
Challenges Experienced By Alternative Learning System (ALS) Graduates from English Medium Instruction in Philippine Advent College: Coping Strategies

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ABSTRACT

This study mainly focused on how language of instruction could influence the quality of education by determining the academic performance of challenges experienced by Alternative Learning System (ALS Recipient) students from English Medium instruction in Philippine Advent College and coping strategies during the School year 2019-2020. The participants involved in this study were the 373 ALS from BSBA department; 242, Education department; 16, IT department and 18, HRM department. Both the descriptive and inferential statistics were used in the analysis of the data.

The study disclosed that the challenges experienced by the ALS graduates using English as the medium of instruction in private school were; hesitation to visit their professors at their offices for scientific inquiries during office hours because of the English language barriers, can't present ideas well and logically, embarrassment in class to answer and ask questions in English and depends on notes summaries more than textbooks. While the coping strategies they employed to overcome the challenges were; engagement in physical activities, wish that they were more capable of dealing with the problem and think more positively about them, try to control over the problem and leave the situation altogether. Also, the study disclosed that ALS graduates passed with their subjects enrolled amidst the challenges encountered on the use of English as Medium of Instructions. And that, both male and female participants encountered different challenges and used varied coping strategies to overcome them.

Finally, the study recommends that the school may prioritize in addressing the challenges experience by the college ALS students from English Medium Instruction for their academic achievements; that the College instructors may use multilingual instruction to address difficulty of the student; that the college ALS graduates to continue their exposure in the (EMI) English Medium Instruction so that they can overcome their challenges through time; that the ALS graduates may double their effort in attaining closely approximating mastery in learning EMI for coping strategies in school and that another study may conducted in other school having ALS graduates with increased number of variables.

KEYWORDS: *Alternative Learning System (ALS), English Medium Instruction (EMI), Challenges, coping strategies, Academic Performance*

INTRODUCTION

The importance of education has been growing accordingly (Kazu & Demirkol) [1], and it is a very important human activity that plays a very important role in the development and

progress of a certain nation (Kimani, Kara & Njagi) [2]. It helps any society and model individuals to function well in their environment and its purpose is to equip the citizenry to reshape society and eliminate inequality (Tindowen, Bassig & Cagurangan) [3]. Also, education is an important sector in national and individual development, and it plays a vital role in creating a country's human resource base at a level higher than primary education (Kimani, Kara, & Njagi) [2].

Every Filipino has a privilege to free basic education; however, various Filipinos do not have a possibility to attend and finish formal basic education (Atilano, et al.) [4]. Therefore, the Philippine educational system has education may be granted to certain types of learners who for many reasons are unable to attend or finish the formal schooling track (Arzadon & Nato) [5].

Republic Act. 9155 in 2010 or the Governance Act of Basic Education provides contingencies for Alternative Learning System (ALS) that will address and promote continuing education. The implementation of ALS paved way to the rights for education to be asserted by marginalized groups like children, women, people with special needs, and Indigenous People communities and also out-of-school youths (OSY) who did not finish their basic education due to economic and support issues (Tindowen, Bassig, & Cagurangan) [3]. The government-initiated Alternative Learning System (ALS) Curriculum for Indigenous People (IP's) was institutionalized through DepEd Order No.101. The curriculum supposedly develops content which is responsive to the specific needs of the target communities although the learning competencies are the same all ALS context of learning (Tupas & Lorente) [6].

Alternative Learning System is a program that serves students at any level, serves suspended and expelled students, serves students whose learning styles are better served in alternative program, or provides individualized programs outside of the standard classroom setting in a caring atmosphere in which students learn the skills necessary to redirect their lives (Mercado) [7]. Many Filipinos do not have a chance to attend and finish formal basic education (Grades 1-6 and Year 1-4) due to many reasons. Some drop out of schools and some do not have schools in their communities. It is increasingly recognized that school alone cannot provide quality basic education for all. Hence, non-formal education is one such pathway. For many children and young people who experience educational exclusion, non-formal education is an important means to acquiring knowledge, skills, values and attitudes required for further learning, better well-being and improved livelihoods (Yasunaga) [8].

Educational endeavors are mainly aimed at molding students into resilient learners (critical and creative thinkers, effective problem solvers) so that they can gain admittance to better living opportunities and advanced education (Kuldass, et al.) [9]. In today's globalized world, knowing language is seen as an indispensable part of almost every sector in the Philippines. The teaching of foreign languages has become the essential part of the Philippine system (Solak & Bayar) [10]. The society is at present witnessing a rapid increase in the use of English as a language as well as a language of wider communication (Smith) [11]. English has become an essential second language as well as a language for international communication (Kuo, Chu, & Huang) [12]. English language is an acknowledge passport to better education and employment opportunities and plays a crucial role to weave the world into a single thread (Ahmad) [13]. In addition, the English language is widely used and recognized both in Education and the private sector in the Philippines. Different views come into play the role and function of English in institutions of higher education, where it is the

medium of instruction. It now entails being able to provide high-quality education through English-medium instruction (Basibek et al.) [14].

However, it can also be difficult to motivate learners. In many EFL context, children may struggle to understand the relevance of learning English as they have little contact with speakers of the language, particularly the Alternative Learning System graduates (Copland, Garton & Burns) [15]. Also, the current EMI situation leaves much to be desired with students struggling to learn the subject matter due to their low-proficiency in English. In other words, the efficiency of learning and studying in ALS graduates is very poor, and the English education could be a serious problems in their lives of ALS graduates, and it has still been struggling to improve the English proficiency of the whole ALS students (Cho) [16].

ALS graduates often fell the need for coping for English language for it is the medium of instruction in almost colleges/ universities all over the world (Mosha) [17]. A coping strategy is one of the most popular concepts, and researchers have suggested that it plays a crucial role in predicting and individuals' burnout levels. Coping refers to “constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and / or internal demands that are appraised as challenging of exceeding the resources of the person” (Shin et al.) [18].

The researcher observes that the Alternative Learning System graduates who are enrolled in college endeavor in coping with the lessons in higher education. Same is the problem of the ALS graduates who are currently enrolled in Philippine Advent College. They suffer difficulties because of lacking competencies due to an informal way of learning their high school education. They become traumatized most especially in speaking English language inside the classroom. Hence, the researcher wishes to conduct the study to single-out the challenges encountered by the Alternative Learning System (ALS) graduates from English Medium Instruction (EMI) in private school and to determine their coping strategies as well.

Statement of the Problem

This study determined the challenges encountered by the Alternative Learning System graduates and it aimed to gain insights about how the Alternative Learning System (ALS) graduates coped with the strategies and achieve their academic performance in English in Philippine Advent College.

METHODS

The study used the descriptive-correlational design. The research was conducted in Philippine Advent College which is located in Ramon Magsaysay, Sindangan, Zamboanga Del Norte. The population of the study consists of 649 ALS graduates who were currently enrolled in the different Departments, the IT, HRM, BSBA, and Education of Philippine Advent College for the School Year 2019-2020. A questionnaire-checklist served as the main instrument in collecting the needed data from the participants of the study. The challenges encountered by the ALS graduate participants from English Medium Instruction (EMI) were determined using the structured questionnaire on Performance in different assessment tasks, Student-instructor communication inside and outside of the class, Material content and study habits and Students attitudes towards learning, which adapted from the study of Al Zumor [19]. The coping strategies of the ALS graduates from English Medium Instruction (EMI) were identified using the structured questionnaire composed of Approach

factor, Avoidance factor, Social Support factor, which is adapted from the study of Sullivan [20]. To determine the challenges encountered by the ALS graduates-participants using English Medium Instruction; the coping strategies of the ALS graduates to overcome the challenges; the Academic Performance of the ALS graduates using English Language Instruction, a Weighted Average Mean was employed. The t-test was used to determine the significant difference between the challenges encountered by the ALS graduates-participants from English Medium Instruction; and significance difference between coping strategies of the ALS graduates from the English Medium Instruction. To determine the significant relationship between the challenges experienced by the ALS recipients and their academic performance, Pearson coefficient of correlation was used.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Challenges Experience by the ALS recipients using EMI

Table 1 discloses how ALS-participants' challenges experienced using English Medium Instruction. As to the male participants, they strongly agreed that they experienced a very serious challenges as to their performance in different assessment tasks as manifested in the overall mean of 4.28. However, they only agreed on the student-instructor communication inside and outside of the class, material content and study habits and students' attitude towards learning and with 4.08, 3.85 and 4.0 over all means respectively.

The male ALS-participants concurred that with EMI they hesitate to visit their professors at their offices for scientific inquiries, do not do well in exams because they find it hard comprehending the questions, can't present ideas well and logically, do not take notes during lectures and cannot organize their thoughts and ideas coherently when discussions are in English.

As to the female ALS-participants, they responded that they were challenged seriously as they agreed on all of the four descriptors as manifested by their overall means of 4.01, 3.94, 3.88 and 3.93, respectively. However, among the specific challenges identified, they concurred that because of EMI they encountered the following challenges very seriously: they hesitant in visiting their professors in their offices for scientific inquiries, feel embarrassed in class to answer questions, depend on notes summaries and translated notes more than textbooks, feel embarrassed in class when asked to answer on English questions and cannot organized thoughts and ideas coherently and logically.

The grand mean of 4.05 for the male and 3.94 for the female conclude that both of the groups agreed that they experienced serious challenges on the use of EMI. The result of the study is in congruence with Kirkgoz [21] which results claims that students were found to have difficulty in understanding main concepts in their subject area. Accordingly, students stated a lack of understanding subject matter through EMI as challenges and that they encounter the following problems: 1) Reduced ability to understand concepts, 2) Low-level of knowledge about the subject studied, 3) Excessive consumption of time, 4) Feelings of alienation and separation, 5) The least amount of participation in the classes due to low level proficiency in English.

Table 1. *Challenges Experienced by the ALS Graduates on the Use of English Medium Instruction*

Challenges	Male			Female		
	WAM	AE	I	WAM	AE	I
A. Performance in Different Assessment Task						
1. I usually do not do well in exams because questions are in English which hinders my comprehension of questions and production of answer.	4.38	SA	VS	4.09	A	S
2. If given the chance to take exams in English, I would do not do pretty well.	4.10	A	S	3.89	A	S
3. I can't present my ideas well and logically when I do my exams in English	4.37	SA	VS	4.04	A	S
Overall Mean	4.28	SA	VS	4.01	A	S
B. Student-Instructor Communication Inside and Outside of the Class						
1. Using English as a medium of instruction and communication in my department is barrier to communication between students and their professors during office hours.	4.27	SA	VS	4.15	A	S
2. I hesitate to visit my professors at their offices for scientific inquiries during office hours because of the English language barrier.	4.52	SA	VS	4.41	SA	VS
3. I cannot organize my thoughts and ideas incoherently when discussions are in English in the lecture hall	4.28	SA	VS	4.22	SA	VS
4. My weakness in English is the main reason for not asking questions for clarification during the lecture.	4.11	A	S	4.06	A	S
5. I do not take notes in English during the lecture.	4.30	SA	VS	3.72	A	S
6. I do not take notes during the lecture	3.96	A	S	4.18	A	S
7. My role in the lecture presented in English is an inactive listener and I do not participate.	3.84	A	S	3.80	A	S
8. Instructors organize pair discussion activities among students during the lecture that can help in enhancing content comprehension. I do not participate.	3.72	A	S	3.36	M A	LS
9. I can say that I am not active during the lectures presented in English	3.89	A	S	3.79	A	S
10. Because I am weak in English, I hesitate to ask the lecturer a question to clarify a	3.94	A	S	3.70	A	S

point I did not understand.

Overall Mean	4.08	A	S	3.94	A	S
C. Material Content and Study Habits						
1. I depend on note summaries and translated notes more than on the textbook because of my low proficiency in English.	4.05	A	S	4.27	SA	VS
2. I spend most of my study time at home doing the translation from English into Filipino.	3.64	A	S	3.48	A	S
Overall Mean	3.85	A	S	3.88	A	S
D. Students' Attitude Towards Learning						
1. The shift of medium of instruction from Filipino at school to English at university causes feeling of anxiety, frustration, tension and fear.	3.75	A	S	3.41	M A	LS
2. I believe EMI results in weak learning outcomes.	4.09	A	S	3.74	A	S
3. I feel embarrassed in the class if asked to answer a question in English.	4.21	SA	VS	4.25	SA	VS
4. I feel not comfortable when I am asked to do written assignments in English.	4.01	A	S	3.77	A	S
5. I do not enjoy participation in discussion when it is in English.	3.99	A	S	4.14	A	S
6. I feel ashamed of myself in front of the class every time the I am asked to answer the questions in English and misused the correct grammar.	3.97	A	S	4.28	SA	VS
Overall Mean	4.00	A	S	3.93	A	S
Grand Mean	4.05	A	S	3.94	A	S

Legend:

5	(4.21-5.00)	Strongly Agree(SA)	Very Serious (VS)
4	(3.41-4.20)	Agree (A)	Serious (S)
3	(2.61-3.40)	Fairly Agree (FA)	Less Serious (LS)
2	(1.81-2.60)	Disagree (D)	Least Serious (LstS)
1	(1.00-1.50)	Strongly Disagree (SD)	Not a Problem(NP)

Table 2 displays the data on the coping strategies of employed by the college ALS students to overcome the challenges encountered which were assessed through the three indicators namely: Approach Factor, Avoidance Factor and Social Support Factor.

As to the male ALS-participants, they responded that they “often” employ approach factor as coping strategy to overcome EMI challenges with the grand mean of 3.70. However, they “sometimes” employ avoidance and social factors with the overall mean of 3.16 and 3.24, respectively.

This elucidates that the male-participants identified often engaging to physical activities, thinking positively about the problem and trying to find out what is wrong as their approach factor. However, they wish they were ore capable of dealing with the problem, accept they can't do anything about the problem and leaving the problem situation altogether were there identified avoidance factor. Finally, they talk to a friend or family member for advices, express their emotion by crying and hide their feelings from others as their social support factors.

As to the female-participants, they retorted that they “often” employ avoidance factor and social support factor as their coping strategies with the overall mean of 3.70 and 3.44, respectively. However, the “sometimes” employ avoidance factor with the overall mean of 3.29.

The female-participant's entails that they engage to physical activities, brainstorm for a possible solution and try to gain control over the problem as their approach factor; leave the problem situation altogether, tell themselves that the problem isn't important and doing nothing about them as their avoidance factors; and spend time with someone they care, express emptions through crying and get other people's perspective of the problem as their social support factor.

The grand mean shows that the two groups of participants has slight difference as the male participants had 3.37, which means they” sometimes” employ the coping strategies to overcome the challenges while the female participants had 3.53, which means they “often” employ the identified strategies. The result is in contrast the results of the study conducted by Tindowen, et al. [22] which claims that in terms of gender-dependent adaptive strategies, male learners are more creative and innovative than female's learners.

Table 2. *Coping Strategies of the ALS Graduates to Overcome the Challenges Encountered*

Coping Strategies	Male			Female		
	WAM	SD	AE	WAM	SD	AE
A. Approach Factor						
1. Trying to stay calm.	3.65	0.89	O	3.76	1.05	O
2. Trying to find out what you did wrong.	3.74	0.82	O	3.90	0.83	O
3. Trying to gain control over the problem.	3.42	0.88	O	3.95	0.93	O
4. Drawing on your past experience to help you solve the problem.	3.64	0.96	O	3.31	0.95	S
5. Engaging physical activity of exercise.	4.06	0.98	O	4.25	0.86	A
6. Thinking positively about the problem.	3.92	0.80	O	3.90	0.82	O
7. Brainstorming a variety of possible solutions to the problems.	3.45	0.91	O	3.93	1.00	O
Overall Mean	3.70		O	3.86		O
B. Avoidance Factor						
1. Leaving the problem situation altogether.	3.69	1.03	O	3.98	1.06	O
2. Using drugs or alcohol.	1.82	1.26	R	1.36	0.59	N
3. Thinking about hurting yourself.	2.72	1.30	S	2.16	1.26	R

4. Giving up.	2.31	1.25	R	2.35	1.19	R
5. Wishing you were more capable of dealing with the problem situation.	3.93	0.96	O	3.44	1.11	O
6. Telling yourself the problem isn't that important.	3.05	1.50	S	3.90	0.95	O
7. Ignoring the problem.	2.89	1.35	S	3.30	1.15	S
8. Withdrawing from other people.	3.35	1.04	S	3.29	1.07	S
9. Engaging in activities to distract you from the problem (reading, watching a movie, listening to music).	3.63	1.25	O	3.74	1.17	O
10. Denying that the problem exists.	3.27	1.34	S	3.58	1.06	O
11. Avoiding people or things that remind you of the problem.	3.15	1.30	S	3.57	1.03	O
12. Doing nothing about the problem.	3.53	1.15	O	3.81	1.01	O
13. Hoping that the problem will fix itself.	2.94	1.36	S	3.36	1.04	S
14. Trying to avoid thinking about the problem.	3.32	1.14	S	3.26	1.19	S
15. Blaming others for the problem.	2.85	1.38	S	2.70	0.94	S
16. Blaming yourself for the problem.	3.13	1.34	S	3.72	1.40	O
17. Getting angry about the problem.	3.53	1.12	O	4.01	1.18	O
18. Accepting you can't do anything about the problem.	3.72	1.04	O	3.71	1.13	O
Overall Mean	3.16		S	3.29		S

C. Social Support Factor

1. Talking to another student for emotional support.	3.19	1.03	S	3.64	1.09	O
2. Getting other people perspective of the problem.	3.43	1.16	O	3.84	1.10	O
3. Talking to a friend from outside school, or a family member, for specific advice on how to solve the problem.	3.63	1.11	O	3.73	1.07	O
4. Not talking to anyone about the problem.	3.31	1.15	S	3.01	1.35	S
5. Talking for a professor/supervisor specific advice on how to solve the problem.	3.13	1.26	S	3.18	1.28	S
6. Hiding your feelings from others, keeping your feelings to yourself.	3.50	1.27	O	3.00	1.40	S
7. Expressing your emotions to someone.	3.25	1.30	S	3.48	1.21	O
8. Talking to a friend outside school, or a family member, for emotional support.	3.21	1.20	S	3.60	1.25	O
9. Getting advice from someone who has had the same problem.	3.33	1.15	S	3.24	1.17	S
10. Expressing your emotions by crying.	3.61	1.24	O	3.90	1.03	O
11. Spending time with someone you care about.	3.06	1.22	S	4.05	1.02	O

12. Talking for a professor/supervisor for emotional support.	2.76	1.43	S	3.06	1.15	S
13. Talking someone about your feelings.	2.78	1.38	S	3.04	1.11	S
14. Talking to another student for specific advice on how to solve the problem.	3.18	1.29	S	3.40	1.29	S
Overall Mean	3.24		S	3.44		O
Grand Mean	3.37		S	3.53		O

Legend:

5	(4.21-5.00)	Always (A)
4	(3.41-4.20)	Often (O)
3	(2.61-3.40)	Sometimes (S)
2	(1.81-2.60)	Rarely (R)
1	(1.00-1.50)	Never (N)

ALS Graduates' Academic Performance

Table 3 shows the ALS Graduates' academic performance. It could be gleaned on the table nobody belongs to the top two highest grade range, however, all of them passed on their terms. It shows that majority of them have good academic performance with the grade range of 2.01-2.50 and the rest were 2.60-3.0, "Passed". This could entail that the ALS students still passed on their subjects though they encounter challenges under the English Medium Instructions however, they all of them seemed to struggle achieving above average academic performance.

Table 3. *ALS Graduates' Academic Performance*

Grade Range	F	P(%)
Excellent (1.00-1.50)	0	0.00
Very Good (1.60-2.00)	0	0.00
Good (2.01-2.50)	347	53.47
Passed (2.60 - 3.00)	302	46.53
Failed (Above 3.00)	0	0.00

Table 4. *Significance of the Difference on the Challenges Experienced Between the Male and Female ALS Graduates*

Participants	N	Mean	SD	z-value		p-value	Decision
				Computed	Critical		
Male	342	4.05	0.20	6.65	1.96	0.00	Significant
Female	307	3.94	0.28				

Table 4 presents the analysis on the significant difference on the challenges encountered by the male and female ALS participants. Based on the data, the computed z-value is greater

than the critical value of 1.96 with 0.00 p-value. Therefore, there is a sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis.

The result implies that the male and female ALS participant do not have the same assessment as to the challenges they encountered on the use of English Medium Instruction (EMI). This is in line with the results of the studies conducted by Romaine [23] which showed that, compared to female students, male students took the floor more often. Whereas Romaine's findings were retrieved from an L1-classroom, the same effect reported in educations where English is used, more or less systematically as the means for communication. In addition, Macaro & Akincioglu [24] show that female students in Turkish universities found it more difficult to speak in front of peers and lecturers. This raises the question of whether the introduction of EMI puts even more restraints on female students, who were already less likely to speak up in class. As can be expected from the disparity between male and female students in levels of confidence, female students report, more often than male students, that they spend more time understanding syllabus written in English. On average, female students also report spending more time remembering English academic texts. In sum, there is a tendency that, as compared to male students, female students find EMI to be more challenging.

Table 5. *Significance of the Difference on the Coping Strategies Employed Between the Male and Female ALS Graduates*

Participants	N	Mean	SD	z-value		p-value	Decision
				Computed	Critical		
Male	342	3.37	0.27	5.94	1.96	0.00	Significant
Female	307	3.53	0.41				

Table 5 discloses the significance of the difference between the male and female ALS graduate participants' coping strategies to the challenges encountered. The computed z-value of 5.94 is greater than the critical value of 1.96 with 0.00 p-value. Thus, there is no sufficient proof to accept the null hypothesis.

The result suggests that the male and female ALS recipients varies on their assessment on the strategies they employed to cope up the challenges they encountered on the use of English Medium Instructions. Men and women display different coping strategies in every situation. Women tend to use coping strategies that are aimed at changing their emotional responses to a situation, whereas men use more problem-focused or instrumental methods of handling stressful experiences.

Table 6. *Significance of the Relationship Between the Challenges Encountered by ALS Graduates and Their Academic Performance*

Variable	rp	Level of Significance	t-value		Decision
			Computed	Critical	
Extent of Challenges Encountered	0.032	0.05	0.81	1.96	Not Significant
Academic Performance					

Table 6 discloses the significance of the relationship between the challenges encountered by the ALS graduate and their academic performance. The computed t-value of 0.81 is lesser than the critical value of 1.96 at 0.05 level of significance. Thus, there is sufficient proof to accept the null hypothesis.

The result suggests that the ALS participants' challenges encountered does not have something to do with their academic performance. This further implies somehow that their grades were not affected though they encountered difficulties in the English Medium Instructions and that this may entail that they are coping these challenges well. This is in congruence with Devonport and Lane [25] who suggested that coping can influence academic performance and retention among university students because the amount of effort students invest to reach a certain outcome is dependent on how they cope with negative emotions, setbacks, and obstacles. The measurement of coping strategies may provide information above and beyond that provided by measures of intelligence and academic achievement.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following conclusions are hereby formulated: The male and female ALS participants experience different challenges on the English Medium Instructions. The male participants employ mainly approaches factors while females prefer avoidance and social supports as coping strategies on the EMI challenges. All of the ALS participants pass with their subjects enrolled amidst the challenges encountered on the use of English as Medium of Instructions. The male and female college ALS students encounter many different challenges from English Medium Instruction (EMI). The male and female ALS participants vary on their coping strategies to overcome the challenges on the use of English Medium Instruction. The use of EMI do not affect the ALS graduates' academic performance.

The following essential recommendations are hereby offered: That the school may prioritize in addressing the challenges experience by the ALS graduates from English Medium Instruction for their academic achievements. That the College instructors may use multilingual instruction to address difficulty of the student. That the ALS graduates to continue their exposure in the (EMI) English Medium Instruction so that they can overcome their challenges through time. That the ALS graduates may double their effort in attaining closely approximating mastery in learning EMI for coping strategies in school. That another study may conducted in other school having ALS participants with increased number of variables.

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