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Towards Integrative Teaching in Filipino and English

Niña Iuela P. Cleofas*, Girlie S. Macapagal
Department of Humanities, Miriam College High School,
U.P. P.O. Box 110, Diliman, Quezon City, Philippines 1101
*ninaiuelacleofas@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The Philippine Basic Education curriculum supports the teaching of two official languages, namely Filipino and English. In support of this national thrust and its institutional vision, mission, and goals, Miriam College High School aims to teach the two languages using globalized and integrated strategies within a student-centered environment. The study investigates how the teaching of both language and literature (Khatib & Rahimi, 2012) either in English or Filipino using various teaching strategies which adhere to implementing an Integrated Approach (Yimwilai, 2015) can be effective to students in an ESL context. This also identifies the best activities/strategies which cater to the demands of an integrated classroom. Quantitative and qualitative data which are derived from a survey and an interview among Grades 9, 10 and 11 students reveal that 584 (56.53%) out of 1,033 students of Filipino and 507 (47.47%) out of 1,068 students of English absolutely agreed that the different learning activities in class are effective and meaningful. The study reports that the same allowed learners to learn, apply, and enhance their skills. Interview data reveal the essential activities/strategies that are helpful to them. These only show that teaching language and literature of either Filipino or English using the Integrated Approach brings out student success in learning. The study provides specific implications on the management of bilingual and multilingual contexts of student-centered learning.

Keyword: Integrated Approach, language and literature teaching, teaching strategies

Introduction

The Philippine educational system supports the teaching of two official languages, namely Filipino and English in its thrust towards global competitiveness. However, knowing that language is the key to learning and communication, the teaching of English and Filipino has been focused primarily in utilizing the language. Literature, therefore, is not always part of language teaching for “the study of literature [as such] can hinder the use of literature as a resource” (Bottino, n.d.). Thus, in most cases in the Philippine context, the teaching of English is divided into two categories: (a) Language which focuses more on its grammar and conventions and (b) Reading which uses literary texts that hone students’ ability in reading. Likewise, Filipino is also divided into Wika (Language) and Panitikan (Reading).

On the other hand, some studies say that language and literature must never be separated in language teaching for “literature is a new material in teaching and learning communicative competence of the language. [Also,] Liam (2001) said that literary works provide additional material of grammar practice, vocabulary learning, and translation” (Khatib & Rahimi, 2012).

These views, therefore, bring forth questions and debates on whether language and literature should be taught separately or not, and on how language teaching should be done especially in bilingual and/or multilingual contexts. Hence, this paper contributes to the

development of language and literature teaching particularly in English and Filipino in ESL contexts.

In what follows, the significance of integrating language and literature in language teaching is explained. Then, an integrated approach framework is suggested while its features are briefly discussed. Finally, the results from a survey and series of interviews are reported to justify the use of the suggested approach in teaching Filipino or English in ESL contexts.

Teaching Both Language and Literature

Questions on literature teaching as a springboard for language teaching have been recurring over the years. McKay (1982) mentions some of the common arguments against utilizing literature: (1) lack of contribution of literature to teaching grammar which is one of the important goals of language teaching program, (2) literature does not help students to reach their academic and occupational goals, and (3) the specific cultural viewpoints which are reflected in every piece of literature; and grasping and making sense of cultural perspectives may be difficult for the students especially for EFL or ESL students (in Khatib & Rahimi, 2012).

Meanwhile, literature provides varied models for language use because the learner's exposure to literary language facilitates language development. McKay (1989) and McRae (1996) also assert that since our role as ESL teachers is to familiarize our learners with the grammar of the language, acquiring knowledge of grammar should not be an end in itself but a prerequisite to effective communication skills-building as demonstrated in actual literary discourse. As choice of texts to be taught these days are no longer confined to canonical, learners get to work with various kinds of materials that allow them greater flexibility in language use. Based on the foregoing, therefore, it is the complementary relationship between linguistic and literary competences that makes the integration of literature and language very feasible in the ESL classroom.

The Need for the New Approach

Because of the increasing expectations in education in preparing young citizens for the challenges of globalization, Kagan (1994) asserts that 21st century education demands a change in classroom methodology. Considering these issues particularly in language teaching, Miriam College High School (MCHS), an exclusive school for girls in the Philippines with its vision, mission and goals, dedicates itself to teach Filipino and English through the integration of language and literature with advanced, essential, thematic, and focused activities and/or strategies.

Therefore, this paper attempts to investigate the effectiveness of teaching both language and literature either in English or Filipino using various teaching strategies which adhere to implementing an Integrated Approach to students in an ESL context. This study also identifies the best activities/strategies which cater to the demands of an integrated classroom knowing that "some scholars suggest that an integrated approach is a good option for effective instruction, especially in language teaching" (Adeyemi in Yimwilai, 2015). Moreover, such an approach is vital in the present era of globalization, as many believe that the world, a culturally and linguistically diverse entity, can be best understood in an integrated way (Yimwilai, 2015).

Literature Review

Integrating language and literature in language teaching as well as themes, life-like activities, and other teaching strategies have been making impact to student learning and acquisition. Studies and arguments cited in Khatib & Rahimi (2012) as well as those of

McKay (1982), Povey, (1972), Maley (2001), Arthur (1968), Oster (1989), Hadaway, Vardell and Young (2002), and Lazar (1993) only prove that literature is a useful vehicle for the teaching of language skills most specially if teachers combine a variety of methods, assessments, and technical devices.

Theoretical Framework: The Concept of Integrated Approach

Yimwilai (2015) explains that the integrated approach can also be referred to as the multidisciplinary approach, which denotes the teaching of concepts across more than one [subject area] or approach. Integration, in this paper, is more of a combination of thematic approach, content-based and language-based teaching, and task-based approach other than the integration of language and literature.

Van (2009) believes that studying literature in an [EFL] classroom is beneficial for many reasons: it provides meaningful context; involves a profound range of vocabulary, dialogue, and prose; appeals to the imagination and enhances creativity; encourages critical thinking; and is in line with Communicative Language Teaching principles. In addition, Adeyemi (2010) writes that the Integrated Approach provides students with more comprehensive learning that is rich and interesting. As a result, it makes the classroom atmosphere more enjoyable and thought-provoking. Moreover, Knowles and Smith (2001) explain that the integrated approach to teaching literature “can facilitate collaborative learning as well as help students become independent problem solvers” (in Yimwilai, 2015).

It is definitely bound in these studies that the Integrated Approach is an effective methodology in teaching. In this case, it is an Integrative Approach that stimulates value-oriented, student-centered, and communication-based environment which attempts to fulfill the expectations of forming globally competent learners.

Conceptual Framework: MCHS’s Adaptation of the Integrated Approach

The current program for both Filipino and English in MCHS adheres to a student-centered environment and is designed to meet the standard components of a language curriculum that is informed and influenced by our view of the:

- a. nature of the language that is both form and function;
- b. nature of language learning that is effective only when it is experienced; and,
- c. educational philosophy that adheres to the communicative, interactive, innovative, and experiential teaching methodology.

Anchored on the Integrated Approach, the MCHS’s Integrated Language Work (ILW) framework (Abad, 2006) has been developed, with which comes the syllabi of instruction that are tailored to the needs of the students – in particular, the language skills they have to hone to prepare them for tertiary education and even beyond. Thus, to achieve the goals set forth in the program, the teachers either in Filipino or English are expected to:

- a. focus on both content and language;
- b. contextualize activities that are life-like;
- c. consider different level of thinking;
- d. integrate the macro skills particularly listening, speaking, reading, and writing in lesson planning;
- e. teach students to experiment, take risks and discover, thus promote language learning and acquisition; and
- f. teach creatively using varied and innovative strategies, techniques, and activities.

To date, lessons are bound by the features of the ILW framework for teaching Filipino and English:

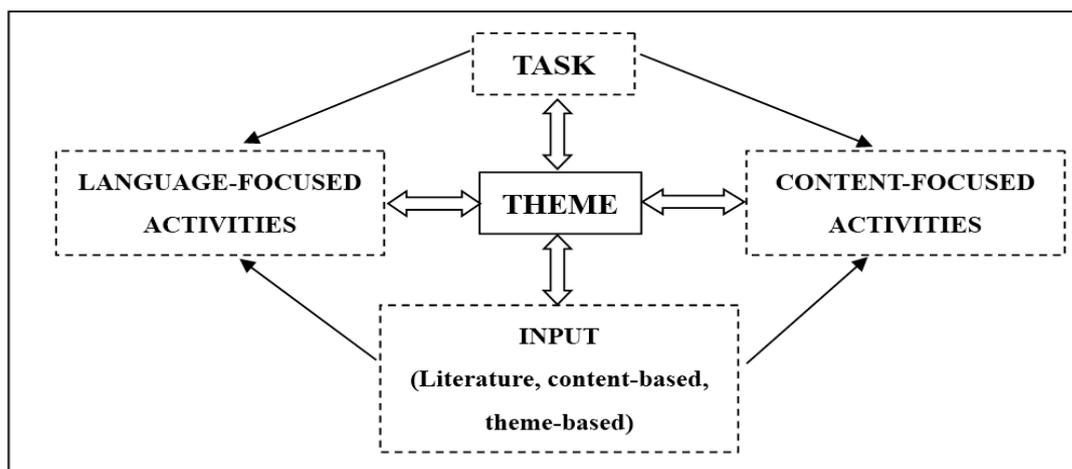


Figure 1. MCHS's Integrated Language Work (ILW) framework (Abad, 2006)

INPUT – is any piece of communication data (text, dialogue, video recording, etc.) that provides stimulus material for activities, new language items, correct models of language use, a topic for communication, information processing. In a lesson, the main input can be supported by supplementary input.

CONTENT-FOCUSED ACTIVITIES – are activities which allow students to express their understanding of the information presented in the input and generate meaningful communication based on information given.

LANGUAGE-FOCUSED ACTIVITIES – are activities which enable learners to practice the language structures, to show how the language structures work and to acquire the necessary language to participate in communication.

TASK – is a communication opportunity where the learners get the chance to apply and display their knowledge of the content and the language and serves as the primary focus of the lesson.

As shown in Figure 1, there is an underlying theme that is based on the values taught by the institution and functions as the core of all the activities (i.e. task, language-focused activities, content-focused activities, and input). Moreover, the activities in this approach that involve the completion of real-world tasks in the learning process (Richards & Rodgers in Hadley, 2002) become the center of the lesson planning. Major and minor tasks, as well as the language-focused activities, are determined according to the survey of needs conducted by grade level teachers among themselves. The topics and their sequence and the distribution of skills for development are adjusted or revised annually to be relevant to the students' needs. Moreover, the content-focused activities are explored depending on the inputs, which are varied in nature. As the focus is primarily on teaching language within a meaningful context, inputs are taken from related disciplines in their genre conventions, historical context and/or cultural significance (Bragger & Rice in Hadley, 2001). Consequently, the resulting lessons enable the learners to focus their attention on utilizing meanings and language in building a repertoire of skills as they are engaged in life-like activities that make language learning purposeful. Appropriate methodologies are provided to maximize learning opportunities; and the teachers facilitate learning opportunities for the learners.

Data Gathering and Results

Data Gathering

This study involves both qualitative and quantitative analyses among all grade 9, 10, and 11 students of school year 2014-2015 in Miriam College High School. With a total of 1,033 students of Filipino and 1,068 students of English, they were asked to answer a survey in a form of a Likert Scale from an online portal operated by the school regarding their evaluation of English and Filipino subjects (i.e. teaching strategies, topics, lesson objectives, form of assessments, other activities, etc.). Afterwards, the total of the responses per key question was computed and tabulated.

There were five (5) key items from the survey that were included for analysis:

- a. There were different opportunities aligned with themes (i.e. thematic focus per semester) from which I could learn values that matter to my personal growth (*May iba't ibang oportunidad na nakahanay sa mga tema (hal. tuong-tematiko bawat semestre) kung saan ay natututuhan ko ang iba't ibang pagpapahalaga para sa aking personal o pansariling paglago*).
- b. There is a clear balance in enhancing my knowledge and skills particularly in reading, writing, speaking, and listening that are relevant to my personal growth (*May malinaw na balanse sa pagpapataas ng aking kaalaman at kasanayan lalo na sa pagbabasa, pagsusulat, pagsasalita at pakikinig na kailangan sa aking personal o pansariling paglago*).
- c. There are different integrated and student-centered learning activities in teaching language and literature that allowed me to be participative and creative (*May iba't ibang magkakaugnay na gawaing pangkaalamang nakasentro sa mga mag-aaral sa pagtuturo ng wika at panitikan na nagbibigay sa akin ng pagkakataong makibahagi at maging malikhain*).
- d. There are various learning materials/aids (e.g. maps, periodicals, audio-visual materials, etc.) that are innovative that keep me interested and engaged (*May sarisari't makabagong kagamitang panturo/pantulong (hal. mapa, pahayagan, kagamitang audio-visual atbp.) na pumupukaw at nagpapanatili ng aking interes sa aralin*).
- e. There is a balance between pencil and paper tests and other forms of evaluating my performance on the target language (English) (*May balanse sa mga pasulat na pagsusulit at iba pang anyo ng pagtataya sa pagsasakatuparan ng aking mga gawain sa target na wika (Filipino)*).

From the survey, there were randomly chosen students for interview. They were asked about the (1) effectiveness of both Filipino and English language programs, (2) areas and/or activities they find relevant and helpful in their language learning and acquisition, and (3) in what aspect can the language programs be improved. The whole interview was recorded and then transcribed for accuracy and validity.

Results

Survey results reveal that there are a significant number of students who agreed that the Filipino and English programs in grades 9, 10, and 11 of school year 2014-2015 achieved their goals through the implementation of the Integrated Approach. Also, responses from the interview support the survey results that highlighted the different opportunities and activities that allowed them to learn, apply, and enhance their skills.

The total responses per key question in both Filipino and English are summarized in the following table:

Table 1
Summary of Survey Results

| | Strongly Agree | | Moderately Agree | | Neither | | Moderately Disagree | | Strongly Disagree | |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|
| | Filipino | English | Filipino | English | Filipino | English | Filipino | English | Filipino | English |
| A | 554 (53.63%) | 465 (43.54%) | 359 (34.74%) | 379 (35.49%) | 103 (9.97%) | 182 (17.04%) | 15 (1.45%) | 29 (2.72%) | 2 (0.19%) | 13 (1.22%) |
| B | 532 (51.50%) | 455 (42.60%) | 365 (35.33%) | 385 (36.05%) | 112 (10.84%) | 174 (16.29%) | 22 (2.13%) | 43 (4.03%) | 2 (0.19%) | 11 (1.03%) |
| C | 584 (56.53%) | 507 (47.47%) | 342 (33.11%) | 379 (35.49%) | 94 (9.10%) | 143 (13.39%) | 11 (1.06%) | 29 (2.72%) | 2 (0.19%) | 10 (0.94%) |
| D | 511 (49.47%) | 405 (37.92%) | 345 (33.40%) | 394 (36.89%) | 147 (14.23%) | 201 (18.82%) | 26 (2.52%) | 51 (4.78%) | 4 (0.39%) | 17 (1.59%) |
| E | 521 (50.44%) | 440 (41.20%) | 364 (35.24%) | 385 (36.05%) | 123 (11.91%) | 170 (15.92%) | 19 (1.84%) | 50 (4.68%) | 6 (0.58%) | 23 (2.15%) |

Table 1 shows that among 1,033 students of Filipino, 554 (53.63%) strongly agreed while only 2 (0.19%) strongly disagreed that lessons and other activities in class focused on a specific theme that is relevant to one's value formation and personal growth. Similarly, out of 1,068 students of English, 465 (43.54%) strongly agreed and only 13 (1.22%) said otherwise. These show that both students of either Filipino or English find opportunities that are relevant and life-like as they develop values through thematic-teaching. Quoting from the following interview participants:

Grade 10 student in Filipino: *Nagustuhan ko ang mga naituro ni Bb. Miranda dahil base ito sa mga tema tungkol sa buhay. Marami siyang mga "pabaon" na hango sa lesson (I really liked the lessons taught by Ms. Miranda because they were based on themes related to life. She instills a lot of values based on the lesson).*

Grade 11 student in Filipino: *Ang pagaaral ko po ng Noli Me Tangere at El Filibusterismo ang naging paborito kong parte ng Filipino. Sa tulong po nito, mas nabuksan po ang aking mga mata ukol sa mga problema ng ating bansa. Dahil po sa mga librong ito, natulungan po akong mahal in ang aking bayan at mas pahalagahan ang mga sakripisyo at paghihirap ng ating pambansang bayani na si Jose Rizal (Noli Me Tangere and El Filibusterismo are my favorite parts in studying Filipino. With the help of these texts, it opened my eyes more about the problems in our country. Because of these texts, it helped me love and appreciate my country and value all the sacrifices and hard work of our national heroes such as Jose Rizal).*

Similarly, the results prove that the students were taught in such a way that the activities/strategies were significant in enhancing their knowledge and skills. There were 532 (51.50%) who strongly agreed that the Filipino program has a clear balance in improving their knowledge and skills. On the other hand, only 2 (0.19%) strongly disagreed due to the reason that *"limited time hindered them in coping with the activities which later on resulted to confusion,"* as mentioned by most of the interview participants across grade levels. For the English program, 455 (42.60%) strongly agreed and only 11 (1.03%) said otherwise. With the small number of students who strongly disagreed, it shows that most students believed that the activities/strategies were effective as the following interview participants shared:

Grade 9 student of English: *The culminating task (persuasive speech) helped me in improving my reading, writing, and speaking abilities.*

Grade 11 student of Filipino: *"Ang pagtuturo ng Filipino ay naaayon sa main task na monologo na nag-challenge sa aking kakayahang magsulat, magbasa, magsalita, at making" (The teaching of Filipino was based on the main task which is a monologue that challenged my skills in writing, reading, speaking and listening).*

In terms of utilizing integrated and student-centered learning activities in teaching language and literature, 584 (56.53%) students of Filipino strongly agreed that it was effective as it allowed them to be creative and participative; and only 2 (0.19%) responded strongly disagree. Similarly, a total of 507 (47.47%) students of English strongly agreed while only 10 (0.94%) said otherwise. These data only proves that integrating language and literature through student-centered activities gives students opportunities to showcase their abilities as the following interview participants also pointed out:

Grade 9 student of Filipino: *3rd Term Collage Project ang aking nagustuhan dahil binigyan kami ng oportuinad na maging malaya sa pagiging malikhain sa proyekto na ito at saka natutunan kong paano tuparin ang aking tungkulin sa grupo at dahil maliit lang yung grupo, kung kaya't mas maganda at mabilis ang pagbabahagi namin ng aming mga ideya para sa proyekto at ang pag-uusap namin sa isa't isa* (I liked the 3rd Term Collage Project because it provided opportunities to be free in terms of our creativity. I also learned how to accomplish my tasks for the group for there were only a number of members per group that allowed us to finish easily, share our ideas and communicate well with each other.)

Grade 10 student of Filipino: *Gusto ko ang paggawa ng bidyo para sa mga kanta na isinulat namin dahil tinulak nito ang aking pagiging malikhain at ang aking pagmamahal sa musika* (I liked the video-making activity because we were the ones who wrote the song which drove me to be more creative and to love music more.)

Grade 11 student of Filipino: *Nagustuhan ko ang open mic dahil nagkaroon kaming lahat ng pagkakataon na ipamalas ang aming galing at talento at masaksihan na rin ang galing at talento ng iba naming mga kamag-aral* (I liked the open mic activity because we were given the opportunity to showcase our talents and witness not only our own skills and talents but also our classmates'.)

Grade 9 student of English: *I like how our culminating tasks challenge our creativity and not only skills in the English subject. No matter how difficult they are, I always seem to get ready for the challenge.*

Grade 10 student of English: *I enjoyed the debate (Form 3) because it boosted my self-confidence in participating in group tasks and taught me how to make arguments that are valid.*

Grade 11 student of English: *Honestly, I enjoyed all the activities we had this 3rd term in English. I loved the books we read, The Time Machine and Pride and Prejudice. I really enjoyed the group presentations we had for Pride and Prejudice and our Form 3 which was to create an advocacy book. It challenged our creativity but it was great fun.*

Moreover, in implementing these activities/strategies through the integrated approach, the teacher must utilize learning materials that are engaging, innovative and meaningful. On this note, 511 (49.47%) students of Filipino strongly agreed on the effectiveness of the materials while only 4 (0.49%) strongly disagreed. Likewise, 405 (37.92%) students in English strongly agreed, while 17 (1.59%) strongly disagreed possibly due to the following reasons as mentioned by a number of interview participants:

Grade 11 student of English: *The students should be given the choice of texts to be read/studied. We shouldn't also be using the provided e-books only. Since tablets make my eyes hurt.*

Grade 10 Filipino student: *Dapat meron pang mas maraming alternatibong gawain at gumamit ng mas nakakaenganyong bagay sa pagtuturo ng Florante at Laura dahil mahirap intindihin ito. At gumamit pa ng ibang gamit pangturo bukod sa MS Power Point* (There should be more alternative activities and use interesting ways/materials in teaching Florante at Laura because it is difficult to understand.)

It cannot be denied that teachers are usually the ones choosing the materials they find appropriate and helpful in their teaching, hence, they maximize the use of Power-point presentations. Nonetheless, the students were provided student-centered activities within the lesson which means that the teacher doesn't solely rely on the use of such. With regards to the use of e-books, it has been part of the policy that students still have the choice on whether to read the provided e-books, borrow books from the library, and/or purchase their own.

Furthermore, to check whether students have understood and achieved the goals of the lesson either in Filipino or English, they are assessed and evaluated through summative assessments (pencil and paper tests (Form 1)) and end-goal tasks (both written (Form 2) and oral/performance-based activities (Form 3)). 521 (50.44%) students of Filipino and 440 (41.20%) students in English strongly agreed that there was a balance in the different forms of evaluation, while there were 6 (0.58%) and 23 (2.15%) strongly disagreed respectively.

In spite of the significant number of students who find the forms of evaluation balanced and effective, all interview participants emphasized that one of their difficulties in either Filipino or English is coping with the number of tasks, activities, and most especially assessments which they find it a bit overwhelming. It has been part of the policy, however, that the schedule of the deadlines of these activities must be planned ahead of time, and an estimation of accomplishing tasks were considered by all teachers not only in Filipino and English.

Conclusion

Implications

Similar to many studies, the results provide significant evidence that the Integrated Approach is effective in teaching either Filipino or English. For instance, Yimwilai (2015) found that the experimental group who was taught using the approach garnered higher achievement test scores, critical thinking skills improvement, and attitudes toward reading literature than those of the control groups. In addition, the results of this study reveal that the students see the purpose and relationship of the implemented activities/strategies with real life situations. Thus, the integrated approach empowered students to see connections, generalize, and transfer knowledge to a variety of problem-solving situations in the real world (Adeyemi in Yimwilai, 2015).

Moreover, in accordance with the idea of Carter and Long (1991) who argued that the teaching of literature allows the learners to relate their experiences, feelings, emotions or ideas to those in the text and in the process to get to know himself better, the integration of language and literature in this study proves that students appreciate literary texts more as they see the values and cultures that lie within it.

All in all, the concept of integration utilized in this paper effectively taps students' personal growth in terms of their 4 macro-skills, acquisition of the target language, appreciation of literary texts, creativity, and value-formation. These only show that teaching language and literature of either Filipino or English using the Integrated Approach brings out student success in learning.

Towards Globalization: Integrated Approach

With the study as a contribution to change perspectives on language teaching among teachers, administrators, policy-makers, and/or even language researchers, there is a chance to attain the demands of education in a globalizing world. This is through the implementation of the Integrated Approach with the acceptance that language and literature must never be separated not only because language is the pre-requisite of literature or vice-versa, but they are also a reflection of culture and identity. Hence, this intervention will lead to stronger

global competitiveness through language use for communication, appreciation and expansion of one's "reality".

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