

**DUNIG PUSONG DI PEGTENDU: THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF  
SECONDARY ENGLISH TEACHERS IN AN INDIGENOUS PEOPLES  
SCHOOL**

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**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of the study is to describe and analyze the lived experiences of English language teachers in teaching IP students. The researchers hope to gain a deeper knowledge of the struggles and challenges experienced by Secondary English Language Teachers. The phenomenological research method of Moustakas (1994) was employed in this study to document and describe the participants' experiences. The findings of the study revealed six themes that represented the journeys of the participants: (1) Teaching in an IP school requires commitment and understanding to help IP students cope with their real problems; (2) Happiness and Fulfillment of teachers in an IP school come from students' attitude and in their little progress; (3) Teachers' motivation to teach the English language in an IP School is to make a difference in the lives of their IP students; (4) IP teachers remain resilient despite the experienced setbacks; (5) IP teachers overcome challenges by being resourceful, embracing drawbacks, and finding reasons to love one's work; (6) To be the best in one's field is to never

stop learning. The journey of the Secondary English IP teachers teaching in an IP school was not a walk in the park, but they ended up inspired, fulfilled, and transformed. The heavy duties and responsibilities challenge English IP teachers to go beyond their limits. Hence, it is suggested that they continue to plan and utilize varied teaching strategies for effective teaching and strive to develop better professional growth through workshops and programs.

**Keywords:** Indigenous Peoples School, lived experiences, self-fulfillment, Moustakas phenomenology study, Philippine English Teachers

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Philippines is home to many Indigenous Communities (Episcopal Commission on Indigenous Peoples, 2008). Indigenous Peoples (IPs) in the Philippines, as defined in DepEd Order No. 22, s. 2016, refers to a group of people or homogeneous societies identified by self-ascription and ascription by others. IPs live as an organized community bound by their language, customs, culture, traditions, norms, and other distinctive traits. Just like other distinct groups of people, IPs are also protected by laws that enable them to have equal rights as human beings. One of these rights is access to education as stipulated in DepEd Order No. 22, s. 2016. They are given full and adequate privileges such as scholarships and other incentives.

With the apparent link to IPs and education, IP schools in the Philippines are empowered as the Department of Education opens 251 new schools for the IPs in Mindanao (Mateo, 2016). Mateo (2016) added that the Department of Education would provide a culture-based education for the IPs. This action grants the IP Community, specifically IP learners, to attain education.

In teaching in IP Schools, IP teachers encounter different struggles and challenges. One of which is language, mainly English language teaching. Although the Philippines is one of the most fluent English-speaking countries, some Filipinos, specifically the Indigenous People, struggle to learn to speak the language (Pachina, 2020). Teachers find it hard to teach English using the English language as a medium of instruction because most IP learners and their families acquire limited awareness of the importance of learning English and how to speak it (Leaño et al., 2019). They added that teachers are challenged when they teach English in the classroom, as Indigenous learners have difficulty recalling, interpreting, and articulating English words. The lack of preparation in handling Indigenous learners who have difficulty learning and speaking the English language is also one of the struggles teachers face (Leaño et al., 2019). As a result, there is a need to offer more training, workshops, and seminars offered over the semesters and breaks to train and develop teachers how to effectively teach indigenous students (Ocampo & Delgado, 2014). Another struggle is the far workplace such as experiencing a two-hour ride from home to school, traveling during rainy seasons on a muddy road, and the non-availability of passenger vehicles in the area (Palicte, 2020). Some IP Schools located in remote areas lack resources and do not have electricity. Teachers usually trek down mountains to access the internet (Microsoft Philippines Communications Team, 2018).

Along this view, this study aimed to describe and analyze the lived experiences of English language teachers in IP schools. The researchers hoped to gain a deeper knowledge of the struggles and challenges experienced by Secondary English Language Teachers in teaching the

said students and to give them ample opportunity for their concerns, voices, and sentiments to be heard.

## 1.1 Statement of the Problem

This study highlights the narratives, stories, and experiences of the English Teachers in one of the public schools in the Division of Ozamiz City. The researchers used this grand tour question to unveil the participants lived experiences.

What are the lived experiences of the secondary English language teachers in an IP School?

The grand tour question above served as a starting point in the investigation of the phenomenon. Following Creswell's (2007) model, the grand tour question is open-ended, evolving, and non-directional which allows flexibility to explore the phenomenon in question. 'To investigate the core phenomenon, Creswell (2007) added that the research question should begin with "what" or "how" rather than "why."

## 2.0 METHODS

### 2.1 Research Design

This study aimed to uncover the lived experiences of secondary English language teachers in an IP school. This utilized qualitative research methodology, specifically phenomenology using purposive sampling. Rossman and Rallis, (2003) declared that the primary goal of the phenomenological methodology is to condense or summarize the full meaning of the participants lived experiences as shared in their own words. Moreover, this method also delved into understanding of the participant's thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

Examining the depths of human experiences through the description provided by the people who are involved in the process is central to a qualitative phenomenological research design. Furthermore, it tried to dig out how people construct meaning and understanding of their real experiences. Hence, the phenomenological method is a reflective method that enables researchers to ponder the fundamental ways certain phenomena are experienced deeply.

### 2.2 Research Locale

This research was conducted in one of the public schools in the Division of Ozamiz City during the Academic Year 2022-2023. It lies in the northern part of Mindanao in Region 10, Misamis Oriental, 7200, Philippines. It has a population of 32 teachers, including the non-teaching, which includes the principal, 1 Head-teacher, 1 Admin Assistant, and 29 teaching staff. It consists of 4 English teachers in Junior High School. To be determined an IP school, the educational institution should have learners who are Indigenous People. This characteristic identified the school as an IP school because it has 81 students who are IP learners.

### 2.3 Participants of the Study

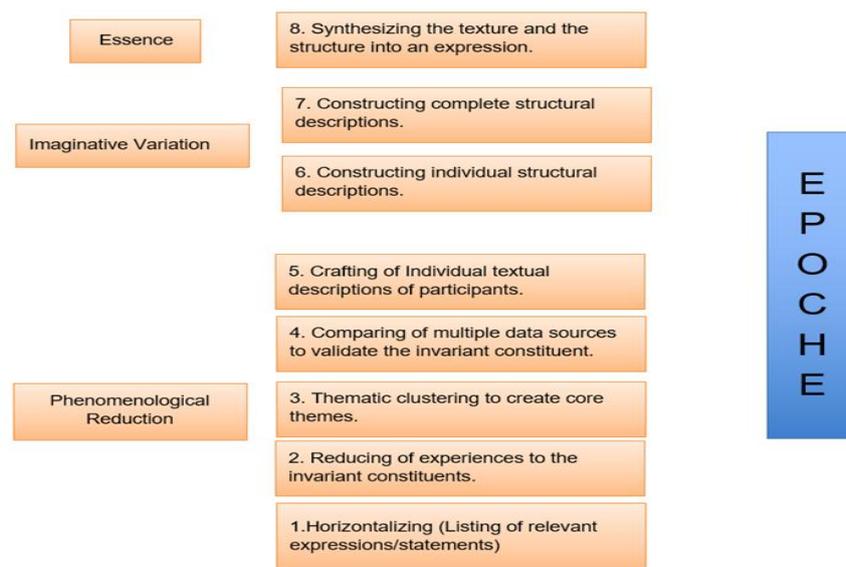
There were four (4) secondary English language teachers who were considered participants in the study. Since this is qualitative phenomenological research, the participants were

purposefully selected to provide the researchers with data on the important facets and perspectives related to the research questions (Creswell, 2007). In selecting the participants, the selection was based on the researchers' judgment and the purpose of the study. The researchers believed that these participants had pertinent encounters with the phenomenon and could articulately express their experiences. The the inclusion exclusion criteria include (a) English Secondary teacher at in the school for more than a year already; (b) Working on a full-time basis in a school-based set-up; (c) Working in an Indigenous Peoples school in Misamis Occidental. (d)Not one of the Indigenous People. Beyond these criteria were excluded in this study.

## 2.4 Data Analysis Procedure

Moustakas (1994) presented general procedures in data analysis, including phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and the exploration of the essence of the experience.

The process for the preparation and analysis of the data is presented in Figure 1



**Fig.1: Moustakas (1994) Data Analysis Procedure**

## 3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### The Journey of a Mother

“Being a mother is learning about strengths you didn't know you had. And dealing with fears you didn't know existed.”- Linda Wooten

Motherhood is a journey that requires immense patience and dedication, as it involves the birth of a child. It is a lifetime commitment to care for the child's well-being until its last breath. The first few days of motherhood can be laborious, as mothers wake up late to entertain their child and struggle to find what else it wants. However, they also find the first days fulfilling, as they

witness their child's delicate lips and strong grip and realize that every day is another opportunity to learn something new.

English IP teachers play a similar role in nurturing their students' lives in the classroom. They embody this purpose by being a mother to their students and continuously strive to fulfill their roles and responsibilities to impact the academic community. They encounter difficulties, but these experiences provide new opportunities to learn from their work and students. These significant experiences encourage them to continue striving for what is right and best, making their mission a work in progress. Both mothers and teachers are constantly learning and growing from their experiences.

### **3.1 The Caregiver: Embracing Responsibilities**

The stories of first-time mothers are always a mixture of different emotions. From their faces, one can really see how they must have felt the first time they experienced these. Truthfully, every mother has a story to tell of how they were able to fulfill the responsibilities entrusted to them. The routine goes from hearing stories and pieces of advice from long-term mothers to experiencing these things firsthand. This little child will always need the care and attention of their parents, specifically their mother. They are immensely dependent on their mother; thus, these moments are essential for the child's development. With good and sufficient nurturing, a child's perspective is widened each day.

#### **3.1.1 Committing to work**

The field of teaching requires genuine commitment to continue imparting knowledge to students despite the various learning challenges. When teachers are committed to their work, there is an effective learning process inside the learning environment. Having commitment does not only fulfill one's responsibility, but it is also striving to be better at it all the time. However, commitment does not only exist inside the working environment but also with the personal life of a teacher. One of the English IP teachers shared that she finds it difficult to leave her family, specifically her young children because of her work. These are narrated by the participant.

...Because in teaching, you can leave your family behind, you are here at school from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. (ET2)

...I also had another struggle when I got married. Because it will be difficult for me to leave my family, especially my young children. The phases of your problems are different. (ET2)

ET2 expressed her concern of leaving her family early in the morning and returning late in the afternoon because of the distance of her workplace from their home.

#### **3.1.2 Understanding the real problems of the IP students.**

Being an understanding individual is a significant characteristic in the teaching field. In the process of educating the IP students, the participants witnessed the learning gaps between the IP and non- IP students. The English teachers encounter IP students who need help with the

basic English language comprehension. Some students have difficulty with writing and pronunciation of the alphabet letters. In addition, some students also have poor reading and comprehension skills. For this reason, it is inevitable to have space for comparison with IP. They shared that they have this tendency to compare IP students to non-IP students, specifically those coming from the city. The participants shared:

...I think the identified IP students that we have are students from Tipan and Penacio. They are the students who are academically challenged, compared to others. They are not really interested in learning. (ET3)

...here in Montol, they are mixed. That's why they are left behind compared to non-IP students who do well in class. It is better to keep them distinct so that the teacher can focus. With that, they are not intimidated and can voice out what they feel. (ET4)

...This is because in Montessori, students are fluent in the English language. When the instructions are given once, they can understand immediately whereas in Montol, they cannot understand immediately. Because for them, English is just a subject. (ET2)

...What is challenging in terms of, you know? People from the countryside may know more, especially in English, right? They are not competent when it comes to speaking English, unlike the people from the city. That's our perception as mountain kids. (ET1)

...Well, at first, I found it very challenging. It was really difficult at the beginning because my first students in Ateneo are really good at speaking the language compared to the students here in Montol. (ET3)

...You really like to teach in the HOMO section because they can catch up quickly. But when it comes to HETERO sections, you will get tired quickly. Your will to teach will decrease. (ET2)

The researchers, after a thorough analysis of the core themes in this aspect, arrived at a final theme: Teaching in an IP school requires commitment and understanding to help IP students cope with their real problems.

### 3.2 The Cheerleader: Appreciating Little Wins

A mother always remembers the “first times” of their child. They remember the first moment they utter the words mama and papa. They also remember well the first time those little frail legs walked from a meter far walking towards them. The memory of the first time her child walked on the stage and delivered a poem or a song, or even the first moment she gets to pin the ribbons and don the medals remain in her mind as if it only happened yesterday. A mother will eternally cherish these small fragments of memories, because for once in her life, these small things will always remind her of the first little wins of her child. When her child wins the smallest things, she feels these things fill the huge parts of her role as a mother.

Like a mother, English teachers handling IP students also appreciate the small wins of their second children inside the school. After the long process of striving to learn, these small wins

cover the huge parts inside the hearts of the teachers. These small wins are manifestations that students are aspiring to even learn more despite the hindrances that life throws at them.

### 3.2.1 Finding happiness and fulfillment in students' attitude and in their little progress.

Nothing is more satisfying for a teacher than knowing and witnessing their students' triumphs. It is of the utmost importance that the outstanding achievements of students be acknowledged and appreciated. The progress and achievements of students are the gratifying rewards of teaching. English teachers handling IP students felt immense satisfaction when their non-reader students learned to read in due time. Students who had difficulty in recognizing letters in the alphabet are slowly learning how to construct sentences and even paragraphs. They also feel immense joy when they witness their former students excelling in their studies. The participants expressed:

...When I teach them, they can understand my lessons in our English class. (ET1)

...When students are slowly learning the lessons that they find difficult before. This really motivates me. (ET2)

...It is fulfilling when someone can write a paragraph in English and say it aloud or recite it in class. (ET2)

...It is also a fulfilling experience when you give the instructions once, and they can understand immediately. That's it, ma'am. Now, our non-readers have gradually identified letter sounds. You start with, Ah-ah-ah, but at least there is progress. (ET2)

...I think my fulfilling experience regarding teaching them the English language is whenever they can apply what they have learned in our class. (ET1)

...It is really challenging teaching them, but it is also fulfilling, especially when they become interested in the lesson. (ET3)

...Even though they are dealing with difficulties while learning and they are having a longer time to understand a lesson, I can still see that they are trying. They have learned something from my English class. Although the process is slow, they have learned to read English words and sentences. (ET4)

... I usually integrate games in my lesson because they become interested if I do that. (ET3)

Seeing the little progress of the students makes the English teachers happy and fulfilled. They expressed this happiness and fulfillment when they see their IP students slowly learning the English lesson they find difficult to understand before. ET2 shared that she observes how her IP students improve by seeing them writing an English paragraph and reciting it in front of the class. ET1 also expressed her fulfillment when she sees her students apply everything they have learned from her class. Seeing the IP students interested in the English class despite the challenges is the source of fulfillment of ET3. Because of this, ET3 decided to integrate games in her lesson to sustain the interest of her students. ET4 also manifests her patience as she sees

her students trying in class despite the slow process. Thus, her students learned how to read English words and sentences.

The thorough analysis of the core theme in this section led to the creation of the main theme: Happiness and Fulfillment of teachers in an IP school come from students' attitude and in their little progress.

### 3.3 The Artist: Weaving Dreams

Dreams are embedded in one's heart, like it has been there ever since the moment a person is born. These dreams drive a person's journey and give more meaning to one's mission in life. As a mother, they feel fulfilled when their children begin to act on the dream they want in the future. They even get more excited when their children narrate what they want to be when they grow up. Most times, we get to witness children who like to take part in games which require them to act like a certain professional. We see children interested in being doctors, chefs, or even artists. In these cases, mothers get to realize the dream their children want to have. In addition, parents also instill in their minds the continuous hard work to send their children to a good school and achieve the dreams they always dreamed. However, it is also important for parents, specifically for mothers, to imprint to their children the importance of living their own dreams. They must remind their children to do good things that make them happy and content. Children must always remember that their dreams are manifestations of their own heart's desires, not the desires of their parents or even of other people.

#### 3.3.1 Making a difference in the lives of the IP students.

There is nothing more rewarding for English teachers than to see their IP students desiring a dream they never realized before. Back then, they only got to hear their students' repetitive narrative that they will never get the chance to aim higher because of their life situation. Witnessing how their students realized that they could do something more through their teachings is such a significant accomplishment in the field of education. Indeed, teachers not only educate the minds, but also inspire the hearts of their students to become better people every day. The participant said:

...the unforgettable ones would be when I have students who tell me that they got motivated to pursue college or even dream higher because they learned something in class. (ET3)

...I told them that we really don't know where we are going in the future, why not learn as much as you can today because you might use that in the future. Most of their mindset is that "as long we can finish high school" 75 is enough. (ET3)

...I feel like I can do something different here. (ET3)

ET3 has this conviction that she can do something different in her workplace. Hence, she got to experience how her IP students were able to dream higher in life because of her mindset. She narrated that some of her students are considering pursuing college instead of just settling with a high school degree. Through her teaching, she made her students realize that they can aim for something more in life.

The experiences and narratives of the ETs in this section led to the creation of the main theme. Teachers' motivation to teach the English language in an IP School is to make a difference in the lives of their IP students.

### **3.4 The Heroine: Experiencing Difficulties**

Nurturing and raising a child is never an easy job and it does not happen without facing challenging and confusing circumstances. With little knowledge of motherhood, a mother who continues to learn gains knowledge from her own experiences and observations from other mothers who have also gone through motherhood. During the first few days, the mother might be overwhelmed with laborious tasks like waking up every night to attend to a crying child, physical pain during breastfeeding, managing a household while attending to the baby and the child's needs, and recovering oneself from birth. However, with patience, dedication to learning, and a heart to raise one's own child, she feels fulfilled and the mother will be able to adjust and face the challenges she encounters in her journey as a mother. The life of a mother is comparable to that of an English teacher handling IP student who face work-related challenges and other responsibilities outside their profession.

Being an English teacher handling IP student is fulfilling, but it is also an exhausting and difficult experience. They find it challenging to teach English in an IP school due to IP students who cannot understand English and its simple concepts. They feel sad, exhausted, and disappointed due to IP students' inability to understand English and its simple concepts such as identifying letter sounds and reading and spelling out English words. Also, English teachers feel demotivated because of their students' lack of interest in learning. They have students who do not go to school daily which burdens them. Moreover, English teachers handling IP students must also deal with difficult, remote workplaces. They encounter difficulties in transportation or location due to living far from the workplace, the rough road they travel which makes them prone to accidents.

The following core theme was identified: Experiencing setbacks like remote workplace, students' lack of interest and inability to learn English.

#### **3.4.1 Experiencing setbacks like remote workplace, students' lack of interest, and inability to learn English.**

English teachers handling IP students encounter problems in transportation and the location of the school. Most of them live far away from where the school is located. They usually wake up and prepare earlier for them not to be late for class. Another is the road to school. The school is in a mountainous area and the road is not that smooth compared to that of a highway. Some of the teachers need to commute or ride public transportation to get to school every day. During their first years of teaching, the road from the town center to the school is rough and during rainy seasons, the road becomes slippery and muddy which is prone to accidents. Inclusive education demands reassurance that future educators of indigenous students are properly equipped to manage multicultural classroom environments (Reyteran, 2022). Despite this vision, teachers teaching in indigenous peoples' schools encounter many significant challenges in their teaching field. Among these challenges are in the areas of transportation. These are narrated by the following participants.

...The challenge is coming to school. It is because I live far from Montol; actually, it is not far if you're going to look... because I am also from the mountains. So, I live in Gala, Ozamis City. It is just the opposite, but the problem is, since the road on the hill is broken, I really have to travel. I will go to the city, and then I will go up to Montol. I have climbed a mountain twice. (ET1)

...But perhaps the challenge is coming to school. It is because I live far from Montol. (ET1)

So, from our house? That's less than an hour, too. But usually, 30 to 40 minutes more, if it is fast. And ofcourse if you're almost late, we have to hurry a little. So that is my struggle. (ET1)

At first, I struggled because the road from the town center to here was still rough. It gets worse when it rains; it's very muddy and terrifying because you're almost always close to an accident. That's why I can only think of being absent. (ET2)

The road needs to be paved, I need to ride in a habal-habal, and I will get rained on during the rainy season. (ET4)

Another thing is that you need to wake up early because the school is far from our house, and you don't know the emergencies that might happen on the road. That's how I conditioned my mind: I was assigned to a mountain, so this is the reality. It would be best if you woke up early. (ET4)

The experiences of these English teachers handling IP students revealed that they encountered difficulties in the means of transportation due to the distance of the school from their respective residences. However, this situation never hinders them from striving to fulfill and accomplish their role as an educator. This finding is consistent with the experiences of Miko Dyan Pogoy, a public-school teacher who has also educated Indigenous learners. To reach a countryside village to teach Indigenous Peoples (IPs) children, she must wake up at dawn to prepare to travel for two to three hours since she resides in the city's downtown area (Palicte, 2020).

Students' lack of interest to learn demotivates teachers which contribute to the challenges encountered by the English IP teachers. They stated:

I felt demotivated because they are not motivated to learn. (ET3)

They only go to school twice a week. Not to mention, the road is tough. However, now, the road is cemented, and they have already established an integrated school. It is way different from 6 years ago. Since they only attend school twice a week, they get nothing, Ma'am, as in zero. (ET2)

I think the identified IP students that we have are students from Tipan and Penacio. They are students who are academically challenged, compared to others. They are not really interested in learning. (ET3)

I usually integrate games in my lesson because they become interested if I do that. If I refuse to do that, and I will settle in a lecture type of discussion, the IP students will not understand you. (ET3)

One is their motivation. It is very difficult to teach them when they are less motivated to learn. (ET3)

ET3 expressed how demotivated she was when her IP students were not interested in learning. She added that it was even more difficult to teach them if she conducted lecture type of discussion because the IP students cannot understand. Lamb (2011) stated that some students become uninterested and demotivated in learning due to prior negative learning experiences.

Teaching the English language in an IP School includes significant experiences for English learners. Among these is the struggle of students in participating in English class. As narrated:

It is a challenge when they find it difficult to identify the sound of the letters. (ET2)

... There is someone from Penacio who really doesn't know how to read. He was actually enrolled in my class, in my advisory, but we put him in ALS. Because he can barely recognize letters. Then according to the teacher at ALS, "It is still very difficult for him to adopt our lessons because he doesn't even know how to read. I am sad for them because they never know how to read. Then when they reached grade 11, it got worse. That's why I can say, "where is their elementary teacher?" because why don't they know how to read? Almost all of them are from Penacio. We will know immediately that they don't know how to read. In Tagalog, they know a little, but in English, it was very difficult for them. During my first quiz, they just wrote on their paper facemask because they were constantly seeing it on the walls, but they didn't have anything else within their paper. That is why I am concerned about them. That's why I chose to send them to ALS. (ET4)

I can feel a little disappointment teaching in an IP school. (ET2)

Honestly speaking, I felt tired. I am tired of teaching like this because you'll return to the beginning. Suddenly, I became an elementary teacher. (ET2)

I find it very sad because they really have difficulty in learning the English subject. (ET4)

I am sad for them because they don't know how to read. (ET4)

These findings are validated by Pachino (2020) who stressed that one of the struggles of English teachers handling IP students is teaching the English language. Some Filipinos, particularly the Indigenous people, still struggle in learning to speak the English language even though the Philippines is one of the most fluent English-speaking countries. English teachers expressed their difficulties in fulfilling their job due to the inability of some students to comprehend even the basic concepts. Their situation required them to manage their time wisely and plan their lessons and teaching strategies appropriately. ET2 expressed how frustrated she is in teaching new English lessons in class because some of her students, specifically those

from Penacio, still have difficulty even in identifying letter sounds. She explained that this topic is no longer her job as a Grade 7 English teacher. However, she strives to not let those students feel left out in the class by helping them with their difficulties.

According to the study of Leño et al. (2019), indigenous learners have difficulty in comprehending the English language due to their very limited exposure to the language. Their limited English vocabulary hinders their capacity to understand the significance and meaning of English words and expressions. The deficiency of their English vocabularies impairs the capacity of indigenous students to recognize words, causing them to mispronounce or disregard them.

The researchers, after a thorough analysis on the core themes in this aspect, arrived at a final theme: Experiencing setbacks like remote workplace, students' lack of interest and inability to learn English.

### **3.5 The Way-maker: Overcoming Challenges**

Becoming a mother means there is no utmost assurance that she will get to have a full 24-hour journey for herself. There is also no assurance that she will only get to solve her own problems. Being a mother means being a source of different solutions. Whether it would be a missing shirt inside a closet, a stain on a white uniform, or a loose uniform skirt, it seemed like she always had a manual for solving these problems. No matter how tiring it is to think of solutions to all the problems, a mother can still find happiness in her work as she develops patience and passion while embracing drawbacks. Being a mother is also about finding that drive to stay and continue despite countless obstacles, problems to face, and solutions to solve.

Just like a mother, these English teachers handling IP also strive to overcome the challenges in their learning environment. They seek to have an environment where students are heard with their problems and are given various ways to solve the problems. They become flexible and resourceful to be of help to their students. They adjust their teaching strategies to cater to the needs of the students and motivate them to learn. Teachers adjust their standards for them to understand their students and to give them the best attention to address the students' learning needs.

Upon striving to overcome their challenges, teachers also find happiness in their work by developing patience and passion and embracing drawbacks. In teaching the IP students, teachers develop patience and passion. As teachers become more passionate in teaching IP students, they begin to love their workplace and create memorable experiences with them. No matter where one is assigned, it does not hinder the teachers' drive to impart knowledge to their students.

As they strive to overcome the difficult obstacles and find happiness beyond them, teachers find the drive to stay and continue teaching. Teachers stay and continue teaching because of personal reasons such as having bills to pay, there is no other choice, and because they are already used to the learning environment.

#### **3.5.1 Finding happiness in one's work by developing patience and passion and embracing drawbacks.**

In teaching the IP students, teachers develop their patience as IP students find it hard to understand the topics immediately and optimistically believe that they will be able to learn in the end. With their burning passion to teach their students, the teachers become more invested in their work and attend to the needs of their students religiously. English teachers handling IP students share memorable experiences with their students and learn to love their workplace because of their passion and dedication in teaching. No matter where one is assigned, the teacher prepares herself and considers one's workplace a blessing.

When you are already in the field, you may not have this day again, so make sure to make the most of it. (ET1)

My unforgettable experience teaching them was my interaction with the students from Penacio. It is behind that mountain. (Laughed). They only go to school twice a week. Not to mention, the road is tough. However, now, the road is cemented, and they have already established an integrated school. It is way different from 6 years ago. Since they only attend school twice a week, they get nothing ma'am, as in zero. (ET2)

I would say that every day is an unforgettable experience. (ET1)

Just love where you are assigned. Because if you can be placed in or assigned to an IP school, although it is tiring, at the same time, it is very fulfilling. (ET2)

The first time I heard that I would be here, I didn't know how to feel. Would I be happy? (Char!) But we should be happy because it's a blessing. (ET1)

Nope. We can't choose. When you apply to DepEd, only the Division will assign you and what school you will attend. You really have to prepare yourself for where you will be thrown. (ET1)

You must be patient in teaching them. Because in the end, they will still learn. (ET1)

To become effective and trustworthy in the eyes of the students, teachers should exert effort and do the best they can to teach them what they need to learn and what they should be able to achieve in the future. When teachers begin to build a teacher-student relationship towards their students in the classroom, they will start creating memorable experiences with them. ET2 expressed her unforgettable interaction with the students from Penacio. For ET1, she believes that every day is an unforgettable experience. In terms of the workplace, both ET1 and ET2 share the same sentiments that no matter where one is assigned, they should embrace it as blessing. As teachers it is a must that they must prepare ourselves for what lies ahead. Moreover, teachers should embody the utmost patience towards their students, especially if the students find it hard to understand the lessons immediately. Teachers should also remember that with patience, one believes that the students will eventually learn in the end.

### **3.5.2 Being flexible and resourceful to be of help to IP students.**

English teachers handling IP students are always flexible and resourceful in the classroom. They plan and design varied teaching strategies to cater to the needs of their students. Since

the students are the main recipients of learning, teachers should adjust their ways in the classroom for their students to understand the lesson and become motivated to learn.

English teachers handling IP students develop varied strategies to motivate their students. They will find and prepare diverse strategies and lessons that best suit the needs of the students. Also, they will allow themselves to know their students more deeply by determining and understanding their strengths and weaknesses. By identifying their strengths and weaknesses, teachers will be able to know the right strategies to implement and design activities that encourage them to become active in their discussion. These are narrated by the following participants.

As teachers, let's prepare. And we should know their strengths and weaknesses in learning. What learning styles or strategies would fit them? So, we have to know what suits them. (ET1)

Even though they are not eager to learn, I find ways to encourage them to become active in our activities. I even offered rewards, snacks and affirmations just to make them feel justified and acknowledged. (ET3)

We have a project to pull out our non-reader students, especially from Penacio. (ET3)

I usually integrate games in my lesson because they become interesting if I do that. (ET3)

Then your preparations and the lessons you will give them should be fit for them. (ET2)

The activities I prepare must be varied. What I prepared for the HOMO section is different from the HETERO section. You should do an activity in this section. It should not be the same as HOMO because it should be easy for them. To HETERO, it's always just a simple spelling. (ET2)

The flexibility of a teacher can also be seen in their adjustments towards their approach and standard to better understand their students. English IP teachers lower their standards for students to understand and develop their capabilities. They are careful with the questions they will be asking during their discussion for clarity because students cannot immediately understand an English question when asked. These are narrated by the following participants.

I started to tone down my standard, the way I teach, so I realized that I had to switch to make sure that my students understood. Especially the instructions and the activity. (ET3)

But when I was assigned here, it was the opposite. They didn't know and couldn't follow, so it wasn't easy. You need to change your standards to fit them. (ET4)

As for me, I am very careful because if you ask the child yes-or-no questions like "Do you like to have this?" they will not respond. But when you ask it in vernacular, "Ganahan ka ani? Asa imohang ganahan ani?" and then, they will answer you. I asked

why they didn't speak up and it was because they didn't understand English. But there are also ¼ of the students who know, but the rest do not...(ET2)

English teachers also consider the needs of the IP students. This is done by pulling out non-reader students and giving them a special room. Having different rooms for IP students allows the teachers to focus on them and the students will also not get intimidated by other students and can freely voice out their feelings. ET3 and ET4 stated:

We have a project to pull out our non-reader students, especially from Penacio. (ET3)

For me, these IP students really need a special room of their own, as they are IP students. (ET4)

... It is better to keep them distinct so that the teacher can focus. With that, they are not intimidated and can voice out what they feel. (ET4)

The needs of the students are the primary concern of the teachers. To see the learning and development of the students, teachers should adjust their teaching strategies. To meet the students' needs, teachers employ varied strategies such as realizing the need to code-switch especially on the instruction, discussion, and activities. Teachers would also translate English stories to vernacular and include supplementing materials such as pictures. Translating the instruction and activities to vernacular is a must for the IP students to understand the teachers.

I realized that I had to code switch to make sure that my students understood. Especially the instructions and the activity. (ET3)

I realized that I need to translate the instruction into vernacular in order for them to understand and to know what to do. (ET3)

I was able to adjust, but the adjustment meant that I had to apply code switching because it is really necessary. (ET3)

Especially when I teach stories, I think my role in literature is to translate the stories into vernacular with actions and pictures to make it easier for them to understand. However, it's fulfilling. (ET3)

Moreover, teachers are also idealistic when it comes to their lessons. They also want to see how their students accomplish the tasks given. However, ET4 emphasized that no matter how idealistic a teacher is, if her approach and discussion cannot fully impart knowledge and value towards the students, the teacher should adjust and tone down her standard. Furthermore, ET4 stated that no matter how idealistic we are, we need to adjust based on the situation. (ET4)

### 3.5.3 Finding that drive to stay in teaching.

Teaching in an IP school is indeed a challenging task; thus, English teachers continuously look for ways to make the work easier and more effective. The first experiences in teaching the English language for teachers are memorable because accordingly, they have impressed their students with their ability to teach the language. They emphasized that as an English teacher,

they are determined to teach the language by speaking it during the discussion because they believe that it is a principle in teaching. In addition, they also have their personal reasons for staying in the service such as for financial support and considering their length of service. For these reasons, they continuously encourage themselves to persist in their chosen field. They developed other personal skills such as learning how to drive to overcome the difficulty of a far workplace. They are also open to other opportunities to improve their financial capabilities. They narrated:

...My first English class here was very silent, I expected that they were listening, but they are not, they are just in awe and amazed at how I teach. (ET3)

ET3 shared how her students are amazed during their first encounter with each other. She was consistent in speaking the language during the discussion because it is an English class. The English teachers handling IP students added:

...As an English teacher, of course we really have to speak the language when teaching, so my first month in teaching, I really did not use code switching because that's the principle in teaching English. (ET3)

...Of course, if you're a new teacher, it's very idealistic. It should be our standard that should be followed. The students in your class must speak English because you are an English teacher. (ET4)

ET3 and ET4 both expressed the essence of speaking the English language during the discussion so that students will also get used to hearing and speaking the language.

Despite the various challenges, the teachers continuously decide to stay in the service because of their personal reasons. They shared:

...I don't have a choice. (Laughed) I decided to stay here in Montol even though many say why not transfer because I have been here for six years. But the environment will be wasted, as well as the students, because they know how to respect, particularly these IP students. (ET4)

...So, as you mentioned, what motivates me? Of course, we have bills to pay. Bills are waving. (ET1)

...I haven't had that thought. It's still the same because there's no other choice. I don't have any other jobs either. (ET2)

Staying because of the length of service and the respectful students are the reasons for ET4 in staying in the service. Meanwhile, ET2 never thought of quitting because she has no other choice, and it is her only choice. Hence, their choice to stay in teaching in the IP school encouraged them to develop other personal skills. They narrated:

...But now that the road is paved, it is quite okay. So, the teacher should learn to drive. (ET2)

...So, try hard. Because of the distance, I was able to learn how to drive to get to Montol.  
(ET1)

ET2 and ET1 both shared that they thought of developing these personal skills to make their job as teachers better. On the other hand, they are also open to other opportunities that life might give them. They indicated:

...I tried to enroll in law school so that I could study for one semester, but I didn't.  
(ET1)

...If there is another option that doesn't require you to leave your family or another offer where the salary is enough to pay the bills, why not? I will grab it. (ET2)

Both ET2 and ET1 shared their desire to also try other fields aside from teaching if they were given a chance.

The experiences and narratives of the ETs in this section led to the creation of the main theme. English teachers handling IP students **overcome challenges by being resourceful, embracing drawbacks, and finding reasons to love one's work.**

### 3.6 The Mother: Learning for a Lifetime

Do yourself a favor and learn all you can; then remember what you learn, and you will prosper (Proverbs 19:8). Indeed, learning is a lifelong process. Every day we learn new things from our experiences, interactions, and observations. Becoming a mother is not about settling and being content with what you have and what you know right now. It is also about desiring to gain and learn more about nurturing and raising a child for herself and especially to the one she nurtures. For mothers, it is not enough to just know how to raise a child, to know how to perfectly put diapers, or to know what meal to prepare. Becoming a mother means becoming her child's confidence, the number one supporter, provider, defender, and all others. As she aspires to become the best, she embraces countless opportunities to learn and better herself for her child.

Similarly, English teachers handling IP students also desire to be the best and effective for their students. They begin to feel frustration whenever they feel they cannot do more for their students and not have enough. This inspires them to improve themselves because they believe they can really do something more for their students. If it is for their students, frustration cannot equal the fulfilling feeling whenever their students learn something from them. To attain such aspiration, teachers begin to have plans for their professional growth. They start by determining their future goals and planning to pursue graduate studies when one's financial situation is stable. Also, they grab free seminars for professional needs to become more effective in teaching and delivering the lessons.

The following core themes were identified: (1) Aspiring for career advancement and (2) Desiring to be the best teacher to IP students.

#### 3.6.1 Aspiring for career advancement.

As English teachers begin to see and realize their needs and the needs of their IP students, they begin to aspire for career advancement. Having plans for professional growth will also gain them knowledge on the parts they do not know about and on the part, they lack knowledge of. The desire to be effective in one's field fuels their hearts to pursue graduate studies. Education is a continuous process. It continues even after obtaining a degree and beginning a profession. Through professional development, individuals with a focus on their careers may continually enhance their abilities and become more proficient in their careers. In the field of teaching, the need to enhance and develop oneself is important. The participants shared:

I have personal needs, so if there is a free seminar, I will grab it. Because I've been here for six years, the children's knowledge has increased, but mine is still the same. I also didn't try self-study because it is tiring. (ET2)

Yes, I need more training, maybe, because I feel like I didn't use most of our training before. It should be more than 1 page ahead for the student. It should be more so that you can deliver the lesson effectively. (ET4)

I am still determining where I'm going. (ET1)

I have plans for my education, such as a master's degree, once my financial situation is stable. I must prepare well if I want to proceed to my masteral. (ET2)

I started my master's degree at Saint Columban in 2020. It was only in the summer, and then I changed again because the next semester, I tried to enroll in law school so that I could study for one semester, but I didn't. (ET1)

Aspiring for career advancement promotes personal and professional growth. ET4 expressed that she recognized the need for training to develop her knowledge and skills in teaching. For ET1 and ET2, they are determined to see the end of where they are going. ET2 added that financial matters concern her. This led her to express that when her financial situation is stable, she will prepare for her graduate studies.

The participants' will to pursue professional development to offer better quality of education to students supports the study of Robiños (2022). He emphasized the struggles of ineffective teaching learning processes between indigenous students and teachers due to lack of formal training and even teacher preparation. To adequately meet the demands for high quality education, English teachers must have competent knowledge in planning and executing culturally sensitive education activities.

### 3.6.2 Desiring to be the best teacher to IP students.

Teachers want to give the best of themselves to help their students. By doing so, they need to have that encouragement that in everything they do, they must make the most out of it. Teachers will always do the things they know are right for their students. In giving the best of oneself to help the students, teachers make their discussions easier and extend extra time to teach them.

Okay, so it's just that, you cannot give what you don't have, right? If you are going to teach, you should have that encouragement yourself. It's not because you want it, but

you should do it, right? It's your job as a teacher. Why did you choose to teach? That's part of it. And also, when you are already in the field, you may not have this day again, so make sure to make the most of it. (ET1)

Especially when I teach stories, I think my role in literature is to translate the stories into vernacular with actions and pictures to make it easier for them to understand. However, it's fulfilling. (ET3)

You will not have a hard time handling them because they are not naughty children. They will listen, but the only struggle is that they don't know. You have to extend extra time to teach them. (ET4)

So as teachers, it is our responsibility to teach them as much as we can, as much as we know. (ET1)

...They come to high school without knowing how to read and write. But I really want to teach them. (ET3)

Wanting to give the best of oneself to help the students is the ultimate desire of ET1, ET3, and ET4. They will go all out to become the best teachers to their students. As they desire to be the best, they make their discussions easier by translating English stories into vernacular whenever they teach literature. They also extend extra time to teach students whenever they are struggling on a certain topic or concept. Teaching the IP students gives teachers frustration especially when they cannot provide enough or not have enough to help them.

Synthesizing from their lived experiences, the main essence of the phenomenon is, Happiness and fulfillment in teaching come from the celebrations of little successes and finding love in one's work despite setbacks.

## CONCLUSION

The journey of Secondary English IP teachers teaching in an IP school was not a walk on sandy beaches, but they ended up happy and fulfilled. Their happiness and fulfillment are rooted in their students' little successes. Their duties and responsibilities challenge them to transcend beyond their capacities. However, along the journey, they found love in their work despite the setbacks. Carrying important duties and responsibilities inspired the English IP teachers to aspire for advancement in the field of teaching.

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