

Culture-based teaching practices of teachers in a Philippine-Chinese school: narratives and insights

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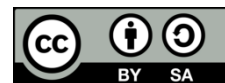
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ABSTRACT

Philippine-Chinese schools have been in existence for several decades. This study explores the influence of Chinese culture on Filipino teachers' pedagogical and content delivery, language and social interaction, and their practices and constructions while teaching in a Chinese school. Through a descriptive-qualitative approach to explore the experiences, 12 non-Chinese teachers were purposively chosen to participate in the study. Guided by the validated interview guide and the qualitative data analysis steps by Braun and Clarke, six themes emerged: bilingual pedagogy, cultural values integration, language immersion, technology in education, thriving through diversity, support and collegiality. The study revealed the enriching interaction between Chinese cultural influences and Filipino teaching practices, suggesting the need for ongoing professional development that enhances cultural competence, innovative pedagogical strategies, and supportive teaching communities.

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1. INTRODUCTION

China and the Philippines have a long history. Over the years, a considerable number of Filipinos have been learning the Chinese language, adapting to some of the Chinese ways of life, and have witnessed the influences of Chinese on Filipinos, such as in business, cuisine, fashion, beliefs, and values. These aspects have enriched the Philippine culture and affected the lives of many Filipinos. In 2018, Chinese Filipinos accounted for 2% of the Philippine population in ethnic groups. With the Chinese community that flourished over the years, Filipinos observe their traditions, beliefs, and customs. Considerably in the past years, the Philippine government has also realized the importance of Chinese and has gradually relaxed the policy of Chinese education. With the many Chinese schools in the Philippines, value-based leadership was emphasized among Filipino-Chinese leaders who are confronted with challenges in communication and sustaining the quality of instruction [1]. Despite the problems of poor equipment and poor teaching in some Chinese schools, privately funded and established schools continue to operate by expanding their construction investment toward a comprehensive implementation of Chinese education reform [2].

The shift of ownership and administration of Chinese schools in the Philippines under Filipinization led to several changes, such as the time devoted to the Chinese curriculum and the ratio of foreign students who could be admitted to Filipino-Chinese schools. Non-Chinese teachers and students in Chinese schools attributed classroom interaction and the extent of learning to varied factors in teaching and learning approaches, cultural and linguistic aspects, and linguistic and other psychological factors. The extant literature supports the tenet that in any culture, teacher-student interaction is influenced by the norms of

behaviors, value system beliefs, and acceptances in a particular culture [3], [4]. It underscored the tendency of misunderstandings and possible cultural conflicts, with factors that might affect teachers when dealing with students having valid cultural backgrounds. Similarly, teacher and student behaviors are manifestations of what they value in each of their cultures, which results in the prevalence of differing classroom behaviors [5].

The pro-Filipinization, which can be construed as a means to separate Filipino and Chinese learners and teachers supports considerations for national security. Teachers are to exercise both inclusive and exclusive methods of education to address the diverse needs of Filipino-Chinese students. However, in terms of spoken languages, language educators have become conscious of language instructional practices [6]. Faced with the differing cultures, non-Chinese teachers are expected to deal with similarities and differences accordingly in their pedagogy or content delivery, practices, and beliefs. Considerably, over the years, there has been no study conducted that analyzes data, in rich description, the complex situations of non-Chinese teachers teaching in Filipino-Chinese schools. The use of teacher narratives as a primary source of data and the experiences towards adaptations in teaching offers a novel exploration of the unique nature of Filipino teachers' culture-based approaches while teaching in a Philippine-Chinese school. Hence, an in-depth exploration of the teachers' pedagogical praxes and Chinese cultural influences provides a nuanced understanding and insights into how cultural adaptations shape their classroom teaching practices, focusing on pedagogy, content delivery, language, and social interaction.

In this research, reality is socially constructed and perceived to be subjective. The researchers acknowledged that teachers have their thoughts, interpretations, and meanings of 'what is'. The narratives of their feelings, inner thoughts, and constructions as Filipino teachers teaching in Chinese schools are captured through the use of the interpretive approach. Subjectivist highlights that the world is not known and that the role of the researcher is to construct an impression of the world as they see it. The researchers in this study interpret the teachers' narratives of their experiences and produce multiple themes, shaping the outcomes of the study. Since meaning is arrived at through sense-making, an epistemological stance of the study was adopted and reality, a by-product of the teachers' thoughts and interactions within and outside the learning environment, was determined.

The in-depth exploration of culture-based teaching practices within a Philippine-Chinese school context underscores the uniqueness of the study. While there are studies that focus on culture in education or the dynamics of multicultural classrooms, this study delved into the nuanced pedagogical approaches of teachers in a school that caters to both Filipino and Chinese students. The narrative and insights obtained from the teachers offer unparalleled perspectives on bicultural education, thereby understanding how teachers adapt and implement culture-based teaching practices.

2. METHOD

This study employed a descriptive-qualitative approach to explore and describe the experiences of Filipino teachers teaching in Chinese schools in Cebu, Philippines. Purposive sampling was used to select Filipino teachers who had been employed in Chinese schools for three years or more. A total of 12 participants (coded as P for participants) were chosen based on data saturation. This criterion was essential to achieve data saturation, where nothing further emerged from other participants. The results of this study make important contributions to the understanding of cross-cultural education and the localization of teaching practices.

A validated, unstructured interview guide was used to collect data from the teachers. In-depth, one-on-one interviews were conducted after obtaining ethics clearance from the university and participant consent. Filipino educators contribute distinctive approaches and insights that enhance the learning environment in Chinese schools, bridging cultural divides and promoting mutual respect between Filipino and Chinese communities. Their experiences underscore the value of adaptability, cultural sensitivity, and professional development in multicultural educational environments. The informed consent form included the purpose of the study and how it would be conducted; the benefits for the participants; how the privacy, anonymity, and confidentiality of the participants would be ensured; freedom of the teacher-participants to withdraw from the study without consequence; and their voluntariness to participate in the study but without monetary compensation. Data collection and verification lasted for 8 months. During the interviews, teachers were asked about the influence of Chinese culture on their pedagogical and content delivery, language and social interaction, and teaching practices and constructions while teaching in a Chinese school. Audio recordings of the conversations were made with participant consent, and participants were provided with the transcripts for verification. Thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's steps [7], was used to identify patterns of meaning (themes) within qualitative data.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Guided by the thematic analysis steps espoused by Braun and Clarke [7], the influence of Chinese culture on Filipino teachers' pedagogical and content delivery, language, and social interaction as well as their practices and constructions while teaching in a Chinese school, six themes emerged: bilingual pedagogy, cultural values integration, language immersion, technology in education, thriving through diversity, support, and collegiality.

3.1. Bilingual policy

Filipino teachers in Chinese schools frequently need to adapt their teaching practices to fit with Chinese cultural norms and educational standards. Understanding local customs, values, and communication preferences is necessary since they may have an impact on how education is delivered and received. The success of bilingual education depends heavily on Filipino instructors' fluency in both Chinese and English. Teachers must speak more than one language fluently to ensure that pupils comprehend the subject matter and simultaneously advance their language proficiency. Language trainings centered on intercultural communication techniques and professional development of teachers, especially in dealing with multilingual learners [8].

3.1.1. Adoption of bilingual teaching strategies

The teaching approaches of Filipino educators are shaped by Chinese cultural norms and values, particularly the emphasis on thoroughness and obedience to authority. These variables also have an impact on the use of bilingual teaching strategies, which aim to raise students' academic achievement and language proficiency in a multicultural classroom. It is advised that multilingual teaching strategies that address students' proficiency in both Chinese and English be used by Filipino teachers in these schools. The fluency of Filipino teachers in both Chinese and English is important to the success of bilingual education. To make sure that students understand the material and improve their language skills at the same time, teachers need to be fluent in multiple languages. Bagapuro and Santos [9] stressed that teaching competencies encompass the development and display of the composite skills necessary for student teaching, such as lesson introduction, explanation, pace of instruction, reinforcement, comprehension of child psychology, behavior recognition, classroom management, and assignment distribution.

"I tried my very best to learn Chinese so that I can interact my students even after class hours. Some of them might do some gossip and I cannot understand that is why, I tried learning Chinese." (P9)

"Yes, because it's really hard to communicate with them so I really have to study. There are times that I really study Chinese characters and languages so that I can speak with them but it's really hard." (P2)

"There's an edge for the teachers if they know Mandarin, but the school does not expect us to be studying this language. Like if I'm a new teacher, I have to learn Mandarin. And those who learn a lot are those teacher assistants because they're there for one whole year and they're going to be very good in Mandarin. They can really understand." (P5)

This implies that for Filipino teachers to improve their cultural competence and bilingual teaching abilities, ongoing professional development is essential. These could include language instruction, seminars on Chinese teaching methods, and chances for collaborative learning with Chinese coworkers. The way that students and teachers interact in a bilingual setting can also be influenced by cultural conventions. Filipino educators should be conscious of the hierarchical nature of teacher-student relationships in Chinese culture, as it might affect student involvement and classroom dynamics. Translanguaging techniques, in which languages are switched between, can be used by bilingual educators to improve learning and comprehension [10]. With this approach, students can progressively improve their second language skills while also understanding difficult concepts in their native tongue.

3.1.2. Dynamic social environment

To improve students' multilingual abilities and expand their cultural awareness, it is recommended that teachers employ both languages when instructing their classes. Through exposure to various linguistic and cultural viewpoints, bilingual education not only enhances language competency but also fosters cultural competence [11]. Teachers can establish a learning environment that fosters linguistic variety and a greater understanding of cultural diversity by incorporating both languages into the curriculum. This will facilitate cross-cultural communication and collaboration among students and teachers, fostering a supportive learning community. Dynamic bilingualism highlights the sophisticated and dynamic language use that bilinguals make in the increasingly globalized 21st-century environment [12].

“They don’t have problems about interactions because they are so active and participative.” (P1)
“I had alternates between English and Chinese in simple words during science experiments, encouraging students to discuss their observations in both languages for them to understand fully the concepts.” (P10)

This emphasizes the importance of understanding and adapting to cultural differences within the school community. It highlights the efforts made to respect and accommodate diverse cultural backgrounds, fostering a culturally sensitive and inclusive environment. Teachers in bilingual education settings frequently switch between languages, like English and Chinese, to enhance the learning experiences of their pupils, especially in interactive activities like science experiments. This method not only helps students become more proficient in both languages but also inspires them to use a variety of linguistic devices to communicate their observations and ideas. In a science experiment, for instance, a teacher might ask students to explain their observations in both Chinese and English. Through this exercise, students can improve their language proficiency in both languages while actively engaging with scientific subjects. Through the promotion of bilingual interactions, educators assist learners in gaining confidence and fluency in communicating scientific concepts across language barriers.

3.2. Cultural values integration

Cultural values integration refers to the deliberate integration and promotion of diverse cultural perspectives within the curriculum and learning environment. Promoting an educational experience that is more inclusive, equitable, and sensitive to the cultural backgrounds of both teachers and students is the aim of this approach. Educators who prioritize the integration of cultural values often incorporate cultural narratives, customs, and historical backgrounds into their instructional materials and classroom discussions. Students can get a greater understanding and respect for variety through discussions on ethical issues in many cultures, historical events seen from multiple perspectives, and examples of literature from diverse cultural backgrounds. The curriculum and classroom management strategies that are based on traditional Chinese values, such as harmony and respect, are important in determining the kinds of discipline that are used and accepted by students. These principles are woven tightly into the fabric of teaching and learning procedures in Chinese educational contexts, impacting classroom dynamics and pedagogical techniques alike.

3.2.1. Influence of cultural norms on pedagogical practices

In order to create a welcoming environment where all students, regardless of their background or tenure, feel respected and encouraged in their academic endeavors, this statement emphasizes the significance of inclusive policies and mentorship programs. This discovery also emphasizes the benefits that various student groups can derive from mutual respect and cultural interaction. In addition to fostering cultural awareness and understanding, these exchanges also help to foster the growth of deep cross-cultural friendships and cooperative learning opportunities [12]. This is supported by the sharing of the teacher-participants:

“The culture that I also like here is—it doesn’t matter how long you stay here. I didn’t feel like I was a first year here. We are helping each other in reaching up. Their goal is to reach excellence but no person is left behind, so we have mentoring.” (P2)
“I don’t think so because we are in, we’re studying in one Cebu. We are in Cebu, so I observed Chinese students and teachers have this respect for the Filipinos—the culture, even the food and activities. The same is true with the Filipinos. They really established friendships and are learning from each other.” (P7)

The teachers acknowledge the welcoming and culturally sensitive learning atmosphere where all students’ growth is valued, regardless of their experience or background. The cross-cultural exchange and mentorship program shows a strong commitment to helping students and creating a supportive community. All things considered, the participant’s description suggests that the school places a high value on mutual understanding, inclusion, and academic performance. Teachers can make learning experiences more relevant and relatable for students by including materials, resources, and examples from many cultural backgrounds in their curricula. This method encourages a sense of participation and belonging in the classroom by validating students’ identities and experiences. Enhancing inclusion in the classroom can be accomplished through utilizing a range of teaching strategies that accommodate diverse learning styles and cultural preferences [12]. Integration of cultural values is a dynamic process that unites people from various cultural backgrounds and promotes diversity and unity within a society. It is essential to creating a peaceful and inclusive society since it affects education, personal development, and societal cohesiveness.

3.2.2. Cultural influence on teaching pedagogy

The design of curricula and classroom management is shaped by pedagogical practices that center on traditional Chinese values like as harmony and respect. This influences the techniques of discipline and the expectations for student behavior. Through the identification of efficient teaching methods, student learning preferences, and classroom management strategies, educational research findings continuously impact pedagogical practices. For instance, research on differentiated instruction has led educators to modify their pedagogical approaches to better meet the needs and skills of a wide range of students.

“The dynamics of the class I would be teaching at the moment had the biggest impact on my professional development and practices during the course of my career. As a result, my pupils have the greatest impact on my professional development and methods.” (P12)

“I adjusted their language of instruction based on the students’ proficiency, using a combination of English and Filipino to cater to their needs. I also seminars have equipped the teacher with new techniques and strategies, such as group activities, oral recitation, and games, to engage students effectively.” (P3)

The primary elements influencing educators’ educational approaches include the distinct needs and dynamics of each student, the greater school and community context, ongoing professional development and reflection, and the integration of new technology. Competent teachers may effectively handle these various aspects to create engaging and memorable learning experiences for their students. Language proficiency is generally seen as an essential component of cultural integration. Prior research has noted that there is a strong correlation between academic performance and English proficiency and the general adaptation of international students to English-speaking countries worldwide [13].

Moreover, it is difficult for you to successfully diversify instruction in classes because of the diverse range of personalities, learning styles, and skill levels present. Changing lessons to meet the requirements of different students encourages innovation and resourcefulness in the teaching style. Thus, the dynamics of your classroom influence how you develop professionally by forcing you to change, adapt, and advance alongside your pupils. The effect on instructional strategies and professional growth highlights how dynamic education is and how important meaningful classroom relationships are.

3.2.3. Cultural context and relevance

This means that the teacher integrates cultural studies and historical perspectives into subjects, providing a holistic view of Chinese culture and its impact on various disciplines. This means a method of instruction where teachers purposefully include topics in cultural studies and historical perspectives in the curriculum. They hope to provide pupils with an all-encompassing understanding of Chinese culture that goes beyond conventional limits by doing this. Examining elements of Chinese culture that are specific to China, like its literature, art, and rituals, is crucial when integrating cultural studies. In parallel, historical viewpoints look at important occasions, dates, and factors that have influenced Chinese civilization over time.

“We follow DepEd also. We all have this Buwan ng Wika, and this Chinito-Chinita. They also wear their Cheongsam; For Filipinos ay Filipino din na costume. And it’s so nice. We really thank God, because of these mixed cultures that they have, they don’t say, you’re a Filipino, I’m a Chinese. There’s no such thing like that here.” (P5)

“They are just students. Once inside the classroom, it doesn’t matter if they are Filipinos or Chinese. As a teacher, I see to it that there is a balance of cultural integration in my class with Filipino and Chinese cultures.” (P2)

This all-encompassing approach develops a greater regard and appreciation for diversity in addition to enhancing students’ knowledge. It enables students to make the connection between abstract ideas and practical applications, illustrating how Chinese culture affects and impacts a wide range of academic fields. Additionally, integrating historical and cultural viewpoints into lessons encourages students to think critically and empathize with others. They pick up the ability to evaluate other points of view and understand the intricacy of cross-cultural relationships in a global setting. In the end, this teaching method equips students to successfully navigate and participate in an increasingly interconnected society.

3.3. Language immersion strategies

Language immersion is a comprehensive educational approach that provides English language learners with the necessary skills to become naturally and socially competent communicators [12]. At the

core of this approach are language immersion strategies focused on immersing students in a target language environment to accommodate bilingual teaching and boost fluency and cultural appreciation [8], [12]. The immersion strategies are designed to replicate the natural language acquisition process, where students are exposed to the language in various contexts and diverse settings, encouraging them to actively and meaningfully use the language. It also influenced the teachers to put a premium on pedagogical adaptation and innovation, holistic language practices, and social and cultural integration.

3.3.1. Pedagogical adaptation and innovation

Language immersion strategies significantly shape the pedagogical practices of teachers by emphasizing practical language use within a cultural context. In the study of Filipino teachers in Chinese schools, these strategies involve implementing techniques that mirror the Chinese language learning environment. For instance, teacher participants mentioned that:

“For example, in an English situation, we use real-life situations in our performance task, or in our word problems, we usually use real-life situations where kids can relate.” (P6)

“Always include in the activities hands-on learning. My strategy is more on asking the students to be engaged in the learning so more on students’ activities and less of teacher talk.” (P8)

“Manipulatives and games. They like games and group activities.” (P2)

“Action songs and pictures are used to introduce vocabulary, which is helpful for students.” (P9)

Moreover, techniques like total physical response (TPR) and game-based learning are also utilized, where students engage in physical activities to learn and practice the language, making the learning process more dynamic and interactive. These strategies are underpinned by the idea that learning is more effective when students are actively involved and enjoying the process [14], [15]. They both strive to create a more engaging and effective learning experience. It is most effective for beginners and young learners but can be modified for all ages and levels.

In language immersion, the selection and utilization of learning materials and resources play a critical role. The significance of shaping learners’ experiences, emphasizing the importance of cultural perspectives and overcoming language or semantic barriers in communication was also highlighted [16]. By curating materials that resonate with learners’ cultural backgrounds, educators can foster a stronger connection between the content and students’ real-life experiences [17]. This immersive approach ensures that language learning is not just theoretical but integrated into everyday classroom activities, making it more effective and engaging for students.

3.3.2. Holistic language practices

Adopting language immersion strategies has enhanced language practices by increasing students’ exposure to and fluency in both English and Chinese [17]. Creating an immersive learning environment encourages students to use the target language in various contexts, promoting linguistic proficiency [18]. This approach often involves differentiating between Chinese and English classes to maintain focused immersion experiences.

“Even with the students, the reason why they are here is to be immersed in an English-speaking community so they are trying their best to communicate in English.” (P3)

“When I see my students even if they are all Chinese they speak in English because it is our medium of instruction.” (P8)

“The school encourages students to speak English, and measures are taken to discourage the use of dialects, such as fines.” (P12)

“The use of the English language, benefits both ways for the teacher and the students because if they cannot speak English, they really have, they are forced.” (P4)

Immersion strategies involve surrounding learners with the target language in various contexts, from classroom instruction to everyday conversations. This constant exposure helps learners to absorb the language passively, just as they would their native language. This is supported by the sharing of the teacher-participants.

“We encourage them to speak English. I really encourage them. I let them speak even if they cannot speak fluently because my Chinese students of mine are really active and they really want to answer, even if it’s hard for them to speak, I let them speak in English.” (P2)

“Students are encouraged to speak Chinese during Chinese classes and English during English classes to improve their language skills.” (P9)

Language immersion programs have been found to provide substantial language learning benefits for first-time students. The immersive environment “forces” students to engage with the language daily, rather than the limited exposure they may receive in a traditional classroom setting [19]. The effects of immersion programs and strategies appear to be similar across student groups, benefiting both native English speakers and those from other language backgrounds equally [11]. Ultimately, the findings of this research supported by literature suggest that language immersion strategies, whether short-term or long-term, can significantly enhance language practices and proficiency for students learning both English and Chinese.

3.3.3. Social and cultural integration

Language immersion strategies have a profound impact on social interaction among students [20]. By promoting language exchange and cultural sharing, these strategies enhance social cohesion and mutual understanding. In the context of Filipino teachers in Chinese schools, students are encouraged to engage in cultural and linguistic exchanges, which help build a sense of community and mutual respect [20], [21]. The immersive nature of the language programs allows students to interact with each other and their teachers in the target language, fostering an environment of collaboration and cultural appreciation [8].

“We’re also careful of how we speak because most of the students are very sensitive. For them, we are like making fun of their culture.” (P2)

“Teachers who can speak and understand Chinese help other teachers.” (P5)

“I observed Chinese students and teachers have this respect for the Filipinos- culture, even the food and activities. The same is true with the Filipinos. They really established friendships and are learning from each other.” (P9)

“Chinese students, especially that we are in a Christian school, appreciate a Christ-centered education with values integrated into lessons.” (P11)

This interaction not only improves language skills but also helps students develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of different cultures, promoting global awareness and intercultural competence [21], [22]. Language learners correspond more to the language that plays the role of social change, as they are more aware of future needs and demands needed to enhance their social status and guarantee a successful future. Being an intercultural speaker has become a necessity in global communication, and multicultural classes have a positive impact on intercultural learning [22]. Students from various cultural backgrounds come together to learn English, which allows them to develop intercultural awareness. In essence, these findings underscore the transformative role of language immersion strategies in preparing students for a globalized world, where understanding and appreciating diverse cultures are essential for effective communication and cooperation.

3.4. Technology in language education

Teachers need ongoing support and resources in utilizing ICT in teaching [23]. In the context of Filipino teachers working in Chinese schools, the integration of technological tools has significantly transformed pedagogical practices, language acquisition strategies, and social interactions within educational settings. This integration enhances the effectiveness of language instruction while prompting teachers to adopt technology-augmented pedagogical practices, autonomous language learning, and facilitating social interaction.

3.4.1. Technology-augmented pedagogical practices

The integration of technology into language education has revolutionized pedagogical approaches in Filipino classrooms [24], [25]. Incorporating tools such as translation apps, online language platforms, and interactive digital resources has enabled teachers to create more dynamic and engaging lessons [26], [27]. These technological advancements cater to diverse learning styles and promote active student participation by offering multimedia content, interactive exercises, and immediate feedback mechanisms [28].

“Actually, the use of technology, especially with my students I noticed they are very engaged. My students are very proficient in the use of different apps.” (P7)

“The kids, because of the gadgets, they’re very good also. If they can’t understand, they also use their... dictionary, ahh Chinese app that when the teacher teaches, if they cannot understand, they can use their gadget only for them.” (P2)

“This year we have one from China. Came from China and she doesn’t really understand English. The seatmate is helping her when I discuss, she also has a translator device so I allowed her.” (P8)

The adoption of digital tools aligns with innovative educational practices observed in Chinese schools, where technology is used to enhance teaching effectiveness and student engagement. This approach not only enriches language instruction but also fosters a collaborative learning environment where students can explore language concepts in interactive and meaningful ways. Increased usage of technology provides opportunities for multiple learning styles, and multiple modes of communication, interaction, and understanding. Research reveals that students exposed to multimedia materials are more apt to stop, reflect, and edit their materials [29], [30]. Innovative digital devices and platforms are enhancing foreign language teaching and learning in classrooms as well as creating new spaces inside and outside of the classroom. In language education, foreign language teachers must integrate digital tools that enhance students' learning experiences and expand their technological infrastructure. Educators need to develop specialized knowledge, skills, and a positive attitude toward using digital media to become more competent and digitally literate in their teaching practices.

3.4.2. Autonomous language learning

Technology has revolutionized the field of language education, expanding access to resources and promoting autonomous learning for students [31], [32]. By providing a wide range of online materials, digital libraries, and educational software, technology supplements traditional textbooks and enhances learning outcomes [33]. Autonomous and self-directed language learning has also been greatly influenced by technological development, allowing students to control their learning process with greater flexibility and access than ever before. With the use of AI-based platforms, e-libraries, and interactive applications, learners can access real-life language materials adjusted to their proficiency levels and personal learning styles.

“We teach through with translation to Chinese word, Chinese characters with the English meaning the translation and then we also speak it. And then with the technology right now we record it. Those parents who cannot understand, they we will send it to you through messenger. We just do Messenger, okay this is the way you will pronounce it.” (P6)

As narrated by P6, they are leveraging technology to support diverse learners, utilizing tools like Messenger to share recordings that allow parents who may not fully understand the language to engage with the material. They use translation tools among others to assist students in the classroom. Furthermore, language learning apps and digital dictionaries empower students to practice and refine their skills independently, fostering self-directed learning and personalized experiences tailored to individual needs and preferences [32]. This autonomy is crucial in enhancing overall language proficiency, as it enables learners to take an active role in their development.

While the integration of technology into language education offers numerous benefits, it is essential to consider potential challenges [33]. Educators must carefully align the use of technology with pedagogical goals, ensuring that the implementation serves to enhance, rather than replace, the role of the teacher [34], [35]. Additionally, it is crucial to address potential feelings of isolation or disconnection that can arise from over-reliance on online resources and digital tools, emphasizing the importance of maintaining a learner-centered environment with appropriate scaffolding and face-to-face interactions.

3.4.3. Facilitated social interaction

Technology has become an integral part of language education, transforming the way students engage with and learn foreign languages. Digital communication channels enable real-time interaction and collaboration, allowing students to engage in meaningful discussions, joint projects, and cultural exchanges [20]. In the context of Chinese learners, smooth interaction with their teachers and peers (who are not Chinese) may be challenging due to language barriers. In this case, both teachers and students require assistance from digital tools specifically translators. As one teacher notes,

“Thankfully, because we have technology. When we try to explain to them, sometimes we cannot use the language, I mean, use the Mandarin language that they can understand, so Google Translate helps a lot.” (P5)

Digital translation tools like Google Translate are invaluable resources for Chinese students learning in English-medium classes. They enable students to overcome language barriers and actively participate in discussions, collaborate on projects, and engage with their teachers and peers. By providing real-time translation, these tools ensure that students can comprehend the lesson content and communicate their ideas, even if their English proficiency is still developing. This access to digital support promotes cross-cultural understanding and helps students thrive in the diverse, interconnected world. However, students must not become overly reliant on translation software, as this can hinder the development of their natural English

language skills. The goal should be for students to gradually build their confidence and fluency in English through increased immersion and engagement during classes.

3.5. Thriving through diversity

This theme emphasizes the importance of empowering teachers and fostering a supportive and inclusive school environment that values cultural diversity. It highlights how professional development, described as staff development encompassing all in-service actions, facilitated continual updating of teachers' knowledge and skills throughout their teaching career. This is evident through the institution of bilingual policy, teacher-led initiatives, and cultural adaption and sensitivity training. These activities have influenced teachers' pedagogical practices, social interactions, and teaching constructions leading to their heightened cultural competence, enhanced interpersonal relationships, and culture-sensitive pedagogy.

3.5.1. Heightened cultural competence

With over 10 years of teaching in a Chinese school, the teachers expressed their increased ability to respectfully and effectively interact with the Chinese teachers. This is evident by their understanding and appreciation of the beliefs, customs, and languages that are necessary to work happily in a multicultural learning institution. According to the teachers:

“Every last Friday of the month, early dismissal for the students, like for example, at 2 o'clock so that we can have our professional development program. There are times we have seminars, and there are times we have our cooking sessions. We regular have team-building; we play together. All of us including the Chinese teachers. As we learn and grow professionally, we also learn about our Chinese colleagues- their language, their stories.” (P5)

“We also have team-building activities every Friday. It's like a 30-minute devotion time where all teachers gather together in the AVR. We really thank God, because of these mixed cultures that we have. We don't say, you're a Filipino, I'm a Chinese. There's no such thing like that here.” (P6)

The teachers' accounts demonstrate this through their descriptions of professional development activities that foster mutual understanding, respect, and collaboration between Filipino and Chinese teachers. These include regular seminars, team-building, and shared devotional time that promote cross-cultural learning, communication, and a sense of community. The teachers express gratitude for the school's supportive environment that enables their professional and personal growth, both spiritually and mentally. As such, the school's approach to faculty development has cultivated a positive, inclusive school culture where differences are celebrated and teachers from diverse backgrounds can thrive. Research on effective professional development emphasizes the importance of content focus and sustained participation, among others [36]. Teachers' descriptions of regular seminars, team-building, and devotional time promote a sense of community and inclusive culture.

3.5.2. Enhanced interpersonal relationships

This refers to the strengthening of bond between the Filipino teachers and Chinese teachers due to the various staff development activities implemented in schools. Mutual respect and non-judgmental interactions with cultural sensitivity support teachers' personal growth and sense of belonging. According to the teachers:

“I'm happy working here especially it's a Christian school. It's like another family to me. Because of the school we have a healing ministry. Although the salary is not comparable with DepEd but for me relationship between administrators and teacher matter. They only not feed our physical body and also our soul and the school. We respect each other's uniqueness-Chinese or Filipinos.” (P8)

“As for learning the Chinese language before we were given free lessons because of time constraints our time was so tight, so that's a stop but I learned few words in Chinese. As to my usage of English language, yes, it really broadened my speaking abilities in English like I'm more confident because the language use here primarily is English.” (P4)

The teachers' accounts demonstrate a deep sense of community and belonging within the school. As one teacher expressed, “it is like another family to me” and the school “not only feeds our physical body but also our soul. This reflects the development of close, supportive relationships between the teachers, administrators, and the school community. Research has shown that high-quality interpersonal relationships within schools can enhance social connectedness, a sense of belonging, and overall school adaptation among

teachers [2]. The teachers' emphasis on mutual respect and appreciation for each other's 'uniqueness' as Chinese or Filipino aligns with studies highlighting the importance of inclusive, culturally responsive school environments for fostering interpersonal dynamics [20], [37]. Furthermore, the teachers describe collaborative planning and open communication which reflects the development of strong working relationships.

3.5.3. Culture-sensitive pedagogy

The teachers use instructional approaches that incorporate students' cultural backgrounds to foster a facilitative learning environment. Caring and trusting relationships with students are central to these culture-sensitive teaching practices. Teachers are cognizant that their teaching philosophy and behaviors toward students' varied cultural backgrounds can influence the students' academic performance and engagement. They mentioned that:

"I also have to think of innovative strategies, tasks, and projects, including experiments that would be aligned with my students' learning abilities. Sometimes I do demonstration; depends on the topic and the class; Then there's demonstration there's also like exploration for them; role plays; games." (P4)

"I have to use my Lekou but very seldom, especially to the new or transferees and school visitors, I will tell them in Chinese. I really explained. There are many times like that. But of course, for other English teachers, they cannot do that anymore. If they can't understand, they also use their Lekou." (P6)

"We have a peer support. In this way they learn more from each other. During the assessment I ask or I allow them to talk. Those with difficulty with English, I allow them to speak to communicate, allowing peer assistance due to language difficulty." (P10)

These narratives from Filipino teachers reveal a nuanced understanding of teaching in a Chinese school where cultural differences and language barriers exist. They acknowledge the importance of adapting their teaching strategies to meet the diverse needs of their students, including those from other linguistic and cultural backgrounds. P4 uses demonstration, exploration, role play, and games to engage students, while P10 employs peer support. One acknowledged the limitations of using a foreign language (*Lekou*) and instead resorts to speaking Chinese when communicating with new students or transferees. This underscores the need for flexibility and creativity in the classroom to enrich students' cultural experiences [38]. Additionally, fostering peer support underscores the importance of social interaction in learning, helping students with language difficulties by allowing them to communicate and learn from each other. These approaches not only respect and value cultural diversity but also promote effective learning in a multicultural classroom setting. The teachers' narratives provide strong empirical support for fostering a supportive and inclusive school community characterized by relevant professional development and appreciation of diverse cultural backgrounds. Also, teachers from diverse backgrounds can thrive within a learning institution that respects and values cultural diversity.

3.6. Support and collegiality

This theme underscores intentional efforts to create and strengthen connections, fostering mutual support among teachers. The collegial and collaborative relationships contribute to the cohesive and encouraging school community, exemplified through their pillars of collaboration and growth: knowledge sharing, supportive community, and collective effort. This theme puts importance on the conscious development of relationships and cooperative support between teachers, which is important in building a harmonious and supportive school community. The kind of collegial and collaborative relationships that are formed as a result of such actions play an important role in the development of a knowledge-sharing, friendly interaction, and collaborative-oriented community.

3.6.1. Knowledge sharing

In an educational setting, knowledge sharing involves the exchange of information, ideas, and experiences among teachers, fostering professional growth and enhancing teaching practices. It is a collaborative process where teachers contribute their expertise and learn from each other to improve student learning outcomes and develop as professionals. This knowledge-sharing is evident in the following statements:

"I only know a little Chinese and I am happy that there are certain days that we can mingle with other Chinese teachers as part of our weekly activity in school. I can say that we are learning a lot each from each other day." (P7)

“I think it’s just natural or normal for me to extend my help because I have been through all these. I know that they can’t understand so I immediately translate it. I told my colleagues I can answer you whatever your problem is just a text a way, just go to me, if I can help them why not.” (P8)

“Yeah, we sit together and ask me how my lesson plan, my PowerPoints, my summative tests. Before I will submit my summative assessment tasks, we have three days to make and edit based on comments. My mentor has to check it before I will submit it to the coordinator.” (P2)

The experiences of the teachers exemplify a robust culture of knowledge sharing within their school. It reveals the teachers’ enthusiasm for mingling with Chinese colleagues and mutual learning via structured school activities and proactive stance in offering transition services fostering a cohesive environment. Meanwhile, P2’s description of collaborative lesson planning and assessment refinement demonstrates a systematic approach to leveraging collective expertise, ensuring high-quality teaching standards through mentorship and peer feedback. Together, these experiences reflect the school’s commitment to a nurturing environment where teachers demonstrate genuine concern for each other through shared knowledge and support. These practices align with the study which emphasized the need-based support to teachers and the value of collaboration in learning institutions [39].

3.6.2. Supportive community

A supportive community within a school setting fosters a sense of belonging, collaboration, and mutual assistance among teachers. It creates an environment where teachers feel valued, understood, and empowered to excel collectively. This community extends beyond the professional collaboration of teachers to encompass personal support and camaraderie, enhancing overall job satisfaction and well-being.

“Also, the culture that I also like here is—it doesn’t matter how long you stay here. I didn’t feel like I was a first year here. We are helping each other in reaching up. Their goal is to reach excellence but no person is left behind, so we have mentoring.” (P2)

“To be honest, I found a family here. Whatever the teacher needs, whether it is personal the school is ready to backup. Even if the compensation package is not comparable with others, yet teachers are helped professionally and spiritually. For me that’s part of the compensation package.” (P6)

Evident in the utterances of the teachers is the culture of mutual aid mentoring and familial support where professional and spiritual assistance have become crucial compensatory strategies. These experiences succinctly encapsulate the sentiments of the Filipino teachers acknowledging the school as a community where a sense of belonging and support transcends external perceptions and physical conditions. Closely akin to this is the tenet of a structured support system on employee outcomes [40] and the impact of positive experiences [41] and motivation [42]. As such, a supportive community is a contributing factor to teachers’ professional growth in a multicultural school setting.

3.6.3. Collective effort

Collective effort as a subtheme emphasizes the power and impact of collaboration towards a common goal. It signifies teachers coming together, pooling their resources, skills, and efforts to achieve something greater than what any single teacher could accomplish alone. It embodies teamwork, mutual support, and shared responsibility, often leading to more significant achievements and fostering a sense of community and belonging among participants.

“These new teachers have to be here two weeks before so that we will have an orientation, we will teach them the policies and we remind them, “This is a Chinese school” but of course, there are Filipino teachers as well so we need to be flexible and sensitive.” (P5)

“There are changes, sudden changes with curriculum but because maybe because of the help I received from the senior faculty and the administration, I become flexible. I was able to adapt to the changes.” (P11)

“I also like the culture here. We help each other reach our goals. Their goal is excellence, but no person is left behind, so we have regular mentoring sessions.” (P2)

The call for collective effort is evident in the school with the orientation process, the practice of having the teachers report 2 weeks before the start of classes to have collective knowledge and adherence to the school policies and teaching standards. As practiced, the school ensures mutual understanding and

a supportive spirit with the parents with the view of sustaining a cohesive learning institution. This further exemplifies the value placed upon a school as a family where everyone is encouraged to thrive and grow together. Similarly, some studies cited how changes were made possible through the help provided by the school to the faculty and staff, especially with the instructional modalities [1], [38], and parental support [43]. Such support has been recognized by Filipino teachers working in Filipino-Chinese schools.

4. CONCLUSION

This study on the culture-based teaching of Filipino teachers in Chinese schools illuminated profound insights into the enriching interaction between Chinese cultural influences on the teachers' pedagogical practices, content delivery, language use, and social interactions. The themes underscore the transformative impact of Chinese cultural values on educational settings, shaping bilingual pedagogies to enhance language proficiency and cross-cultural understanding. Additionally, the integration of values and professional development initiatives fosters a respectful and enriching school environment, while immersive language strategies and technological innovations support instructional delivery. Collectively, the study highlighted the dynamic interplay between Filipino teachers' pedagogical adaptations and the cultural context of Chinese schools, emphasizing the importance of cultural awareness and a supportive environment in teaching and learning institutions. Teacher education programs may prioritize the development of cultural competence, language immersion strategies, and technologically augmented pedagogies to prepare Filipino teachers for teaching in diverse settings. Ongoing support through professional development that enhances cultural competence, innovative pedagogical strategies, and supportive teaching communities may be considered by the school administration.

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C : **C**onceptualization

M : **M**ethodology

So : **S**oftware

Va : **V**alidation

Fo : **F**ormal analysis

I : **I**nvestigation

R : **R**esources

D : **D**ata Curation

O : **O**riting - **O**riginal Draft

E : **E**riting - **R**eview & **E**ditng

Vi : **V**isualization

Su : **S**upervision

P : **P**roject administration

Fu : **F**unding acquisition

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors state no conflict of interest.

INFORMED CONSENT

The authors have obtained informed consent from all individuals included in this study.

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DATA AVAILABILITY

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author [RCB]. The data, which contain information that could compromise the privacy of research participants, are not publicly available due to certain restrictions.




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