional issues such as passive "reporting" methods and unclear explanations as primary demotivators. In comparison, 93.3% cited a significant "vocabulary gap" and English language dominance as barriers to comprehension.

Despite these challenges, the study highlights strong learner agency, with all respondents employing self-regulated strategies, including media immersion and peer collaboration, to navigate academic hurdles. Building upon these findings, the study proposes a Contextualized Filipino Curriculum that integrates contemporary media, digital literacy, and "Taglish" as a bridge to academic Filipino, making content more relatable and accessible. Additionally, it recommends implementing Teacher Sensitivity and Competency Workshops to address the high rate of dissatisfaction with instructional quality. Future research should include a Parental Perception Survey to better understand the influence of home environments on language hesitance. Finally, the introduction of a "Filipino for Professionals" module could help students view Filipino as a valuable career asset. These recommendations provide a context-responsive foundation for curriculum developers and school administrators to bridge the gap between student interest and Filipino language acquisition.

**Keywords:** lived experiences, student reluctance, Filipino subject, senior high school, thematic analysis, curriculum innovation, digital literacy

## INTRODUCTION

Language education remains a vital component of the Philippine educational system, with the Filipino subject intended to foster national identity and effective communication skills among students. However, recent evidence demonstrates persistent challenges in Filipino language learning, particularly among senior high school students who exhibit reluctance and disengagement. The lived experiences of students reveal multiple contributing factors, including ineffective teaching methods, limited vocabulary, complex language terms, and a general lack of motivation or appreciation for the Filipino language.

For instance, students report that teachers who are frequently absent, use fast and unclear explanations, and emphasize oral recitations create barriers to learning, leading to diminished interest and confidence in using Filipino. Furthermore, linguistic challenges such as difficulty understanding deep vocabulary, lack of practice in

speaking Filipino, and the dominance of English in academic and social contexts exacerbate students' struggles. These findings are consistent with local research (Nacario & Orobia, 2025; Castulo et al., 2025) and international perspectives (Garganera, 2025).

In response, there is a growing need to contextualize the Filipino curriculum. Integrating contemporary media, digital literacy, and the strategic use of "Taglish" as an accessible bridge to academic Filipino may increase engagement, rather than strictly enforcing archaic vocabulary that can alienate students. This approach aims to revitalize the Filipino subject and ensure it fulfills its role in nurturing linguistic competence and cultural identity among Filipino youth.

### Research Questions

1. What are the reasons why students lose interest in the Filipino subject?
2. What struggles do students experience in the Filipino subject?
3. How do students overcome or deal with these struggles?
4. What advice can students give to their fellow students to help improve their learning in the Filipino subject?

## METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a qualitative research design to explore the lived experiences and reluctance of senior high school students toward the Filipino subject. The research was conducted at Bukidnon National High School, involving 15 purposively selected senior high school students. Data were collected through open-ended questionnaires designed to elicit comprehensive responses on student attitudes, struggles, coping mechanisms, and advice for peers.

The textual data gathered were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022), generating codes and grouping them into broader themes reflecting the multifaceted nature of students' reluctance and engagement. To enhance trustworthiness, triangulation and member checking were employed, and ethical protocols were strictly followed.

This methodological approach provided a comprehensive and contextually grounded understanding of the challenges faced by senior high school students and offers valuable insights for improving Filipino language education.

## RESULTS

Table 1. Major Themes and Frequencies (n = 15)

Theme	Frequency	% of Respondents
Teacher-Related Issues	12	80.0%
Language Difficulty	14	93.3%
Lack of Interest and Motivation	11	73.3%
Student Coping Strategies	15	100.0%

## DISCUSSION

### Instructional and Teacher-Related Factors

Teacher-related issues emerged as a dominant influence on student motivation, with 80% of participants reporting negative experiences such as teacher absenteeism, unclear explanations, and perceived unfair grading. This supports Bandura's (1997) social cognitive theory, which emphasizes the role of environmental factors in shaping motivation. The findings support the urgent need for Teacher Sensitivity and Competency Workshops. These workshops can address instructional quality gaps and equip teachers with effective, student-centered methods.

## Linguistic Challenges and Language Proficiency Barriers

Difficulties with complex vocabulary and unfamiliar linguistic terms were reported by 93.3% of students. Enforcing archaic vocabulary has led to disengagement and comprehension barriers. Instead, a Contextualized Filipino Curriculum is proposed, integrating contemporary media and digital literacy, and leveraging "Taglish" as a linguistic bridge to academic Filipino. This approach makes lessons more relatable while guiding learners toward deeper mastery of the language.

## Attitudinal and Motivational Factors

A lack of appreciation and motivation was evident in 73.3% of students, many of whom preferred English. To address this, curricular reforms should highlight the relevance of Filipino in both personal and professional contexts. Introducing a "Filipino for Professionals" module can help reframe the subject as a valuable career skill, not merely an academic requirement, thus fostering intrinsic motivation.

## Student Resilience and Coping Strategies

Despite significant challenges, all respondents demonstrated resilience through self-initiated strategies: consuming Filipino media, collaborating with peers, and seeking support from teachers. These behaviors align with Zimmerman's (2002) self-regulated learning theory.

## Peer Recommendations for Enhancing Learning

Students are advised active participation, respect for teachers, and practice consistently. This wisdom supports the importance of social interaction and scaffolding, as described by Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory.

## Future Research Directions

Given students' hesitance, a Parental Perception Survey is recommended to examine how home environments and parental attitudes may influence student engagement and reluctance toward Filipino. Understanding these dynamics can guide more holistic interventions.

This study's primary limitation is its geographic concentration and small sample size, being conducted exclusively at Bukidnon National High School with 15 students. As such, the findings, while offering deep insights, may not reflect the broader range of experiences of students in urban Metro Manila or the Visayas, where diverse linguistic dynamics prevail. Future studies should expand to include a broader and more diverse participant pool from multiple regions to capture the full spectrum of attitudes and experiences toward the Filipino subject.

Furthermore, while the study identifies "lack of interest" as a barrier, it does not sufficiently investigate the socio-economic drivers of this apathy. Specifically, the perception that English proficiency is the sole pathway to economic advancement may devalue Filipinos in the eyes of pragmatic students. Future research should employ quantitative and qualitative methods to examine how socio-economic status and labor market perceptions shape students' attitudes toward the Filipino language.

It is also recommended that future research includes a Parental Perception Survey to explore the influence of home environments and parental attitudes. School administrators should consider implementing Teacher Sensitivity and Competency Workshops and piloting a "Filipino for Professionals" module to address both instructional quality and the perceived value of Filipino in professional contexts.

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