NARRATIVES ON THE COMMON LANGUAGE LEARNING STRUGGLES OF SELECTED STUDENTS OF LETRAN BATAAN AMID FLEXIBLE TEACHING MODALITY

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ABSTRACT

As the education system suddenly shifts from face to face to Flexible Teaching Modality, certain challenges and problems were encountered by students in their learning progress. One of these difficulties is highly reflected on the context of English language learning. The varying complexities and intricate rules of the language system added up to the constraints and restrictions of the pandemic thereby affecting the performances of the students in their English courses. In this regard, the study seeks to unravel the common language learning struggles experienced by the students in the new teaching modality. Thirty five (35) reflective essays from the students of Grade 11 of the Senior High School Department of Colegio de San Juan de Letran Bataan were subjected to qualitative content analysis. Upon careful analysis of the data deemed in the materials, three common categories of language learning struggles emerged from the responses of the participants. The study revealed that struggles relating to linguistic patterns (F=74: P=55%) such as grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, spelling and variations in the English language are evident. Moreover, struggles relating to intrinsic values (F=43: P=32%) which include peer pressure and fear, interest and motivation, confidence and study habits are also prevalent to the language learning experience of the students. Finally, difficulties relating to language barrier (F= 17: P= 13%) such as exposure in the target language and translation are also contributing factors to the language learning struggles of the participants.

Keywords: *language learning, struggles, content analysis, linguistic patterns, intrinsic values, language barrier*

INTRODUCTION

The very context of the English language learning has always been the initial indicator in developing oral, written and critical language skills of the students. As cited by Kramina (2000) in the study of Zaščerinska (2010), language learning primarily highlights the idea of familiarizing and analyzing the system and network of interconnected meanings in the context of the target language. In this sense, the processes are done in a conscious manner and fueled with intention. The mere fact that the process is done in an intended and conscious manner brings out spontaneous synergy between the native language acquisition and the context of the target language. As mentioned by Robbins (2007), the in order to gain mastery of the target language one should have a constant realization about the governing rules of the target language and how the native

language should fits the newly established arbitrary command. Although, the English language and the Filipino language possess some similarities when it comes to structure and utterances, this does not guarantee mastery among Filipino learners.

As revealed by Hosain (2018), problems in learning the English language can be brought about by different factors relating not only to the learners but also to the level of dependency of the native language to the target language. In his study, he found out that learners might struggle in learning the English language primarily because of its intricate linguistic rules. Secondly, the manner on which the learner learns the English language could also be a contributing factor. These include the level of competency of the teachers, materials used and the learning facilities. Lastly, the behavioral aspect of the learner shall also be considered such as displacement and motivation.

In addition, students might encounter hardships in mastering the English language or any target language if there is a significantly higher volume of English Language Learners (ELLs) (Bell, 2013). As revealed in the study, the numbers of students contained in a particular facility can impact the learning process. This is due to the fact, that preparatory and implementation procedures will be greatly affected. Consequently, students will be receiving little individual focus and interaction which are greatly needed in mastering the target language.

Finally, in the context of every Filipino classroom, difficulties in both oral and written English are quite a normal scenario for every English teacher. Some common observations are hesitations in speaking the language, grammar errors and frequent code switching. As stated by Claro (2012) in his newspaper article, the problem with English curriculum is that the English language is taught in a much deviated way. Accordingly, the language presented in the classrooms does not meet the common needs of Filipino learners. This leads to various misuses of the English language.

As far as the grammatical patterns is concerned, Filipino students might have some difficulties in contextualizing usage of the English language. As revealed by the study of Leaño (2019), students may have some troubles in the aspect of vocabulary, word processing and communicative expressions. Some of these problems can be manifested in simply naming objects found in the environment, recitation, conveying illustrated antonyms and synonyms, and proper usage of various communicative expressions. This particular problem is quite evident in a non-native speaking classrooms like in the country. Evidently speaking, most of these problems are brought about by educational policies, habit formation, word assimilation and most importantly curriculum development.

In similar manner, grammatical rules in the English language may complicate language teaching and learning process among Filipino students. As revealed by Sumalinog (2018), teaching grammar has been a constant struggle among teachers of the English language. Errors in various speaking and writing activities are quite evident among the works of Filipino students in general. As depicted in her findings, errors in grammatical patterns can be observed in using prepositions, observing noun-pronoun antecedent, spelling variations, plural and singular forms, correct verb tenses, subject and verb agreement and passive- active voices in English. More importantly, the participants in her study showed lower mastery of these English competencies despite the repetition of these lessons or concepts in previous and succeeding grade levels.

Another contributing factor in the quality of English skills of Filipino learners is anxiety. As mentioned by Jugo (2020), anxiety emerges from problems with intrinsic values observed among learners especially when expressing oneself in English. Students tend to become so self-conscious when they are speaking in foreign language. Most of them tend to constantly monitor themselves thereby inhibiting them from expressing themselves in a much spontaneous and comfortable manner. Consequently, such anxiety is often brought about by

negative-self-perception, error-correction, peer-pressure and communication with English speakers. Also, negative exposure of students to various communicative set-up might also affect their performance in the English language. Some speaking activities like speech, conversation, role-play and broadcasting, if not facilitated properly, may constitute to the language anxiety of the students.

Although, these particular cases were observed in several studies concerning the English Language learning, none of such was conducted in the Colegio. Most of its researches focused on curriculum development, sports and administrative aspect but little attention is given to language learning experiences of the students. More importantly, as the education set-up in the country suddenly shift from face to face strategy to flexible teaching modality, problems in learning the English language might escalate given the limitations and hindrances brought about by the pandemic. The challenges encountered by the students so as the policies, adjustments, leniencies and protocols observed by the learning institution in response to the Covid-19 pandemic may greatly affect the quality of English language learning among students.

Hence, this study shall present and highlight the common language learning struggles of selected Grade 11 students of Colegio de San Juan de Letran Bataan. More specifically, the study shall employ content analysis in extracting themes among the journals of the respondents. At the end of the study, the researcher expects to identify these learning struggles and explain how these would constitute to language teaching.

Research Objectives

The study aims to identify the common English Language learning struggles of the Grade 11 students of Colegio de San Juan de Letran Bataan. Specifically, the study seeks to find answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the common struggles of the students towards learning the English language?

2. How may these identified struggles implicate language teaching amid flexible learning modality?
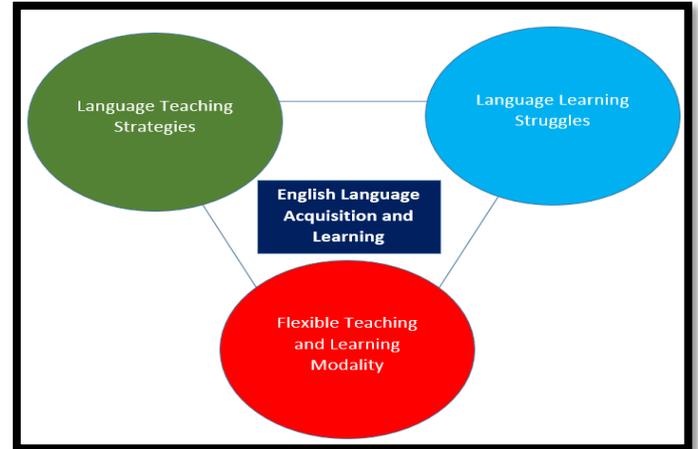
Conceptual Framework

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

Figure 1 summarizes the general track of the research study. Based on the figure, the study is piloted towards the understanding on how language learning struggles of the students reflect in the flexible teaching and learning modality implemented by the Colegio. Moreover, it seeks to draw out the teaching strategies needed to address concerning English language acquisition and learning.

METHODOLOGY

The part presents the methods and procedures employed in identifying the common language learning struggles of Grade 11 students of Colegio de San Juan de Letran Bataan. Specifically, included in this section are the research method, development, population and sample and validation of research materials and data processing and procedure.

Research Design

The research will utilize qualitative research methodology in exploring the common struggles that the Grade

11 students of Colegio de San Juan de Letran- Bataan are experiencing in learning the English language. As cited by Hancock (2007), qualitative method focuses on developing explanations using specific patterns or methods. Unlike any other approcehs in research, qualitative research study deals with analysis of non-numerical data gathered through careful and flexible measures like interviews, observations and document collection.

Moreover, this study shall employ qualitative content analysis to give light to the specific struggles experienced by the participants with regards to English language teaching and learning. As mentioned by Schreier (2012), content analysis is a distinct procedure in both qualitative and quantitative research approaches. This form of analysis make use of large amount of data taken from various materials like documents, reflective essays, media files and correspondents. Consequently, patterns for categories and qualifications among the gathered data which in turn, shall provide comprehensive discussion nd analysis of the identified research problem.

Population and Sample of the Study

The study will encompass selected Grade 11 students of Colegio de San Juan de Letran Bataan. The participants are selected based on the common observation of the researcher towards their skills, attitudes and aptitude in learning the English language. More specifically, the study made use of the reflective essays of the students under their Reading and Writing Skills course. These reflective essay was facilitated by the researcher as a form of English aptitude test for the students. The research study identified thirty five (35) reflective essays. The materials were chosen based on the average scores of the students in the said activity. As the general average score of the students during the activity is twenty five (25) points, reflective essays which received a mark of twenty five (25) and lower were selected accordingly. The reflective essays of the students were graded based on organization of ideas, coherence, mechanics, relevance, and content and language structure.

Data Gathering Procedure

The study aims to present the experiences of selected Grade 11 students of Colegio de San Juan de Letran Bataan towards the learning of the English Language. Specifically, the study highlighted all the common struggles that they have gone through. To do this, the researcher employed strict monitoring of the procedures as for the study calls for confidentiality and preciseness. Primarily, the researchers gave consent forms among the respondents. These consents shall inform them about the goals and objectives of the study. Moreover, the researcher shall ensure that the participants were well- oriented about all the procedures that shall transpire in the study.

The study proceeded on selecting the materials needed for qualitative content analysis. Reflective essays facilitated for Reading and Writing Skills course were carefully examined and analyzed. Reflective essays of the students which got twenty five (25) points and below were selected as they would yield relevant results for the study.

Ethical Consideration

The researchers carefully utilized permits and protocols in the process of the selection of materials and data gathering procedures. These procedures were relayed to the participants specifically the purpose of this study and informed them the methods that the researchers used in the entire research process. The researchers opted not to proceed with the interview unless all the permits and consents were properly distributed.

More importantly, the data gathered from both the material of the students and interview among the participants were treated with utmost confidentiality in respect to the Data Privacy Act of 2012. Needless to say, all the information that transpired during the entire data gathering were only used for the advancement of the goals and objectives of the research study. In relation, information that might reveal the identities of the participants were kept and hidden for safety and security measures.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following section deals with the analysis and interpretation of the gathered data from the reflective essays of the students and the inputs shared by the teacher-participants of the study. In this study, thirty five (35) reflective essays were subjected to qualitative content analysis. These essays were taken from students who got twenty five (25) points and below in the said activity. Below is the summary of the findings collected from the material.

Table 1.1: Identified language learning struggles among students
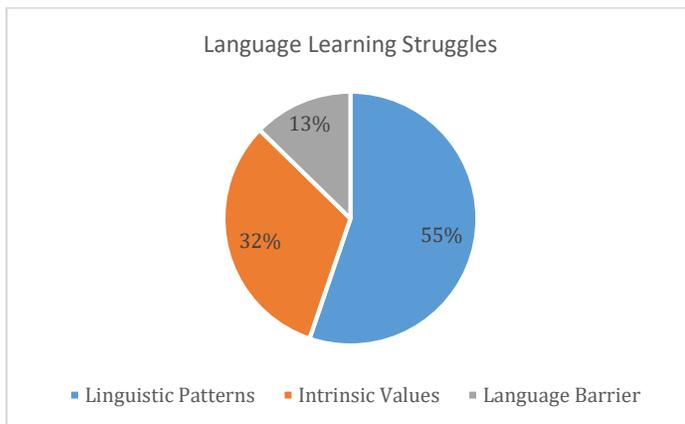
The above table summarizes the gathered data from the reflective essays of the participants in their Reading and Writing Skills Course. Based on the summary, the researcher identified three common language learning struggles among the participants. Out of one hundred and thirty four (134) responses, seventy four (74) of which falls under the linguistic patterns of the language learning. This constitutes to 54% of the total identified struggles among the learners. Moreover, forty three (43) out of the total number of responses from the participants falls under intrinsic values. In general, this number constitutes to 32% of the identified struggles. Finally, seventeen (17) of the gathered responses from the reflective essays are categorized as struggles in language barrier. This contributes to 13% of the total identified language learning problems.

Common Struggles in English Language Learning

Linguistic Patterns

Table 1.2: Categories and percentage distributions of the responses under linguistic patterns

Linguistic Patterns		
Categories	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Grammar	22	29.73%
Pronunciation	17	22.97%
Vocabulary	16	21.62%
Spelling	13	17.57%
Variations in English	6	8.11%
Total	**74**	**100%**

Table 1.2 summarizes the responses taken from the reflective essays of the participants which falls under the category of linguistic patterns. The researcher had identified seventy four (74) total number of responses for this category which constitutes to 55% of the grand total number of responses. The findings reveals that most of the participants experienced problems and concern when it comes to grammar. This is depicted by the twenty two (22) gathered responses from the material which constitutes to 29.74% for linguistic patterns.

In addition, the reflective essays of the participants also revealed that most of them have problems with pronunciation. This is depicted by the seventeen (17) collected responses which contributes to 22.97% of the category. Moreover, sixteen (16) responses fall under spelling which constitutes to 21.62%. Meanwhile, spelling is also an evident struggle among learners as it amounts to thirteen (13) of the total number of responses in this category thereby resulting to 17.57%. Finally, variations in the English language is a contributing factor in the problems in linguistic patterns among the students as revealed by six (6) responses or 8.11% of the total gathered data.

Grammar

Grammar is the most crucial aspect of linguistic studies. In any aspect of language teaching and learning process, grammar is given of greater importance as it greatly influences the overall structure of the communication delivered among individuals in both oral and written aspects (Singh et.al 2017). Consequently, errors in language learning are often observed in the way the students structured their sentences and paragraphs. As language learning is viewed, as a complex and challenging activity (Chin 2000), struggles in this aspect of linguistic aspect can be pretty much evident especially in writing skills of the students. Such complexities and errors can be evident in areas like plural forms, passive-active voices, adjectives, propositions, nouns and pronouns, adverbs, conjunctions and interjections.

As revealed by the responses of the participants in their reflective essays, learning the English language is made difficult with the intricate and complex rules of grammar. Such hardship is being escalated specifically in the Flexible teaching modality as exercises, principles and activities to English grammar became evidently limited. This is being supported by the responses of the participants as some of them mentioned that:

> *"I struggle in using the correct Grammar since it is complex, making it difficult to remember, master, and use logically."*

> *"Constructing sentences is one of my main problems in having to speak or write in English. Writing the letters and sentence, and using the wrong words for a particular sentence."*

> *"Other struggles I had to deal with are regarding following grammar rules and fluency. There are times when I find it hard to choose what figures of speech, and more, I have to use."*

> *"I always seem to have the need to correct myself when I'm trying to construct a paragraph in the subject of the argument."*

> *"There are sentences that seems wrong but is actually correct and sentences that seems correct but is actually not."*

> *"When I'm writing essays like this instead of using 'going to' I often write 'gonna' so I have to check it again and correct my mistakes plus it's not formal so sometimes."*

Pronunciation

The mastery of the English language does not halt from the proficiency in grammatical patterns. Oftentimes, pronunciation plays an important role in both oral and written aspect of linguistic patterns. According to, AMEP (2002) pronunciation refers to the production of significant sounds that we use to convey meaning. To be more specific, it includes attention to particular sounds of language which are called segments and aspects of speech beyond the level of individual sound such as stress, phrasing, intonation, timing and rhythm (suprasegmental aspects). In linguistic aspect, pronunciation of words depend on how the speaker articulates these aspects through careful and logical combinations of different linguistic elements such as phonemes and graphemes.

As far as the English language is concerned, Filipino students might experience some difficulties in speaking some of its words because of the varying segmental and suprasegmental aspects of the Filipino and the English language. Oftentimes, Filipino students tend to mispronounced words or in worst scenario omit sounds essential for the English word. This errors in pronunciation can be evident in consonant and vowel sounds, unique vocabulary, direct translations, and inflections (present, past future). Other contributing factor could be the cultural background of the speaker as for the cases of absent forms in their Mother tongue. In addition, Filipino students may also encounter problems in schwa vowel sound, voiced consonants (/z/, /b/, /v/), and more importantly articulation of /th/

sounds. Also, students may struggle with pronunciation because of loan translations from Tagalog to Spanish language resulting in an improper selection of word.

Such difficulties in pronunciation is quite evident among the responses of the participants in their reflective essays. Most of them considered pronunciation as an integral aspect of English language learning as it contributes to other facets of linguistic patterns such as grammar and spelling. It also effect the communicative patterns of the students specifically in the verbal communicative aspect. These are being supported by the responses of the participants as they revealed that:

> "Pronunciation, since I'm trying to learn the Filipino language is often difficult for me to pronounce certain words properly in English."

> "Another struggle I encountered during my Elementary days was mispronunciation. Even in my present days, I still had problems from it, I mispronounced Cordon Bleu as Gordon Bleu. I thought the dish was from Gordon Ramsay."

> "Sometimes when I try to speak English fluently. I tend to say it incorrectly, through the wrong tone or just outright missed a word."

> "I stutter at some words because I am not familiar with it. Pronouncing is much harder when you don't know what and how to read that specific word."

> "But as I grow older, the first struggle I always find is that I can never easily distinguished the difference of same sounding words when it is being said to me."

> "Sometimes I don't know what to say next so sometimes I just keep quiet especially when i can't pronounce something."

Vocabulary

In every aspect of language learning, vocabulary holds and integral value in mastering macro skills in English such as reading, writing, listening, speaking and viewing. Central to English language learning, vocabulary is often relating to the stockpile of words of an individual. The more words an individual know about a certain language, the better he is in both receptive and productive skills. However, according Alali and Schmitt (2012) vocabulary does not only deal with individual contexts of the word but on how it plays out to the entire semantic and syntactic patterns. This concept is primarily known as formulaic sequences wherein it deals with the interconnectedness of the meanings embedded in a sentence or phrase. Hence, vocabulary can be elaborated as words of language, including single items and phrases or chunks of several words which convey a particular meaning, the way individual words do. Furthermore, vocabulary does not only addresses single lexical items (words with specific meanings)- but it also includes lexical phrases or chunks.

Integral to vocabulary learning is understanding the underlying elements in it. This is due to the fact that vocabulary should not be confined with the concept word alone but it should be expanded to various linguistic patterns. This includes form, meaning and usage. According to Nation (2001), the form of a certain word pertains to its pronunciation, spelling and any word that makes up to it as a whole including prefix, root or affixes. On the other hand, meaning encompasses the way the form and the meaning work together. In other words, it generally refers to the concept what it refers to and the significant associations that come into people's mind when they think of the given word or expression. Meanwhile, usage involves the grammatical functions of the word or phrase. It also refers to the collocations that usually go with it and the any constraints on its use in terms of frequency, level and the likes.

When learning vocabulary, it is very important for teachers to help students learn how these three vocabulary elements play out in any communicative aspects. This particular assertions make vocabulary building a challenging tasks among Filipino learners. This is due to the fact that contextualized and

highly specific approach should be facilitated in order to expand the stock pile of words that a learner has in the English language. Shifting to Flexible teaching modality, participants revealed in their reflective essays that such problems are generally encountered in their experiences in learning the language. Some of the responses of the participant include the following:

> *"Sometimes when I have activities in school I am sad because many words that I don't know how to explain but when I read it I understand it very carefully."*

> *"Vocabulary particularly when it comes to verb variation and understanding which tense should be used in various situations."*

> *"My struggles on using English language is first I'm bad in English vocabulary. We all do know when you are bad in vocabulary you're bad at everything."*

> *"Sometimes it is hard to make sentences in English form because you don't know what the English word is."*

> *"English words got deeper and deeper, all new unfamiliar words with much deeper meanings. That made it harder to learn, and construct sentence."*

> *"Learning the meaning of a word in the English language is another level of difficulty, like the word ''date'' that can have up to four different meanings."*

Spelling

Oftentimes, errors in language learning particularly in written communication always involve spelling. This is due to the fact that this linguistic pattern is an integral part of writing process that make use of word-sound association. Also, spelling is one of the tools which facilitate communication specifically of the writer's message.

Although there is a major similarity between the English and the Filipino language, some problems with regards to spelling have been prominent in the outputs of the students. This is due to the fact that the varying complexities, word-sound association and linguistic utterances can be impose problems and difficulties among learners. As mentioned by Williams (2008), spelling is somewhat a difficult concept primarily because of the several factors. Initially, spelling became a problem because of the alphabet of the target language. In this aspect, alphabets of a language are not just consist of letters but variations of sound in each letter. Most of the times, students do not know what a sound a letter is going to make which results to spelling errors. Variations in sounds in the English alphabet contributes to the spelling difficulties of the students given the fact that English alphabet has around forty (40) sounds but more than two hundred (200) ways to spell them.

Needless to say, Filipino learners should take into account how these sounds are being used in the sentence in order to grasp the spelling of the target word. As revealed by Tanpoco (2019), spelling among Filipino learners is highly evident in the sense that issues in related linguistic aspect added up to the challenge of the learners. This includes errors in grammar, lexical choice, semantics and mechanics.

Such assumptions were being reflected in the responses given by the participants in their essays. Most of them encountered problems in spelling basic to complex words. Some of the responses of the participants include the following:

> *"I make mistakes at some English words because I don't know the word and it is also hard to pronounce and spell it."*

> *"To be frank, spelling used to be my enemy growing up. Certain words in the English language don't spell the way they are said."*

> *"I'm not good at spelling words before. And lastly, sometimes, I can't gather my thoughts when I'm reading or writing."*

> *"I always find myself getting held up when I try to spell words that is very easy to say."*

"One of my struggles in learning the English language is spelling, because it is confusing to spell it right if you just heard it from other people and not reading it."

"Spelling is not really my strong suit since I always base their spelling in the pronunciation of the words"

"I also struggled on spellings, there are some words that I misspelled like suscribe which is subscribe"

Variations in English Language

The very concept of variations in the English language is one of the contributing factor in developing the proficiencies of the students in five macro skills such as reading, writing, speaking, listening and viewing. As mentioned by Parab (2015) the notion of variability in the English language particularly in the field of linguistics involves taking all the social and linguistic factors into account. Needless to say, the changes in grammatical patterns, pronunciation and utterances in English can be generally affected by the social constructs and language exposure of a certain individual. In relation to this, it is recognized by linguist that recurring social patterns such as speech behavior and phonetic schemes of a culture or group of people could affect the variation of the language. In other words, we can say that linguistic variations is functionally motivated, related to different purposes and influenced by different communicative tasks under varying circumstances.

Oftentimes, variations in the language is most likely associated with accents and slangs sued by individuals.

In the Philippine context, accents are predominantly affected by the concept of multilingualism. In this sense, mother tongue plays an important role in uttering sounds in the English language. This brought about to unique accents among different groups of people in the country. As mentioned by Mendoza (2020), language varieties yield to differing preferences, perceptions, and attitudes towards varieties and subvarieties of the language. Speakers tend to make the language their own and strive to neutralize the accents, fact still remains that distinct variations can be evident especially on highly stratified societal groups where interlocutors are inherently attach to different attitudes in language.

These particular assertions are best reflected on the essays gathered on the works of the participants. As far as the variations in accent and slang is concerned, students encountered difficulties in mastering the English language. This is being supported by the responses taken from the participants as they mentioned that:

"Accent is also problem for me, when we're speaking a language that's really not our main language, it's a hassle."

"Slang since some of my friends are not Filipino some sentences are slang words, so maintaining a conversation is a little bit difficult to comprehend"

"Slang is a bit challenging as more and more appears as the days go by. It is not something that you can learn on a formal level."

"Actually I do have issues in myself because I always forget the variations of English language."

"My accent because there are many accents on how to pronounce the English language, it is a struggle for me on how to pronounce it right."

"Variation in English, the variation in the different form of English can often be difficult to understand the difference between using the formal and informal language the differences between spoken and written language."

Intrinsic Values

Table 1.3: Categories and percentage distributions of the responses under intrinsic values

Intrinsic Values		
Categories	**Frequency**	**Percentage**

Peer Pressure and Fear	15	34.88%
Interest and Motivation	11	25.48%
Confidence	9	20.93%
Study Habits	8	18.61%
Total	**43**	**100%**

Table 1.3 reveals the frequency and percentage distribution of the responses taken from the reflective essays of the participants under intrinsic values. The researcher had identified forty three (43) responses from the materials which constitutes to 32% of the total responses in this category. The data reveals that most of the responses of the participants indicate that peer pressure and fear is one the most evident factor of concerning intrinsic values. This depicted by the fifteen (15) total number of responses which contributes to 34.88% for this category.

Furthermore, eleven (11) of the total gathered responses indicated that interest and motivation is one of the problems of the students when it comes in learning the English language. This result amounts to 25.48% of the total number of responses taken under this category. Moreover, nine (9) out of the total number of responses for this category indicates that confidence is key factor in their English language learning. This is depicted by 20.93% of the total responses. Finally, the reflective essays of the participants revealed that study habits is one of the intrinsic struggle encountered by the students. This is indicated by the eight (8) responses form the participants constituting to 18.61%.

Peer Pressure and Fear

In language teaching and learning process, understanding linguistic patterns such as grammar, spelling, pronunciation and vocabulary is not the only major concern of students and teachers alike. Intrinsic values may also contribute to the performances of the students. It has long established that social pressure and fear play a vital role in the growth and development of a person. This is evidently true in language teaching and learning process. This is being brought about by the fear to commit mistakes and the social anxiety brought about by the judgement of the people around.

Fundamentally speaking, problems in language learning can be associated with social fears. The fear of making mistakes, and being corrected by others or being negatively evaluated is a significant factor of anxiety among Filipino learners. As mentioned by Wang and Xu (2019), second language learning and acquisition is a complex psychological process which is greatly influenced by affective factors such attitude, anxiety and empathy. Individuals are inherently reluctant on being corrected or being admittedly committing errors. In a non- English speaking community, the needs to convey information in English add up to pressure and anxiety among learners. As a result, students tend to constantly monitor their grammatical patterns, word choice and pronunciation thereby by constraining their spontaneity in speaking the language.

Such assumptions are evident among the responses of the participants in their reflective essay. Most of them experienced a hard time learning the English language because of the lingering fears and social anxiety brought about by their learning environment. Most of them reveals that they opted not to speak up their minds as they are very much concerned with what other people would say should they commit the slightest errors in their responses. These are being supported by the responses of the participants as they mentioned that:

> *"If you are wrong on saying it other people will discriminate you."*

> *"Teachers before actually punish you when you're not getting the right pronunciation of the words."*

> *"Speaking English in High School is a bit hard, since most people don't like people who are speaking English because they think they are being too fancy"*

> *"This was apparent whenever I had to speak in front of an audience. The cause to this was my nervousness and my fear of being humiliate."*

"My final struggle was my fear of being judged for saying my opinions that mean no harm. It was as if my confidence was stripped off of me, and that all my answers were worthless for others' words were far more valuable than mine."

"You can get laugh on when you make a mistake or mispronounce a word."

"When I was still stuttering I had a fear that I wouldn't be able to make any friends or be able to fit in."

"People tend to discourage people from speaking English in public like they always say" nasa Pilipinas ka bat nag English kapa?" it really does hurt my confidence."

"I experienced it on debates way back 2019 when I run to Junior Highschool Council of Squires. I tried talking in it, then I stuttered like mehhh. I'm so embarrassed that I got anxious in front of a lot of people."

"Being mocked from time to time for speaking in English even when it wasn't needed."

"Then I graduated to High School, for me it is the introduction to social life. This is where I finally encountered anxiety and social pressure."

Interest and Motivation

As mentioned by the Affective Filter hypothesis of Stephen Krashen, affective filters like motivation, interest and anxiety play an important role in language acquisition and learning process. Krashen claims that higher level of interest and motivation mong learners constitute to a much faster rate and success in language acquisition. In other words, when filter is up and became higher, it drastically impedes language learning. On the other hand, when the filter is low and positive attitudes are employed, language learning takes place.

This particular concept in language learning can be greatly observed in natural setting particularly in a non-English speaking classrooms. As revealed by Asgari et.al (2018), interest and motivation should be greatly considered in an ESL classroom for better results in language teaching and learning. Problems in the communicative aspect among students can be brought about by the negligence of these things. This calls for proper facilitation of language teaching strategies which would boost the motivation of the students to learn the English language. Examples of these strategies may include contextualizing learning materials, and prioritizing interest based teaching strategies which may cater the needs of the learners.

These particular instances are best observed in the responses of the participants in their reflective essays. They mentioned that:

"One of the many struggles that I encountered so far as a student while learning the language is the lack of motivation to actually want to understand the language."

"It is hard for me to do essays because, I am too lazy to it in the first place."
"When I was in third grade when my teacher couldn't handle myself being so hard headed just because I didn't want to learn nothing about English."

"English has never been my favorite subject. In fact, it has always been my least favorite subject."

"I often wondered why I needed to do so many English related tasks, and in wondering, I learned to detest the subject."

"I hate English since I'm kinder to junior high school. It is so hard for me to speak English fluently."

"I knew to myself that it was gonna be boring and the time would be so much longer compared to the other subjects."

"At first I'm not interested in English because I think I don't need to learn."

As many studies linked to the impact of motivation and interest to English language learning, it is important to note that complexities of the lesson might affect the performances of the students. Students tend to struggle in the English language discipline primarily because of the mismatched in skills and aptitude of the learners to the needs and difficulties of the course. As mentioned by, Othman (2013), both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation should be carefully balanced in order to achieve the goals and objective of the English class. Moreover, a highly motivated learner may boost his efforts to become proficient in a particular language, but a learner who is consistently incapable of fulfilling his/her learning goals may tend to become less motivated compared to others. Students choose not to participate in any language learning related activities if they are not motivated wit what they do. In a similar way, aspects like cooperation and collaboration may also be affected should students' interest and motivation get lower.

Confidence

Another aspect of intrinsic values among learners is confidence or self-esteem. Part of Krashen's affective filter hypothesis is the emphasis on how confidence level of students affect their performance in language acquisition and learning process. According to Rubio (2007) as mentioned in the study of Tuncel (2015), confidence is a feeling of self-competence required to handle basic problems in life. Self-confidence therefore means an individual's self-assessment and self-esteem. Such concept is integral in language teaching and learning process. Accordingly, classroom environments should boost self-confidence of the students. In this regard, students should have opportunities to express themselves in the target language without the fear of being judged or negatively corrected by other people. Errors in both writing and speaking communicative patterns could be a result of hesitancy among

students to use the target language. Students may experience difficulty in mastering the target competencies of the language if they are not being encouraged and supported well by the learning environment. Such difficulties and struggles are reflect in the responses of the participants. Some of them mentioned that:

Sometimes when I speak English to others I'm shy to talk to them.

"I am a shy type of a person I don't like being laugh at we all do know pilipinos when you make mistakes they laugh at you and that moment you make a mistake it will never be forgotten by everybody."

"My shyness always overcome me it always got in my way and sometimes my voice is different because of being so nervous and shy."

"My lack of self-esteem made me limit my words because I didn't want to talk too much and communicate as a student."

"My lack of faith was what made me think that I shouldn't trust myself with my words and that things I say might be a mistake even though it isn't."

"I tried to voice something out, someone already answered first, making me lose all confidence and my will to answer along with the others."

"The fourth hassle was the excessive amount of self-consciousness, which was what stops me from communicating with others in fear of being seen as a loud pest for just voicing words out of my throat."

As mentioned by Tridinanti (2018), speaking in the foreign language can be highly influenced by psychological aspects including anxiety and self-confidence. Students who show high level of anxiety, worry, fear and low level of self-esteem in language classes may have difficulties in developing their language competency. This is practically true especially in

Filipino classrooms. Even students with higher aptitude in English language may perform less if he/she has lower level of self-esteem. Needless to say, it is important for teachers and lecturers to encourage students in practicing speaking English in front of classes.

Study Habits

In the field of psychology and teaching pedagogy, habitual behaviors are basically defined as actions which are triggered automatically when individuals encounter situations which they have consistently done in the past. In order for something to be called a habit, one must religiously do it over a course of time until such is embedded to the physiological and psychological memory of the person. Needless to say, habits are product of routinely activities over a longer period of time. Habits are hard to develop and most of the times, individuals so not recognize that what they are doing are already considered habits. Being hard to develop, habits – once formed and established, are hard to beat.

In the field of language acquisition and learning, habit formation is one of the integral factor in developing competencies in the target language. As mentioned by Sabbah (2016), study habits are one of the best indicator of language learning. Following certain habits may help students in mastering macro skills in English such as reading and writing. Some of these habits include preparation of all materials for learning (pencils, highlighters, notes) before going to study, studying tougher subjects when being most alert, underlining and highlighting relevant concepts, and expecting questions of an examination in advance.

On the other hand, poor study habits may constitute to a much lower performance in learning particularly in language acquisition. This affects concentration and attitude of the students towards the subject. These particular assumptions are revealed on the accounts of the particpants in their reflective essays.

"Students also face problems like not having enough sleep due to studying and doing many things."

"Sometimes I forgot to do my homework so I always cram at school just to pass my homework just in time. And I sometimes fail on the exams and quizzes."

"I have poor sleeping habits, I always make my assignments midnight because for me my brain works at midnight."

"I need to read a sentence 2-3 times before I can understand the sentence."

"I think I always forget the words that I want to say or write on my notes
.

Language Barrier

Table 1.4: Categories and percentage distributions of the responses under language barrier

Language Barrier		
Categories	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Exposure to language	10	58.82%
Translation	7	41.18%
Total	**17**	**100%**
Study Habits	8	18.61%
Total	**43**	**100%**

Table 1.4 summarizes the frequency and percentage distributions of the responses taken from the reflective essays of the participants under language barrier category. The researcher had identified seventeen (17) total number of responses related to this category which constitutes to 13% of the total responses. As depicted by the table, exposure to the English language is the most contributing problem in related to language barrier. This is indicated by ten (10) responses of the participants which contributes to 58.82% of the total number of responses for this category. Finally, it is also revealed that translation is an essential factor in the English language learning of the participants. Students encountered problems with translation as indicated by the seven (7) responses from the

reflective essay which adds up to 41.18% of the total number of responses under the language barrier category.

Exposure to Target Language

Language is complex system rules and utterances that are arbitrary in nature. In this regard, the language system that we have right now is a product of thousands of years of evolution, adaptation and modification based on the agreed rules of the people that are using it. Through time, language has been an integral component of every communicative aspect be it in oral or written patterns. In the field of language acquisition and learning, exposure to the target language system highly contributes to the pace and rate of an individual to master the needed competencies. This is practically true considering the fact that it is very much effective to use the target language in various communicative patterns for you to master it.

In a non-English community like us, exposure to the language can be a bit of a problem considering that social constructs and multilingualism may play an important factor in it. According Al-Zoubi (2018), students should be continually exposed to English language. Such exposure may include watching English movies, surfing the internet, listening to radio, reading English books, magazines, newspapers and more importantly practicing English language to native speakers. Some common problems among students in learning the English language are the amount of time and effort they exert in making contact with the target language. As revealed by the responses taken from their essays, some of them used Filipino or Native language as means of communications in their homes or community.

> *"I had a hard time learning English at first because I used to speak Tagalog."*
> *"As of me starting to learn English language as a kid, it is actually really hard because we don't use it in our house."*
> *"For me learning English it takes time, because im not used to speaking English so I didn't adopt it quickly and it is hard for me to apply."*

> *"One of my struggles was stuttering using the english language because I got used to speaking in Tagalog."*
> *"It is so hard for me because I don't speak English in our house, we only speak Taglish."*

Translation

According to Abdellah (2003), translation might be the oldest device developed by humans to communicate ideas, thoughts and culture to solve and overcome issues and problems in language differences and barriers. In theory, individuals tend to find commonalities among system of languages in order to communicate with others. This is the particular reason while direct translation of two languages with entirely different grammatical and linguistic patterns. In the case of English and Filipino languages, although certain similarities in the linguistic aspect can be drawn out, it is not a guarantee that Filipino students could master the English easily and vice versa.

One of the common tendencies of Filipino learners in learning the target language is translating it from native language (L1) to target language which is L2. As mentioned by Awal (2012), translation is an activity of mediating meaning from a source language into a target language. The ability to choose the correct translation technique is an indispensable skill to translators and speakers of the native language. However, such technique can only be best done if students have enough mastery of L1 in areas of vocabulary, grammar and spelling. If not so, translation method may cause errors among the responses of the students. This quite evident to students in a non-English classrooms. In worse cases, students tend to rely on code switching if they experience difficulties in English. Such assumptions can be observed in the responses of the participants revealed in their essays.

> *"I always ask my best friend or classmate to translate my Tagalog into English or explain the question in Tagalog so I can understand correctly."*

"I use Tagalog or Taglish as a means of communicating my thoughts."

"As a no- English speaker by birth, learning the English language can be quite difficult. Learning what my native language words are in English language is the first I faced."

"I also have a problem with my wording which is that I know what the word is in tagalog but not in English."

"But another is when you are speaking it directly to a foreign man because you start to get nervous and mess up all your grammars."

CONCLUSION

The study seeks to identify the different language learning struggles of the students amid flexible teaching modality implemented by the Colegio in the School year 2020-2021. The study encompasses Grade 11 students of the Senior High School Department taking up Reading and Writing Course. The researcher utilized qualitative content analysis on the reflective essays of the students. Furthermore, a total of thirty five (35) reflective essays were chosen in this study. The essays were selected based on the average scores taken by the students in the learning task. Essays which got twenty five (25) points and below were chosen as subjects of the study.

Through careful analysis of the gathered responses from the participants, the researcher accumulated a total of one hundred and thirty four (134) responses. The study yielded three major categories of struggles experienced by the students in their language learning journey. Seventy four (74) of these responses (55%) fall under linguistic aspect. On the other hand, forty three (43) of the total number of responses (32%) are classified as intrinsic values. Finally the remaining seventeen (17) of the total number of responses (13%) are categorized as struggles relating to language barrier.

Furthermore, struggles relating to linguistic aspect are one of the common identified problems encountered by the

students in language learning amid Flexible Teaching Modality. Problems with grammar is the most common linguistic aspect among students as twenty two (22) of the total number of responses (29.73%) fall under this category. Responses of the participants included problems in subject and verb agreement, use of past and present tenses, sentence structure and punctuations. Meanwhile, seventeen (17) of the responses in this category (22.97%) are categorize as problems in pronunciation. Students reveal that most of them struggles in proper pronunciation and enunciation of words resulting to grammatical errors, stuttering and spelling mistakes.

On the other hand, sixteen (16) of the total number of responses in this category (21.62%) are classified as problems with vocabulary building. Students mentioned that they experienced difficulty in English language learning primarily because they are not familiar with some words in the English vocabulary. This results to errors in semantics and syntactic levels thereby affecting their performance in both oral and written communicative patterns. Thirteen (13) of the identified responses in this category (17.57%) are classified as struggles in spelling. Most of the students mention the fact that spelling problems occur in difficulties in word-sound association and vocabulary. Finally, six (6) of the total number of responses under linguistic aspect (8.11%) reveal that students encounter some difficulties in language learning due to variations of the English language. These variations include the use of different accents and slang which are predominantly affected by linguistic capability and social constructs a person.

The second category which emerges from the responses of the participants in their reflective essays is problems concerning intrinsic values. Intrinsic values in general, refers to the affective factors which constitute to the teaching and learning process. As revealed by the gathered data, majority of the participants have problems when it comes to peer pressure and fear as indicated by the fifteen (15) out of the total number of responses taken from the reflective essays (34.88%). As mentioned by the reflective essays, the participants tend to not participate in various language learning activities

out of fear of being negatively corrected or judged by their peers. On the other hand, eleven (11) of the total number of responses in this category (25.58%) are categorized as problems relating to interest and motivation. Some of the participants revealed in their essays that they do not like the English subject and that they do not have the interest to accomplish activities and engagements in this field of discipline. Also, the varying complexity and difficulty of the subject bores them which results to lower performance in their English courses. Meanwhile, nine (9) of the total number of responses under this category (20.93%) are classified as problems relating to confidence or self-esteem. Responses of the participants in their reflective essays reveal that students are shy to speak in front of the class and share their thoughts using the English language. This is being brought about by the inferiority thinking and lack of faith and trust in their individual skills. Finally, eight (8) of the total number of responses in this category (18.61%) falls under struggles relating to study habits. Errors in the English language and lower performance in the discipline are brought by their poor study habits like staying up late at night, memory problems and inadequate strategies of language learning.

The third and final category of language learning struggles that emerges from the responses of the participants in their reflective essay is language barrier. Although there are some similarities in English (L2) and Filipino language (L1) still, it is not a guarantee for Filipino students to fully master the competencies needed in L2. Consequently, students reveal that exposure to the English language is one of the reasons of their struggles in language learning. This is identified by the ten (10) of the total number of responses under this category (58.82%). Some of the responses involve the limited time and opportunities that they employ in using the English language. Finally, seven (7) of the total number of responses under problems relating to language barrier (41.18%) indicate that translation is one of the contributing factor in their language learning difficulties. Some of the students tend to learn the English language through direct translation. In this process, whatever they perceive in the English Language shall be automatically translated to Filipino language and the responses shall be translated back to English. This could be a problem as errors in translation is greatly influenced by the language competency of the students in both L1 and L2 especially in terms of grammatical patterns, vocabulary and pronunciation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings of the study identified three major struggles in learning the English language amid Flexible teaching modality. These categories are linguistic patterns, intrinsic values and language barrier. The categories emerged from the responses taken from the thirty five (35) reflective essays which got a mark of twenty five (25) points and below. For further elaboration of the research study, the researcher highly recommends to explore other written outputs of the students for qualitative content analysis. Some documents that they can use for this kind of research design may be observation reports, anecdotal, student journals and task sheets. These documents might yield to a much concrete themes and categories. Moreover, researchers may have the opportunity to explore other facets of learning by examining wide range of student outputs.

Meanwhile, the researcher also recommends to try different research design and approach in conducting similar study. Some suggested research design are case studies, phenomenology and grounded theory for qualitative research approach. On the other hand, quantitative research designs such as correlational and descriptive can also be applied to yield different track or results. Nevertheless, the concepts found on these approaches may constitute to the general body of knowledge on which the research study falls into.

Moreover, the researcher highly recommends to try different levels of learning for the study. In the finished study, the researcher made use of Senior High School student outputs as subjects of the study. Trying higher levels of learning such as those of college students could present another findings for the study. Similarly, analysis of the outputs of the students of

Elementary and Junior High School might constitute to another view of the research topic.

The researcher also recommends to use other approaches in gathering data for the study. Since time constraint and restrictions are encountered by the researcher during the conduct of the study, other options like interviews and surveys could have yielded different and elaborated results. In this regard, other multifaceted data gathering procedures could be of great help in contributing knowledge and results to this endeavor

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