



EXPLORING THE LITERACY AND NUMERACY SKILLS OF SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS FROM THE VANTAGE POINT OF ENGLISH TEACHERS: AN INQUIRY

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Article DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36713/epra20005>

DOI No: 10.36713/epra20005

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore and understand the experiences of English teachers teaching in private schools of Tagum City, specifically the challenges they have encountered and what are the practices they have implemented, in dealing with the literacy and numeracy skills of students in senior high school. After the pandemic, the gap in literacy and numeracy skills among students has widened, becoming a significant challenge for teachers. This issue is particularly pressing for senior high school English teachers, who are tasked with teaching these foundational skills to students who often struggle with even the basics. The complexity of teaching under these circumstances has increased, creating significant challenges for educators. This study aims to explore the best practices, challenges, coping mechanisms, and insights of senior high school English teachers, with the goal of sharing valuable strategies with colleagues and the broader academic community in the context of the post-pandemic era. A qualitative research approach was employed to gain a deeper understanding of this phenomenon through natural observation and analysis rather than controlled measurement. The participants included 14 senior high school English teachers who taught literacy and numeracy skills during the 2023-2024 school year. These educators were from private schools in Tagum City, divided into two groups: seven participants for in-depth interviews (IDI) and seven for focus group discussions (FGD). The findings of the study reflect the significant challenges and effective practices of these teachers in teaching literacy and numeracy skills. A key challenge identified was the lack of adequate teaching materials, which complicates the already demanding task of addressing these skills in English classes. As the researcher and one of the senior high school English teachers involved in teaching literacy and numeracy skills, this study has greatly broadened my perspective on the phenomenon. I gained valuable insights from the participants on how they navigate and overcome the challenges they encounter. The lessons they shared are not only informative but also applicable, enabling me to reflect on and implement these strategies in real teaching scenarios.

KEYWORDS: *Literacy Skills, Numeracy Skills, Qualitative, Tagum City Davao del Norte*

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

In a global perspective, educators face challenges that impede their ability to employ innovative teaching methods and foster critical thinking skills among students. In China, the emphasis on rote memorization and standardized testing in the education system restricts educators' autonomy and limits opportunities for holistic skill development, as observed by Li Ming (2022). Integrating numeracy into English lessons poses a particular challenge in bridging linguistic and mathematical concepts for students. Similarly, in Malaysia, language teachers are tasked with selecting appropriate teaching methods and strategies, yet many face barriers such as inadequate training and reluctance to use language laboratories, as highlighted by Chandran et al. (2022). Furthermore, in Indonesia, language teachers encounter a multitude of obstacles, including unqualified educators, insufficient resources, and learners' lack of motivation and access to technology, as noted by Listyani (2022).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore and understand the experiences of English teachers teaching in private schools of Tagum City, specifically the challenges they have encountered and what are the best practices they have implemented, in dealing with the literacy and numeracy skills of students in senior high school.

Research Questions

1. What are the practices implemented by English teachers on the literacy and numeracy skills of Senior High School students?
2. What are the challenges encountered by English teachers on the literacy and numeracy skills of Senior High School students?
3. How do the English teachers cope with the challenges on the literacy and numeracy skills of students?



4. What are the insights of English teachers on the literacy and numeracy skills of students that can be shared with others?

Theoretical Lens

This research is based on the framework of Lev Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978), which posits that social and cultural factors play a significant role in cognitive development. Vygotsky emphasized the influence of social interactions on children's mental growth, particularly in the realms of language development and reasoning. He highlighted the importance of collaborative exchanges with more knowledgeable individuals in society, wherein children acquire cultural norms, beliefs, and problem-solving strategies through socially mediated cognitive processes.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

The scope of this study was limited to 14 senior high school English teachers, teaching literacy and numeracy skills. The participants of this study were the 14 English teachers who came from three private schools in Tagum City. The study was conducted from March to June in the school year 2023-2024. Further, this study was limited to describing the challenges and best practices of English teachers regarding the literacy and numeracy skills of the students.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter presents the relevant published literatures that would support in providing the information. This chapter contains the following headings: Literacy skills, Numeracy skills, The Performance of students on their literacy and numeracy skills, The experiences of English teachers dealing with students' literacy and numeracy skills, and Strategies in improving student's literacy and numeracy skills.

Literacy Skills

The study underscored the need for continuous training to keep educators abreast of the latest research-based practices and pedagogical approaches in literacy education. The study examined how economic disparities can impact access to literacy resources and, consequently, influence students' reading and writing abilities. Addressing these socio-economic factors is crucial for fostering equitable literacy outcomes. There is a connection between socio-economic factors and literacy skills Garcia (2020).

Numeracy Skills

Brown (2019) delved into the integration of real-world applications in teaching numeracy. The study discussed how connecting mathematical concepts to practical, everyday situations can enhance students' understanding and application of numeracy skills, making the learning experience more relevant and engaging.

Performance of Students on their Literacy and Numeracy Skills

Brown (2020) delved into the connection between language development and mathematical reasoning. The study highlighted those activities involving verbalization of mathematical strategies and explanations enhanced students' ability to articulate their thought processes. This integration not only improved their language skills but also helped enhance comprehension of mathematical concepts.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter contains a detailed explanation of the methodology of the proposed study. The study explored the challenges and best practices of Senior High School English Teachers teaching literacy and numeracy skills. This chapter discusses how the study was conducted, as well as how the data was collected and analyzed. The research design, research participants, researcher's role, the data sources, the data collection processes, data analysis, the trustworthiness of the study, and the ethical considerations are all covered in this chapter.

Research Design

In this research, I opted for phenomenology to delve deeper into understanding the most effective methods utilized by English teachers in addressing literacy and numeracy skills within language instruction. Phenomenology was well-suited for this study as it allowed for the exploration of English teachers' firsthand experiences, including the challenges they faced and their successes and failures concerning literacy and numeracy skills in language teaching.

Research Participants

Furthermore, the participants were composed of seven (7) English teachers for in-depth interviews (IDI) and seven (7) English teachers for focus-group discussion (FGD). Since Tagum City has many private schools, the participants of each school were divided according to the size of the school. There were two (2) participants for the IDI and three (3) participants in FGD in two (2) large schools. Also, two (2) participants in IDI and two (2) participants in FGD in one (1) medium school.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

This chapter displays the results from in-depth interviews and focus-group discussion of 14 Senior High School English teachers on their challenges and best practices about the literacy and numeracy skills of students. These were taken rigorously and processed from the raw transcripts of my participants' interviews through the use of coding and thematic analysis. The results are presented in four tables focusing on the best practices implemented by the participants, their challenges encountered, their coping mechanism and the insights gained from their experiences.



Practices Implemented by English Teachers on the Literacy and Numeracy Skills of Senior High School Students

Displayed in Table 1 are the major themes and core ideas that reveal the practices implemented by English teachers on the literacy and numeracy skills of Senior High School students. There are five themes that emerged in this category. These themes

include: (a) utilizing engaging strategies; (b) empowering learners through personalized approaches; (c) fostering support collaboration; (d) building empathy and positivity; and (e) creating proactive learning. These themes were supported and justified by verbatim responses which were extracted during the interviews.

Table 1
Major Themes and Core Ideas on the Best Practices Implemented by English Teachers on the Literacy and Numeracy Skills of Senior High School Students

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Utilizing Engaging Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> providing strategies to enhance literacy, numeracy, integration using essays to improve writing, punctuation, speaking integrating Math and English to enhance research skills engaging students in performance to enhance communication skills using questioning to increase student participation and motivation tailoring activities to support diverse student skill levels using engaging strategies to boost student attention and participation
Empowering Learners through Personalized Approaches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> understanding students requires patience and time knowing students' strengths tailors learning materials effectively incorporating technology engages students effectively innovating lessons enhances student understanding effectively personalizing lessons activates participation and engagement
Fostering Support and Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> encouraging collaboration to boost shy students' confidence using small groups to encourage peer support employing groupings to boost students' confidence and productivity employing game-based activities to boost student engagement grouping students to encourage collaboration and motivation
Building Empathy and Positivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> extending support to help struggling students succeed addressing mistakes positively to ensure constructive learning incorporating real-world content to motivate language learning extending time to help struggling students understand addressing struggles to ensure students receive support
Creating Proactive Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> correcting mistakes promptly integrating numeracy to simplify learning and understanding taking initiative to ensure student comprehension and understanding correcting errors immediately to reinforce proper learning

Challenges Encountered by English Teachers on the Literacy and Numeracy Skills of Senior High School Students

Displayed in Table 2 are the major themes and core ideas that reveal the challenges encountered by English teachers on the literacy and numeracy skills of Senior High School students. There are four major themes that emerged in this category. These themes include: (a) poor literacy and numeracy skills; (b) lack of

teaching resources; (c) difficulty in handling diverse learners; and (d) lack of confidence and interest. Each of the mentioned themes are presented together with their corresponding core ideas. Moreover, each core idea is supported with verbatim statements to concretize the claims made jointly by the participants of the study.



Table 2
Major Themes and Core Ideas on the Challenges Encountered by English Teachers on the Literacy and Numeracy Skills of Senior High School Students

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Poor Literacy and Numeracy Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● struggling with grammar, structure, and numeracy concepts ● struggling with reading basics hampers comprehension and progress ● being unable to comprehend due to language instruction barriers ● struggling with literacy: reading, writing, and vocabulary skills ● struggling with spelling despite correct answers in assessments ● struggling with following instructions and numeracy skills ● relying on memorizing basic responses ● being unable to read some texts
Lack of Teaching Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● lacking resources, especially books, hindering effective learning ● lacking TV, limiting technology integration in lessons ● lacking visuals, hindering effective visual learning in classrooms ● needing projectors, TVs, and computers for effective learning ● struggling with limited access to extension cords ● lacking equipment, relying on visual aids and charts ● lacking up-to-date materials, limiting library usage and resources
Difficulty in Handling Diverse Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● struggling with literacy, numeracy due to varying pace ● struggling with student engagement due to diverse learning styles ● struggling with varying learning paces and exposure levels ● grouping students thoughtfully based on resources and compatibility due to their diversity ● struggling with diverse learners, varying capacities, and backgrounds
Lack of Confidence and Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● struggling with anxiety, hesitant to speak due to judgment ● struggling with participation, needing motivation for active engagement ● struggling with embarrassment, leading to poor attendance and challenges ● struggling with limited vocabulary, causing insecurity and hesitation ● struggling with lack of motivation, leading to disengagement

Chapter 5
DISCUSSIONS

The final chapter culminates on the discussion of the presented findings in Chapter 4. To make further sense of the presented data, implications on teaching practice, and recommendations for future research are added. Finally, concluding remarks are communicated to finalize the key points discussed in the study.

Practices Implemented by English Teachers on the Literacy and Numeracy Skills of Senior High School Students

In this study, Senior High School English teachers implemented practices on the literacy and numeracy skills of the students. There were five (5) themes unveiled namely: (a) utilizing engaging strategies; (b) empowering learners through personalized approaches; (c) fostering support and collaboration; (d) building empathy and positivity; and (e) creating proactive learning.

Utilizing Engaging Strategies

This supported the study of Serravallo (2022) which argued the importance of diverse teaching methods, including integrating literature and fostering creativity, to engage students and improve their literacy skills. She highlights that a multifaceted approach not only supports academic growth but also builds confidence and critical thinking abilities in learners.

Challenges Encountered by English teachers on the Literacy and Numeracy Skills of Senior High School Students

In this study, the challenges encountered by Senior High School English teachers on the literacy and numeracy skills of Senior High School students revealed the common experiences. There were four (4) themes that had emerged namely: (a) poor literacy and numeracy skills; (b) lack of teaching resources; (c) difficulty in handling diverse learners; and (d) lack of confidence and interest.



Poor Literacy and Numeracy Skills

This confirms the study of Neuman (2022) which pointed out that a lack of foundational skills in reading and writing significantly hampers students' ability to comprehend complex texts and follow instructions, ultimately affecting their engagement with the curriculum. She also notes that while students may perform adequately in numeracy, deficiencies in language skills can create barriers to their overall academic success.

Coping Mechanisms of Senior High School English Teachers on the Challenges in Teaching Literacy and Numeracy Skills of the Students

In this study, Senior High School English teachers cope with the challenges in teaching literacy and numeracy skills of the students. Five (5) themes had been unveiled namely: (a) reinforcing essential grammar and math Skills; (b) integrating reflective practice for teaching improvement; (c) engaging strategies for comprehensive student learning; (d) enhancing teaching skills through ongoing professional development; and (e) collaborating with other teachers.

Reinforcing Essential Grammar and Skills

As Anderson (2021) claimed in his study the necessity of revisiting essential grammar rules and engaging students in regular practice to reinforce foundational skills. It discusses the importance of evaluating students' understanding of these concepts to identify gaps in knowledge, and he highlights how a solid grasp of grammar is crucial for tackling more complex writing topics. The integrating of grammar instruction into everyday lessons to help students see the relevance of these skills in their writing and communication.

Insights of Senior High School English Teachers in Teaching Literacy and Numeracy That Can Be Shared with Others

In this study, the insights of Senior High School English teachers in teaching Literacy and Numeracy that can be shared with others revealed the common experiences. Four (4) themes had been unveiled namely: (a) integrating technology in teaching; (b) developing a positive attitude towards teaching; (c) seeking guidance from other teachers; and (d) fostering a conducive learning environment.

Integrating Technology in Learning

In the same manner, Doe (2020) argued that films not only serve as engaging tools but also provide authentic contexts that resonate with learners' experiences. By exploring diverse genres, teachers can draw parallels between movie scenarios and real-life classroom situations, making the learning process more relatable and practical. Films provide relatable scenarios that help educators connect cinematic experiences to real-life teaching situations, making learning both enjoyable and practical.

Implications for Teaching Practice

The findings of the study have managed to mirror the challenges and best practices of Senior High School English Teachers

teaching literacy and numeracy skills of Senior High School students. Teaching literacy and numeracy skills of Senior High School students was quite challenging for English Teachers especially knowing their diverse experiences. With all these findings, possible implications can be drawn to consider and understand the issues of teachers filling these roles. These implications are discussed one by one

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

First and foremost, I thank God Almighty for blessing me with wisdom, knowledge, and strength, which have guided me through every challenge and made this research a reality.

To my family, especially to my parents, your unwavering support and encouragement have been my rock throughout this journey. To my husband- Enrico S. Baliling and my sister- Emalyn M. Lindo. Your love and belief in me pushed me to keep going, even when things seemed tough. This accomplishment is as much yours as it is mine;

To my research adviser, Dr. Gina M. Oracion, thank you for your patience, guidance, and invaluable insights. You made every step of this process clearer, and your support was a constant source of motivation for me;

To the distinguished members of the Panel of Examiners: Dr. Perla C. Padro, Dr. Belen D. Tado, Dr. Donita May C. Valera, Dr. Socorro L. Neri and Dr. Klein Mamayabay, I am truly grateful for your thoughtful evaluation and constructive feedback. Your guidance helped me refine this work and bring it to fruition; To Dr. Socorro L. Neri, Chairperson of SMCTI-REC, your patience, kindness, and understanding truly inspired me to persevere. Your encouragement was like a light guiding me forward when the path seemed unclear;

To the School President, Academic Head, and Principals, thank you for trusting me and allowing me to conduct this study. Your support made it possible to bring this research to life.

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