PANTAO
The International Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences
Volume 5, Issue 1
ISSN 3028-0877 | DOI 10.69651/2022PIJHSS

Learning preferences in English and Science of Higaonon learners: A phenomenological study

Jenaley J. Ocio
Agusan Colleges, Inc.
Butuan City, Philippines
Email: jenaleyocio@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study assessed the learning preferences of Higaonon learners at Bokbokon Elementary School in Las Nieves District and examined their perceptions of teacher competency in addressing these preferences in English and Science. Using a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach, the study explored learners' lived experiences, preferred learning methods, and classroom challenges. Fifteen Higaonon learners from Grades 4, 5, and 6 participated in semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings revealed that Higaonon learners preferred visual, contextualized, language-mediated, and experiential learning approaches. Visual aids, real objects, demonstrations, storytelling, and the translation of lessons into Bisaya significantly enhanced learners' comprehension and engagement. Learners perceived their teachers as competent in using instructional materials, classroom management strategies, and teaching methods that supported learning. However, difficulties in English and Science persisted due to language barriers, unfamiliar vocabulary, and abstract concepts. The study concluded that culturally responsive, learner-centered, and multimodal instructional practices are essential in addressing the learning needs of Higaonon learners. Based on the findings, two proposed learning models suited to indigenous learners were developed to enhance teaching effectiveness and learning outcomes in English and Science.

Keywords: Higaonon learners, learning preferences, teacher competency, phenomenological study, culturally responsive pedagogy, indigenous people's education, visual learning, language mediation, English instruction, Science instruction

Date Submitted: January 9, 2026
Date Accepted: January 22, 2026
Date Published: February 9, 2026

INTRODUCTION

Learners achieve better outcomes when teachers employ instructional methods that align with their preferred modes of learning. Every learner is different: some understand lessons more effectively through pictures and visual representations, others through listening and discussion, and still others through direct participation in activities. When teachers recognize and respond to these differences, student interest, active engagement, and academic

DOI: http://doi.org/10.69651/PIJHSS0501791

Recommended citation:
Ocio, J. J. (2026). Learning preferences in English and Science of Higaonon learners: A phenomenological study. Pantao (The International Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences) 5 (1), 8802-8812. http://doi.org/10.69651/PIJHSS0501791

success are meaningfully enhanced. In the Philippines, the K to 12 curriculum promotes learner-centered teaching that places students' needs, interests, and learning styles at the center of instruction, a principle enshrined in Republic Act No. 10533, the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013. For indigenous learners such as the Higaonon of Las Nieves District in Agusan del Norte, this approach carries particular significance.

The Higaonon people, one of the recognized indigenous groups in Mindanao, possess rich cultural traditions, beliefs, and distinct ways of learning shaped by their community experiences and environment. Despite their cultural wealth, they often face considerable challenges in formal schooling because the standard curriculum is largely informed by Western-oriented models that emphasize individual learning, written assessment, and formal classroom instruction, models that may not adequately reflect indigenous epistemologies and learning orientations. The Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act of 1997 (Republic Act No. 8371) guarantees the right of indigenous communities to an education that respects their languages, cultures, and identities, while the Department of Education's National Indigenous Peoples Education Policy Framework further mandates the development of culturally responsive and community-based educational approaches.

At Bokbokon Elementary School, where the majority of learners belong to the Higaonon community, this misalignment between dominant schooling practices and indigenous learners' cultural orientations is especially evident. Teachers observe that Higaonon learners are more responsive to activities that reflect their daily experiences, such as storytelling, cooperative group tasks, and hands-on demonstrations, and that participation increases notably when lessons incorporate familiar cultural references, local narratives, or practical applications. Many learners encounter difficulty with purely written tasks or highly structured, text-heavy instruction because these modalities do not correspond to how they naturally acquire knowledge within their cultural environment. Despite these consistent classroom observations, there remains limited structured research on the specific learning preferences of Higaonon learners in English and Science, a gap that constrains teachers' ability to design culturally aligned instruction.

This study is theoretically grounded in three complementary frameworks. Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory posits that learning is a continuous process rooted in experience, involving four stages: Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualization, and Active Experimentation. This framework explains why Higaonon learners engage more effectively with simple experiments, demonstrations, storytelling, drawing, and real-life activities, as these modes support the active construction of meaning. Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences (1983, extended 2020) recognizes that intelligence is multidimensional, encompassing linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalistic capacities. This theory supports the use of varied instructional strategies, including visual aids for spatial intelligence, hands-on activities for bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, and collaborative tasks for interpersonal intelligence, to address the diverse learning strengths of Higaonon learners. Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978) emphasizes that learning is fundamentally shaped by social interaction, language, and cultural context, and introduces the Zone of Proximal Development to describe the space between independent ability and capacity achieved through guided support. In this study's context, Vygotsky's framework illuminates the essential role of mother-tongue mediation, Bisaya translation, scaffolded teacher explanation, and group interaction in facilitating meaningful learning among Higaonon pupils. Together, these theoretical lenses establish a comprehensive framework for understanding the cultural, cognitive, and social dimensions of learning preferences among Higaonon learners and for designing the culturally responsive learning models proposed in this study.

Statement of the problem

This study aimed to determine the learning preferences in English and Science of Higaonon learners at Bokbokon Elementary School in Las Nieves District and to examine their perceptions of teacher competency in addressing these preferences. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What were the learning preferences of Higaonon learners in English and in Science?
2. How did learners perceive the competency of their teachers in meeting learning preferences in terms of the selection and utilization of instructional materials, classroom management, and teaching strategies?
3. What difficulties were encountered by learners in English and Science?
4. Based on the findings, what learning model for English and Science may be proposed to address the learning preferences and needs of Higaonon learners?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative research design, specifically a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology, as a qualitative research methodology, focuses on understanding the lived experiences of participants, describing how they experience, understand, and assign meaning to particular situations (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Moustakas, 1994). In this study, the phenomenological approach was used to explore the learning preferences of Higaonon learners and their perceptions of teacher competency as these emerged from their actual experiences in learning English and Science. Since learning preferences are shaped by learners' cultural backgrounds, daily interactions, and classroom experiences, this approach enabled the researcher to gather authentic, direct descriptions of how learners understood lessons, how they perceived their teachers' instructional strategies, and the difficulties they encountered in these subject areas.

The study was conducted at Bokbokon Elementary School, a public school located in the upland barangay of Bokbokon in the Municipality of Las Nieves, Province of Agusan del Norte. The school is approximately 25 kilometers from the town proper and serves a student population predominantly composed of Higaonon indigenous community members. This school was deliberately selected as the research site because it provided a natural, ecologically valid context for studying the learning experiences of Higaonon learners in their own community environment.

The participants consisted of 15 Higaonon learners from Grades 4, 5, and 6 at Bokbokon Elementary School, comprising five participants from each grade level. The study focused on these grade levels, which fall within Key Stage 2 of elementary education, as learners at this stage possess sufficient communicative ability to articulate their learning experiences and preferences. Purposive sampling was employed based on the following criteria: participants were exclusively Higaonon learners, were cooperative and recommended by their teachers as capable of providing relevant and reflective responses, and were currently enrolled in the specified grade levels. This sampling approach ensured that detailed and contextually relevant data were gathered from those most knowledgeable about the study variables.

The primary research instruments were semi-structured interview guides and focus group discussion protocols. The interview guide questions were developed based on the research problem statement and were reviewed and validated by experts for clarity, relevance, and suitability. Revisions were incorporated based on expert feedback. The same set of semi-

structured questions was used consistently across all participants to ensure reliability, and data from both interviews and focus group discussions were cross-referenced to confirm the consistency of responses. Audio recordings and field notes were used to ensure accurate and complete documentation.

Data collection commenced following the submission and approval of a permission letter to the school head and the securing of informed consent from participants and their parents or guardians. Individual interviews and focus group discussions were conducted in a quiet, comfortable location within the school premises, using open-ended questions about learners' preferred learning methods and their perceptions of teacher competency. Confidentiality of participant responses and respect for cultural practices were maintained throughout the data-gathering process.

Thematic analysis was used to analyze and interpret the data. Interview and focus group discussion transcripts were transcribed, coded, and grouped into emerging themes aligned with the research questions. The identified themes described the learning preferences of Higaonon learners in English and Science, their perceptions of teacher competency across the three domains of instructional materials, classroom management, and teaching strategies, and the difficulties they encountered. Confidentiality and accuracy were rigorously maintained throughout the analysis to ensure the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings, which subsequently informed the development of the two proposed culturally responsive learning models.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the analysis and interpretation of the data gathered in the qualitative study on the learning preferences of Higaonon learners in Grades 4, 5, and 6. The study involved fifteen participants composed of learners coded as P4.1 to P4.5, P5.1 to P5.5, and P6.1 to P6.5. Data were collected through in depth interviews and were transcribed, coded, and analyzed using thematic analysis. The discussion is grounded directly in the participants' responses and is interpreted in relation to the objectives of the study, which sought to determine the learning preferences of Higaonon learners, examine the competence of teachers as perceived by these learners, and identify the difficulties encountered in English and Science subjects. The presentation integrates descriptive findings and interpretative discussion in order to explain patterns that emerged from the qualitative data.

The thematic analysis of the learning preferences of Higaonon learners revealed three major themes that describe how learners most effectively understand lessons in English and Science. The themes include visual based learning, contextualized instruction with language mediation in multimodal learning, and experiential learning. Responses from participants coded as P4.1, P4.3, P4.4, P5.1, and P5.5 indicated that the use of pictures and actions helps them understand English, while P5.4, P6.5, and P5.3 emphasized pictures, videos, flashcards, charts, and other memory enhancing visual tools. These responses collectively indicate that learning becomes more meaningful when abstract concepts are transformed into observable forms. Learners frequently associated comprehension with visual exposure, suggesting that instructional strategies involving pictures, visual aids, and demonstrations facilitate understanding. For example, participant P4.1 expressed that pictures and actions help them understand English, while participant P4.3 explained that seeing pictures allows them to understand the lesson better. These statements demonstrate that visual materials function as cognitive supports that bridge unfamiliar concepts with learners' existing knowledge.

Visual exposure was also reported to enhance comprehension particularly in language learning situations where learners encounter unfamiliar vocabulary. Participants described how visual stimuli help them interpret meanings even when they are not yet fully familiar with

English terms. This finding suggests that visual learning strategies serve not only as engagement tools but also as comprehension mechanisms. The results confirm that learners rely heavily on visual references to decode meaning, reinforcing the importance of visual based learning in classrooms that serve indigenous learners.

Another important aspect that emerged from the interviews was the role of language mediation in supporting comprehension. Several participants emphasized the importance of translating English lessons into Bisaya to facilitate understanding. Participant P4.5 stated that English should be translated into Bisaya so that learners can understand the lesson more clearly, while P6.1 explained that reading in English followed by translation into Bisaya improves comprehension. These responses demonstrate that language bridging functions as an instructional scaffold that reduces linguistic barriers. Translation allows learners to connect unfamiliar academic language with their everyday linguistic experiences. In classrooms where English serves as the medium of instruction, the use of Bisaya becomes an essential strategy for clarifying meaning and maintaining learner participation.

Participants also highlighted the effectiveness of multimedia and multimodal instruction. Learners coded as P5.1 and P5.4 reported that watching pictures and videos helped them remember lessons more easily. These responses indicate that varied instructional modes enhance both engagement and retention. The integration of visual materials, storytelling, and translation supports learners with different learning preferences and strengthens comprehension. Eduardo (2021) emphasized that indigenous learners learn more effectively when instruction integrates their language, culture, and lived experiences. Similarly, Bonifacio et al. (2021) found that the use of familiar language and culturally relevant references significantly improved comprehension among indigenous learners. The present findings align with these observations, demonstrating that visual materials and language mediation create meaningful connections between the learners' cultural context and academic content.

Experiential learning also emerged as a prominent learning preference among the participants. In Science lessons, learners indicated that hands on activities help them understand concepts more effectively. Participant P5.5 shared that they conducted simple experiments such as observing plant growth, while P6.2 mentioned drawing activities as part of learning. These responses suggest that experiential activities provide opportunities for learners to actively construct knowledge rather than passively receive information. Through observation, participation, and manipulation of materials, learners are able to develop deeper conceptual understanding.

Contextualized instruction further supports this experiential dimension of learning. Participants described how teachers used familiar examples and real objects found within their environment. Participant P4.2 noted that the teacher provides examples that are familiar to them and uses real objects in the classroom, while P6.4 confirmed that lessons become easier to understand when teachers refer to objects found around them. These responses highlight the value of connecting instruction with the learners' immediate environment. The integration of culturally relevant examples helps learners interpret abstract ideas through experiences that are already meaningful within their community context. Research on indigenous learning preferences consistently indicates that learners respond positively to visual, contextualized, and experiential instruction. Fleming and Mills' (1992) VARK model explains that visual and kinesthetic learners benefit from images, demonstrations, and hands on activities, which corresponds closely with the preferences expressed by the Higaonon learners in this study.

The competence of teachers as perceived by the Higaonon learners was also examined through thematic analysis of instructional materials, classroom management practices, and teaching strategies. Findings related to instructional materials revealed two dominant themes,

namely visual and concrete instructional materials and multimodal instructional materials. Participants P4.1, P4.2, P4.3, P4.4, P5.1, P5.2, P6.1, and P6.2 consistently reported that teachers use pictures, drawings, flashcards, and real objects in teaching English and Science. These materials enable learners to visualize concepts and connect lessons to tangible references. Learners repeatedly emphasized that pictures are used in both English and Science subjects, suggesting that teachers deliberately incorporate visual supports to facilitate comprehension.

In addition to visual materials, learners also described the use of videos, stories, and traditional classroom tools such as chalk, board, and ballpen. Participant P4.5 specifically mentioned the use of chalk, board, ballpen, pictures, and videos during Science lessons. Participant P6.5 stated that the teacher uses pictures, videos, and stories along with real objects. These responses demonstrate that teachers employ a multimodal instructional approach that combines traditional resources with multimedia tools. The integration of different instructional materials allows teachers to address diverse learning needs and sustain learner engagement. Such practices reflect pedagogical adaptability and responsiveness to the learning context of indigenous learners.

Classroom management practices reported by the participants revealed three recurring themes: the use of discipline and cleanliness to maintain order, rule enforcement through corrective measures, and consistent behavioral monitoring and cleanliness. Learners described how teachers reprimand disruptive behavior, remind learners to sit properly, and maintain order during class activities. Participants P5.4 and P6.2 shared that teachers reprimand learners when they become noisy. In some situations, consequences are applied to reinforce discipline. Participant P4.5 mentioned that points may be deducted from a subject when rules are violated. These practices demonstrate that teachers use corrective strategies to regulate classroom behavior and maintain a structured learning environment.

Another important component of classroom management identified by the participants was the integration of cleanliness routines into daily classroom practices. Learners explained that they are asked to clean the classroom when it becomes untidy or before going home. Participant P4.2 described how they are instructed to clean when the classroom becomes dirty, while P5.4 indicated that cleaning is done before dismissal. These routines promote responsibility and collective accountability among learners. By combining discipline with environmental care, teachers establish an orderly classroom atmosphere that supports learning.

The classroom management practices described by the participants are consistent with existing literature on culturally responsive teaching. O'Gorman (2024) observed that indigenous learners respond positively to classroom environments that emphasize cooperation, respect, and shared responsibility. Similarly, Gutierrez (2022) found that structured routines and culturally sensitive management strategies enhance participation and reduce behavioral issues among indigenous learners. Esparrago Kalidas (2024) also emphasized the importance of flexibility and cultural awareness in managing indigenous classrooms, noting that rigid disciplinary systems may conflict with community values. The findings of the present study therefore support existing research that effective classroom management among indigenous learners involves structured guidance combined with communal responsibility.

Teaching strategies employed by teachers also reflected their competence in addressing the learning needs of Higaonon learners. Four themes emerged from the analysis of the interview responses, namely language based instructional scaffolding, contextualized and visual learning support, inclusive participation strategies, and experiential and active learning. Participants coded as P4.1, P4.3, P4.4, P5.1, P5.2, P5.3, P5.5, P6.1, P6.2, P6.3, P6.4, and P6.5 described how teachers translate lessons into Bisaya or Tagalog, simplify explanations, and repeat important information to ensure comprehension. These strategies reduce linguistic barriers and allow learners with limited English proficiency to follow the lesson. Participant

P4.1 explained that the teacher simplifies the lesson and translates words into Bisaya, while P6.1 described how the teacher reads in English and then translates into Bisaya. These practices demonstrate the role of language scaffolding in improving understanding among indigenous learners.

Teachers also support learning through contextualized and visual instruction. Participants P4.2, P4.3, P4.4, P4.5, P5.1, P5.2, P5.4, P6.1, P6.2, and P6.5 reported that teachers use pictures, drawings, videos, and real objects to explain lessons. Participant P4.3 explained that the teacher gives examples and shows pictures so learners can understand, while P5.1 described how real objects are shown to clarify concepts. These strategies demonstrate how contextualized teaching transforms abstract ideas into concrete experiences. The integration of visual supports strengthens comprehension and reinforces the learners' preferred learning modes.

Inclusive participation strategies also emerged as an important aspect of teaching competence. Learners indicated that teachers encourage them to answer questions, participate in discussions, and work in groups. Participant P4.3 stated that even when they cannot speak English fluently, the teacher still gives them a chance to express their ideas. Participant P4.2 noted that group activities allow them to share ideas without feeling embarrassed. These responses suggest that teachers foster supportive classroom environments where learners feel confident participating despite language limitations.

Experiential and active learning was likewise observed in teaching practices. Participants P4.5, P6.3, and P6.5 described how teachers conduct hands on activities, demonstrations, and action-based tasks. These strategies enable learners to learn by doing rather than by listening alone. Experiential activities stimulate curiosity, reinforce understanding, and allow learners to apply knowledge in practical contexts. The findings correspond with research indicating that culturally responsive teachers employ experiential and visual strategies to improve comprehension among indigenous learners. Eduardo (2021) emphasized that competent teachers adapt instruction to learners' cultural backgrounds and experiences. Bonifacio et al. (2021) similarly reported that mother tongue mediation improves participation and reduces language barriers. Gutierrez (2022) highlighted the effectiveness of demonstrations and contextualized instruction in indigenous classrooms, while Clark (2023) and Esparrago Kalidas (2024) identified consistent routines and positive discipline as indicators of teacher competence. The present findings therefore confirm that teachers' instructional practices align with culturally responsive teaching principles.

Despite these positive instructional practices, the study also identified several difficulties encountered by Higaonon learners in English and Science subjects. The thematic analysis revealed three major themes: language-based learning difficulties, very low vocabulary skills, and insufficient visual and contextual support in lessons. Participants P4.1, P4.2, P4.3, P4.4, P4.5, P5.1 to P5.5, and P6.1 to P6.5 described difficulties related to grammar, sentence construction, and unfamiliar academic terms. Learners frequently associated subject difficulty with the language used in instruction rather than with the content itself. Participant P4.1 reported that English grammar is difficult to understand, while P6.2 explained that they struggle with writing different kinds of sentences. In Science, participant P4.4 indicated that the concept of motion is difficult because the terminology is unfamiliar. These responses show that linguistic complexity plays a significant role in shaping learners' academic challenges.

Limited English vocabulary also emerged as a major barrier to comprehension. Learners explained that when lessons are delivered entirely in English, understanding becomes more difficult. Participant P4.3 stated that English is difficult because they cannot immediately understand it, while P5.5 explained that lessons become harder when unfamiliar English words

are used. These responses indicate that limited vocabulary knowledge restricts learners' ability to interpret instructions, participate in discussions, and grasp lesson content.

In addition to language related challenges, learners also reported difficulties when lessons lack visual or contextual supports. Participants P4.4, P5.1, P5.2, P5.5, and P6.2 to P6.5 described situations where lessons were difficult because they could not see pictures or real examples. Participant P4.4 explained that Science lessons become difficult when there are no pictures to observe, while P5.1 indicated that certain topics such as pleasant and unpleasant sounds are difficult to understand without examples. Participant P6.3 also noted that simple machines are difficult to understand when learners cannot see an actual machine. These statements demonstrate that visual and experiential supports are not merely instructional enhancements but essential components of comprehension for these learners. When lessons rely solely on verbal explanations, learners encounter greater difficulty in constructing meaning.

Overall, the results of the study demonstrate that Higaonon learners in Grades 4, 5, and 6 prefer instructional approaches that integrate visual materials, language mediation, contextualized examples, and experiential activities. The participants' responses consistently highlight the importance of pictures, videos, storytelling, translation into Bisaya, and hands on learning experiences in facilitating comprehension. Teachers were perceived as competent when they employed visual and multimodal instructional materials, maintained structured classroom routines, encouraged participation, and used culturally responsive teaching strategies. At the same time, learners reported challenges related to English language proficiency, unfamiliar vocabulary, and the absence of visual or contextual supports in lessons. These findings collectively address the objectives of the study by illustrating how learning preferences, teacher competence, and learning difficulties interact within the classroom experiences of Higaonon learners. The results contribute to a deeper understanding of culturally responsive education for indigenous communities and provide empirical justification for the development of instructional models such as the Visual Language Learning Model for English and the Visual Real Object Learning Model for Science, which are presented in the succeeding section.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the learning preferences in English and Science of Higaonon learners at Bokbokon Elementary School in the Las Nieves District and synthesized evidence on how these preferences shape classroom experiences, teacher practices, and learning difficulties. Using a qualitative research design anchored in a phenomenological approach, the investigation involved fifteen (15) Higaonon learners from Grades 4, 5, and 6. Data were gathered through semi structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs), then analyzed and interpreted through thematic analysis to ensure that conclusions were derived directly from the lived experiences and perspectives expressed by the participants. Grounded in the study's research questions, the findings collectively clarified how culturally situated learning preferences intersect with instructional delivery, classroom conditions, and language demands in English and Science, and they also informed the development of a proposed learning model aligned with the needs of Higaonon learners.

The results demonstrated that Higaonon learners strongly preferred visual based learning, contextualized instruction, language mediation through translation to Bisaya, and experiential learning. Learners reported that they learned best when lessons incorporated pictures, videos, real objects, storytelling, and simple hands-on activities, indicating that comprehension and retention increased when instruction moved from abstract explanations to observable, relatable, and culturally meaningful representations. These preferences reflect

distinct learning patterns closely linked to cultural background and lived experiences, reinforcing the conclusion that effective learning for Higaonon learners is strengthened when instruction connects academic concepts to familiar contexts and concrete experiences. In particular, visual materials such as pictures, videos, drawings, and real objects emerged as essential supports that enhance comprehension, engagement, and retention in both English and Science. Alongside these visual supports, translation of lessons into Bisaya played a crucial role in helping learners understand content, overcome language barriers, and participate actively in class discussions, underscoring that language mediation is not merely supplementary but a foundational scaffold for meaning making in classrooms where English is a dominant medium of instruction.

Findings further indicated that learners perceived their teachers to be competent in using visual, concrete, and multimodal instructional materials, suggesting that current classroom practices already include strategies aligned with learners' expressed preferences. Teachers were also viewed as effective in classroom management through the use of discipline, cleanliness routines, and consistent monitoring of learner behavior, practices that contributed to an orderly learning environment and supported engagement during instruction. Teaching strategies that involved explanation, demonstration, and the use of familiar examples were likewise identified as facilitating understanding and participation, illustrating that learners recognized the value of instructional clarity and culturally connected examples in helping them follow lessons. At the same time, the study established that Higaonon learners experienced persistent difficulty in both English and Science due to language barriers, unfamiliar vocabulary, abstract concepts, and limited contextualization of lessons. These difficulties indicate that learners are struggling not solely because of content complexity but also because limited exposure to the English language and insufficient cultural contextualization restrict access to meaning, especially when instruction relies heavily on abstract or decontextualized explanations.

In response to the overall pattern of preferences, perceived teacher competence, and documented learning difficulties, the study proposed a learning model for English and Science suited to the needs of Higaonon learners. The synthesis of findings supports the recommendation that teachers consistently integrate visual, experiential, and contextualized teaching strategies in English and Science instruction by strengthening the use of pictures, videos, real objects, storytelling, and simple experiments, while sustaining mother tongue mediation, particularly translation into Bisaya, to support comprehension as learners gradually develop English proficiency. In line with this recommendation, continuous professional development focused on culturally responsive pedagogy and the education of indigenous learners is essential to deepen teachers' capacity to align instruction with learners' cultural contexts and language needs. Complementing classroom level efforts, school administrators are encouraged to support teachers by ensuring access to instructional materials such as visual aids, multimedia resources, and culturally relevant learning materials, and by organizing trainings and workshops focused on Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd), learning styles, and inclusive teaching practices to strengthen instructional competence and responsiveness.

The conclusion also affirms the importance of learner agency within culturally responsive classrooms. Higaonon learners are encouraged to develop awareness of their preferred learning styles and to participate actively in classroom activities, since increased confidence in expressing ideas and asking questions can improve learning experiences and academic performance. To extend and strengthen the evidence base, future research is recommended to involve a larger number of participants, include other indigenous groups, and examine additional subject areas, while quantitative or mixed methods approaches may be

employed to validate and broaden the applicability of the present findings. Further studies are also encouraged to evaluate the effectiveness of the proposed learning model developed in this research, thereby determining its potential contribution to improving English and Science learning outcomes and informing wider implementation within contexts serving indigenous learners. Taken together, the findings, conclusions, and recommendations highlight the central contribution of the study to culturally responsive, learner centered instruction by demonstrating that meaningful learning for Higaonon learners is most effectively supported through visual and experiential strategies, language mediation through Bisaya, and culturally contextualized teaching, providing a clear foundation for instructional improvement and subsequent inquiry.

REFERENCES

Ambas, R. M., & Feliciano, J. P. (2025). Learning style preferences of elementary learners in selected public schools in Mindanao. Journal of Philippine Education Studies, 12(1), 45-59.

Bastida, L. M., Dela Cruz, R. S., & Manalo, P. J. (2023). A rights-based and culturally responsive instructional framework for Higaonon learners. Journal of Indigenous Education Research, 5(2), 66-82.

Bonifacio, J. L., Datuin, A. P., & Manlangit, E. R. (2021). Enhancing learning among indigenous pupils through mother-tongue mediation. Mindanao Journal of Indigenous Education, 3(1), 77-94.

Condeza, R., & Mongas, J. (2025). Culturally responsive teaching among Higaonon communities: Strategies for learner engagement. Philippine Indigenous Pedagogy Journal, 4(1), 12-27.

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.

Dedel, R., Pascua, M., & Leyva, G. (2024). Culturally responsive teaching strategies for indigenous English learners. Journal of Language and Culture in Education, 8(2), 44-60.

Eduardo, A. M. (2021). Barriers and opportunities in indigenous peoples' education in the Philippines. Asia Pacific Journal of Education, 41(3), 350-365.

Escabusa, G. N., & Luzano, R. A. (2024). Learning styles and academic performance of indigenous learners in Manolo Fortich District IV. Mindanao Education Review, 5(2), 101-115.

Esparrago-Kalidas, A. J. (2024). Challenges in implementing culturally sustaining pedagogy in indigenous classrooms. Philippine Journal of Educational Research, 16(1), 25-40.

Gardner, H., Kornhaber, M. L., & Moran, S. (2020). Multiple intelligences: New horizons in theory and practice. Basic Books.

Gutierrez, R. (2022). Bridging cultures: Teaching indigenous learners from the perspectives of teachers in public elementary schools. Philippine Journal of Educational Research, 10(3), 45-59.

Kolb, D. A. (2015). Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development (2nd ed.). Pearson Education.

Leano, R., Santos, M., & Reyes, P. (2019). Speaking and semantic difficulties of indigenous English learners. Language and Literacy in Education, 6(1), 33-47.

Llagas, M. J., & Trimillos, R. (2024). Integrating indigenous culture in instructional materials for IP learners. Philippine Indigenous Education Journal, 7(1), 88-104.

Medel, J. A., & Gallardo, R. T. (2025). Classroom experiences of indigenous learners in English and Science subjects. Journal of Rural and Indigenous Education, 9(1), 33-48.

Moustakas, C. (1994). Phenomenological research methods. SAGE Publications.

O'Gorman, T. (2024). Cultural identity, classroom climate, and learning engagement among indigenous learners. International Journal of Cross-Cultural Education, 13(2), 99-118.

Pelenio, J. R., & Bacabac, K. L. (2024). Culturally responsive teaching practices for Higaonon learners. Journal of Indigenous Education Research, 6(1), 15-28.

Rebollos, R., Dela Cruz, A., & Santos, T. (2024). Teacher competence, classroom management, and student engagement in Philippine schools. Philippine Educational Research Journal, 11(2), 70-85.

Sun, L., Kim, J., & Zhao, W. (2023). Learning preferences and classroom engagement among diverse learner populations in Asian schools. Asia-Pacific Education Researcher, 32(4), 301-316.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes. Harvard University Press.