

Technological Dependency and Learning Gaps: Post-Pandemic Challenges in Language Education

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic's peak challenges students in the learning process. The experiences, coping mechanisms, and implications of ten (10) grade 10 students of Danggagan National High School, Bukidnon, Philippines in learning Filipino subjects after the pandemic were explored using a descriptive-narrative method. Five (5) went through in-depth interviews and five (5) were included in a focus group discussion to gain deeper insights using a purposive sampling method with a semi-structured interview containing open-ended questions. Themes were generated after the transcription and coding of data. Results show that the cognitive aspect was affected in the student's learning. Learning gaps revealed a lack of skills in spelling, comprehension of the Filipino language, and reading comprehension. The lack of speaking, writing, and reading skills were identified as learning gaps in the psychomotor aspect. It revealed further those participants became dependent on technology for many of their answers were simply copied from the internet. They no longer read and used their minds to form ideas and barely spoke since most of the lessons were delivered via videos. Thus, the heutagogical theory of learning and constructivism becomes the foundation of the results emphasizing the responsibility of students, encouraging active participation in education highlighting the importance of collaborative learning and social contexts in shaping learning experiences. These are essential for understanding the challenges and adaptations faced during and after the pandemic. Findings suggest strengthening foundation skills such as reading and writing at the secondary level due to the challenges highlighted in the study.

Keywords: *language, education, technology, gap, pandemic*

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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly disrupted education worldwide encountering challenges due to prolonged school closures. Prior to the pandemic, language educators faced considerable difficulties in effectively teaching the Filipino subject because students often struggle to comprehend the Filipino subject due to the extensive reading materials and complex tasks included in the curriculum (Dalag, 2019). Responding to students' needs for meaningful

and effective learning is crucial, yet both teachers and students face heightened challenges in improving performance levels particularly after the pandemic.

In the study of Aringay and Napil (2023) throughout the pandemic, the student's shows low reading comprehension, many students struggled with vocabulary, frequently asking for word meanings which highlighted their lack of understanding on the topic and teachers observed that students often gave incorrect answers or left worksheets incomplete due to difficulties in understanding the material. The teachers expressed disappointment when students submitted worksheets of poor quality, as it was evident that the responses were copied in the internet and lacked thoughtful engagement with the material. However, positive impact from the modality of teaching during pandemic was technology and the use of it would benefit their post-pandemic academic teaching (Andriani & Bram, 2022; Rahman 2020). A blended learning approach is any education strategy that mixes digital and traditional teaching methods. This has been the instrument for the education of most students in public schools, teachers and students have successfully navigated education during the pandemic.

Moreover, language education in public and private schools have become more flexible because of the new standard structure implemented in the Philippines in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (Abarquez, 2021). The transition from conventional teaching to the new normal has been substantial, and resilience and collaboration will play key roles in this process. The shift to the "new normal," moving from traditional classroom settings to virtual environments, requires an evaluation of the effectiveness of blended learning in delivering quality and outcomes-based education (Basilaia & Kvavadze, 2020).

In line with this, this research is grounded on heutagogic theory and supported by constructivism. According to the heutagogic learning theory (Hase and Kenyon, 2001), students themselves make a significant contribution to their learning. This is an independent study of the key skills related to social change. Currently, one of the results of blended learning is the independence and creativity of students in studying the subjects they are learning (Rahman 2022). This is supported by the theory of constructivism of Piaget which states that learning is an active process in which students create and acquire new knowledge based on their experiences. Due to the pandemic, students may create natural methods and/or strategies to learn and acquire

knowledge based on the changes currently happening in the world and the education system. Together, these approaches are essential for understanding the challenges and adaptations faced by students during and after the pandemic.

Thus, this study explored one major research problem: what are the effects of the pandemic on learning the Filipino subject?

METHODOLOGY

This research is qualitative design specifically a descriptive-narrative method to gain a deeper understanding of the learning of Junior High School students in the Filipino subject after the pandemic. Researchers used In-Depth Interviews and focus group discussions to understand the learning experiences in the Filipino subject after the pandemic. Both techniques were used in gathering the data to enhance the quality and comprehensiveness of the data collected. Through these techniques, the researchers had the opportunity to analyze the data from different perspectives to gain a deeper understanding of learning in the Filipino subject after the pandemic. Combining these methods enables researchers to triangulate findings, increasing the validity and robustness of the research.

Ten (10) participants were selected through a purposive sampling technique from the public school at Dangcagan National High School. Five (5) went through in-depth interviews and five (5) were included in a focus group discussion. The selected participants are in the tenth grade because they experienced the pandemic for two consecutive years. Then, thematic analysis used to analyze the data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In analyzing the aftermath of the pandemic on Junior High School in learning the Filipino subject, learning gaps revealed through the themes developed based on the perspectives of the participants.

Cognitive Aspect

The cognitive aspect of the respondents has a significant impact on their learning in the Filipino subject after the pandemic. Due to their lack of knowledge, other effects have emerged, such as some participants experiencing a lack of understanding, making it difficult for them to learn the subject of Filipino.

Learning gaps were enumerated such as lack of understanding of the Filipino language, lack of proficiency in spelling, lack of comprehension of what is read, absence of self-directed learning, dependence on technology, and ultimately, it did not contribute to their studies. In each statement of the participants, it can be observed that the pandemic has had a significant impact on their cognitive aspects in learning the subject of Filipino. This result is contrary to the research by Kitane (2022), which shows that students' performance in the modular approach experiences a wide or high level in the following aspects: understanding of content, clarity of instructions, language, visual illustrations and graphics, assistance from teachers, and accessibility in obtaining and acquiring modules. The result of the study contradicts also the findings of the research by Kabir et. al. (2023), which showed an increase in the affective and psychomotor skills of students during the pandemic when classes were conducted online.

On a positive note, literary texts should unlock the imaginative potential of students, encouraging them to think critically and respond with empathy to their surroundings (Sarce, 2022). Incorporating materials that are relevant to students' lives and reflect their everyday experiences and cultural background can make the learning process more meaningful. Thus, teachers should aim to provide such contextualized materials to make the language learning more accessible and engaging.

Psychomotor Aspect

Another area that affected after the pandemic was the psychomotor aspect of the participants, as their learning in the Filipino subject depended much on technology. From the participants point of view, technology helps them, but they have come to rely on it for all their tasks. Every activity that they had was based on Google, especially on Brainly. One of the effects is that they have become dependent on the answer key of their module. They will no longer read their respective modules because they will go straight to the answer keys. Due to this, the following learning gaps have emerged: lack of reading skills, deficiency in writing skills, absence of speaking skills, and lack of writing proficiency.

Further, the participants laziness emerged in the study of the Filipino subject. This result is in line with the findings of Kitane (2022), which presents a slightly lower aspect regarding assistance from parents or other family members and the activities included in the module. The modular approach enhances the self-learning of students, but it cannot be denied that in the years of their studies, before the pandemic broke out, teachers were guiding their learning. The absence of clarity in their questions signifies a disturbance in the system. The parents who should have been partners with teachers during the pandemic are just an idealized image. Parents work to provide for their children's needs, so teaching their children during the pandemic is not their priority. Here, the psychomotor skills of the students are greatly affected, especially since most of them do not focus on answering the module because they have been tasked with doing household chores. Students are forced to understand the module on their own or simply copy the answer key because there is no one to teach them.

Overall, there has been a loss of skills in speaking, writing, and reading because, during that time, everything relied solely on answer keys and technology, especially Google and Brainly, whenever students had assignments. This agrees with the findings of Kabir et. al. (2023), that students experience a decline in skills during the pandemic due to online classes. The children have become dependent on technology, as most of their answers were simply copied from the internet. They no longer read, they no longer use their brains to form thoughts, and most importantly, they no longer speak because almost everything is in video format now.

CONCLUSION

The study reveals that the pandemic has various effects on students' learning in the Filipino subject that develops in them that even after pandemic they were coping up to the new normal type of curriculum. This has a significant impact on their cognition because they experienced a lack of knowledge, understanding, and tools, and most importantly, they did not learn anything. They also lost their skills in phonetics, understanding of the Filipino language, and even their comprehension of what they read. While on their psychomotor skills, they lost their ability to speak, write, and read. Above all they were solely dependent on answer keys and technology, especially Google and Brainly whenever they had assignments.

This dependency highlights a need for educators to reassess and refine teaching methods to ensure students develop independent learning skills and a deeper understanding of the subject matter. Generally, the study emphasizes the necessity for educators and policymakers to address these gaps and implement strategies that support students in regaining and enhancing their linguistic and cognitive abilities in the post-pandemic educational system. Lastly, findings suggest strengthening foundation skills such as reading and writing at the secondary level due to the challenges highlighted in the study.

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