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Demystifying the Flights of Blaan ESL Learners in Urban Educational Setting: A Multiple Case Study

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Abstract

The integration of ESL in urban educational settings presents unique challenges for Blaan students, as their primary language shapes daily experiences, creating tension between adapting to new linguistic contexts and preserving cultural identity. This qualitative research employing multiple-case inquiry approach explored the difficulties encountered by Blaan learners of English as a Second Language (ESL) in three urban school settings for the School Year 2024-2025. Indigenous learners face linguistic, cultural, and socio-emotional obstacles that impede their academic achievement and social integration. Semi-structured interviews were conducted among Grade 7 Blaan frustrated readers and speakers based on Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) evaluation. Thematic analysis was utilized to understand the data and derive essential insights. Data revealed that Blaan students experience difficulties in English understanding, pronunciation, and vocabulary, resulting in anxiety and diminished self-confidence. Social and cultural exclusion intensifies their difficulties, since they face discrimination and marginalization inside the educational environment. Notwithstanding these challenges, learners utilize coping strategies like peer and familial support, autonomous learning, and resilience to surmount educational obstacles. The significance of educators and inclusive pedagogical approaches was emphasized as essential in facilitating language acquisition and cultural identity. This study highlights the necessity for culturally sensitive teaching, bilingual education initiatives, and improved institutional support to close the educational gap among Blaan ESL learners. By cultivating an inclusive educational atmosphere, schools can enable indigenous students to excel academically while safeguarding their linguistic and cultural heritage.

Keywords: *Blaan ESL learners, Indigenous education, English language learning, urban education, language barriers, cultural identity, social exclusion, educational challenges, resilience, inclusive education*

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INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly globalized world, the integration of English as a Second Language (ESL) in urban educational environments presents unique challenges for indigenous learners. As English serves as a crucial medium for academic success, mastering the language becomes imperative. However, this shift in language use often leads to tension between adjusting to new educational and social settings and maintaining cultural identity. For Blaan learners, the shift to an English-dominated academic setting may lead to struggles underscoring the complex intersection of language acquisition and cultural preservation. Thus, understanding these challenges was essential to ensuring equitable and culturally responsive education for indigenous ESL learners navigating urban schooling.

Globally, the adaptability of indigenous speakers in ESL environments had shown that insufficient exposure to English and reliance on native languages might impede language development. According to Morozova (2015) and Gan (2016), students often struggled with speaking due to fear of making mistakes, insufficient vocabulary, and frequent reliance on their native language in group interactions. Similarly, Cummins (2018) emphasized that the lack of bilingual instructional strategies can impede both linguistic competence and academic success, highlighting the importance of fostering first-language skills alongside English learning. García and Wei (2014) further argued that bilingual and culturally inclusive teaching approaches not only improve language proficiency but also promote students' confidence and participation, which are critical to their success in multilingual environments. These studies provide valuable insights into the experiences of Blaan learners in ESL contexts, reinforcing the importance of addressing their linguistic and cultural needs through appropriate educational strategies.

Ambayon (2021) emphasized that the cultural practices of Blaan students significantly influenced their academic performance, particularly in relation to their language use. His study further highlighted that Blaan students perceived their cultural identity and language as integral components of their educational experiences. Moreover, Blaan culture is profoundly established in community life, with practices that show a tight connection with environment and spirituality. Their original language, Blaan, is essential to preserving their cultural identity (Salazar, 2015). However, as more members of the community migrated to urban areas where they face challenges in retaining their linguistic and cultural roots. Hence, Dela Cruz (2015) stressed that the shift toward urban education further complicates their ability to maintain cultural identity while adapting to new environments.

Generally, Blaan learners struggled with multiple challenges, including language barriers that hinder comprehension and expression in English (Padilla, 2016; Tupas & Martin, 2015). Cultural differences further exacerbated these challenges, as Blaan students must navigate an educational space that often reflects dominant cultural norms. Hence, for Padilla (2016), issues related to identity and belonging are also significant, as these students may feel isolated or disconnected from both their indigenous roots and the mainstream school community.

Statement of the Problem

This study generally aimed to explore the plights of Blaan ESL learners in urban educational setting. Further, this study was carried out using multiple case design in the context of qualitative method case study, and the data was collected using Semi-Structured Interviews (SSI) that would guide a comprehensive investigation in to the challenges of Blaan ESL learners

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in urban educational setting, helping to uncover both the underlying issues and potential solutions. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the plights of Blaan ESL learners in urban educational setting?
2. What are the coping mechanisms of Blaan ESL learners in urban educational setting?
3. What insights can Blaan ESL learners share with regard to urban educational setting?
4. What are the similarities and differences of each case in this study?

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The researcher utilized multiple case study as a methodological research approach to explore the plights of ESL Blaan learners at Cebuano National High School, Emiliano P. Baquial National High School, and Cirila G. Odal National High School. According to Creswell (2013), a multiple-case design explores a real-life multiple bounded system through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information.

Also, Adams (2021) highlighted that a multiple case study research design is a qualitative research design that preserves the uniqueness of the individual case studies while enabling researchers to compare and contrast individual cases, representing a range of qualities and extremes to create depth and comprehend a broad phenomenon. In examining the particular difficulties faced by Blaan students when navigating ESL, this approach thus emphasizes tangible ramifications.

Additionally, this study used the triangulation method, which involves cross-verifying data from their advisers and parents, to strengthen the validity and credibility of the findings (Denzin, 1978). Parents were asked about their observations of the child's reading and speaking habits at home, and the difficulties they face, which focused in particular on the struggling ESL Blaan students. Furthermore, advisers were asked regarding the performance pertaining to students' academic reading and speaking proficiency, the interventions that have been implemented, and their efficacy. To lessen the bias, the comments from their parents and advisors were cross-checked.

Respondents and locale of the study

The participants of the study were the Grade 7 students of Cebuano National High School (CNHS), Emiliano P. Baquial National High School (EPBNHS), and Cirila G. Odal National High School (CGONHS) - Junior High School Department who were enrolled in the School Year 2024-2025. The researcher selected nine (9) Grade 7 Blaan students, 3 from each locale, who had undergone assessment using the Phil-IRI Tool.

Based on the assessment of the 9 participants using the Phil-IRI Assessment Tool, the following descriptions highlight the plights of the Blaan ESL learners in urban education setting: Case 1 was from a remote village who had a case of having limited exposure to English outside of school. The lack of English-speaking role models and resources at home hindered his language development; Case 2 was a Blaan student who struggled to adapt to the English language due to the significant differences between their native language and English, leading to difficulties in pronunciation and sentence construction. Case 3 had a case of financial constraints being from a low-income family who cannot afford additional English learning materials or attend extra tutoring sessions, limiting her opportunities to improve her English skills.

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Additionally, Case 4 had a case of having fear of speaking English in class due to fear of making mistakes and being ridiculed by classmates, limiting his results in limited practice and slow progress; Case 5 struggled from having lack of supportive environment at home where she did not receive any encouragement and understanding, affecting her confidence and motivation to learn; Case 6 was also a Blaan student who was taught English using traditional methods that did not cater to his learning style. He found it difficult to grasp the language and loses interest in learning.

Furthermore, Case 7, among others, had a case of having limited access to technology, such as computers or the internet, which could provide additional resources and practice opportunities for learning English; Case 8 had issues with his native language that did interfere with his English learning, causing confusion in grammar and vocabulary. He struggled to differentiate between the two languages; and lastly, Case 9, however, had a case of having low self-esteem due to previous failures in learning English. This lack of confidence affects his willingness to participate in class and practice the language.

Research Instrument

The main instruments employed in this study were the Semi Structured Interview (SSI) guide questions and the recorder.

Before creating the SSI, the researcher ensured that the guiding questions were aligned with the Research and Development (R&D) procedural steps for designing SSI, as outlined by DeJohnckheere & Vaughn (2018). This framework included 11 phases: defining the purpose and scope, identifying participants, addressing ethical considerations, planning logical components, developing the interview guide, establishing trust and rapport, conducting interviews with memoing and reflection, analyzing the data, ensuring trustworthiness, and presenting findings in a paper.

Data Analysis Method

The study employed Thematic Analysis (TA). According to Braun & Clarke (2013), the TA's systematic procedure involved several key steps:

Step 1. Familiarizing with the data. This initial step involved thoroughly reading and re-reading the collected data, such as participants' statements to become deeply immersed and familiar with the content. In the context of exploring the plights of Blaan ESL learners, this step helped to grasp the experiences and perspectives shared by the learners.

Step 2. Generating initial codes. After familiarization, the researcher identified important and relevant details by coding the data. These codes were short labels that captured key features, such as common challenges or cultural issues highlighted by the Blaan learners.

Step 3. Searching for themes. The researcher grouped the codes into broader themes. These themes represented patterns or recurring ideas in the data, such as cultural disconnection or language barriers faced by the Blaan ESL learners in urban schools.

Step 4. Reviewing themes. This step involved ensuring that the themes accurately reflect the data. The researcher revisited the data to confirm that the themes were consistent with the participants' statements and experiences, refining them if necessary.

Step 5. Defining themes. Here, the researcher defined each theme in detail, identifying what each theme means and how it contributed to the overall story. This step helped provide deeper insights into the plights and adaptive strategies of Blaan ESL learners.

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Step 6. Writing the decoded themes. In the final step, the researcher had written up the themes, presenting them in a coherent and meaningful way. The themes were then interpreted to contribute to the study's aim of exploring the struggles and experiences of Blaan ESL learners in urban educational setting.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Plights of Blaan ESL Learners in Urban Educational Setting

Emergent Theme 1. Linguistic Challenges

Blaan ESL learners struggle with understanding and using English, particularly in speaking, writing, and grammar. They find it difficult to construct correct sentences, which affects their confidence in communication.

> *(Case 1) Sewe mlemah di gami gamlabat English bay glabat mi neh gugda e kastulen mi.* [We find it difficult to understand English but we can understand their native language.]

> *(Case 2) La ale gu too gare English, du mda atnalu me too mah hal.* [We do not know much about English. It is like our language is different.]

> *(Case 4) La aglabat gu ron Ma'am. Du too mlemah e stulen di English.* [Because ma'am, I do not understand it. It is difficult to speak in English.]

> *(Case 8) Gami, dad Blaan, sewe mlemah di gami talon a gamlabat English.* [We, Blaan, find it difficult to pronounce and understand English.]

> *(Case 6) Para di do mlemah gu glabat e English. Bay ko talo agu mlal sah, dunan aye talo gal gu mlemah glabat.* [I find it difficult to understand English. In speaking, it is okay but there are words that I find hard to understand.]

The statements reflect that many Blaan students come from communities where English is not commonly spoken, making it harder for them to develop proficiency in the language. The difficulty in constructing correct sentences impacts their ability to communicate effectively in class, leading to hesitation in participating in discussions. Their struggles extend beyond speaking to reading and writing, which are fundamental in academic performance. Without adequate support, these challenges can create a long-term gap in learning.

According to Presbitero (2020), indigenous learners who lack exposure to English often struggle with comprehension and expression, which aligns with the experiences of Blaan students. Leaño et al. (2014) highlighted similar struggles in ESL learners, emphasizing their difficulty in vocabulary acquisition and sentence construction. Without proper interventions, these challenges may hinder their academic success and social integration.

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Emergent Theme 2. Emotional Barriers in Learning

Many students experience anxiety, nervousness, and embarrassment when using English. These feelings prevent them from actively participating in class and social interactions.

> *(Case 1) Nun bang ah aye, gal agu amya talo di gareme gu di klase du mata gu nule.* [Sometimes, I feel embarrassed to speak in class because my classmates might laugh at me.]

> *(Case 5) Gal agu knulba ko snalek la gu na talo agu di kanfe fare ko mahal e gman gu.* [I get nervous when asked to speak in front because I might say something wrong.]

These statements illustrate that many Blaan students are afraid of making mistakes in English that leads to a lack of confidence and reluctance to speak in class. Their nervousness is heightened when they are required to read aloud or answer questions, as they fear being judged by their peers. This anxiety creates a learning barrier, making it harder for them to practice the language and improve their skills. Furthermore, the challenge of adjusting to an unfamiliar school environment adds another layer of stress, making language learning even more difficult.

Vizconde (2022) found that ESL learners often experience stress due to language barriers, cultural differences, and academic pressures. Similarly, Panaguiton et al. (2024) identified anxiety as a significant factor that prevents indigenous students from confidently using a second language. Emotional struggles not only limit language development but also reduce motivation and engagement in learning.

Emergent Theme 3. Social and Cultural Barriers

Due to their struggles with English, many Blaan students feel isolated from their classmates. They hesitate to engage with peers who do not share their linguistic background.

> *(Case 9) Mda dad dareme gu di skul gal la gamin ule di ktalo mi.* [Some students make fun of us because of how we talk.]

> *(Case 2) Sewe mahal ami du md agami gumda na tnalo sahal di dareme la salngad ami.* [We feel different because our traditions and language are not the same as others.]

The statements showcase how language serves as a bridge to socialization, but for Blaan students, the language barrier often leads to isolation. They may struggle to form friendships with non-Blaan classmates due to their difficulty in communicating effectively in English. This hesitation to interact with others further limits their opportunities to practice the language, creating a cycle of exclusion. The fear of being misunderstood or ridiculed also contributes to their reluctance to participate in group activities, which are essential for both academic and social development.

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Garcia and Cuéllar (2016) emphasized that ESL learners who struggle with cultural adaptation often face social exclusion. The lack of culturally responsive interventions further alienates them from mainstream education. Additionally, Avergonzado (2019) found that indigenous students often refrain from participating in co-curricular activities due to feelings of inferiority.

Emergent Theme 4. Cultural Discrimination

Blaan students experience discrimination from peers due to their distinct language and accent. Some feel bullied when speaking in their native language.

> *(Case 6) Nun dun aye gal la gami naroy du blaan ami.* [There are times when others look down on us just because we are Blaan.]

The statements manifest that language-based discrimination is a significant issue for Blaan students. Some classmates view their native language as strange or inferior, leading to mockery and exclusion. This kind of discrimination discourages them from speaking their language openly, making them feel ashamed of their cultural identity. Over time, this can have lasting effects on their self-esteem and willingness to engage in the classroom. Addressing this issue requires schools to promote linguistic diversity and teach students the value of respecting different cultures.

Albona (2015) noted that racial discrimination is a prevalent issue among indigenous learners, affecting their self-esteem and academic engagement. Similarly, Buenaflor et al. (2023) identified social prejudice as a barrier to indigenous students' success in urban educational setting. Schools must implement programs to promote cultural inclusivity and eliminate biases.

Emergent Theme 5. Social Exclusion

Many students feel excluded in the classroom because of their language and cultural differences. They believe that others view them as inferior due to their ethnic background.

> *(Case 7) Nun bangan aye para di do sewe la dnawat e skul ami.* [Sometimes, I feel like we are not accepted in school.]

Beyond linguistic discrimination, some Blaan students experience broader social exclusion. They feel that their peers and even some educators do not acknowledge their struggles, leading to a sense of invisibility within the school. This exclusion reinforces feelings of inadequacy and discourages them from actively participating in school activities. Schools need to implement programs that foster inclusivity, ensuring that indigenous learners feel valued and recognized.

According to Pogado and Bagtas (2024), indigenous students often experience systemic exclusion due to financial and linguistic barriers. Rivera et al. (2023) suggested that a supportive classroom environment is crucial for fostering resilience among ESL learners. Schools must create inclusive policies to ensure that indigenous students feel valued and supported.

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Emergent Theme 6. Institutional Support

Despite their struggles, some students acknowledge that teachers provide assistance in learning English, particularly in reading and writing.

> *(Case 3) Amda dad tamdo gami gal an gami atdo masa na smulat ko ta fnge klase mi.* [The teachers help us read and write even after class.]

The statements showcase how teachers play a crucial role in helping Blaan students overcome their language difficulties. Some educators go beyond regular class hours to assist students in reading and writing, providing much-needed support. These interventions are essential for improving language skills, as they give students extra time and guidance to practice English. However, more structured and long-term programs such as specialized ESL classes could further enhance their learning experience.

David et al. (2015) pointed out that resource limitations in urban schools hinder effective ESL instruction. However, Franca et al. (2024) argued that when schools implement targeted interventions, indigenous learners demonstrate significant progress in language acquisition. Teacher-led initiatives, such as remedial reading programs, are essential for addressing language barriers.

Emergent Theme 7. Inclusive Educational Practices

Some students feel supported by teachers who treat them equally and encourage their learning, fostering a more inclusive environment.

> *(Case 4)Mlehew agu ko gal gnamit e tamdo gami e tnalo mi para nulitan e dad tdo. [* I am happy when teachers use our native language to explain lessons.]

The statements reflect how inclusive educational practices help bridge the gap for marginalized students. When teachers show fairness and provide tailored support, Blaan learners feel more confident in their abilities. Equal treatment fosters a positive learning environment, allowing indigenous students to thrive alongside their peers. Schools that prioritize inclusivity not only enhance student learning outcomes but also promote cultural appreciation and understanding among all students.

Inclusive educational practices recognize the importance of culturally responsive teaching, integrating indigenous knowledge into the curriculum, and fostering a learning environment that respects linguistic diversity. According to Barnes (2019), culturally relevant pedagogy significantly improves engagement.

Coping Mechanisms of Blaan ESL Learners in Urban Educational Setting

Emergent Theme 1. Social Support System

Blaan ESL learners rely on their peers, classmates, and friends to help them navigate their academic challenges. This support system helps them cope with the difficulties of learning English in an urban educational setting.

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(Case 1) Mlehew agu ko amda dad gareme gu gal la agu atnabeng na glabat gu I tdo la deg. Sewe gal am agu falis na gagen agu kare di daleh.[I am happy when my classmates help me understand the lessons. It makes me feel included.]

(Case 2). Nun bangan, mda dad dareme gu sagbet gal la gut do ku mdet la gal gu glabat. [Sometimes, my friends translate the lesson for me when I do not understand.]

The statements emphasize the significant role of peer and teacher support in the academic journey of Blaan learners. Given their struggles with English, they turn to friends and classmates for assistance, fostering a collaborative learning environment. Their dependence on social networks highlights how a sense of belonging and encouragement can positively impact their ability to persist in school despite linguistic and cultural barriers.

According to Garcia and Cuéllar (2016), social integration is crucial for indigenous students, as peer interactions contribute significantly to their learning progress. Pogado and Bagtas (2024) also noted that indigenous students who receive social support from peers demonstrate higher academic motivation and resilience.

Emergent Theme 2. Institutional and Family Support

Teachers and family members play a crucial role in helping Blaan learners adjust to their studies. Teachers provide extra assistance, while parents and siblings help with assignments and moral support.

(Case 4) Dad tamdo gami gala gami banle oras di kgare mi, man lo gami. La fnablat la nimu mi. [Our teachers give us time to learn at our own pace. They do not pressure us.

(Case 5) Ye gal gu kaye de pamilya gu gal la agu snuporta di kaswela gu para fye fantan gu de fule do. [My family encourages me to study hard so I can have a better future.]

The statements illustrate how the combined efforts of educators and family members create a supportive learning environment for Blaan students. Schools provide structured guidance, while families offer reinforcement at home. This dual support system helps mitigate the challenges students face in acquiring English proficiency and adapting to an urban educational setting.

David et al. (2015) emphasized that educational institutions must tailor their approaches to accommodate indigenous students' needs, while Franca et al. (2024) argued that family engagement significantly influences language acquisition and retention.

Emergent Theme 3. Self-directed Learning Strategies

Many Blaan students take personal responsibility for their learning by practicing reading, studying diligently, and seeking help when needed.

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(Case 7) Gal gu sanfela masa Engllish na smulat agu di fafel gu para tuo gu fulong. [I practice reading English books and writing in my notebook to improve.]

The statements highlight the proactive approach of Blaan learners in improving their academic performance. Their willingness to ask for help and practice independently suggests a strong sense of responsibility and adaptability. These self-directed learning strategies are essential for overcoming linguistic challenges and gaining confidence in their English proficiency.

According to Presbitero (2020), self-directed learning plays a crucial role in ESL acquisition, as it fosters autonomy and confidence. Leaño et al. (2014) also noted that indigenous students who take ownership of their learning progress faster despite external challenges.

Emergent Theme 4. Resilience and Determination

Despite challenges, Blaan ESL learners show resilience by persevering in their studies and remaining determined to succeed.

(Case 8) Balo mlemah English, nimu gu kalbong para agmare agu kada do.[Even if English is hard, I keep trying to learn and improve every day.]

The statements reflect the unwavering determination of Blaan learners to succeed in their education. Their resilience is demonstrated through their perseverance, faith, and willingness to push through hardships. These attributes are crucial for overcoming the various academic and social challenges they face in an urban educational environment.

Rivera et al. (2023) found that resilience among ESL learners is influenced by a supportive learning environment. Buenaflor et al. (2023) also argued that indigenous students who develop a strong sense of purpose are more likely to overcome learning barriers.

Emergent Theme 5. Breaking Stereotypes through Education

Blaan students strive to prove that they are capable and deserving of educational success, challenging negative stereotypes about their ethnic group.

(Case 3) Aye kaye gu fite na mda dad nga Blaan skul gwe la e kaye la gambit de dareme. [I want to prove that Blaan students can succeed just like others.]

The statements manifest the strong desire of Blaan students to challenge societal biases and prove their capabilities. By excelling academically, they hope to dismantle misconceptions about their ethnic group and demonstrate that they, too, can achieve success. Their motivation extends beyond personal achievement, aiming to uplift their community as well.

Albona (2015) highlighted that indigenous students often face societal biases, leading to self-doubt and low participation in class. However, Panaguiton et al. (2024) found that students

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who challenge stereotypes by excelling academically improve their self-esteem and social standing.

Emergent Theme 6. Multidimensional Support Systems

Aside from friends and teachers, Blaan students heavily depend on their families for financial, emotional, and academic support.

> *(Case 6) Kuh fye nimu gi di skul, amda dad toh nafe la gu na e gugda gu (kultura.)* [If I do well in school, people will respect me and my culture.]

> *(Case 9) E dad tamdo, pamilya/gweng m, na e dad dami gu sagbet gala agu banle kakgis ko tagal agu mlehmah di kaskul gu*. [My teachers, family, and friends support me when I am struggling in school.]

The statements underscore the importance of family and peer support in helping Blaan students persist in their education. The encouragement and material assistance from parents alleviate some academic pressures, while friendships provide emotional reinforcement. These combined support systems enhance their ability to cope with challenges in an unfamiliar educational setting.

Blaan learners benefit from multiple layers of support, including financial assistance, emotional encouragement, and academic guidance from teachers, family, and peers. Putt (2014) argued that a holistic approach to educational support yields better outcomes for indigenous learners. Similarly, Garcia and Cuéllar (2016) found that students who receive consistent support from various sources exhibit higher levels of engagement and motivation.

Emergent Theme 7. Cultural Integration Strategies

Blaan students adopt strategies such as respecting differences, making friends, and following societal norms to blend into the urban school environment.

> *(Case 3) Gal gu sisting kah I kto gu di dale di ksunod gu di nimu la bay la le gu glefet, ko ni gumda gu do.* [I try to adjust by learning their ways while keeping my own traditions.]

> *(Case 5) Kafe gu de dareme gu na gal gu kasagbet di daleh, sewe gal agu gagin di daleh.* [Respecting others and making friends helps me feel like I belong.]

The statements demonstrate the conscious efforts of Blaan students to adapt to the cultural and social expectations of urban schools. By valuing mutual respect, building friendships, and focusing on their studies, they attempt to integrate into their new environment while maintaining their cultural identity. These strategies enable them to navigate social barriers and establish a sense of belonging.

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According to Barnes (2019), culturally responsive teaching enhances indigenous students' academic success. Garcia and Cuéllar (2016) argued that allowing indigenous learners to retain their cultural identity while adapting to mainstream education fosters better engagement.

Emergent Theme 8. Empowerment through Education

Students see education as a means to uplift themselves and prove their capabilities to others. They believe in their potential to achieve success through learning.

> *(Case 8) Kasfela e sato gumago para di fule do gtabeng gu e pamilya gu*. [Education is my way to change my future and help my family.*]*

> *(Case 3) Kel du nag we gu I kaskul gu, fite gi di kalbong na kaya gu kari.* [One day, I will graduate and show everyone that I am capable.]

The statements emphasize the transformative power of education in the lives of Blaan students. Through academic achievement, they seek to break barriers and gain social recognition. Their call for additional programs tailored to their needs reflects their desire for institutional support in reaching their full potential.

According to Barnes (2019), access to quality education for indigenous students fosters long-term economic and social empowerment. Rivera et al. (2023) also emphasized that students who perceive education as a tool for change are more likely to persist despite adversity.

Emergent Theme 9. Moral and Emotional Guidance

Families play a key role in strengthening the emotional resilience of Blaan learners by offering encouragement and moral support.

> *(Case 4) Dad tua gu sige la fagtulen deg na fakges ago na dapat fye arat gu, balo gal gu gnagu ktase.* [My parents always remind me to stay strong and be kind, even when facing discrimination.]

> *(Case 9) Kuh gal agu mlungay, te gal gu nimu, gal agu dmasal di Dwata na talu agu di pamilya gu par fye kalnawa gu*. [When I feel down, I pray and talk to my family to feel better.]

The statements highlight the significant role of family in shaping the emotional well-being of Blaan students. Parental guidance helps them build resilience and maintain a positive mindset despite academic and social difficulties. Emotional support from both family and friends fosters self-confidence, enabling them to stay motivated and focused on their studies.

According to Zhang (2023), family support is a critical determinant of student success, particularly for marginalized groups. Buenaflor et al. (2023) found that students with strong moral foundations and emotional stability exhibit greater academic persistence and motivation.

Insights of Blaan ESL Learners in Urban Educational Setting

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Emergent Theme 1. Cultural Identity and Acceptance

Blaan students emphasize the importance of respect, fairness, and recognition in their urban school environment. They want their culture to be acknowledged rather than being a source of discrimination.

> *(Case 1)* Gal agu mlehew ko mda tamdo gami galan gami niyo salngad di daremi nga skul, na la galan gami naroy. *[We feel happy when our teachers treat us fairly, just like other students, and do not look down on us.]*

> *(Case 4) Gami set nga Blaan, bay kaya mi nimu mdet gimu dareme di skul. Bay lo ye kaye mi gtabeng gami para tuo mi glabat e English.* [We are Blaan, but we can also do what others can do in school. We just need more help in learning English.]

The statements construe the desire of Blaan students to be recognized and treated fairly in their educational environment. Their experiences suggest that cultural identity plays a crucial role in their confidence and participation in school. When they feel respected, they are more likely to engage in learning. The call for acknowledgment of their language and heritage highlights the need for culturally responsive education that embraces diversity and fosters inclusivity.

According to Garcia and Cuéllar (2016), cultural identity plays a significant role in students' academic engagement and self-esteem. Avergonzado (2019) argued that indigenous students in urban schools often struggle with feelings of alienation when their culture is not acknowledged, impacting their overall educational performance. On the other hand, Reyes (2021) contended that while cultural identity is essential, complete assimilation into mainstream education can sometimes be more beneficial for indigenous learners in terms of economic and social mobility.

Emergent Theme 2. Resilience and Perseverance

Despite difficulties in studying, Blaan learners continue to push forward. They recognize the challenges they face but maintain a strong will to succeed.

> *(Case 7) Balo mlemah English, gnagan gu du kaye gu glabat ani na gafnge gu kaskul gu.* [Even when English is difficult, I try my best because I want to learn and finish my studies.]

> *(Case 2) Kada do gl gu samfela masa na smulat English, du kaye gu fete na fulong ago salngad daremi dad nga.*[I keep practicing reading and writing English because I want to prove that I can learn, just like others.]

The statements show the resilience of Blaan learners as they strive to overcome academic challenges. Their determination stems from a deep sense of responsibility, not only for their personal growth but also for their families and community. Despite the struggles they face, they remain optimistic about their future, showing their unwavering commitment to achieving success through education.

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Rivera et al. (2023) found that resilience among ESL learners is influenced by a supportive learning environment. Similarly, Buenaflor et al. (2023) argued that indigenous students who develop perseverance are more likely to overcome linguistic and social barriers. In contrast, Santos (2022) posited that resilience alone is not enough; institutional interventions such as targeted academic support and structural reforms are necessary to create an equitable learning environment for indigenous students.

Emergent Theme 3. Teacher Support and Guidance

Blaan students appreciate the role of their teachers in making learning easier. They benefit from explanations, translations, and patient guidance from educators.

> *(Case 5) Dad tamdo gami gal la gami tnabeng para glabat mi e tdo la. Le la gal nulet di gami, na la baya la gami*. [Our teachers help us understand lessons by explaining carefully. They do not leave us behind.]

> *(Case 8) Dad maestra dini kafye dad balo la. Gal ale at mabeng ko la gare mi dad mlemah tnalo di English*. [The teachers here are kind. They help us when we cannot understand English words.]

The statements emphasize the critical role of teachers in bridging learning gaps for Blaan students. Their efforts to explain lessons in a way that accommodates language differences contribute significantly to the students' ability to grasp concepts. However, despite the assistance, some learners still struggle, suggesting a need for more tailored instructional strategies, such as bilingual education programs and contextualized teaching approaches.

According to Presbitero (2020), teacher intervention is crucial in bridging the language gap for ESL learners. Franca et al. (2024) also highlighted the importance of culturally responsive teaching techniques in improving comprehension among indigenous students. However, Lee (2021) argued that an overreliance on teacher guidance can create dependency, preventing indigenous learners from developing independent learning strategies.

Emergent Theme 4. Educational Support and Equal Opportunities

Blaan students believe that schools should provide more resources, assistance, and fair treatment to indigenous learners to bridge the educational gap.

> *(Case 9) Mlal ami gmare ko mda tamdo gami gal an gami tnamel na banlen gami oras para glabat mi.*[It is easier to learn when teachers guide us and give us extra time to understand the lessons.]

> *(Case 1) E dad tamdo gami tuo la gami banle panahon di lam skul. La fite la gamin a mahal ami.* [Our teachers give us the same chances as others in class. They do not treat us differently.]

The statements stress out the need for educational equity in urban schools. Blaan students recognize that having access to learning materials and receiving additional academic support can

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improve their educational experience. Their desire for fair treatment and opportunities to showcase their talents suggests that indigenous learners often feel overlooked or deprived of the same privileges as their non-indigenous peers. Addressing these concerns through inclusive policies can help ensure that all students receive the support they need to succeed.

Pogado and Bagtas (2024) emphasized that equitable access to education is essential for indigenous students' academic success. Albona (2015) noted that indigenous learners often lack access to school resources, further widening the educational disparity. In contrast, Cruz (2022) suggested that while educational support is important, self-advocacy among indigenous students should also be cultivated to help them navigate academic challenges independently.

Emergent Theme 5. Future Aspirations and Family Support

Blaan students are motivated to study hard because they want a better future for themselves and their families. They see education as a way to improve their lives.

> *(Case 3) Ko fye kasfela gu agtabeng gu pamilya gu de fule do.*[If I study hard, I can help my family someday.]

> *(Case 6) Dad tua gu sige la man do fanse gu kaskul gu para fye mne tuke muna gu.* [My parents always tell me that I should finish school so that I will have a better future.]

The statements reflect the strong influence of family support on the aspirations of Blaan students. They view education as a means of securing a better future, not just for themselves but for their loved ones as well. Their dreams of making their families proud and contributing to their well-being demonstrate how deeply personal and community-oriented their educational journey is. This reinforces the need for policies and programs that provide long-term educational and financial support for indigenous students.

According to Barnes (2019), family support is a key factor in indigenous students' educational success. Zhang (2023) also found that students who receive emotional and moral guidance from their families perform better academically. Conversely, Martinez (2021) argued that family expectations can sometimes create undue pressure on indigenous learners, leading to anxiety and stress.

Similarities and Differences of Each Case in This Study

Similarities

The analysis of the cases in this study revealed several initial codes, categories, and emergent themes. The initial codes identified include struggles in language proficiency, strategies for language adaptation, peer interactions, cultural influences, systemic challenges, academic perseverance, and external support systems. These codes were grouped into broader categories such as Language Acquisition and Adaptation, which highlights the difficulties learners face in mastering English and the strategies they employ to improve, and Cultural and

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Systemic Barriers, which highlights the challenges that arise from cultural differences and institutional limitations.

Teacher Mediation and Support was another key theme underscoring the importance of educators in bridging learning gaps. Furthermore, Resilience and Academic Determination surfaced as a theme, demonstrating how learners persist despite adversities to achieve academic success. Lastly, Social Integration and Peer Relations also emerged as a theme, emphasizing the role of friendships and social interactions in language development.

Differences

Differences among the experiences of the participants were revealed in their responses in the case. These initial codes included difficulty in understanding academic content, reliance on teacher intervention, peer dynamics, experiences of discrimination, and expressions of self-motivation. Through thematic clustering, these codes were organized into five core themes that reflect the lived experiences of Blaan ESL learners navigating urban educational environments.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion

The results show that language barriers, cultural discrimination, and a lack of adequate educational resources are only a few of the difficulties Blaan ESL students encounter in urban schools. These difficulties make it more difficult for them to succeed academically and participate completely in the learning process. But their determination, along with the help of their classmates, teachers, and family, allows them to overcome these hurdles and work toward improved academic results.

In order to recognize and integrate indigenous students into the mainstream system without sacrificing their cultural identity, the study highlights the need for a more inclusive and culturally sensitive educational approach. For educational institutions to foster an atmosphere where Blaan students feel empowered, appreciated, and supported, transformational leadership is essential. The study also emphasizes how sensemaking can assist educators and policymakers in creating programs and regulations that successfully meet the particular requirements of indigenous students.

In the end, schools, families, and communities must work together to provide Blaan children with an equitable education. Institutions can assist Blaan ESL students in overcoming their obstacles and thriving both academically and socially by putting strategic interventions into place and cultivating an inclusive educational culture.

Recommendations

The findings of the study highlight the challenges faced by Blaan ESL learners in urban educational settings, their coping mechanisms, and the valuable insights they can offer regarding their experiences. To address these concerns and enhance their learning environment, the following recommendations are proposed. These suggestions are directed toward key stakeholders, including policymakers, educators, school administrators, and future researchers, to foster a more inclusive and supportive educational system for Blaan ESL learners.

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1.It is suggested that educational policymakers may contextualize a culturally responsive curricula and instructional strategies tailored to the linguistic and cultural needs of Blaan ESL learners.

2.Teachers and school guidance counsellors may establish peer mentoring programs and support groups where Blaan ESL learners can share experiences and strategies for adapting to urban educational challenges.

3.School administrators can create platforms such as student forums, storytelling sessions, and focus group discussions where Blaan ESL learners can freely express their thoughts and experiences.

4.Researchers and academic institutions may also conduct further studies comparing the challenges and experiences of Blaan ESL learners with those of other indigenous learners in different urban setting. This affirmative research agenda aims to identify broader trends and inform the development of contextualized educational policies and interventions that effectively address the unique needs of indigenous ESL learners.

5.Future qualitative researchers may explore the long-term academic and career trajectories of Blaan ESL learners in urban setting. Employing mixed-method research approaches, including ethnographic studies and longitudinal tracking, will provide a more comprehensive understanding of their experiences and needs.

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