
**NAVIGATING TECHNOLOGY INTEGRATION IN FILIPINO
LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION UNDER THE MATATAG
CURRICULUM: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF TEACHERS'
EXPERIENCES**

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ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of Filipino language teachers navigating technology integration under the MATATAG Curriculum in selected schools of North Cotabato, Philippines. Twenty (20) participants were purposively selected — ten (10) for in-depth interviews (KI-T1 to KI-T10) and ten (10) for focus group discussions (KI-T11 to KI-T20). Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, then analyzed using Colaizzi's thematic analysis framework. Two global themes emerged: (1) Purposeful and Intentional Technology Integration, encompassing intentionality in technology use and competency mapping and curriculum alignment; and (2) Navigating Challenges to Technology Integration, encompassing infrastructure, access, and digital equity; student distraction and classroom management in digital spaces; varying digital literacy among students; and real-time feedback and formative assessment. Findings reveal that effective technology integration in Filipino instruction requires deliberate competency alignment, not tool compliance. Teachers developed adaptive strategies — offline contingencies, peer-pairing, formative digital assessments, and clear classroom routines — to address infrastructure gaps, student distraction, and uneven digital literacy. An intervention plan prioritizing competency-aligned technology use, digital equity, technology-based classroom management, learner support, and purposeful professional development was validated at Very High priority (Rank 1) for four of five components.

KEYWORDS: Phenomenological study; MATATAG Curriculum; technology integration; Filipino language teaching; teachers' experiences; digital equity; formative assessment; Philippines.

1. INTRODUCTION

The MATATAG Curriculum represents a landmark reform in Philippine basic education, aiming to strengthen foundational skills, streamline learning competencies, and embed cultural relevance in instruction across all subject areas, including Filipino language education [1]. A central expectation of this curriculum is that teachers will deploy technology purposefully to enhance competency-based learning. However, lived realities in classrooms — particularly in rural and semi-urban settings of North Cotabato — present formidable challenges: unstable internet connectivity, limited device availability, heterogeneous student digital literacy, and the complex relational demands of managing digital learning environments [2].

While quantitative studies have measured the levels of technology integration and instructional quality [3], they cannot fully capture the nuanced, situated, and experiential dimensions of how teachers navigate these demands in practice. A phenomenological approach is therefore methodologically appropriate, as it allows for the surfacing of teachers' intentionalities, adaptive strategies, and persistent struggles as they enact technology-integrated Filipino instruction [4].

This study sought to answer two questions: (1) What challenges do teachers face in implementing effective instructional strategies for teaching Filipino competencies under the MATATAG Curriculum? (2) What intervention plans can be developed based on teachers' experiences to enhance Filipino teaching practices? The findings aim to generate contextually grounded, practitioner-validated insights for curriculum implementers, professional development designers, and education policymakers.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Research Design

A phenomenological qualitative design was adopted, following Colaizzi's [5] descriptive phenomenology framework. This design is appropriate for exploring the meaning structure of shared human experiences — in this case, teachers' experiences of technology-integrated Filipino instruction under a new curriculum reform [4]. The study is grounded in Husserl's

phenomenological tradition, which prioritizes first-person accounts, intentionality, and the structures of lived experience.

2.2 Participants

Twenty (20) teachers were purposively selected from participating schools in the Magpet, Makilala, and President Roxas Districts of North Cotabato, Philippines. Purposive sampling ensured that participants had direct, sustained experience with technology-integrated Filipino language instruction under the MATATAG Curriculum. Ten teachers participated in individual in-depth interviews (coded KI-T1 to KI-T10) and ten participated in focus group discussions (coded KI-T11 to KI-T20). All participants provided signed informed consent, understanding the purpose, procedures, and ethical safeguards of the study.

2.3 Data Collection

Semi-structured in-depth interviews and focus group discussions were conducted at participants' preferred times and locations to promote psychological comfort and candid disclosure. A validated interview guide matrix directed inquiry across challenges, coping strategies, and improvement recommendations. All sessions were audio-recorded with participant consent, time-stamped, and supplemented with field notes. Interviews averaged approximately 15 minutes each.

2.4 Data Analysis

Verbatim transcription was followed by thematic analysis using Colaizzi's [5] phenomenological process: (1) reading all protocols to understand participants' perspectives; (2) extracting significant statements; (3) formulating meanings; (4) organizing into theme clusters; (5) integrating into exhaustive description; (6) validating the findings through member checking. Trustworthiness was established through member checking with six participants, peer debriefing, thick description, and audit trails.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

Ethics approval was obtained from relevant institutional authorities. Informed consent was secured from all participants. Pseudonyms (KI-T codes) were assigned to protect anonymity. Participants were free to withdraw at any time without penalty. No identifying information was disclosed in any research output.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Overview of Themes

Table 1 presents the thematic architecture emerging from 20 teacher participants. Two global themes, five organizing themes, and seven specific themes were identified, reflecting the dual

nature of teachers' technology experiences: intentional, purposeful integration on one hand, and persistent navigational challenges on the other.

Table 1. Thematic Architecture: Teachers' Experiences in Technology-Integrated Filipino Instruction.

Global Theme	Organizing Theme	Specific Themes
GT1: Purposeful and Intentional Technology Integration	OT1.1 Technology as Tool for Competency-Aligned Instruction	Intentionality in Technology Use; Competency Mapping and Curriculum Alignment
GT2: Navigating Challenges to Technology Integration	OT2.1 Infrastructure, Access, and Digital Equity	Device Access and Connectivity Problems
	OT2.2 Digital Classroom Management	Student Distraction and Classroom Management in Digital Spaces
	OT2.3 Learner Diversity	Varying Digital Literacy Among Students
	OT2.4 Feedback and Assessment	Real-Time Feedback and Formative Assessment; Digital Tools for Classroom Routines

3.2 Global Theme 1: Purposeful and Intentional Technology Integration

3.2.1 Technology as a Tool for Competency-Aligned Instruction

Teachers consistently emphasized that technology integration must be subordinated to pedagogical purpose — specifically, alignment with MATATAG competencies and performance standards. The most recurring message across interviews was that technology is only meaningful when it serves the curriculum's essential competencies, not when it is used as a performance of modernity.

"Mahimong makahuluganon ang teknolohiya kung mosuporta kini sa pagtutok sa MATATAG sa mga batakang kompetensya, dili kung gamiton lang aron magpakita nga moderno." [Technology is only meaningful if it supports the MATATAG focus on basic competencies, not just used to look modern.] (KI-T1)

"Nagamaayo ang mga gamit kon ginapapraktis nila ang matuod nga Filipino nga komunikasyon sang mga estudyante, indi lang nga naga sabat sang worksheets." [Tools work better when they give students opportunities to practice authentic Filipino communication, not just respond on worksheets.] (FGD-T1)

These narratives align with Garcia et al. [6], who highlighted that instructional quality in Philippine schools improves significantly when technology use is guided by competency mapping rather than tool application frequency. The teachers' insistence on intentionality reflects the broader principle identified by Martinez [7]: competency-driven integration

ensures that technology enhances cultural and linguistic learning goals rather than distracting from them.

3.2.2 Competency Mapping and Curriculum Alignment

A critical dimension of intentional integration was explicit competency mapping before selecting digital tools. Teachers consistently reported that lessons became shallow and pedagogically hollow when tools were chosen without first identifying the target MATATAG competency.

"Ang sukod nga labing ginarepeto mao ang pagkahan-ay — ang teknolohiya kinahanglan klarong mohaom sa kompetensya ug performance standard." [The measure that matters most is alignment — technology must clearly match the competency and performance standard.] (KI-T1)

"Mag-una gyud ta sa target nga kompetensya, unya ra ta mangita ug tech tools kung klaro na ang tumong." [We always begin with the competency target and select tech tools only after the objective is clear.] (FGD-T2)

These accounts support Lopez and Cruz [8], who found that professional development focused on pedagogical integration, rather than tool training, better prepares teachers to create authentic language learning opportunities. The implication is that teaching supervisors should institute backward design protocols requiring competency identification before technology tool selection.

3.3 Global Theme 2: Navigating Challenges to Technology Integration

3.3.1 Infrastructure, Access, and Digital Equity

Infrastructure-related challenges were the most universally reported across all 20 participants. Unstable internet connectivity, insufficient devices, and inconsistent power supply emerged as the primary barriers to technology-integrated Filipino instruction.

"Ang akong pinakadako nga hagit kay ang dili lig-on nga internet ug kulang nga mga devices, mao nga mag-andam ko ug offline backups sama sa gi-print nga mga teksto ug na-downloaded nga mga video." [My greatest challenge is unstable internet and insufficient devices, so I prepare offline backups — printed texts and downloaded videos.] (KI-T4)

"Kanunay ko magkabala kaayo sa mga estudyante nga walay gadget, mao nga among ginahimo ang mga tech activities nga puwede buhaton sa pares o offline, aron walay mabayaan." [I always worry about learners without gadgets, so we design activities that can be done in pairs or offline, so no one is left behind.] (FGD-T6)

These findings resonate with UNESCO's [9] emphasis that school connectivity remains a key condition for equitable technology-enabled learning, particularly in underserved settings.

Teachers' adaptive responses — offline contingencies, group device sharing, blended instruction — reflect creative professional agency within structural constraints, consistent with Abedi and Owusu-Ansah [10], who documented that first-order barriers (hardware, connectivity, support) remain primary obstacles to effective technology integration.

3.3.2 Student Distraction and Classroom Management in Digital Spaces

Managing student attention and behavioral engagement in technology-rich environments was a persistent theme. Teachers reported that mobile phones and internet access created competing attention demands that required specific management strategies.

"Ang distraction isa gid ka matuod nga isyu kon ara ang mga cellphone. Gina-manage ko ini paagi sa paghatag sang mga madasig nga buluhaton nga may oras kag klaro nga resulta." [Distraction is a real issue when phones are present. I manage it by giving short, timed tasks with clear outputs.] (KI-T3)

"Mas ni-improve ang kalidad sa pagtudlo kung nagbutang ko ug klarong mga lagda sa paggamit sa devices ug gipunting ang mga kalihokan aron malikayan ang distraction." [Instructional quality improved when I established clear rules for device use and focused activities to avoid distraction.] (FGD-T10)

These accounts support quantitative findings showing classroom management's significant association with implementation and support ($r=-0.212$, $p=0.046$). Clear routines, structured submission processes, and standardized rubric formats emerged as teachers' primary classroom management technologies — reflecting Sortwell et al.'s [11] finding that structured digital routines improve consistency and learning outcomes across K–12 settings.

3.3.3 Varying Digital Literacy Among Students

Heterogeneity in students' digital competence created instructional differentiation demands that complicated technology-enhanced Filipino teaching.

"Ang akong hagit mao ang nagkalain-laing digital literacy sa mga estudyante. Gi-atubang nako kini pinaagi sa pagtudlo sa paggamit sa mga gamit step-by-step una, dayon pagpairsa sa mga tech-skilled nga estudyante sa mga nanginahanglan ug tabang." [My challenge is students varying digital literacy. I address it by teaching tool use step-by-step first, then pairing tech-skilled students with those who need support.] (KI-T4)

This challenge mirrors the broader digital divide documented in Philippine educational technology research, where access inequalities translate into skill disparities within the same classroom [8]. Teachers' peer-pairing strategies operationalize Vygotsky's [12] zone of proximal development — leveraging more digitally proficient students as scaffolds for peers with lower digital confidence.

3.3.4 Real-Time Feedback and Formative Assessment

A fourth challenge involved the complexities of implementing responsive, data-informed assessment under the MATATAG Curriculum's mastery orientation. Teachers described the pressure to monitor comprehension in real time while managing large class sizes.

"Ang teknolohiya nagabulig sa akon nga masiguro ang pagsabot sang mga estudyante sa madali, makilala ang naga-struggle nga mga estudyante, kag ma-adjust ang pagtudlo sa real time." [Technology helps me quickly check student comprehension, identify struggling learners, and adjust my teaching in real time.] (KI-T6)

"Ang paspas nga formative quizzes human sa leksyon makatabang nako nga madakpan ang mga sayop nga pagsabot. Kung ako magbalik-tudlo dayon, mas lig-on ang performance tasks sa mga estudyante." [Quick formative quizzes after the lesson help me catch misconceptions. When I reteach immediately, performance task outcomes are stronger.] (KI-T2)

These accounts validate quantitative findings showing that student support significantly predicts teaching and learning enhancement ($\beta=0.062$, $p=0.045$). They also align with Pinto-Llorente and Izquierdo-Álvarez [13], who documented that digital formative assessment improves instructional feedback and adjustment in K–12 settings.

4. CONCLUSION

This phenomenological study revealed that Filipino language teachers in North Cotabato navigate a complex ecology of intentional technology integration and persistent structural challenges in enacting the MATATAG Curriculum. Their experiences demonstrate that effective technology integration is not reducible to tool adoption frequency; it requires deliberate alignment with curriculum competencies, adaptive responses to infrastructure and access inequities, purposeful management of digital classroom environments, and responsive assessment practices. Teachers demonstrate considerable professional agency through offline contingencies, peer-pairing strategies, structured digital routines, and real-time formative assessment. However, these individual-level adaptations are insufficient substitutes for systemic supports: reliable connectivity, adequate devices, competency-aligned professional development, and institutionalized digital equity policies. The validated intervention plan prioritizes these systemic responses, with competency-aligned technology integration, digital equity, technology-based classroom management, and learner support all rated as Very High priority (Rank 1) for immediate implementation.

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6. Conflict of Interest

The author declares no financial or non-financial conflicts of interest.

7. Ethical Statements

Statement of Ethical Approval: Ethical clearance was obtained from the relevant institutional review body prior to data collection. Statement of Informed Consent: Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study. Participants were assigned pseudonym codes, and no identifying information was disclosed.

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