

CHALLENGES OF NON-TAGALOG STUDENT TEACHERS AND THEIR LEVEL OF TAGALOG LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND TEACHING COMPETENCY IN FILIPINO SUBJECT

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the challenges experienced by Non-Tagalog (Binisaya) student teachers, their level of Tagalog language proficiency, and their teaching competency in Filipino. Using a descriptive-correlational research design, the study involved 77 Filipino major student teachers from Saint Joseph College, Maasin City, Southern Leyte. Data were gathered through a researcher-made questionnaire and analyzed using weighted mean, standard deviation, and Pearson's r . The instrument was found reliable based on Cronbach's Alpha results: 0.929 for challenges, 0.922 for language proficiency, and 0.959 for teaching competency. Findings revealed that respondents experienced challenges in learning and teaching Filipino, particularly in grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and confidence in speaking. However, they showed a proficient level in Tagalog language skills and were generally competent in teaching Filipino. Results also showed a weak but significant relationship between challenges and Tagalog proficiency, no significant relationship between challenges and teaching competency, and a strong significant relationship between Tagalog proficiency and teaching competency. The study recommends the implementation of the GABAY-FIL Program to strengthen both language proficiency and pedagogical competence among Non-Tagalog student teachers.

Keywords: Non-Tagalog student teachers, Tagalog proficiency, teaching competence, language challenges, Filipino instruction, language pedagogy

METHODS

Research Design

This study used a descriptive-correlational research design to examine the relationship between the challenges experienced by the students, their level of proficiency in the Filipino language, and their teaching competence in Filipino. According to Price et al. (2017), a descriptive-correlational design measures the statistical relationship between two or more variables. This design was considered appropriate for the study because it allowed the researcher to gather relevant data efficiently and provided a clear basis for analyzing how the variables are related to one another.

Sources of Data

The data for this study were collected from student teachers enrolled in the second to fourth year levels, majoring in Filipino at Saint Joseph College, Maasin City, Southern Leyte. The necessary information regarding their experiences, language skills, and teaching competence

was obtained through their responses to a structured questionnaire. The responses from the survey questionnaire served as the primary basis for data analysis.

Population of the Study

The respondents of the study consisted of 77 student teachers selected from a total population of 96 at Saint Joseph College, Maasin City, Southern Leyte. Of this number, 19 were from the second year level, 24 from the third year, and 34 from the fourth year. The sample size was determined using the Raosoft Sample Size Calculator.

To ensure fair representation, the researcher employed stratified random sampling. This method allowed the selection of respondents based on their year level and gender, ensuring that each group was proportionally represented in the study.

Instrumentation and Validation

The questionnaire used in this study was adapted from the work of Fajardo et al. and carefully modified to better fit the context of the research. It was organized into three parts: the first gathered basic information about the respondents, such as their age, gender, year level, and first language; the second explored the challenges they face in teaching Filipino, including difficulties in pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, speaking confidence, constructing lessons, and applying teaching strategies; and the third assessed their level of language proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, as well as their teaching competence in lesson preparation, classroom discussion, use of strategies, and assessment of learning. To ensure its quality, the questionnaire was reviewed by three experts in Filipino and research, and its reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha. The results showed high reliability, with an overall score of 0.929, 0.922 for language proficiency, and 0.959 for teaching competence. These findings suggest that the instrument is consistent and dependable, and that it effectively measures what it is intended to assess.

Evaluation and Scoring

This section presents the criteria used by the researcher in interpreting and scoring the responses related to language challenges, level of proficiency in the Tagalog language, and teaching competence in Filipino among Non-Tagalog (Binisaya) student teachers.

A 4-point Likert scale was used, where each response was assigned a corresponding numerical value. This allowed the respondents' perceptions and experiences to be converted into quantitative data. The scale was used to measure the level of challenges experienced by the respondents, and the interpretation of the scores is presented in the table below.

WEIGHT	SCORE RANGE	DESCRIPTION
4	3.50 – 4.00	Strongly Agree
3	2.50 – 3.49	Agree
2	1.75 – 2.49	Disagree
1	1.00 – 1.74	Strongly Disagree

This scale was used to evaluate statements related to pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, confidence in speaking, constructing instruction in Filipino, and adapting pedagogical strategies.

To determine the level of proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, a 4-point Likert scale was also used, with the following interpretations:

WEIGHT	SCORE RANGE	DESCRIPTION
4	3.50 – 4.00	Highly Competent
3	2.50 – 3.49	Competent
2	1.75 – 2.49	Less Competent
1	1.00 – 1.74	Not Competent

This scale served as the basis for interpreting the mean scores of each language skill.

Teaching competence was measured across four key dimensions: lesson preparation, actual teaching and discussion, use of instructional strategies, and assessment of learning. The interpretation of the scores followed the scale presented below:

WEIGHT	SCORE RANGE	DESCRIPTION
4	3.50 – 4.00	Highly Competent
3	2.50 – 3.49	Competent
2	1.75 – 2.49	Less Competent
1	1.00 – 1.74	Not Competent

This scale was used to describe the overall level of the respondents' teaching competence in the subject Filipino.

Data Gathering Procedure

An online questionnaire (Google Form) was prepared, focusing on the challenges in teaching Filipino, level of proficiency in the Tagalog language, and teaching competence in the subject Filipino in order to collect the needed data.

Before the actual data collection, the questionnaire was reviewed and validated by the panelists and the graduate studies administration. The researcher also secured a letter of permission from the administration of Saint Joseph College, Maasin City, Southern Leyte. After the approval was granted, the survey link was distributed to the respondents. The purpose of the study was clearly explained, and participants were assured that their responses would be voluntary and kept confidential. It was also emphasized that the data would be used solely for research purposes.

After all responses were collected, the data were organized and subjected to statistical analysis with the guidance of the research adviser and a statistician.

Statistical Treatment of Data

To address the research problems, the following statistical tools were used:

Weighted Mean and Standard Deviation were used to determine the level of:

- challenges in teaching Filipino;
- proficiency in the Tagalog language; and
- teaching competence in the subject Filipino.

Pearson's r Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to determine the relationships between:

- language challenges and level of proficiency in Tagalog;
- language challenges and teaching competence in Filipino; and
- level of proficiency in Tagalog and teaching competence in Filipino.

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

1. Challenges Experienced in Learning and Teaching the Filipino Language

Statements	Weighted Mean	Interpretation	Rank
Correct pronunciation of Filipino words	3.22	Agree	5
Use of correct grammar while teaching	3.28	Strongly Agree	4
Selection of appropriate Filipino words in discussion	3.32	Strongly Agree	1.5
Explaining lessons using Filipino	3.31	Strongly Agree	3
Answering students' questions in Filipino	3.18	Agree	8.5
Maintaining Filipino as the medium of instruction	3.32	Strongly Agree	1.5
Avoiding excessive code-switching	2.88	Agree	10
Using Filipino in giving instructions	3.19	Agree	8.5
Expressing ideas clearly in Filipino	3.20	Agree	7
Teaching confidently using Filipino	3.21	Agree	6
Average Weighted Mean	3.21	Agree	

Legend: 3.25–4.00 (Strongly Agree); 2.50–3.24 (Agree); 1.75–2.49 (Disagree); 1.00–1.74 (Strongly Disagree)

Table 1 shows that the overall level of challenges in learning and teaching the Filipino language has an average weighted mean of 3.21, interpreted as Agree. This indicates that Non-Tagalog (Bisaya) student teachers genuinely experience linguistic difficulties in the actual use of Filipino as a medium of instruction. The highest-rated challenges are the selection of appropriate Filipino words in discussions and the maintenance of Filipino as the medium of instruction, while the lowest-rated challenge is avoiding excessive code-switching.

2. Level of Proficiency in the Tagalog Language Based on Listening

Statements	Weighted Mean	Interpretation	Rank
Understanding formal discussions in Filipino	2.94	Proficient	1.5
Understanding academic vocabulary	2.81	Proficient	3
Identifying tone and emotion	2.94	Proficient	1.5
Average	2.90	Proficient	

Legend: 3.25–4.00 (Highly Proficient); 2.50–3.24 (Proficient); 1.75–2.49 (Less Proficient); 1.00–1.74 (Not Proficient)

Table 2 shows the level of proficiency in the Tagalog language in terms of listening, with an average weighted mean of 2.90, interpreted as Proficient. This indicates that the respondents demonstrate stronger ability in understanding formal discussions and in identifying the tone and emotions of the speaker than in comprehending academic Filipino vocabulary.

3. Level of Proficiency in the Tagalog Language Based on Speaking

Statements	Weighted Mean	Interpretation	Rank
Expressing ideas clearly and organized	2.79	Proficient	2
Speaking confidently in class	2.84	Proficient	1
Correct pronunciation and stress	2.77	Proficient	3
Average	2.80	Proficient	

Legend: 3.25–4.00 (Highly Proficient); 2.50–3.24 (Proficient); 1.75–2.49 (Less Proficient); 1.00–1.74 (Not Proficient)

Table 3 shows that the level of proficiency in the Tagalog language in terms of speaking has an average weighted mean of 2.80, interpreted as Proficient. The highest-rated item is speaking Filipino confidently in front of the class, while the lowest is the use of correct pronunciation and stress of Filipino words in teaching. This indicates that although the respondents are capable of speaking in Filipino, there is still a need to further strengthen their accuracy in oral language performance.

4. Level of Proficiency in the Tagalog Language Based on Reading

Statements	Weighted Mean	Interpretation	Rank
Understanding academic texts	2.90	Proficient	2
Understanding deep/contextual vocabulary	2.63	Proficient	3
Identifying main ideas	2.92	Proficient	1
Average	2.82	Proficient	

Legend: 3.25–4.00 (Highly Proficient); 2.50–3.24 (Proficient); 1.75–2.49 (Less Proficient); 1.00–1.74 (Not Proficient)

Table 4 shows that the level of proficiency in the Tagalog language in terms of reading has an average weighted mean of 2.82, interpreted as Proficient. The highest-rated skill is identifying the main idea of the text being read, while the lowest is understanding deep words or the contextual meanings of the text. This indicates that respondents find it easier to grasp the general idea of a text than to understand more complex and academic vocabulary.

5. Level of Proficiency in the Tagalog Language Based on Writing

Statements	Weighted Mean	Interpretation	Rank
Writing correct sentences	2.90	Proficient	1
Writing academic compositions	2.85	Proficient	2
Correct punctuation and spelling	2.83	Proficient	3
Average	2.86	Proficient	

Legend: 3.25–4.00 (Highly Proficient); 2.50–3.24 (Proficient); 1.75–2.49 (Less Proficient); 1.00–1.74 (Not Proficient)

Table 5 shows that the level of proficiency in the Tagalog language in terms of writing has an average weighted mean of 2.86, interpreted as Proficient. The highest-rated skill is writing correct sentences in Filipino, while the lowest is the use of correct punctuation and spelling. This indicates that the respondents have functional writing proficiency; however, there is still a need to further strengthen the mechanical and academic aspects of writing.

6. Summary of Tagalog Proficiency

Skills	Weighted Mean	Interpretation	Rank
Listening	2.90	Proficient	1
Speaking	2.80	Proficient	4
Reading	2.82	Proficient	3
Writing	2.86	Proficient	2
Overall Average	2.84	Proficient	

Legend: 3.25–4.00 (Highly Proficient); 2.50–3.24 (Proficient); 1.75–2.49 (Less Proficient); 1.00–1.74 (Not Proficient)

Table 6 presents a summary of the level of proficiency in the Tagalog language, with an overall average weighted mean of 2.84, interpreted as Proficient. It was found that listening obtained the highest rating, while speaking received the lowest. This indicates that the respondents' receptive skills are stronger than their productive skills.

7. Level of Teaching Competency in the Filipino Subject Based on Lesson Preparation

Statements	Weighted Mean	Interpretation	Rank
Identifying lesson objectives	2.90	Competent	2.5
Preparing instructional materials	2.96	Competent	1

Organizing lesson content	2.88	Competent	4
Considering learners' level	2.90	Competent	2.5
Average	2.91	Competent	

Legend: 3.25–4.00 (Highly Competent); 2.50–3.24 (Competent); 1.75–2.49 (Less Competent); 1.00–1.74 (Not Competent)

Table 7 shows that the level of teaching competency in the Filipino subject, in terms of lesson preparation, has an overall average weighted mean of 2.91, interpreted as Competent. This indicates that the respondents are capable of formulating lesson objectives, selecting appropriate instructional materials, and organizing lesson content prior to the actual teaching.

8. Level of Teaching Competency in the Filipino Subject Based on Teaching and Discussion

Statements	Weighted Mean	Interpretation	Rank
Explaining lessons clearly	2.80	Competent	4
Using appropriate examples	2.97	Competent	1
Encouraging participation	2.94	Competent	2
Time management	2.88	Competent	3
Average	2.90	Competent	

Legend: 3.25–4.00 (Highly Competent); 2.50–3.24 (Competent); 1.75–2.49 (Less Competent); 1.00–1.74 (Not Competent)

Table 8 shows that the level of teaching competency in the Filipino subject, in terms of teaching and discussion, has an average weighted mean of 2.90, interpreted as Competent. The highest-rated item is the use of appropriate examples in discussion, while the lowest is the clear explanation of lessons in Filipino. This indicates that the respondents are effective in relating examples to the lesson; however, there is still a need to further strengthen their clarity in oral explanation in Filipino.

9. Level of Teaching Competency in the Filipino Subject Based on Use of Strategies

Statements	Weighted Mean	Interpretation	Rank
Using varied strategies	2.83	Competent	1.5
Adapting strategies	2.79	Competent	3
Increasing student interest	2.83	Competent	1.5
Adjusting strategies	2.76	Competent	4
Average	2.80	Competent	

Legend: 3.25–4.00 (Highly Competent); 2.50–3.24 (Competent); 1.75–2.49 (Less Competent); 1.00–1.74 (Not Competent)

Table 9 shows that the level of teaching competency in the Filipino subject, in terms of the use of strategies, has an overall average weighted mean of 2.80, interpreted as Competent. This indicates that the respondents are capable of using various teaching strategies to maintain students' interest and participation; however, there is still a need to further improve their ability to adapt strategies to different classroom situations.

10. Level of Teaching Competency in the Filipino Subject Based on Assessment of Learning

Statements	Weighted Mean	Interpretation	Rank
Giving appropriate tests	2.92	Competent	3
Using clear grading criteria	3.03	Competent	1
Providing feedback	2.87	Competent	4
Using results to improve teaching	2.97	Competent	2
Average Weighted Mean	2.95	Competent	

Legend: 3.25–4.00 (Highly Competent); 2.50–3.24 (Competent); 1.75–2.49 (Less Competent); 1.00–1.74 (Not Competent)

Table 10 shows that the level of teaching competency in the Filipino subject, in terms of assessment of learning, has an average weighted mean of 2.95, interpreted as Competent. The highest-rated item is the use of clear grading criteria, while the lowest is the provision of feedback on students' performance. This indicates that the respondents are competent in the aspect of assessment; however, there is still a need to further strengthen the delivery of meaningful and timely feedback.

11. Summary of Teaching Competency

Dimension	Weighted Mean	Interpretation	Rank
Lesson Preparation	2.91	Competent	2
Teaching & Discussion	2.90	Competent	3
Strategies	2.80	Competent	4
Assessment	2.95	Competent	1
Overall Average Weighted Mean	2.89	Competent	

Legend: 3.25–4.00 (Highly Competent); 2.50–3.24 (Competent); 1.75–2.49 (Less Competent); 1.00–1.74 (Not Competent)

Table 11 presents a summary of the level of teaching competency in the Filipino subject, with an overall average weighted mean of 2.89, interpreted as Competent. It was found that assessment of learning obtained the highest rating, while the use of strategies received the lowest. This indicates that, overall, the respondents demonstrate competent teaching ability; however, there is still a need to further improve flexibility in the use of strategies to better address the needs of the learners.

12. Significant Relationship Between the Challenges in Learning and Teaching the Filipino Language and the Level of Proficiency in the Tagalog Language

Variables	Pearson r	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Challenges in Learning and Teaching the Filipino Language and the Level of Proficiency in the Tagalog Language	r=0.258 (weak correlation)	0.023	H ₀ rejected	Significant
Significant @.05				

Table 12 shows that there is a significant correlation between the challenges in learning and teaching the Filipino language and the level of proficiency in the Tagalog language ($r = 0.258$, $p = 0.023$). Although the strength of the relationship is weak, it remains statistically significant; therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

In simpler terms, there is a connection between the challenges experienced by the respondents and their proficiency in the Tagalog language. This means that as they encounter challenges, these have a corresponding effect—although small—on their language ability. However, since the relationship is weak, it also indicates that challenges alone do not determine their proficiency; other factors such as experience, training, and exposure to the language may also play a role.

13. Significant Relationship Between the Challenges in Learning and Teaching the Filipino Language and Teaching Competency in the Filipino Subject

Variables	Pearson r	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Challenges in Learning and Teaching the Filipino Language and Teaching Competency in the Filipino Subject	r=0.199 (very weak correlation)	0.082	H ₀ not rejected	Not Significant
Not Significant @.05				

Table 13 shows that the correlation between the challenges in learning and teaching the Filipino language and teaching competency is not significant ($r = 0.199$, $p = 0.082$). Although there is a very weak positive relationship, it is not sufficient to be considered statistically significant; therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected.

This indicates that language-related challenges do not directly affect the respondents' teaching competency. In other words, even if they experience difficulties in certain aspects of the language, they are still able to teach the subject effectively. This may be attributed to their teaching strategies, classroom experience, and ability to adapt to different situations.

14. Significant Relationship Between the Level of Proficiency in the Tagalog Language and Teaching Competency in the Filipino Subject

Variables	Pearson r	p-value	Decision	Interpretation
Level of Proficiency in the Tagalog Language and Teaching Competency in the Filipino Subject	r=0.786 (strong correlation)	< .001	H ₀ rejected	Significant
Significant @.05				

Meanwhile, Table 14 shows that there is a strong and significant correlation between the level of proficiency in the Tagalog language and teaching competency in the Filipino subject ($r = 0.786$, $p < .001$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

This means that as the respondents become more proficient in the Tagalog language, they also become more effective in teaching Filipino. This highlights that language proficiency is a crucial foundation for becoming an effective teacher. When there is clear understanding and proper use of the language, it becomes easier to explain lessons, select appropriate strategies, and interact with students.

15. Proposed Intervention Program: GABAY-FIL (Guide to Academic Proficiency and Enrichment in Filipino for Student Teachers)

Activity	Objective	Timeline	Persons Involved	Budget	Success Indicator
Workshop on Pronunciation, Grammar, and Expression	To improve speaking skills and reduce difficulties in pronunciation, grammar, and clear expression in Filipino	First Semester, A.Y. 2026–2027	Program Chair, Filipino faculty, Language mentors	₱25,000	At least 85% of participants will demonstrate improvement in post-assessment in speaking and oral classroom delivery
Academic Reading and Filipino Vocabulary Clinic	To enhance understanding of academic vocabulary and contextual	First Semester, A.Y. 2026–2027	Filipino faculty, Librarian, Reading specialists	₱20,000	At least 85% of participants will obtain higher scores in reading and vocabulary

	meanings of Filipino texts				tests
Microteaching and Lesson Planning Mentoring	To improve lesson preparation, lesson explanation, and use of appropriate examples in discussion	Whole Academic Year 2026–2027	Cooperating teachers, Master teachers, Researcher	₱30,000	All participants will be able to develop a lesson plan and conduct microteaching with a rating of good or higher
Workshop on Strategy Adaptation	To strengthen the ability to adapt and modify teaching strategies based on the topic and learners' level	Second Semester, A.Y. 2026–2027	Teacher educators, Curriculum specialists	₱18,000	At least 80% of participants will demonstrate proper use of varied strategies in demonstration teaching
Assessment and Feedback Enhancement Session	To improve the use of grading criteria, feedback, and assessment results in enhancing instruction	Second Semester, A.Y. 2026–2027	Assessment coordinators, Cooperating teachers	₱15,000	At least 85% of participants will use clear rubrics and feedback sheets in their teaching

In line with the overall findings of the study, Table 15 presents the proposed intervention program entitled GABAY-FIL (Guide to Academic Advancement toward Filipino Instructional Leadership). This program aims to further enhance the Tagalog language proficiency and teaching competency in the Filipino subject of Non-Tagalog (Bisaya) student teachers.

The program focuses on the areas identified as needing further development, such as correct pronunciation and stress, appropriate vocabulary use, development of academic writing, and expansion of the ability to utilize various teaching strategies. It also emphasizes the importance of clear lesson explanation, adapting strategies based on students' needs, and providing meaningful and timely feedback in learning.

The development of the GABAY-FIL program is grounded on the findings of the study, particularly the significant relationship between the level of proficiency in the Tagalog language and teaching competency in the Filipino subject. This suggests that improving language proficiency has a direct implication for enhancing the quality of teaching.

Overall, the proposed intervention program is not only focused on developing language proficiency but also on improving the pedagogical skills of the respondents, enabling them to become more effective, competent, and well-prepared in the actual teaching of the Filipino subject.

CONCLUSIONS

1. Non-Tagalog (Binisaya) student teachers still experience challenges in using Filipino as a medium of instruction, particularly in tasks that require continuous and pure use of the language in the classroom.
2. Although the respondents are generally competent, their listening skills are stronger than their speaking, reading, and writing abilities. This suggests a need for more practice, especially in the actual oral use of Filipino.
3. The respondents demonstrate overall good teaching competence; however, there is still a need to further strengthen their ability to use and adapt instructional strategies effectively.
4. The challenges in learning and teaching the Filipino language show a weak but significant positive relationship with the level of proficiency in the Tagalog language. This indicates that even those who are more proficient still encounter certain challenges in using Filipino in teaching.
5. The challenges in learning and teaching Filipino have no significant relationship with teaching competence in the subject. This means that challenges alone are not enough to explain the actual teaching ability of the respondents.
6. The level of proficiency in the Tagalog language has a strong and significant positive relationship with teaching competence in Filipino ($r = 0.786, p < .001$). This suggests that as a teacher's proficiency in Tagalog increases, their teaching competence in Filipino also improves. In other words, language proficiency plays a crucial role in effective teaching.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It is recommended that the institution conduct regular workshops on pronunciation, grammar, academic vocabulary, and oral classroom communication to further enhance the speaking skills of Non-Tagalog student teachers.
2. Teachers and trainers should strengthen the use of microteaching, demonstration teaching, and mentoring sessions to provide students with more opportunities to use Filipino in actual teaching situations.
3. It is advisable to develop targeted interventions focusing on the use and adaptation of instructional strategies, as this area showed the lowest results among the dimensions of teaching competence.
4. The implementation of the GABAY-FIL Program is recommended as a structured and systematic approach to address the identified gaps in both language proficiency and pedagogical competence of the respondents.
5. Future researchers are encouraged to expand the study by including a larger number of participants and incorporating additional variables such as exposure to the Filipino language, level of self-confidence, and extent of practicum experience to better explain variations in teaching competence.

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