

The classroom experiences of teachers in teaching English

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ABSTRACT

Effective English language instruction is crucial for students' academic and professional success. This study explored the lived experiences of English teacher in teaching English. How do English teachers engage in different activities, different strategies during classroom engagement. The challenges as well as the strategies of English understanding these experiences is vital for developing targeted support and improving pedagogical practices. Existing literature highlights various factors influencing English language teaching, including curriculum design, student motivation and resources availability. However, a deeper understanding of teachers' day to day realities within the classroom context is needed. This qualitative study employed a phenomenological approach to investigate the classroom of ten (10) English teachers from diverse educational setting (urban/rural areas) within the municipality of Matnog. Data collection involved semi-structured interviews and classroom observation. Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring themes and patterns within the collected data, focusing on teachers' experiences, challenges, engagement in the different activities and strategies. Ethical considerations including informed consent and anonymity were strictly adhered throughout the research process. Findings revealed several key themes related to classroom experiences. These include: (1) handling briefly engaged learners in lesson development (2) engaging diverse learners in communication activities (3) employing a differentiated scheme of assessment and (4) creating a safe and supportive learning environment. English teachers engage in various activities in the classroom. The study highlighted the challenges and resourcefulness of English teachers. The findings suggest a need for professional development focused on differentiated instruction, engagement strategies and assessment techniques. Supporting teachers in creating inclusive learning environments is also crucial. Further research could explore the impact of these strategies on student outcomes and teacher job satisfaction. Hence, the dedication and

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DOI: <http://doi.org/10.69651/PIJHSS0403461>

Recommended citation:

Buenaflor, M. G., & Dominguiano B. L. (2025). The classroom experiences of teachers in teaching English. Pantao (The International Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences) 4 (3), 4962-4975.
<http://doi.org/10.69651/PIJHSS0403461>

passion of English teachers deserve recognition and support. Their commitment to nurturing linguistic proficiency and fostering intellectual growth is an invaluable contribution to shaping future generations and empowering them to thrive in an increasingly interconnected global society.

Keywords: English language instruction, lived experiences, teaching strategies, classroom engagement, phenomenological approach, challenges, inclusive learning environment

Date Submitted: July 1, 2025

Date Accepted: August 2, 2025

Date Published: September 3, 2025

INTRODUCTION

English teachers help students develop the language skills and the academic performance of the students. Their academic experiences significantly impact learning outcomes such as lesson planning, assessment and classroom engagement, diverse needs of the students and shift in curriculum. Understanding the live experiences of the teacher provides insights to enhance the teaching-learning process.

The classroom has always been a space for immense potential, a place where minds are shaped and future is forged, and within that space, the role of the English teacher feels particularly significant. It's not simply about imparting grammatical rules or expanding vocabulary. It is about empowering students with a tool that can unlock opportunities.

Beyond the technicalities of language, English teachers cultivate critical thinking, foster effective communication, and nurture a love of learning. They guide students to explore diverse perspectives, appreciate different cultures, and ultimately find their own voice. This transformative power of language education extends far beyond the classroom walls, shaping students' personal lives, future careers and their ability to engage meaningfully with the world.

Indeed, teachers play a key role in shaping the future, unlocking every learner's potential, and achieving the Sustainable Development Goal 4 of inclusive and equitable quality education. (UNESCO). The role of English teachers in the educational landscape is critical, where they shape not only language proficiency but also students' overall academic success. As they navigate the complexities of classroom management and engagement, understanding their lived experiences becomes essential.

Teaching English is a multifaceted process, and teachers must pay close attention to students' reading, writing, listening, and speaking abilities. Teachers teach these abilities, and students learn them. Mukminin et al. (2002) found that there were challenges that were encountered by English teachers in teaching English language skills to young learners.

English teachers are at the forefront of fostering communication skills, critical thinking, and cultural awareness among students. However, they often encounter various challenges in classroom management and student engagement, which can affect their teaching effectiveness and students' learning outcomes. The Matnog 1 District, with its unique socio-cultural context, presents a rich setting for examining these dynamics. By focusing on the lived experiences of English teachers, this study aims to capture the essence of their professional journeys, including

the strategies they employ, the challenges they face, and the innovations they envision for improving classroom engagement.

As the world adapts to change, the security of having an education is a must, as it is one of the most critical investments in human development. It is something that the country as well as the selected individuals, anticipates gaining. According to the World Bank Group, education is a critical factor in development and one of the most effective tools for lowering poverty and promoting gender equality, health, peace, and stability. An improvement in educational quality is a sign of significant and advancement in keeping with the Philippine constitution and national laws, every nation's citizen is entitled to a quality education. Such ideals stemmed from the global goals enumerated in the Sustainable Development Goals.

Classroom engagement poses a significant challenge for teachers, as it directly impacts student learning outcomes and the overall classroom atmosphere. One major factor is the diversity of learning styles, with some students being visual, auditory, or kinesthetic learners, making it difficult for teachers to engage everyone equally. Additionally, the growing trend of shorter attention spans, especially in the digital age, requires teachers to constantly use dynamic and interactive methods to maintain focus. Behavioral issues also contribute to disengagement, whether stemming from personal challenges like ADHD or external factors such as peer pressure or home life problems. Many students lack intrinsic motivation, often because they do not see the relevance of the material being taught, requiring teachers to create meaningful connections to spark interest. While technology offers great tools for learning, it can also become a distraction, and managing this balance adds another layer of complexity. Class size further exacerbates the problem, as teachers struggle to provide individualized attention in larger groups, leaving some students feeling overlooked. Socio-emotional factors also come into play, with students' emotional and social challenges influencing their ability to stay engaged. Furthermore, rigid curricula can restrict teachers' ability to introduce creative, interactive lessons, making the material feel disconnected from real-life applications. Overcoming these challenges involves strategies such as incorporating interactive learning activities, integrating technology in a controlled manner, personalizing instruction to cater to different learning needs, and fostering a positive classroom environment. Teachers need to be flexible and empathetic, constantly adapting their methods to create an engaging and inclusive space for all students.

From the perspective of English teachers, classroom engagement presents even more nuanced challenges due to the nature of language learning. Engaging students in subjects like grammar, literature, or writing requires a balance between technical instruction and fostering creativity, which isn't always easy in a diverse classroom. One of the primary difficulties for English teachers is addressing the different levels of language proficiency among students. Some may excel in speaking or writing, while others struggle with comprehension or vocabulary. Catering to this wide range of abilities without leaving some students behind can be particularly challenging. For example, when teaching complex literary texts, advanced students might grasp themes and figurative language quickly, while others may disengage because they feel lost or overwhelmed.

Furthermore, English lessons often require sustained attention, whether during reading or in activities like essay writing, which can be difficult for students with shorter attention spans. This creates an ongoing challenge for teachers to make lessons lively and interactive. Activities

like group discussions or creative writing assignments can be effective, but not all students are comfortable sharing their thoughts publicly, especially if they struggle with self-expression or language skills. This reluctance to participate further hampers engagement, leaving the teacher to juggle between nurturing quieter students while maintaining the interest of the more confident ones.

Another challenge is making English content relevant and interesting to students' lives. Whether it's teaching Shakespeare or sentence structures, students may question the practicality of what they're learning. English teachers must constantly find ways to make the subject matter relatable, such as connecting themes from literature to real-world issues or using contemporary media to illustrate grammar points. However, this requires time, creativity, and often flexibility within a rigid curriculum, where teachers might feel constrained by time limits and set standards.

Technology presents both an opportunity and a challenge for English teachers. While tools like online quizzes, writing platforms, and multimedia presentations can enhance engagement, they can also distract students, especially if they are more interested in the technological device itself than the lesson content. English teachers, therefore, must find ways to use technology as a means to enrich language learning rather than let it become a source of disengagement.

Moreover, English is often seen as a core subject that heavily influences academic success across other areas. This adds pressure on both teachers and students, which can lead to increased stress and, ironically, disengagement. English teachers are not just responsible for teaching content but are often expected to improve students' overall communication skills, a task that requires time and personalized feedback that is difficult to offer in large, diverse classrooms.

Furthermore, the availability of resources and infrastructure in some areas of Matnog may pose challenges for teachers, they might need to be resourceful in utilizing available materials and technology to create engaging and interactive learning experiences for their students.

To combat these challenges, English teachers often employ various strategies such as differentiated instruction, allowing students to work at their own pace or on tasks suited to their skill levels. Incorporating collaborative learning activities like peer reviews or group projects can also help bridge engagement gaps by encouraging students to learn from one another. In addition, making room for creativity in English lessons—through storytelling, creative writing, or debates—can stimulate interest and offer a break from the more rigid aspects of grammar and analysis. However, managing these approaches within the constraints of curriculum expectations and varying student abilities remains an ongoing balancing act.

Despite these challenges, teaching English in Matnog can be a deeply rewarding experience. Teachers have the opportunity to make a significant impact on the lives of the students, empowering them with a language that can open doors to further education and opportunities. By sharing their knowledge and passion for English, these educators contribute to the development of the community and help shape the future of Matnog's youth.

Ultimately, from the point of view of English teachers, classroom engagement is not just about keeping students entertained but fostering an environment where every student feels empowered to develop their language skills. This requires a combination of empathy, flexibility, and innovative teaching strategies, all while addressing the unique challenges that language learning presents.

This study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the professional experiences of English teachers and identify actionable insights that can enhance teaching practices and student learning in Matnog 1 District. This study sought to address several key questions related to the lives of English teachers in the Matnog 1 District, specifically focusing on their classroom management and engagement strategies. Understanding these dimensions is essential for enhancing the educational experience for both teachers and students. The findings could serve as a foundation for professional development programs, policy recommendations, and further research, ultimately benefiting both teachers and students in their educational journeys.

Statement of the problem

This study determined the challenges experienced by the English teachers during classroom engagement. Specifically, this study answered the following specific questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of English teachers in Matnog 1 District in classroom management in terms of their development of the lesson and assessment of learning outcomes?
2. How do English teachers engage in the different activities in the classroom?
3. What are the different strategies identified by the teachers during classroom engagement?
4. What are the challenges experienced by English teachers during classroom engagement?
5. What innovative strategies could be designed to improve classroom engagement in English?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of English teachers in Matnog 1 District, focusing on their approaches to classroom management in terms of lesson development and the assessment of learning. Phenomenology, as one of the most commonly used qualitative methodologies, is particularly suited to describing how individuals experience a certain phenomenon and to uncovering meaning from those experiences. The use of this design allowed the researcher to collect, describe, and interpret the authentic voices of the teachers, ensuring that their personal accounts became central to the study's findings. To achieve this, an interview guide was used as the main instrument for gathering the necessary data. The interviews were structured around research questions designed to elicit teachers' experiences, strategies, and challenges, and the responses were later coded and grouped thematically in accordance with the study's objectives.

The research was conducted in the Municipality of Matnog, Sorsogon, where six secondary schools provide instruction for both junior and senior high school learners. These schools included Culasi National High School, Matnog National High School, Sua National High School, Tiong Hen So Memorial School, Sisigon Integrated School, and Calintaan Integrated School. Four of these schools already implemented senior high school programs, while two newly converted integrated schools were preparing to open their own. Each institution demonstrated distinct strengths, such as active participation in academic and co-curricular competitions, strong community involvement in improving school facilities, and the provision of

diverse track offerings. However, the schools also faced ongoing challenges, such as shortages of teachers and classrooms, lack of facilities and specialized subject support, and the absence of National Certificate (NC) holders among many graduates. By situating the research within these varied educational settings, the study aimed to contextualize the lived experiences of English teachers and highlight both the supports and constraints that influenced their classroom engagement.

The participants of the study were selected using purposive sampling, a method that identifies individuals based on specific attributes relevant to the investigation. A total of ten English teachers were chosen from across the six secondary schools in Matnog 1 District. The distribution of participants was as follows: two from Culasi National High School, one from Tiong Hen So Memorial School, one from Sisigon Integrated High School, two from Matnog National High School, two from Calintaan Integrated High School, and two from Sua National High School. These ten respondents were purposively chosen for their direct involvement in teaching English at the junior and senior high school levels. Their inclusion ensured that the data gathered reflected authentic classroom experiences, including both successes and struggles. By drawing on a group of teachers working within diverse contexts—urban, rural, coastal, and island communities—the study was able to capture a broad spectrum of perspectives shaped by differences in class sizes, resources, curriculum offerings, and availability of support systems. Each teacher's narrative was critical in presenting a realistic picture of English instruction within the district.

The interview guide was carefully developed and finalized with the guidance of the researcher's thesis adviser to ensure validity and alignment with the research objectives. The first section of the guide elicited information on the lived experiences of English teachers in classroom management, focusing on lesson development and assessment of learning outcomes. The second section concentrated on the ways teachers engaged in classroom activities, while the third identified the specific strategies they employed during classroom engagement. The final section of the instrument highlighted the challenges teachers encountered in sustaining student participation and meeting instructional demands. This comprehensive design allowed the instrument to generate detailed and multifaceted data, ensuring that all critical aspects of classroom management were addressed.

Prior to data collection, the researcher secured formal permission from the Schools Division Superintendent of Sorsogon Province to conduct the study. Letters were also sent to the school heads of the six identified secondary schools in Matnog 1 District to inform them of the study and seek their approval to interview the English teachers. Following these authorizations, the researcher personally conducted the interviews with the participants. During the data-gathering process, the anonymity of all respondents was strictly maintained, and confidentiality of their responses was assured. This ethical consideration was observed throughout the study to protect the integrity of the data and the welfare of the teacher-participants. The teachers' responses were recorded, transcribed, and later organized into thematic categories for analysis.

The data collected were analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative approaches, depending on the type of information generated. Thematic analysis was employed to interpret the teachers' lived experiences in lesson development and assessment of learning, as well as their classroom engagement practices. Narrative analysis was further used to capture the stories and strategies shared by the respondents in detail, ensuring that their voices were authentically

presented. To identify the strategies employed by teachers in classroom engagement, frequency counts and ranking were conducted, enabling the researcher to determine how often certain strategies were mentioned and their relative importance. Similarly, the challenges encountered by teacher-respondents were analyzed using frequency counts and means to establish which problems were most common and significant. After the item analysis, interpretations were conducted with the assistance of a statistician to ensure accuracy in the presentation of results.

By systematically integrating these procedures, the study was able to capture a rich and contextualized understanding of the lived experiences of English teachers in Matnog 1 District. The combination of a phenomenological design, purposive sampling, ethically conducted interviews, and rigorous analysis techniques allowed the researcher to generate findings that were both comprehensive and grounded in reality. The methodology thus provided a solid foundation for the development of an action plan aimed at addressing the needs of English teachers and improving classroom management practices in the district.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Lived experiences of English teachers in classroom management

The findings of this study are based on the accounts of ten English teachers from six secondary schools in Matnog 1 District, who were purposively selected for their active role in teaching English in junior and senior high school levels. These teachers, drawn from varied contexts including urban, rural, coastal, and island schools, shared their lived experiences in managing classrooms, addressing learner diversity, and navigating instructional challenges. Building upon the methodological foundation of phenomenology, the interviews revealed rich narratives that reflect the realities of classroom management in the district.

One of the most prominent experiences shared by the teachers was handling briefly engaged learners. Many students displayed short attention spans, which made sustained lesson delivery difficult. To address this, teachers employed culturally rooted strategies such as the use of local stories, songs, dances, and pre-activities to capture and sustain interest. They emphasized the importance of patience, creativity, and commitment in dealing with diverse learners. Their accounts aligned with existing literature that highlights engagement as a more critical factor than motivation alone in ensuring effective learning outcomes.

In addition to sustaining engagement, English teachers consistently sought to develop their students' communication skills through interactive activities. They employed games, role-playing exercises, debates, and group presentations to foster confidence and promote deeper participation. While such activities made lessons enjoyable, challenges persisted, particularly among slow learners and those with limited English proficiency. Teachers addressed these challenges by simplifying instructions, contextualizing activities in culturally relevant ways, and providing individualized support, demonstrating a commitment to inclusivity.

Assessment practices also emerged as a significant theme, with teachers recognizing the need for differentiated approaches. They acknowledged that learners varied in proficiency, learning styles, and comfort levels, and thus implemented a range of assessments including group work, written tasks, oral recitations, and creative outputs. This allowed students to

demonstrate their understanding in ways best suited to their abilities. However, teachers also admitted that time constraints and limited resources made differentiated assessment demanding, requiring them to adapt continuously to ensure fairness and inclusivity.

Another aspect of classroom management focused on the creation of safe and supportive learning environments. Teachers reported that they intentionally normalized mistakes as part of the learning process and employed respectful language, constructive feedback, and collaborative activities to build a positive classroom climate. Clean, organized, and culturally reflective classrooms were also cited as contributing to student comfort and confidence. Such supportive environments, they noted, enhanced teamwork, resilience, and participation, ultimately leading to improved learning experiences.

How english teachers engage in the different activities in the classroom

The study further revealed that teachers actively engaged students through diverse classroom activities designed to address the four macro skills—reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Recognizing the diversity of learners, teachers consistently provided differentiated learning activities to ensure inclusivity. These included lectures, group discussions, the use of visual aids, and collaborative projects. Participants highlighted how visuals supported visual learners and how group activities such as debates and projects fostered collaboration and critical thinking. While differentiated instruction proved effective in sustaining engagement, teachers also acknowledged that it required significant time and resources.

The integration of information and communication technology (ICT) emerged as another vital strategy in classroom engagement. Teachers incorporated digital tools such as slide decks, multimedia presentations, educational apps, and interactive platforms. They observed that ICT use not only increased interactivity but also aligned instruction with students' growing digital literacy, thereby bridging traditional teaching methods with modern learning practices.

Exposure to macro communication skills development was also prioritized. Teachers facilitated activities that enhanced listening, speaking, reading, and writing, including whisper circles, missing headline games, storytelling sessions, debates, and role-playing. These activities reflected constructivist principles by emphasizing active participation, critical thinking, and contextualized communication practice.

Reflective learning was additionally encouraged, with teachers prompting students to evaluate their progress through journals, post-task discussions, and paired feedback. By combining affirmations with constructive criticism, teachers fostered growth mindsets among learners, encouraging them to see challenges as opportunities for improvement rather than as failures. Such reflective practices helped cultivate responsibility, self-awareness, and resilience among students.

Strategies identified by teachers during classroom engagement

The strategies most commonly employed by teachers highlighted the centrality of vocabulary-building in English instruction. All ten participants reported the use of vocabulary-building activities, which emerged as the most frequently applied strategy. This was followed by summarizing data and information, reported by nine teachers, and several approaches mentioned

by eight teachers each, including cooperative learning, debates and discussions, and supplying missing parts of stories. Slightly fewer teachers used retelling and story mapping, each noted by seven participants, while six teachers highlighted giving the main idea as a strategy. Five teachers employed Think-Pair-Share activities, and four incorporated role-playing and drama.

The prevalence of vocabulary-building underscored its critical role in strengthening students' language foundations. Meanwhile, strategies such as summarizing, debates, and cooperative learning promoted critical thinking, comprehension, and collaboration. Although less frequently used, Think-Pair-Share and role-playing were recognized for their ability to stimulate creativity and active participation, suggesting potential areas for more frequent integration. Overall, the findings reflected that teacher balanced foundational strategies with interactive and reflective approaches to create dynamic and engaging classrooms. The results also pointed to the need for professional development that supports differentiated instruction, broader ICT integration, and diverse engagement techniques.

Challenges experienced by teachers during classroom engagement

Despite employing a wide range of strategies, teachers reported significant challenges that complicated their classroom engagement efforts. Learners' lack of interest and behavioral issues emerged as the most pressing concerns, both mentioned by all ten participants. These issues were followed closely by limited resources for interactive activities and learners' low motivation to read, each reported by nine teachers. Poor comprehension and time constraints for lesson coverage were mentioned by eight participants, while seven teachers identified learners' difficulty in speaking English, varied levels of language proficiency, and large class sizes as persistent problems.

These findings highlighted the multidimensional nature of the challenges faced by teachers. The combination of disinterest, behavioral issues, and limited resources made sustaining engagement difficult, while comprehension problems and language proficiency gaps hindered academic progress. Teachers emphasized that these challenges required adaptive and innovative strategies to sustain student interest and minimize disruption. Suggested responses included the use of gamification, collaborative projects, and the integration of real-life applications to spark curiosity. Teachers also recognized the importance of fostering a culture of reading through book clubs, reading challenges, and culturally relevant materials to address poor comprehension and low motivation. Scaffolded instruction using modeling, graphic organizers, and simplified texts was identified as an effective way to support struggling learners, while managing large classes demanded structured group activities to distribute engagement opportunities equitably.

Proposed innovative strategies to improve classroom engagement in english in matnog district

Building on the findings, the study proposed an action plan aimed at improving classroom engagement in English within the district. The rationale of the plan emphasized that active student participation is essential to successful language learning. Engaging lessons not only foster confidence, fluency, and meaningful communication but also reduce disruptive

behavior, promote collaboration, and enhance academic and social outcomes. For teachers, innovative strategies would reinvigorate their professional practice by enabling them to transition from traditional lecturers to facilitators of discovery.

The plan established clear objectives, including equipping English teachers in Matnog District with innovative pedagogical techniques that encourage active participation and create more interactive classrooms by the end of the current school year. It also sought to increase student engagement as measured by classroom observation checklists, participation rates, and feedback surveys.

Several strategic initiatives were identified. Teacher professional development would be enhanced through peer mentoring, where experienced teachers would guide new ones, fostering collaboration and exchange of best practices during the first quarter. Reflective journaling would be required throughout the year to encourage teachers to assess their classroom practices and identify areas for improvement. To strengthen technology integration, monthly workshops on educational tools such as Kahoot, Canva, and Google Classroom would be conducted by the ICT coordinator. Contextualized teaching materials, developed in the second quarter, would make lessons more relevant to local learners by aligning resources with cultural and community contexts. Finally, regular micro-teaching sessions with peer feedback, organized bi-monthly, would provide opportunities for teachers to refine their instructional delivery and classroom management.

The proposed action plan outlined expected outputs, such as improved teaching skills, greater self-awareness among teachers, increased use of engaging digital tools, enhanced lesson relevance, and more effective classroom practices. By aligning professional development, curriculum innovation, and learner-centered strategies, the plan aimed to create a stronger foundation for English instruction in the district and respond to the specific needs revealed by the study.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, several conclusions were drawn. First, English teachers employed strategies that addressed the needs of diverse learners, ensuring that classrooms remained inclusive and effective. Second, teachers actively designed and implemented engaging, student-centered activities aimed at developing communication skills, which were aligned with 21st-century competencies. Third, various strategies were utilized during classroom engagement, enhancing not only language proficiency but also students' critical thinking skills while still catering to learner diversity. Fourth, teachers faced multiple challenges in classroom engagement, highlighting the importance of institutional support, tailored interventions, expanded resources, and sustained teacher development initiatives. Finally, innovative strategies were designed to address these challenges and improve classroom engagement, thereby contributing to more effective English language teaching.

In light of these conclusions, several recommendations were proposed. Schools should conduct regular training and workshops on differentiated instruction and inclusive practices to equip teachers with skills in addressing learner diversity. Professional development programs focusing on 21st-century teaching techniques—such as project-based learning, gamification, and collaborative activities—should also be integrated. Gathering regular feedback from students is

likewise recommended to ensure that strategies remain responsive to their needs and preferences. Increased funding should be advocated to provide essential classroom resources, including books, multimedia tools, and interactive learning kits, which can support engaging instruction. Teachers are further encouraged to continually design innovative strategies that sustain interest and participation in English classes. In addition, continued research into teachers' practices is vital to enhancing the overall quality of education.

This study has shed light on the complex experiences of English teachers in Matnog District, providing a roadmap for addressing challenges and developing effective solutions. It also serves as a springboard for future inquiries into the lived experiences of English teachers. Possible future research directions may include: Beyond the Textbook: Innovative Strategies and Pedagogical Approaches in English Language Teaching, English Language Teaching in Rural Communities: Challenges and Opportunities, and Challenges in the Teaching of Cooperative Learning in English.

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