



Beyond Words: Uncovering the Untold Stories of Multilingual Students' Lived Experiences in Online Distance Learning

Melvin T. Guache¹, Karen A. Manaig^{1*}, John Federick Tesoro¹, Albert D. Yazon¹, Sherwin B. Sapin¹

¹Laguna State Polytechnic University, Philippines

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine the lived experiences of multilingual students in online distance learning during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. The study utilized the qualitative research design - transcendental phenomenology and employed purposive sampling. The study participants were ten (10) multilingual students among Senior High School Students. A researcher-made questionnaire was reviewed by research experts and was used in individual interviews with the participants. The collected data through interviews underwent thematic analyses and triangulation. Based on the findings, the model was developed through thematic analyses, the Basic Instructional Strategies Aiming to Address the Problems of Multilingual Students in Online Distance Learning MODEL (in the Filipino language: Batayang Instruksiyong estratehiya na Naglalayong Tugunan at Alamin (BINTA) ang mga suliranin ng mga multilinggwal na mag-aaral sa online distance learning) was developed. The BINTA Model represents the lived experiences of multilingual students in online distance learning in terms of the themes that emerged: lack of interaction and communication, difficulty in understanding technical terms, consistency of internet connection, and effective communication. This implies that the model can help improve these students' educational outcomes and experiences by providing appropriate instructional strategies tailored to the needs of multilingual students. Educators can help mitigate these students' challenges and difficulties in an online distance learning environment. Through this, educators can help ensure that multilingual students can engage with the material, participate fully in online discussions and activities, and ultimately achieve their learning goals.

Keywords COVID-19, education, learning, multilingual, teaching strategies, students

INTRODUCTION

Education is the refuge of wisdom for everyone and acts as a conduit for the culture through which it is transmitted. Schools have a significant role to play in children's education, especially during times of crisis. The best way to enhance their skills is to attend school. Moreover, teachers must also pay attention to the diversity of students in terms of their cultural backgrounds, the language that is most easily understood by everyone, and the teaching methods that promote their awareness. Schools act as a bridge to individual learning.

Tarkar (2020) states that a school is a place where children can have fun and develop social and academic skills, with the primary motivation being to enhance their abilities. Spending even a brief period in school can improve one's skills and abilities, while not attending school has a negative impact on skill development. The closure of schools has significantly affected the structure of learning and education, particularly in terms of teaching and assessment methods. During a crisis, everything changes, from physically attending school to participating in virtual spaces, with homes serving as schools and parents assuming the role of teachers (Caasi & Pentang, 2022). Therefore, the pandemic has had a profound impact on the education system in our country.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic in the Philippines, the implementation of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) in public and private schools under the K-12 curriculum as mandated by Republic Act No. 10533 in 2012 was implemented. According to Martin (2017),

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Corresponding author's email: karen.manaig@lspu.edu.ph

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students from kindergarten to Grade 3 are required to be taught, use materials, and undergo assessment in their regional or native language. Consequently, changes in teaching methods have affected the language used in teaching and the teaching materials within a class. It was reported that the Department of Education has already developed teaching and learning materials for the 19 languages spoken in the Philippines, which covers almost 80% of the student population, with a focus on building resources for the languages of indigenous peoples (DepEd, 2020).

Simons and Fennig's study (2018) revealed that the Philippines is a multilingual country, with over 180 languages spoken by people scattered throughout the nation. Filipino and English are the official languages. Furthermore, according to Dekker (2017), many Filipinos speak more than two languages, including their "native languages" spoken at home and languages spoken by their local communities (e.g., provincial or regional language or lingua franca), which may differ from those spoken at home. As mentioned in Reid's study (2005) and Padilla (2021), the top ten most widely spoken primary languages (aside from Filipino and English) are Tagalog, Cebuano, Ilokano, Hiligaynon, Bikol, Samar-Leyte, Kapampangan, Pangasinan, Maranao, and Magindanao, each spoken by more than one million people. Thus, the policy on language use in teaching in schools has been intensified in the country.

The definition of multilingualism discussed in the study by Suriaman et al. (2018) refers to a person's ability to use or communicate in three or more languages, whether separately or through mixing and switching between languages for different purposes and situations such as registration, employment, and education. Bin-Tahir (2018) asserts that some people may master multiple languages but do not actively use them simultaneously in daily communication, making them monolingual-multilingual. Therefore, a multilingual person is proficient and communicates actively in three or more languages in the same situation, whereas a monolingual-multilingual person has mastered multiple languages and used them in different situations.

Upon the onset of COVID-19, the World Health Organization (WHO) advised teachers and students to utilize alternative learning methods to reduce the virus's spread and prevent infection. To prevent the cancellation of classes in schools, the Edtech team of the World Bank provided online tools that could be utilized during the pandemic. According to the World Bank (2020), the program aims to enable students to return to school and for schools to reopen while not yet fully returning to traditional classes. Moreover, the program aims to provide guidelines on the delivery of online classes and methods that can be provided to specific parties involved, such as teachers and parents.

According to the World Bank (2020), several countries worldwide, including Colombia, Italy, Japan, Poland, and the Philippines, have responded to the WHO call by implementing their education response. Depending on their ability to develop or access them, various education platforms such as YouTube, learning management systems (LMS), digital libraries, internet streaming or broadcasting, and repositories such as open educational resources (OER) were utilized. Higher education institutions utilized Zoom and Google Hangouts, while teachers were encouraged to take advantage of various websites such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Google Forms. Other organizations include the EdTech Hub, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Education Alliance, Learning Keeps Going (a US consortium), the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies, and the Commonwealth of Learning, among others, also participated. Thus, EdTech Hub provides research and advice on using technology in education. In response to the pandemic, they launched a COVID-19 Education Response Webinar series that provided guidance on remote learning, teacher support, and digital technologies (EdTEch, 2021).

The Department of Education (2020) responded to the WHO's call by issuing a series of memoranda, including the "Task Force for the Management of the Department of Education

Response to the Novel Coronavirus Acute Respiratory Disease (2019-nCoV ARD)" in the first half of 2020. Likewise, it issued an official statement on the Learning Continuity Plan for the "new normal" through DepEd Order No. 012, s. 2020, which was communicated to teachers and students on May 5, 2020. Similarly, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) issued Memo No. 04, series 2020, "Guidelines on the Implementation of Flexible Learning" for colleges. These policies focus on alternative ways to continue education in the new normal.

Theoretical Framework

This research is anchored in Howard Giles' Communication Accommodation Theory (2005), which emphasizes that individuals tend to conform or adapt their speech to their conversation partner to value agreement, participation, empathy, harmony, or pride in being part of a group. This study clearly shows that multilingual students base their language use on their conversation partners.

Likewise, the research is underpinned by Savignon's Communicative Competence Theory (1983), which highlights the importance of paying attention to how multilingual students use language to understand their abilities and knowledge when using the languages they know. The study is also grounded in Dell Hymes' SPEAKING model (1974), which considers communicative ability and important sociocultural factors in effective communication. This theory emphasizes the significance of paying attention to multilingual language use in the context beyond just vocabulary and grammar.

Lastly, the study was affixed on the theory of affordances approach by Gibson (1979), mentioned by Aronin and Singleton (1994), which aligns with the three main divisions of multilingualism: the user, the environment, and the language. The user includes not only speakers but also writers, and the environment encompasses a wide range of language use phenomena.

Conceptual Framework

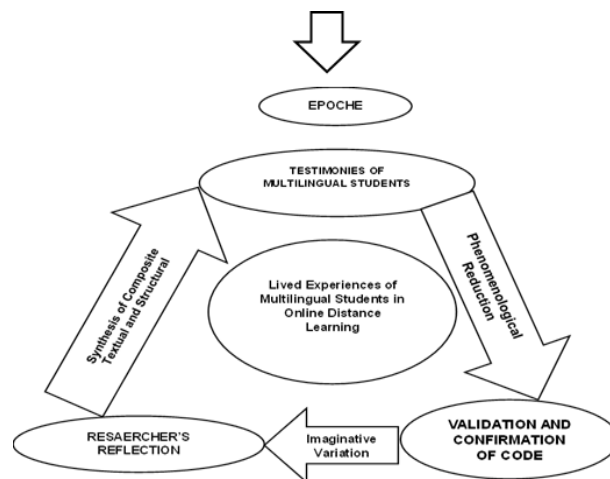


Figure 1. Research Framework

Figure 1 presents the research framework of this research that utilized transcendental phenomenology to explore the lived experiences of multilingual students in online distance learning. Transcendence, in this context, refers to approaching the phenomenon with an open mind and a fresh perspective, gaining new insights from the essence of experiences. To begin, the researcher employed epoché to suspend personal feelings and experiences and reflect on them to

avoid biases and judgments throughout the research process. The essences of the phenomena were defined using transcendental-phenomenological reduction, where perceptions and thoughts about the phenomenon were compiled.

Lastly, creative variation was employed to determine the structural nature of interactions (Moustakas, 1994). Through these measures, the research questions' noema (phenomenon) and noesis (meanings) were reported and analyzed, emphasizing subjectivity. The approach systematically collected and analyzed the participants' perceptions and emotions, generating interpretations through discourse (Moustakas, 1994).

Thus, this research determined the lived experiences of multilingual students in online distance learning amidst the pandemic that began in 2020. The main aim of this research is to identify the challenges faced by multilingual students in online distance learning activities. The data collected will aid in developing a framework that will serve as a basis for creating a model to implement a specific solution to address the challenges faced by each multilingual student in the country's modern education system. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the regional languages of the participants of the study?
2. What methods can be used to address the obstacles to learning for multilingual students in online distance learning?
3. How do multilingual students face changes in their interactions through their settings, subject discussions, and conversations?
4. What themes will emerge based on the responses of the participants?
5. Based on observations and reflections, what model can be developed to help multilingual students in the mode of online distance learning?

LITERATURE REVIEW

As the pandemic spread throughout the country, it posed a great challenge to the education system, leading to a shift from traditional classes to different modes of learning, from basic education to higher education. In response, the Department of Education (2020) announced the creation of DepEd Commons, a learning website catering to Alternative Learning School (ALS) students, Out-of-School Youth (OSYA), and regular students from Kindergarten to Grade 8. The online learning hub is accessible to both public and private schools across the country, with the aim of strengthening education anytime, anywhere. It is suitable for students who have access to the internet using devices such as smartphones, tablets, laptops, and desktop computers.

According to Santos' study (2022), distance learning in the Philippines has revealed a digital divide among Filipino students. Likewise, Baticulon et al. (2020) added that the current situation in online distance learning may exacerbate existing inequalities and highlight barriers to online learning. For instance, a nationwide cross-sectional study revealed that 32% and 22% of the 3,670 Filipino medical students surveyed had difficulty adjusting to new learning styles and had unreliable internet access. Cayaban (2021) also found that some students may struggle to purchase learning equipment to focus on online classes and submit assignments quickly through the online system. Despite efforts to make education accessible to all, many challenges still confront Filipino students in practicing distance education, both in K-12 schools and higher education institutions.

The statement from CHED (2020) regarding the new normal suggests that classrooms will become virtual, and they recommend strengthening online platforms and blended learning approaches. This includes but is not limited to platforms such as Google Classroom, Messenger, Zoom, Edmodo, Facebook, and YouTube. DepEd (2020) also mentioned that they employ various methods of knowledge delivery, including in-person classes, blended learning, distance learning, homeschooling, and other methods. However, implementing this system will also result in problems for students who have limited internet access, lack gadgets, and face other difficulties.

According to Akamai (2017), the Philippines has the lowest internet connectivity in Asia. Winthrop (2020) added that the challenges include equity gaps, student safety and security, compromised quality of education, and poor assessment results. Changes in the grading, assessment, and performance evaluation system will also pose a challenge for every administrator (Toquero, 2020).

Multilingual are individuals who use multiple languages in their daily lives. According to Suriaman et al. (2018), a multilingual person is defined as someone who can use or communicate in three or more languages, either separately or in a mixture of different languages, for various purposes and in different situations or circumstances, such as registration, work, and education. According to the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM, 2018), multilingual students are a diverse group of individuals who differ in many factors, including the languages they know and speak (including their proficiency in these languages), their country of origin, living conditions, family background, and levels of English proficiency. Beiler (2020), citing Canagarajah (2013), described multilingual writers as individuals who may choose to deviate from the language they usually use and sometimes follow monolingual English norms to achieve their communication goals and voice formation.

Multilingual students face various challenges on their learning journey, which can lead to negative learning outcomes. Russ and Sherin (2013) suggest that each student brings preconceived ideas to the classroom based on their life experiences and unique perspectives on how things work and why they are the way they are in the world. Hence, Suriaman et al. (2018) add that multilingual students often exhibit extroverted or ambivert speaking styles.

On the other hand, Faltis and Valdés (2016) argue that teachers should aim to equip multilingual students with the knowledge, skills, and content necessary to be "good" and "effective." They emphasize the need for more research on the subject, including empirical and non-empirical studies. To accommodate the diverse language backgrounds of students in their classrooms, teachers should receive training. The change in language policy reflects a global trend to support the teaching of a child's native language in their early education.

Remarkably, the Philippines is currently the only country in Southeast Asia that has a national policy supporting "Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education" (MTB-MLE) as a law in formal primary education. In 2009, MTB-MLE was institutionalized through Department of Education (DepEd) Order No. 74. English and Filipino are introduced through a transition program from grades 4 to 6 until the two languages can be used as the primary MOI in secondary education. This serves as a bridge for students to use both of their languages for successful and lifelong learning.

Therefore, to effectively implement mother tongue-based multilingual education, the Department of Education (2016) recommends a two-pronged approach: the first prong focuses on accuracy, while the second prong emphasizes meaning. By utilizing both approaches, students will develop literacy skills, gain knowledge and understanding of academic content, and enhance their cognitive skills, including creativity, critical thinking, and decision-making abilities. Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTBMLE) offers a solid foundation, scaffolding, teaching for both accuracy and meaning, confidence building, and proficiency development for two or more languages, as well as communication skills, such as listening, speaking, reading, writing, and viewing. Furthermore, it provides higher-order thinking skills (HOTS) for students.

RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This study used a qualitative research design using transcendental phenomenology. The aim of transcendental phenomenology is to uncover the universal structures that underlie all human experience and to provide a foundation for all other forms of knowledge. It is an important

method for understanding the nature of perception, consciousness, and subjectivity.

Sampling and Participants of the Study

In this qualitative research, the researcher employed a purposive sampling design to select ten participants who met the eligibility criteria. The participants were senior high school students from Grades 11 and 12 in a State University located in the Province of Laguna, Philippines. They were selected as participants since they could speak different regional languages and were considered multilingual. The researcher explained the interview procedures to the participants, and they agreed to have the interview recorded online. However, their identities remained confidential and were only identified through the use of pseudonyms. To gather the necessary data, the participants were interviewed virtually. As interviews are one of the most common data collection procedures in qualitative research (Englander, 2012), it was chosen as the data collection method for this study. The researcher opted for a semi-structured interview methodology with open-ended questions as the data-gathering strategy for this study. All of the selected participants indicated their readiness to participate in the study.

Research Instrument

The researcher utilized interviews as the primary mode of data collection, which is one of the most common and widespread approaches in qualitative research. Specifically, semi-structured interviews were conducted for this study, which is a popular qualitative research method in information systems (Myers & Newman, 2007). Semi-structured interviews have a pre-formed structure but an unfinished script, allowing the researcher to probe further and gather in-depth responses from the participants.

Data Gathering Procedure

This study determined the lived experiences of multilingual students enrolled in online distance learning during the Covid-19 Pandemic. As a result, interviews were chosen as the best methodology for the study. Interviews are a popular and necessary method for gathering qualitative research data (Myers & Newman, 2007). Similarly, consent forms were distributed to all study participants, and after receiving their approval, the forms were gathered for documentation. The researcher interviewed each participant at a mutually convenient time and venue conducive to courteous interviewing. Zoom, a telecommunications application software that specializes in online video conversations, was utilized to conduct and record the interviews.

Treatment of Qualitative Data

For data triangulation, the researcher used a "distance-online" method to collect data in their current study, as mentioned in Gray et al. (2020) research. In addition to conducting interviews, an observational method was used to observe the behavior of the students. All of the online interviews were conducted using Google Meet, as well as the needed video recordings.

To begin, the first step was to set aside preliminary judgments, referred to as "epoché," meaning to avoid judgment. According to Moustakas (1994), this is a method that occurred from the start to the end of the researcher's study to set aside his perspectives and focus on the views mentioned by the participants. The epoché also allowed the researcher to remain objective and avoid giving biases to different phenomena while conducting the study.

In the next step, the 10 participants were interviewed online to share their views on online distance learning, which is part of the second step, the phenomenological reduction. According to Moustakas (1994), this is the phase of data collection and analysis that requires the researcher to

describe "what was observed in a person, not only in terms of the seen things but also in terms of the inner actions of consciousness and experiences." This occurs during and after the interview with the participants. The phenomenological reduction aided the researcher in observing clearly how the participants shared their testimonies.

The third step involves validating and confirming the codes. The researcher grouped strong statements into larger units with comparable meanings or themes. Cilesiz (2011) suggests that in this stage, the researcher often removes redundant statements to create a list of all "meaning units based on the participants." The researcher then examines and simplifies the evidence shared by the participants. According to Moustakas (1994), combining themes formed by the units of meaning helps the researcher identify significant topics and initially see clearer themes formed from the ideas provided by the participants.

According to Moustakas (1994), the next step is the Composite Textural Description. At this stage, the researcher combines individual descriptions into a "group or general textural description that is unified in the same thoughts or ideas formed in the groups." The researcher may also conduct a second individual interview with participants to verify the accuracy of the transcription from the previous interview. Additionally, the researcher aims to identify the possible meanings of themes using an imaginative variation. These strategies help the researcher describe significant structures and phenomena, particularly the lived experiences of multilingual students in online distance learning.

Moustakas (1995) further posits that the possible structural meanings associated with the identified textual meanings are reconceptualized from different perspectives. A deeper understanding of what happened is important for different possible meanings in research. This deeper understanding begins by rereading the textural descriptions that represent experiences from different points of view. In this stage, a list of the main characteristics related to experience will be written. The structural characteristics are stable textual explanations of what the phenomena imply.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The participants of this study are senior high school students from Grades 11 and 12 in a State University located in the Province of Laguna, Philippines. They were identified as multilingual students because they are capable of speaking various regional languages, such as Cebuano, Hiligaynon, Bicol, Kapampangan, Waray, and Ilocano. When asked about the challenges they faced during online distance learning, all participants reported that poor internet connection was the most significant obstacle. This issue was difficult to address due to their geographical location and the devices they were using. The participants' responses provided evidence that they were struggling with their internet connection.

Thus, the findings affirm Reid (2005), as cited by Padilla (2021), asserted that the top ten most widely spoken primary languages (aside from Filipino and English) are Tagalog, Cebuano, Ilokano, Hiligaynon, Bikol, Samar-Leyte, Kapampangan, Pangasinan, Maranao, and Magindanao, each spoken by more than one million people. Thus, the policy on language use in teaching in schools has been intensified in the country. Likewise, according to Santos' study (2022), distance learning in the Philippines has revealed a digital divide among Filipino students. Likewise, Baticulon et al. (2020) added that the current situation in online distance learning might exacerbate existing inequalities and highlight barriers to online learning. For instance, a nationwide cross-sectional study revealed that 32% and 22% of the 3,670 Filipino medical students surveyed had difficulty adjusting to new learning styles and had unreliable internet access.

The participants' adaptation to online distance learning was challenging. The sudden shift from physical classes to online platforms left everyone unprepared, and the students faced

difficulties in finding opportunities to have a stable internet connection during online discussions. The researcher relied on the participants' perspectives and experiences to identify the main challenges encountered by them in online distance learning. They mentioned that they often struggled to understand the teacher's instructions due to lags during online discussions. The findings affirm Garcia (2017), who discovered that college students in the Philippines utilize e-learning through a learning management system (LMS). The study identified that factors influencing the implementation of this system are not limited to the limited infrastructure used, such as internet connectivity, system interactivity, and multimedia teaching; they also include the experience, skills, and attitudes of the students. Good planning, including assessing the skills and attitudes of students, will eventually lead to the full and comfortable adoption of e-learning in the Philippines. This will pave the way for the country to become globally competitive.

The challenge of maintaining a stable internet connection is not easily resolved. Despite this, the participants are considering alternative methods to avoid falling behind in the discussions. Participant 5 stated, *"Sometimes the internet is slow, so I need to reload to be able to attend."* Despite weak and unreliable internet connections, the participants continue to seek ways to participate in discussions or ask questions. This may be due to the changes occurring around them. When given the opportunity, they watch recorded videos or review the content of the entire module. It can be deduced from the findings of Basilaia and Kvavadze's (2020) study which suggests that teachers' abilities in both pedagogical and technological aspects need to be strengthened. This shift to the new normal, from the four walls of the classroom to virtual space, requires every institution to examine how successful online learning is in providing quality education based on student results.

The participants in this study have developed various strategies to address the challenges mentioned above. Google Meet or Zoom is the primary platform for online discussions in the new normal of education, which requires a stable internet connection. To keep up with the topics discussed in Google Meet, some participants utilize alternative methods when encountering internet connectivity issues, such as watching recorded videos of the discussion and reviewing the Self-Paced Learning Module that covers the topics discussed in the online class. In line with this, Basilaia and Kvavadze (2020) also noted that schools with limited technologies are not prepared for the implementation of online education, and virtual teaching may be more successful in schools with a technical environment and support.

Related to the first challenge mentioned and the methods of dealing with it, participants have difficulty understanding the subject due to its complexity of language. To address this challenge, participants conduct research on the internet to gain a clearer understanding, ask their classmates to help them understand the context of words in each statement, and also ask the teacher for clarification if the words cannot be understood from the internet or classmates. Multilingual students face various challenges on their learning journey, which can lead to negative learning outcomes. The findings affirm Lotriet et al. (2018) students face specific challenges during their online education. On the other hand, Kenny (2022) emphasized that the "learning curve" for both students and teachers toward active learning and computer confidence presents practical challenges that need to be overcome for online learning.

The key elements for effective communication and discussion in a class include proper interaction between students and teachers. However, communication in online discussions can be challenging due to obstacles such as internet connection issues and a lack of confidence to speak or participate in the discussions. Despite these challenges, the participants choose to muster the courage to ask questions and be acknowledged within the discussion. To facilitate communication among participants, they use group chat in Facebook Messenger, which allows for easier communication between classmates. Additionally, private messages are available for students who are hesitant to ask the teacher in the group chat. Another method is to ask questions directly during

online discussions to receive quick answers to the topics being discussed. Thus, the findings are in line with Cayaban (2021) that despite efforts to make education accessible to all, many challenges still confront Filipino students in practicing distance education, both in K-12 schools and higher education institutions. Likewise, Winthrop (2020) added that the challenges include equity gaps, student safety and security, compromised quality of education, and poor assessment results.

Based on the findings of the study, four themes emerged from the testimonials of multilingual students' lived experiences in online distance learning. These four overarching themes described different aspects of the participants' authentic experiences, namely, as follows:

a. Lack of interaction and communication

Communication is one of the most crucial aspects of the new normal of education, but it is also one of the primary challenges in online distance learning. Unlike face-to-face classes, at the start of online interviews with participants, communication does not occur naturally in the discussion. This poses a challenge for the participants to initiate interaction in online distance learning because each student is unfamiliar with the other, and a poor internet connection makes it even more difficult to comprehend the topic and hampers active participation in class.

b. Difficulty in Understanding Technical Terms

The second theme that emerged from the participants' answers in the online interview pertains to the use of technical terms in discussing the topic. The student's understanding of various technical terms is not enough to comprehend the subject being discussed. Due to the complex meanings of the terms used in the discussion, the participants lack sufficient knowledge, which hinders their comprehension of the overall lesson. Furthermore, the use of technical terms without clarification leads to the formation of ideas that are not well-understood by the participants.

c. Consistency of Internet Connection

Over time, it cannot be denied that having a good internet connection is a basic necessity in daily life. The internet is the easiest way to communicate with friends, family, students, teachers, and others around us. According to the results of the online interviews conducted with the participants in this study, the main reason for their inability to understand the online discussions and attend the classes is the poor internet connection. Some students run out of load or have inadequate connections, preventing them from listening to the class. As a result, the inconsistency of internet connectivity becomes a barrier to the student's ability to comprehend the topics discussed in class.

d. Effective Communication

The effectiveness of communication is crucial for understanding, problem-solving, and building good relationships between individuals. In a typical class, there are at least 20 students and a teacher who leads the daily discussions. Effective communication is characterized by mutual understanding within the class.

Thus, based on the themes that emerged from this study, a BINTA Model was developed. Since the research paper was originally written in Filipino Language, the model was named as *Batayang INstruksiyong estratehiya na naglalayong Tugunan at Alamin (BINTA) ang mga suliranin ng mga multilinggwal na mag-aaral sa online distance learning (English translation: Basic Instructional Strategies Aiming to Address the Problems of Multilingual Students in*

Online Distance Learning Model).

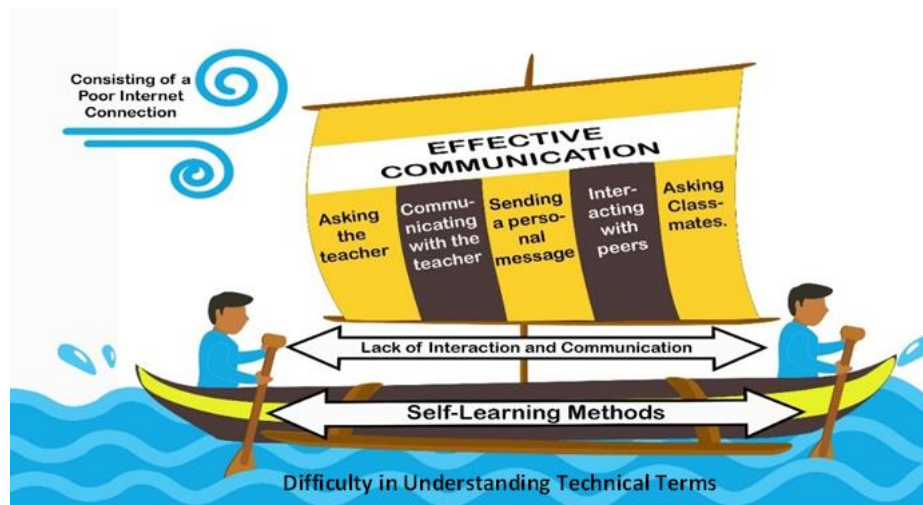


Figure 2. BINTA Model

As presented by Figure 2, it shows the developed *BINTA Model*, which describes the themes that emerged based on the lived experiences of multilingual students in online distance learning. It can be explained metaphorically as a sailing boat (*wherein Vinta is a traditional boat that is an important symbol of the cultural heritage and identity in the Southern Philippines*). Below are the specific explanations of each part of the BINTA Model, namely as follows:

a. Wind

The BINTA Model relies on the wind to function properly. If the wind is strong, the BINTA can smoothly sail and reach its destination. In this metaphor, the wind represents the consistency of the internet, which is essential in online distance learning. A stable internet connection is necessary to ensure that students do not miss out on class and can continue learning seamlessly, even though they are physically distant from their teachers and classmates.

b. Sail

The sail is a crucial component of the BINTA because it helps keep it sailing smoothly. The sail metaphorically represents effective communication, which is necessary for multilingual students to achieve their desired learning outcomes in online distance learning.

c. People

The people on board the BINTA also play a crucial role in ensuring a smooth sail. However, without good interaction and communication among them, there may be problems with the BINTA's sail. This represents the lack of interaction and communication, which is one of the challenges faced by multilingual students. It leads to confusion regarding the subject being discussed and causes them to fall behind in their understanding of the topics being covered.

d. Rudder

A rudder is a crucial tool that helps the BINTA sail smoothly. It is up to the people aboard the BINTA to steer the rudder and determine the direction of the sail while keeping pace with the waves. This represents the efforts made by multilingual students to keep up with the class and continue learning despite the challenges posed by online distance learning.

e. Deep Water

The last thing required for the BINTA to sail smoothly is being in deep water. The BINTA cannot sail if it is not in deep water. Similarly, in a class, students need to comprehend complex vocabulary and technical terms to keep up with the discussion.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the information and data gathered from the participants through online interviews, the researcher gained a broader understanding of the problems that students face in online distance learning, as well as ways to solve these problems. The modern education system is constantly evolving, and changes have been made to teaching methods and communication between teachers and students. As a result, various challenges have arisen, as confirmed by the research results based on the participants' responses. Despite these challenges, both teachers and students must realize the importance of maintaining proper ways of learning. As well as to be patient and open to new knowledge to meet the student's educational needs. Based on the conclusions, the recommendations are offered:

1. Teachers may consider crafting programs that boost the confidence of multilingual students who experience difficulty communicating with their classmates, peers and during classes.
2. To improve understanding of figurative language, teachers can organize initial activities that explain the meanings of words in a way that is easily understandable to everyone. Additionally, teachers can record or search for videos that can help students better comprehend the topics.
3. Future researchers are encouraged to conduct in-depth studies to provide solutions to the challenges and problems faced by students in online distance learning, such as internet connectivity, effective communication, and ways to interact in class.

LIMITATION & FURTHER RESEARCH

In this study, ten (10) multilingual students from the senior high school of Laguna State Polytechnic University's Los Banos Campus were interviewed to gain insights into their experiences. These students are currently enrolled in the academic year 2021-2022 and were from two levels, grades 11 and 12, undergoing online distance learning implemented by the school. It is important to note that this study focuses solely on the experiences of multilingual students in online distance learning and aims to explore their profiles and feelings toward their multilingualism.

To help students who struggle with communicating with their teachers, guidance on effective communication should be provided. Teachers can conduct initial activities to explain the meanings of words in a way that is understandable to everyone, which can improve understanding of figurative language. Additionally, recording additional lectures or searching for videos that can aid in the understanding of the subject matter can also be helpful. For future researchers, conducting more in-depth studies on providing solutions to problems and challenges faced by students in online distance learning, such as internet connectivity, effective communication, and ways of interacting with the class, can be beneficial.

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