

Morphing into the Flock: A Phenomenological Study of Native Students Immersed in the Online Learning Platforms

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Abstract

Utilization of online resources among native language learners have been studied, putting emphasis on the various experiences of this minority group in the academe. Thus, the phenomenological study aimed to explore the emerging issue with three objectives set: positive and negative experiences, challenges faced, and coping strategies developed. Data were gathered using in-depth interview while the data analysis made use of thematic patterning. Outcomes unveiled mixed experiences of native learners, with fewer positive and more negative trends. The study also revealed native students' unreadiness for online learning utilization. Finally, the result conveyed the streamlined blending strategies of native students to cope with online learning. These findings were pivotal to future development UMDC's educational policy, particularly in utilizing online learning modalities, and enrichment to the University's native groups of students. This research is substantial in revitalizing the learning experiences of native students, teaching considerations, and igniting the engagement of the stakeholders as a whole.

Keywords: native students; online learning platforms; phenomenological research design; blending into online learning platforms

INTRODUCTION

Technology is indeed an integral part of education. The peak of the COVID-19 outbreak has emphasized the inseparable link through virtual learning spaces (De et al., 2020). Through its emergence, however, utilizing online learning platforms impact students at different intensities. For instance, students from minority cultural groups experience more significant challenges in coping with technology (Bayod, 2020). The findings of Hyndman (2021) support this with the idea that indigenous learners belong to the population of students with lesser technology literacy than the mainstream. This gap pertains to access and navigating skills to modern ICT (Hanna, 2021). Consequently,

this issue could adversely affect the minority student group. It can put students under stress, harm their mental health, and lower their GPA (Treachy, 2018).

Previous studies focus on the quantitative or numerical representations of the experiences of indigenous learners. Although beneficial in providing fixed data, it must supply the specifics of the participants' lived experiences. Therefore, researchers must also dwell the lens of phenomenology to describe the varied experiences of these students, particularly the difficulties of their online learning endeavor. Further, there is a need to explore the emerging problem and explore how these students cope with the situations, thus, laying a qualitative foundation for future educational decision-making.

With all these accounts, the researchers set an exploration on this matter. In the entire quest, the researchers aimed to highlight and unravel relevant trends in qualitative methods based on the significant questions regarding how the utilization of online learning platforms affects the experiences of indigenous learners of UM Digos College. Specifically, the study sought three objectives: The experiences of native learners in the utilization of online learning platforms in the new normal; The challenges faced by native learners in the utilization of online learning platforms in the new normal; and the native learners coping strategies with these challenges during the new normal.

The research undertaking may contribute to future modifications or adjustments in online education within the UMDC. It may provide a substantial basis for modifying/strengthening the current online learning spaces for minority learners. Further, it may serve as a guiding framework for the online instructors and the school itself in delivering learner-focused teaching-learning strategies, addressing the concerns and sentiments of the minority, and providing support services based on the coping mechanism of the learners.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Despite the enormous accomplishments gained from the emergence of technology in education, there lies an under-discussed issue about their difficulty in acquiring technical skills and integrating them into the academe (Cochrane & Maposa, 2018). On an international scope, the implementation of Distance Education (DE) programs in northern communities in Canada revealed one primary barrier to the academic success of indigenous students. It concerns technological issues, thus stressing out students who need help understanding a post-secondary DE course and navigating the course website. This lack of computer proficiency delays the submission of their assignments (Cochrane & Maposa, 2018).

Meanwhile, language has also brought several alterations in the learning process that fears minority groups. In the Philippines, a qualitative study on the perceptions of the Dumagat natives revealed their negative perceptions towards the dominant English language concerning their rights in education today since the language has been the widely used medium of instruction established in the curricula (Eduardo & Gabriel, 2021). In the locality of UMDC, therefore, the researchers aimed to explore this issue by unraveling the experiences of the native students on the utilization of online learning through specific platforms set by the university as well as their coping mechanisms to continue living in the highly digital education era.

In this study, the theory of Adaptation by Jean Piaget laid a significant theoretical ground for this exploration. It suggests that humans adapt to their environment by corresponding their previous experience to the new experience (Cherry, 2021). Moreover, this theory supports the claim that native students blend into the mainstream learning platforms to survive the academic endeavor by matching their previous learning. Along with this conceptual basis are the supporting theories: Observation Learning and the Theory of Connectionism. Observation Learning describes the learning space occupied by students. It claims that learners attain learning through watching over or observing the model (Valenzuela, 2021).

Nevertheless, students can experience it to acquire the model's language. The live, symbolic, and verbal observation model helps learners acquire learning patterns (Susman, 2021). Thus, online learning platforms could be considered leading contributors to learning, providing online learning facilities that incorporate language demonstrations.

On the other hand, the challenges of minority groups in this study were significant in the theory of Connectionism. Specifically, the two prevailing laws, the law of Readiness and Exercise, was found to be interrelated to bridge the students' experiences in using online learning platforms (Islam, 2022). The laws, as mentioned earlier, determine the readiness of native students and their association with different online learning platforms. On these accounts, a phenomenological study explored the experiences of native learners immersed in online learning schemes at UMDC. Further, the study determined the difficulties faced by this minority and the coping nature demonstrated to continue learning.

METHOD

Participants

The chosen participants in this study were the first to fourth-year native students of UM Digos College, which has 269 of the total population. Specifically, at each year level, the researchers interviewed two participants purposively taken, accumulating eight (8) participants. Accordingly, the number of participants decided by the researchers is supported by an article in Springer (2021) suggesting that the recommended and adequate number of samples has a minimum of five (5) and a maximum of thirty (30), which would be sufficient for the qualitative research to be trend-saturated. In addition, the researchers used non-probability sampling, specifically purposive sampling, a sample relevant to the research's purpose (McCombes, 2019). This study's inclusion criteria were the following: Chosen participants were bona fide native students of UM Digos College regardless of a specific ethnic group. Participants chosen were legible students of a specific year level of any college department. Also, the second semester of the school year 2021-2022 is the basis for the selection of participants, where an online learning curriculum. These Participants are 18 years old and above during the interview, as a target age bracket for the study.

Nonetheless, the researcher guaranteed the exclusion criteria that would negatively alter the study due to the online nature of the data gathering through the interview. Exclusion criteria were eligible students with no native affiliations, those not enrolled in the online learning curriculum, and those students who were lesser than 18 years old. Meanwhile, the withdrawal of participants' participation in the research data gathering was relevant when participants were unavailable for the scheduled interview after several attempts.

Table 1. Description of Research Participants

PARTICIPANT	BACKGROUND	NATURE
1	Bagobo Tagabawa	-Female -Second Year College -BSED-English
2	Bagobo	-Male -Third Year College -BSED-Social Studies
3	Blaan	-Male -Fourth Year College -BS Criminology
4	Bagobo	-Female -Third Year College -BSED-Social Studies
5	Bagobo	-Male -Fourth Year College -BS Financial Management
6	Bagobo	-Female -Second Year College -BS Psychology
7	Blaan	-Female -First Year College -BTVTED-FSM
8	Blaan	-Female -First Year College -BSED-Math

Furthermore, participants can withdraw their participation as they were allowed to halt the interview when the question seems culturally insensitive to their part. To protect the participant's character and identity, the researchers mentioned the ethical considerations before the research interview began.

In addition, there was no disclosure of shared sentiments and ideas before, during, and after the study. Since the population of native students is preferably smaller and more specific than the majority, the researcher used purposive sampling to specify this study. It also considered clear criteria using the master list of students with ethnic affiliations. Strata were not the bases for identifying possible participants; the researchers focused on the general group of native learners.

Instruments

In the entire quest of this study, the researchers utilized a validated guide question for qualitative research. The researchers developed the research questions to provide enriching queries to collect descriptive concepts from the participants. It has probing questions that relate to the experiences of native learners in online learning classes, specifically utilizing learning platforms that direct a language of command dissimilar to the native learner's language.

Afterward, the researchers prepared consent letters addressed to the head of the college school and the participants. Also, during the in-depth interview using the Zoom application, the researchers used a recorder to document the entire interview fully. The researchers informed the participants about securing a recording device throughout the interview and guaranteed the consensual practice of ethical matters and confidentiality. Meanwhile, the researchers have taken note of the significant themes using a notepad and a pen. They schedule different meeting links and times for the eight participants to cater to their availability. At the end of the interview, researchers offered a token of appreciation for the participants who took part in the research interview.

Design and Procedure

To fully determine the major themes in the study, the researchers decided to actualize the procedure using a qualitative research design. This method employed detailed descriptions of the actual experiences of native students in the mandated utilization of online learning platforms. Additionally, the researchers focused on authentic, experience-based, and subjective responses from the research participants during the interview. The study has navigated a phenomenological approach to analyze further and classify the experiential responses of the different participants. To contextualize this, the study aimed to discover the point of view towards integrating modern technology as a new learning platform for native learners. These are questions regarding the positive and negative experiences of native students using online learning platforms, the challenges that native students have encountered under online learning, and lastly, their coping mechanisms to combat these challenges.

Before the proper data gathering, the researchers formally requested a list of native learners personally from the Records and Admission Center (RAC) of UM Digos College. In doing so, the researchers have successfully practiced the safety protocols for collecting such pertinent information. Consequently, the researchers acquired the list of native learners of all year levels as a basis for selecting the participants with a clear criterion on the inclusion and exclusion of research participants in the study. Before the interview, the researchers had settled an official letter of request for the participants to participate in the study and would follow safety protocols in gathering data. After the preparation, the participants participated in an In-depth Interview (IDI) using online conferencing to gather the samples' responses. The researchers believed digging deeper using probing questions enriches responses from the participants (Question, 2021). Each participant was catered to one by one, depending on their availability. In cases of further delay, as the study is purposive by nature, the researchers chose another representative out of the list to be interviewed. Furthermore, the length of the interview time was about 30 minutes or less, depending on the saturation of responses. After the data gathering, the researchers proceed to the next phase of research conduct, which is the organization of data for analysis.

Upon organizing the data collected, the group segregated the answers based on the questions given and based on the unified theme. The researchers have also classified the response while considering the everyday experiences shared by each participant. In this way, the researchers could keep track of the emerging findings in the study. After that, data is segregated in terms of similarity of breadth and must be carried on to the generalized extraction of qualitative response using Colaizzi's thematic patterning to determine the significant trend present among the data collected and interpreted. In this sense, Colaizzi's thematic patterning approach is integral in exploring and delving deeply into the experiences of others through its method of revealing emergent themes and their

entwined associations. Colaizzi's (1978) data analysis method is systematic and dynamic; using this approach in a qualitative method will help the researchers to ensure the credibility and reliability of the results and findings of the study. Since the researchers are using a descriptive phenomenological approach, the researchers used this method as a clear and logical process for exploring the fundamental structure of an experience.

Furthermore, in the analysis, the researcher first familiarized the data, created codes, organized these codes to support data, grouped and reviewed the codes, and then the final writing interpretation (Delve, n.d). Afterward, the researchers used Excel to arrange the organized data systematically. Afterward, the data encoded were sent to the participants to certify the authenticity of responses and to gather their e-signatures for confirmation. Lastly, the researchers sent consolidated themes to the data analyst of the group for data analysis validation.

During the whole data-gathering process, the researchers made sure to lay down ethical considerations in the conduct of the in-depth online interview. Before the conference, the participants knew their study involvement was voluntary. They were informed about their right to decline when situations become overly sensitive to their respective cultures. Also, all the participants understood that their responses or background information was kept confidential and used to finalize this research study. Furthermore, the researchers informed the participants that the study's publication is inside the university as the breadth of this research endeavor concerned the settled ethical consideration between involved parties. Finally, the participants of this research study were aware that their identity, cultural backgrounds, and traditional practices were not at risk during their participation in the study.

FINDINGS

Experiences of Native Learners in the Utilization of Online Learning Platforms in the New Normal

This section will reveal the discussion of the experiences of native learners in the utilization of online learning platforms. It revealed the **Mixed Online-based Learning Experiences** of the respondents, specifically in utilizing online learning platforms. Under this, the blending strategies are six core ideas that represent how native students cope with the challenge of utilizing online learning platforms.

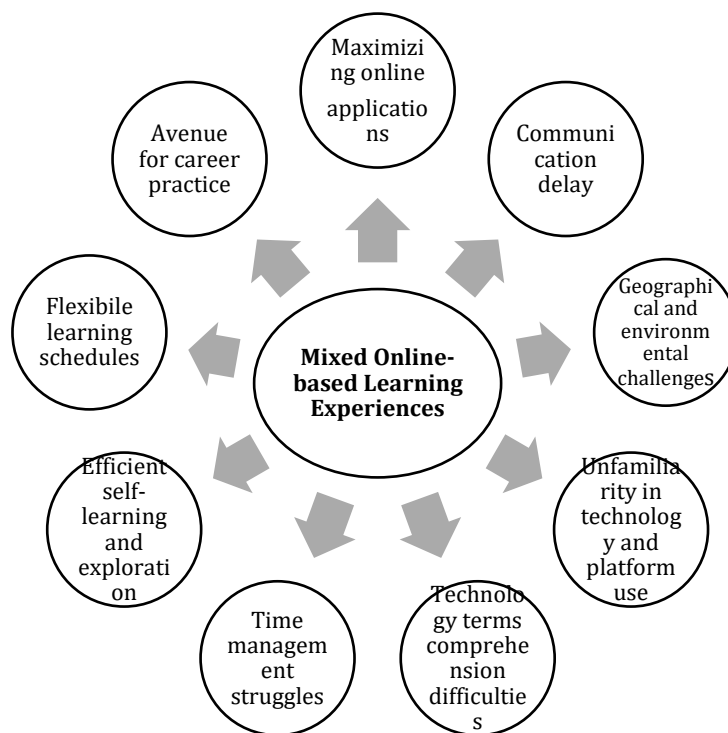


Figure 1. *Experiences of Native Learners in the Utilization of Online Learning Platforms in the New Normal*

Maximizing online applications. The native learners revealed that their online learning experience in UMDC is through online apps and websites implemented in the institution. Their confessions reveal that typical learning applications maximized in online learning are: Quipper, Google Classroom, Google Meet, Student Portal, and Facebook. Student assessments occur through these apps, such as quizzes, activities, and essay assignments, as well as announcements and reminders. They also function as virtual or online classrooms where teachers and students interact with each other through lesson discussions. Apart from that, these educational platforms assist native learners in monitoring their academic performance and other students' transactions with the institution. Thus, the institution's educators maximize online learning platforms to fulfill the student's new learning setting.

*“The typical online platforms used in our school are **Quipper, Google Classroom, Google Meet, and Zoom.**”- Participant 8, Line 1*

*“We use Quipper; google meet for a meeting, and **student portal.**”- Participant 4, Line 1*

*“As mentioned, these are Quipper, Google Classroom, Zoom, and **Facebook** for class updates.”- Participant 2, Line 1*

Communication delay. On the negative features of the online learning experience, the respondents all point out delayed and unclear communication as one major struggle in immersing in online learning platforms. The said learners arrived on shared blame that the delays in online communication are brought solely by slow and intermittent internet connection. Moreover, the learners admit that online learning could be more efficient since they need help communicating

with their course instructors and classmates. In addition, respondents claim that during timed examinations, internet interruptions are most likely to stress them out every time.

*“The disadvantage of online learning platforms is that they require a strong and stable internet connection to function properly. **This internet problem has been a personal issue since the beginning of online learning because our area lacks a stable internet signal.** Sometimes I cannot join or enter the online class session and pass or complete the activities already in Quipper. Worse, I am also delayed for the teacher's class discussion because most online learning platforms require an internet connection.”- Participant 8, Line 1.*

Geographical and environmental challenges. As native learners who shared their personal experiences. While all eight respondents admitted they suffered from a slow internet connection, four said they reside in rural communities where internet connection is critical. Aside from these, particular environmental challenges also contributed to the negative experiences of native learners. The respondents pinpointed annoying noises from the surroundings and horrible weather conditions that distracted them from having good daily learning experiences.

*“Since our internet connection is so unstable, especially when it rains. Thus, we students suffer in those times. **Our house is at a mountainous located at a far-flung area** where we only utilize a piso-wifi Vendo”- Participant 3, Line 5*

“It is primarily challenging for us since we are situated in a remote area. It is the main factor why our internet connectivity is very slow. Due to the location, we are struggling to find a stable internet connection as we must go to the barrio area. Thus, our home location is one of the struggles in this online learning setup.” – Participant 5, Line 3

Unfamiliarity with technology and platform use. Another area for improvement experienced by subjects of the study is their unfamiliarity with educational platforms and technology. They all agreed that they were unfamiliar with online learning platforms and frequently needed help adjusting to the current environment. Further, the learners found the new learning materials challenging to accommodate or adapt. The participants find out that educational platforms, especially during examinations, bring pressure on native students. With this, they admitted multiple situations showing their struggles navigating these online learning platforms. As a result, it adversely affects their learning experiences in total.

*“As a beginner with little to no knowledge, you will have difficulty adjusting, primarily if no one guides you. However, along the way, one can cope with it. It does not affect my native language, **Blaan.** I am flexible in terms of using languages. However, in terms of new*

technological terms, these made me struggle in the online classes.”-

Participant, 2, Line 4

*“There was **much adjustment then because I did not know how to use it.** It was completely unfamiliar to my experience” - Participant 6, Line 5*

Technical terms comprehension difficulties. Another influencing cause of negative experiences in online learning platforms among the respondents is the challenge of understanding specific English technological terms. Along with their unfamiliarity with the online learning platforms, some English terms/words appear confusing for native learners. According to the respondents, they usually encounter complex terms while activating and entering specific educational applications.

“One of the struggles in online learning I experienced was understanding technological terms that are too unfamiliar to understand and use”- Participant 2, Line 1

“I admit that there are terms that are unfamiliar to me, but in this time that our technology is evolving”- Participant 1, Line 1

Time management struggles. The respondents' experiences revealed their difficulty in managing their time upon maximizing online learning platforms in the new normal. The respondents shared that time management struggles cause native students in online learning to feel distressed about keeping on par with the deadlines. In addition, regarding joining daily online classes, the respondents said that time management issues cause their tardiness and absences, even if it is online.

*“What is not working for me is that sometimes **my time management is off.** It can be stressful how teachers assigned work close to the due date of the other class assignments.”- Participant 1, Line 7*

“You tend to be prone to negative experiences when you use online learning platforms. Since it is online, you need data connection. Also, in time management, sometimes it is hard to keep up with the daily schedules.” - Participant 4, Line 3

Efficient self-learning and exploration. As a positive experience, the native learners confess how their utilization of the educational platforms supported their journey towards independent and self-pacing learning and how online space has exposed them to exploring through research activities. They revealed that online learning students attend classes while staying inside their homes alone, without absolute guidance and influence from their classmates and teacher. They made a point that learning has become self-paced or managed through their utilization of educational platforms. In relation, the native students shared the experience of gaining knowledge, especially if there were lessons about which they lacked understanding. In this situation, and through self-learning, they maximized emerging internet search engines as venues for research activities.

“As a native student, you have a new environment to experience, and we learned how to use online learning platforms. Now that we are technological, we can be more advanced and navigate those applications.” - *Participant 4, Line 1*

“Online learning is helpful for me as a student to be able to know how to use the internet and other online learning platforms such as Quipper and Gmeet.” -*Participant 5, Line 1*

Flexible learning schedules. Using online learning platforms, as experienced by the native learners, became beneficial regarding time spent, travel and other financial expenses, and balance between personal/work affairs and academic life. Primarily, native learners profess that they can utilize or access online educational platforms anytime and anywhere, which brings convenience to them. Since learning now occurs within a virtual sphere, learners said they had lessened the time and money spent traveling to school daily. Lastly, online learning provides a favorable position for learners to multitask, better-juggling household/work commitments and academic responsibilities.

*“Online learning enables **the teacher and student to set their own learning pace, and there is the added flexibility of setting a schedule that fits everyone's agenda.** As a result, using online learning platforms allows for a better balance of work and studies. In my case, my experiences using online platforms in learning have been good so far. I mean more good experiences than bad. Online learning saves time, and saving time is important to me.”—Participant 1, Line 1*

“Since I am too far away from the school, it is an advantage so I can no longer travel from Bansalan to Digos. There are lesser expenses on that.” - *Participant 7, Line 1*

*“Somehow, online learning platforms help me in **multitasking because they are accessible to use anytime and anywhere. I can attend my classes while working or while doing household chores.** Even if you have an important event to go to or things to do, as long as you have a stable internet connection, better online learning is achievable.” - Participant 8, Line 1*

Avenue for career practice. Native learners remarked on using online learning platforms as a profitable way of gaining frequent exposure and training related to their career choice. By immersing themselves in online space, they can train and develop themselves in their chosen career path.

“We can utilize online applications, so integrating technology will be more accessible for us in the future. So for us, since we are future educators, we have to immerse ourselves in educational technology.” - Participant 2, Line 2

Challenges Faced by Native Learners in the Utilization of Online Learning in the New Normal

The research presents the respondents' challenges in utilizing online learning platforms in this section. The researchers discovered that the overarching emerging theme was **Unreadiness in Online Learning Utilization** which comprises the six core ideas that represent the challenges of native students immersed in online learning platforms:

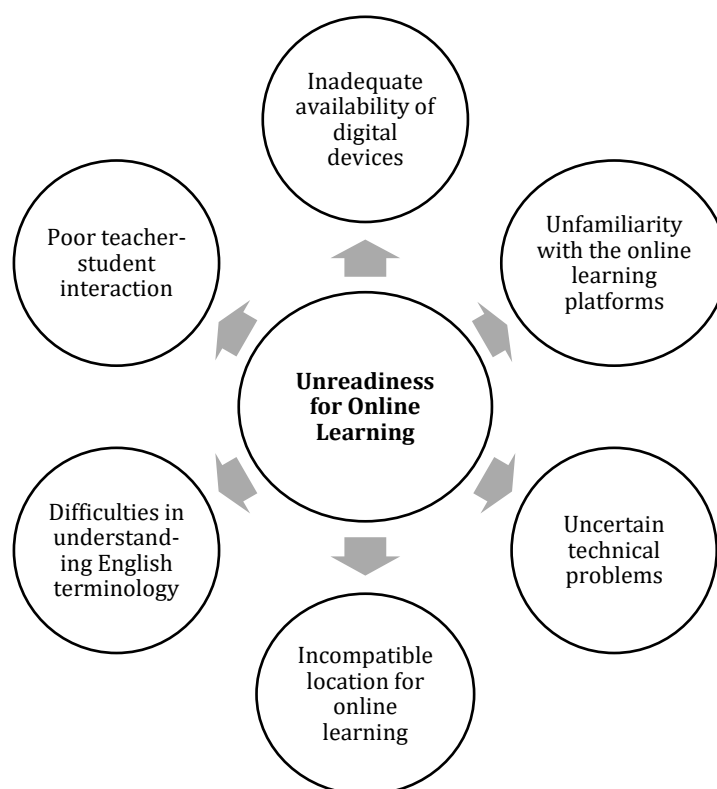


Figure 2. *The Challenges Faced by Native Learners in the Utilization of Online Learning Platforms in the New Normal*

Need for adequate availability of digital devices. Before transitioning to an online learning mode, some respondents asserted they needed help sourcing available and compatible digital devices for online learning. Furthermore, this has led to problems, particularly for native students with limited access to digital devices. Different responses from the respondents set as an indicator for their problems in online learning. It has shown that some native students do not have available digital devices such as laptops, WIFI, or the capacity to purchase new devices for online learning.

*“I think the greatest challenges I have encountered in using online learning platforms is the poor internet connection and the **need for compatible gadgets to utilize it productively.**” –Participant 8, Line 1*

“The most significant challenge I have encountered is finding a stable internet connection; I travel for kilometers to connect with the wifi vendo machine to have a stable connection. Moreover, it hinders us as

students if we do not have a strong internet connection. It hinders us from understanding the lessons.” – Participant 7, Line 1
“It is very difficult specially if there are no available digital devices to use like laptop” – Participant 5, Line 4
“The incapability of providing essential gadgets for online learning really challenges me in this mode of learning – Participant 2, Line 1

Unfamiliarity with online learning platforms. Respondents confirmed that they first found online learning platforms challenging to navigate and manipulate. Some of the common responses revealed among the respondents conclude that the online learning platforms they utilized in school were all new and unfamiliar to them. As a result, they need help transitioning and adjusting to the new learning system, mainly using online learning platforms.

“It is really hard to adjust if you are not familiar with it. Related to that there are some information or announcement in Quipper and then I cannot open it on time because I am not used on using cellphone.” – Participant 4, Line 1
“It was a challenge for us in adapting to the technological aspect of online learning” – Participant 3, Line 1
“It is really to navigate the online learning platform, especially when it requires other digital matters to utilize it effectively.” – Participant 5, Line 1

Uncertain technical problems. Most respondents' significant concerns during this new learning system revolved around technological challenges. This problem has resulted in diverse problems for native students, including disrupted learning experiences, difficulty grasping the lessons, and a delay in passing their requirements and assignment online.

“So far, the greatest challenges I have experienced were technical issues. It interrupts my focus in learning; it can cause in delay of my works submissions like quizzes and assignments, especially during the examination it is challenging.” – Participant 1, Line 1
“I really struggle in the internet connection because sometimes I cannot be able to log in in Quipper.” – Participant 3, Line 2
“I think the greatest challenges I have encountered in using online learning platforms is the poor internet connection and the need of compatible gadgets to utilize it productively.” – Participant 8, Line 1

Difficulties in understanding the English language. The respondents explicitly said that they perceive space and gap between their native language and the language used as instruction in the new learning system. As a result, the eight respondents' responses were similar, and most of them stated that they needed help with grasping and understanding some English terminologies that are too unfamiliar.

*"Then, as a native student, **sometimes I sense a gap between my native language and this new environment's culture or language.** With regards to language, I have quite some experiences where I do struggle to blend my native culture to the online space in this new normal." – Participant 6, Line 3*

"There are times that I struggle to understand some problematic English terms, specifically in the concepts of our lesson, because it is too unfamiliar." – Participant 2, Line 2

"There are real instances where you have difficulty in understanding the lesson just because the language used is English." – Participant 3, Line 1

*"Sometimes, **there are unfamiliar English words that I find too difficult to comprehend,** and I think those instances alone can affect my utilization of online learning." – Participant 6, Line 1*

Teacher-student interaction needs to be improved. According to the respondents, there is a significant difference between online and face-to-face learning. Some respondents observed that online learning does not support or encourage the teacher-student relationship, hindering their motivation to learn and participate in class discussions. They also mentioned that they needed help understanding lessons because the teacher could not address their concerns and clarifications about the lesson. Multiple responses were prevalent among the eight respondents, most preferring face-to-face learning over online learning.

"During the online classes, instead, you can ask your teachers to clarify topics that are not explained. Clearly, we cannot do so anymore compared to physical classes." – Participant 3, Line 3

"For me, face-to-face learning is more convenient than online learning because we are able to ask teachers regarding with the lesson, unlike in online learning where there are only limited to engage with your teacher." – Participant 5, Line 6

Incompatible location for online learning. Respondents indicated that the area where they were situated had been a detrimental factor in their online learning. As seen in their responses, some respondents said that geographical location had been their primary concern for online learning since far-flung areas were still considered isolated and technologically out of reach. With that, native students must go to areas with a stable internet connection and compatible digital devices for online learning.

"Considering our place, we are located in a mountainous area where internet connection was unstable." – Participant 5, Line 1

"The greatest was when the pandemic started; we lacked wifi vendo. I have to travel several kilometers to attend classes." – Participant 7, Line 1

Coping Mechanism of Native Learners in the Utilization of Online Learning Platforms in the New Normal

This section unveils the discussion of the coping mechanisms of native students. Findings revealed that **the respondents practice Streamlined Blending Strategies utilizing** online learning platforms. Under this, the blending strategies are six core ideas that represent how native students cope with the challenge of utilizing online learning platforms.

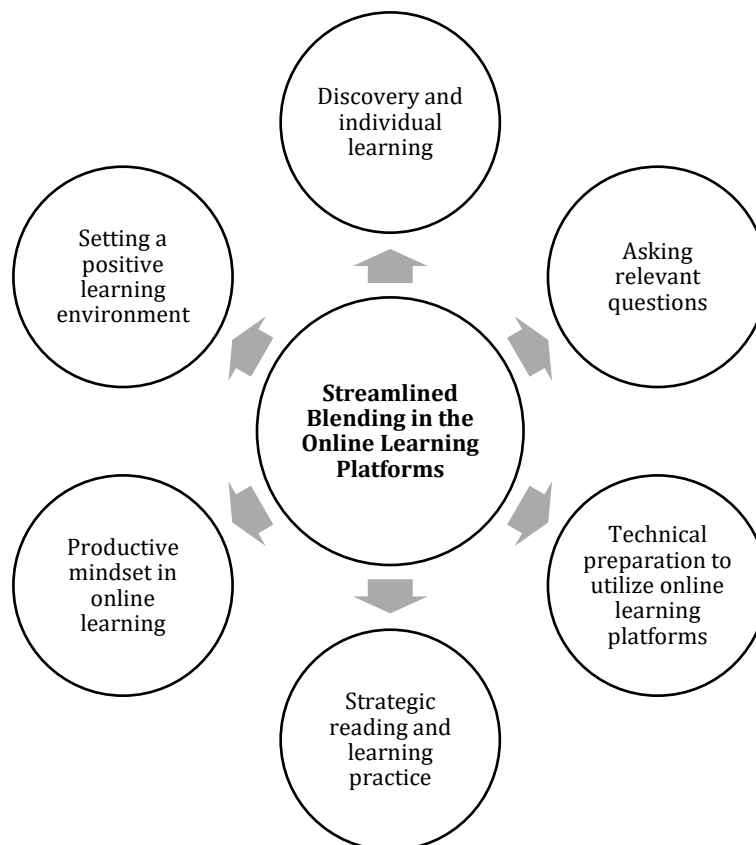


Figure 3. Coping Mechanisms in the Challenges of the New Normal

Discovery and individual learning. Native students suggest that their experience with online learning platforms opens the opportunity to self-exploration and independent learning. Exploring educational platforms, they confessed that it aids their understanding of the discussion. Multiple responses among the eight (8) respondents shared that exploration is the most unvarying strategy to keep up with online learning. In times of lesson and language confusion, research helps keep up with the demand for online learning. Several responses point out this notion:

*"I hustle to **learn through exploration**. Such as searching on YouTube how to do this, or I will ask my classmates how I should use and process the software. I cope by striving hard to understand the concepts through exploration. There are times that I want to learn on my own and do so by searching how to accomplish some tasks." – Participant 2, Line 1*

*"When encountering difficulties with some English words or the lesson, **I always use Google to research**. You can look for information on Google, or I open a Merriam dictionary and look for unfamiliar words. It is also possible to use YouTube, as there are lessons there that will guide your understanding."* – Participant 5, Line 1

Asking relevant questions. During the interview, seven (7) respondents noted a standard answer: to understand lessons effectively, especially those that use complex language commands, they use the inquiry method with their peers and instructors for clarifications. This strategy has been relevant to them as clarifying some misunderstood terms helps them keep connected with the class. Respondents even quoted:

*"And at the end of the class, I always **ask questions/clarifications** about the discussions."* – Participant 1, Line 1

*"If I cannot understand it clearly in that way, **I always reach out to my friends and classmates who may have deeper knowledge about it**. I know that I cannot get through these struggles all by myself, so I acknowledge my peers for their guidance and patience for me to catch up with them."* – Participant 6, Line 1

*"Sometimes, **I seek help from my classmates and friends**. If I am **confused** and cannot understand the whole context, I always ask for help from others."* – Participant 8, Line 1

Technical preparations to utilize online learning platforms. Six respondents also suggest thoroughly practicing online learning platforms' efficiency through technical adjustments. Accordingly, they practice using online learning platforms before classes start to accustom to the technicality of the platforms. Under this central theme falls the internet connectivity issues that respondents have encountered yet conquered. This notion is based on the experiences of the respondents as quoted:

*"The strategy that I did is I organized everything. Before the class session begins, **I ensure that I have the technical capability to access** the required course materials and online tools. Take the time to practice navigating the online system so that I will prepare for my first class. This way, I can focus on learning instead of struggling to log in five minutes into the lecture."* – Participant 1, Line 1

*"I admit, I have had adjustments since I am not knowledgeable in software usage. Such as **how to use the applications**, which usually gave me a hard time. I can say that I have great adjustments with this."* – Participant 2, Line 1

*"Because the use of online learning platforms such as Quipper and google meet is quite new to us, the main goal is **to adjust and accommodate these changes**. With the situation given, **being adaptive and always looking for solutions** is my major coping mechanism."* – Participant 6, Line 1

Strategic reading and learning practice. Six (6) respondents noted that it needs more than listening to the discussion to attain quality learning using the platforms. They suggest study methods, a structure of the reading practice of learning materials provided in the online learning platforms. Through their experience, they have restructured the strategic ways to engage in the class, even online learning platforms. Responses of the participants are the basis for the findings:

*“So far, I can say that there are instances, although I cannot fully grasp when things happen, there is a time that I cannot understand the lesson. For me, I **simplify the complicated concepts that are difficult to understand.**” – Participant 2, Line 1*

*“Whenever I struggle to comprehend the lesson, I **take screenshots from the PowerPoint or ask for a copy. Then, I study them late at night,** when everyone should be asleep already. I read the lesson on the ppt, so I have gained understanding on it earlier because the internet connection gets slower during early daytime.” – Participant 3, Line 1*

*“When the language used in the online learning platforms is too unfamiliar and difficult to understand. I would **read it multiple times in order to comprehend it**” – Participant 8, Line 1*

The productive mindset in online learning. Moreover, five (5) native students suggest that the mental and emotional aspect is also affected in immersing into the online learning platforms. Thus, it requires self-motivation and focus. Keeping calm amidst stressful online learning experiences, especially using platforms like Quipper, Google Meet, and more. Respondents even noted that:

*“I always **motivate myself to continue pursuing my studies and willingness to learn...though the new normal is not easy, I still dare to pursue my study. In finding ways of thinking about the solution, I always calm my mind first for me to think well.**” – Participant 1, Line 1*

*“The main solution I made to cope with this situation is **setting my mind positively.** I always remind myself that everything will go smoothly when I finally get used to utilizing these new materials. Above all, I believe that through prayer, I can surpass them all.” – Participant 7, Line 1*

Setting a positive learning environment. Accordingly, two (2) native students prepare their learning environment as conducive as possible as a coping mechanism for the challenge of online learning. Respondents limit the possible distractions to cope with the challenge of utilizing online learning platforms. In this manner, the respondents can manage the noise and possible communication barriers that might limit their learning. Native students even suggested that:

*“I set up my study area, and when choosing a spot, I **try to limit distractions** as much as possible, both physically and online.” – Participant 1, Line 1*

*“Since we are in the new normal, **we must adjust**, especially in our studies. As I have said, it is tough for us living in remote areas. The internet connection is a problem. We also find it hard to **travel down to the población.**” – Participant 5, Line.*

DISCUSSION

Experiences of Native Learners in the Utilization of Online Learning Platforms in the New Normal

Maximizing online applications

Based on the study's results, the native learners clearly show their mixed experiences when exposed to online-based learning. Primarily, the participants agreed that they conduct online learning by **maximizing online applications** typical in the institution. Under the first sub-question, the respondents named the common e-learning apps they have utilized. Respondents use learning management systems (LMS) such as Quipper, Google Classroom, and Student Portal. Meanwhile, respondents use video conferencing tools such as Google Meet and Zoom Meeting to attend daily virtual classes. In addition, participants recognized social media tools such as Facebook as a tool to receive announcements, updates, or reminders. Under the first sub-question, the study reveals that native students and the mainstream utilized online learning platforms categorized into three sub-parts: LMS, video conferencing tools, and social media. Similarly, in the study of Bilgic, Dogan, and Seferoglu (2016), results showed that these three types of online learning platforms were all utilized by these students during their exploration of online learning.

Students feel frequent exposure to these online learning platforms for those focusing on observations. Thus, the theoretical framework of Bandura's Observational Learning aligns with the study. Although students cannot learn via a physical classroom, their learning experience is reinforced with virtual means, enabling them to establish connections and observations of their environment via symbols. Spellman-Cann (2022) suggested that one of the critical features of Bandura's theory in e-Learning is that stimulation of this experience happens through audio and video as practical tools. Real-time collaboration, teacher presentation, and commenting features in virtual classroom technology furthered this advancement (Spellman-Cann, 2022). Based on this insight, the above-mentioned educational platforms indeed take their varied functions to cater to the observation learning of the native students and the mainstream.

Communication delay

Under the third sub-question, which tackles the respondents' negative encounters, the study revealed five challenges hindering online learning utilization among the minority. Through the investigation, the study found that communication delay has been a significant challenge commonly experienced by the said learners. Slow and intermittent internet connection is the major contributing factor to this argument. This issue has been the experience of learners, native or non-native persons, commonly experienced. Furthermore, it reveals that online learning has been adversely affected due to internet connectivity issues, such as delays in receiving timely announcements, interruptions during real-time assessments, and poor communication between students and course instructors. This issue regarding utilizing online learning modality has become a significant drawback of using online learning tools. This claim is attested by the survey conducted by the Department of

Education in 2020, showing the numerical figure of 6.9 million parents and guardians who commonly shared their sentiments about the connectivity issue prevalent in the country (Lim, 2020). With this, a study on 133 students from The American University of Madaba (AUM) by Alawamkeh, Al-Twait, and Al-Saht (2020) discloses a finding that the majority tend to choose conventional classroom methods rather than online classes. It is due to various reasons, wherein the limited communication levels between the teacher and their students significantly contribute to this preference.

Geographical and environmental challenges

The sprout of the internet problem significantly connects to another study trend, the geographical and environmental challenges, contributing to the former generated theme. Specifically, participants must deal with online learning in remote places where the Internet could be more stable. As a support, a case study on secondary students (Basar et al., 2021) found that geographical location and lacking financial resources are the primary reasons students experienced limited internet access. Thus, they must improve their capability to experience quality online learning fully. Results also imply the negative influence of several environmental distractions. For instance, native learners often experience interruptions during online classes due to environmental noise and weather conditions. This finding is significant for studying the effects of noise pollution in the learning environment on cognitive performances (Vargas, 2020), which showed statistical evidence that noise pollution adversely influenced students' cognitive performances.

Unfamiliarity with technology and platform use

While today's learners can be considered digital natives, when it comes to online learning platforms, the current study showed that another negative experience of native learners relates to their unfamiliarity with technology and platform use. Furthermore, these persons struggle to adapt to the new and highly technological means, especially during the initial years when the new typical education arose. The study has garnered the same result as Bayod's (2020) study, which stated that despite having access to devices like cell phones and laptops, native students still have struggled to master technology. It hinders their ability to participate in online education using platforms like *Moodle*, google meet, zoom, skype, and others. In addition, the study found out that due to the unfamiliarity of the native learners with the new technological tools, they often struggle to navigate the apps and have a much longer duration in mastering the basic instructions designed for every online platform. The same results were manifested in mixed-method research conducted on college students with ethnic backgrounds, revealing that difficulties in conquering online learning have roots in unfamiliarity with some online tools (Aguilera-Hermida, 2020). This struggle coins from the trend common in both studies, which recognizes the lack of orientation/preparedness due to a sudden shift in education.

Technical terms comprehension difficulties

In line with the difficulty in mastering navigating the online learning platforms, the study also revealed that these challenges are also related to the issue of **technological terms comprehension difficulties**, as another negative experience endured in the new standard setup. The study showed that online courses became very challenging to explore and master because the native learners and the mainstream often encountered language instruction that was alien to them. Garnering the same outcome, Prasad et al. (2021)

directly identified the difficulty in grasping terminologies in online-based applications and programs as a significant drawback in utilizing new learning tools. Regarding the delivery of the lessons through the said learning platforms, the study also revealed that the learners became dissatisfied and performed less than in face-to-face learning methods. In line with this finding, Aguilera-Hermida (2020) presented decremented cognitive levels of students in online learning, such that difficulty in comprehending the material given in the online course has grown prevalent. Worse, some university students with native roots lost their internships or clinical rotations due to this issue.

Time management struggles

Meanwhile, the least negative experience discovered in the current study contradicted the shared experiences of online education. While online students own and regulate their online classes, the study found that native learners experienced time management struggles. With the sudden changes in the learning environment, the minority has trouble keeping up with time-to-time monitoring of their classes and workloads. Similarly, analyses of the mixed research (Aguilera-Hermida, 2020) showed that students reported a decrease in skills, which includes time management skills, timely completion of assignments, and success in their classes in general.

Efficient self-learning and exploration

On the brighter side of their experiences, the study showed that online learning platforms positively affect efficient self-learning and exploration. Under this theme, the participants elaborated that e-learning has assisted them in becoming independent and self-managed students. With the new environment, they could carry their learning through their efforts and exploration of the new normal. Similarly, Paul and Jefferson (2019) claimed that online learning is student-centered or active. Students typically decide the classroom dynamics as they individually examine the material, create questions, and seek the instructor's clarification.

Flexible learning schedules

In connection, the study found out native students prefer the use of online learning platforms as a new learning tool and accommodation since it offers flexibility in learning schedules. Learners prefer the challenge, freedom, and independence provided by online learning as they work at their speed and ability levels (Arizona State University, 2019). Moreover, Spark (2022) mentioned that some of the paramount importance of flexibility are: to advance education at own rate by having the option to study a subject at own pace and convenience to study anywhere because having a positive experience in the learning environment. It directly impacts academic performance and the unnecessary long commutes since classes are through attending lessons electronically—lastly, the ability to control your learning schedule to achieve a work-life balance.

Avenue for career practice

Another positive experience of the native learners revealed in the study is that online learning with educational platforms provides an avenue for career practice. Beneath this core idea, the respondents emphasized how e-learning has assisted online students regarding career readiness. Of note, one respondent confessed that he could have adequate exposure to technology by exploring online learning platforms, which is vital for his future

teaching career in 21st-century education. A study conducted at CUNY Kingsborough Community College (Levy, 2017) suggested that technology can aid community college students in their academic performance and help them prepare for future professional success if used properly. Therefore, educators need to be aware of how to constantly connect the advantages of working online to a student's career goals. In fact, in the study conducted at South Texas University (Fedynich et al., 2015), the 249 graduate students had a generally pleasant online experience. Further, student responses were lower in almost every area, from 61% to 67.44%. Most of the program participants responded in agreement (Fedynich et al., 2015).

Challenges Faced by Native Learners in the Utilization of Online Learning in the New Normal

Need for adequate availability of digital devices

There are diverse challenges and problems experienced by native students' during this new normal, discovering a trend of unreadiness for online learning. The relevant problem of this study includes the most prevalent themes that emerged from the participant's responses. Basic ideas are also addressed in each central theme to support the research hypothesis of this study.

Upon exploring the experiences of the native students in utilizing online learning platforms in the new normal, the respondents admitted that they had experienced different challenges, both positive and negative experiences. They first addressed the need for more digital resources for online learning. Material accessibility aligns with economic, technological, social, and cultural contexts. Evaluating their purchasing power, native learners use technological devices to blend in an online learning environment, resulting in noticeable gaps between the haves and the have-nots, which weakens their individual educational choices (Mishra, 2018). Native students also complain about equitable access to compatible digital mechanisms that allow them to utilize online learning platforms effectively. Students in an online learning environment must have access to technological tools, software, and the Internet in order to be interested in participating in the new mode of instruction. Aboderin (2015)'s claim supported that the barriers impeding students from engaging in online learning were internet connectivity and computer and software equipment.

Moreover, this problem stems from native students' incapability to provide digital devices for online learning due to the pandemic crisis. While the pandemic emphasized the importance of digitalization, it also revealed various types of digital divides between societies (Tadesse & Muluye, 2020). Thus, according to Kasinathan and Ranganathan (2020), the pandemic has identified many social issues concerning education and equitable access to technology. It shows a digital dividing line regarding equitable access to digital and technological mechanisms among native students.

Unfamiliarity with online learning platforms

The next problem identified from the respondents' responses is unfamiliarity with online learning platforms. Respondents confirmed that they first found online learning platforms challenging to navigate and manipulate. Some of the responses have been common among the respondents, which entails that the online learning platforms they utilized in school were all new and unfamiliar to them. However, native students also

admitted that they sometimes struggle to use or manipulate the digital devices they use for online learning, which hinders their full utilization of the online learning platforms. Rashid (2016) revealed that some native students probably lack essential skills and capabilities that benefit their utilization of technology and online learning platforms due to limited exposure and experience in digital device usage, device diversification, and technological subscriptions. Moreover, Kasturirangan et al. (2019) asserted that the ongoing digital exclusionary is prevalent among the urban poor, tribal communities, caste, and religion-based groups. It implies that some of the native students were unfamiliar with the utilization of digital devices, as well as online learning platforms, due mainly to their environment where the people around them were not familiar with the use of technology. The findings in this study revealed that the native students at this particular higher education institution lacked basic technological skills and did not yet have compatible digital devices to use for online learning.

Uncertain technical problems

Meanwhile, uncertain technical issue is a popular complaint among native students. Most respondents' primary concern during this new learning system revolves around technical challenges. This problem has resulted in a diverse array of problems for native students, including disrupted learning experiences, difficulty grasping the lessons, as well as a delay in passing their requirements and assignments online. According to some studies, students who are in online learning rely heavily on computer software and technology to attend classes (Daniel, 2020). Another study confirmed that online learning imposes time and space constraints. However, it also has some drawbacks, including connectivity issues, lag applications, and slow computers, all of which can interrupt the learning process. Chhetri (2020) conducted a study on IT online courses, presenting evidence from students' preconceptions of online learning, and discovered that technical difficulties in online classes have constantly challenged students. Another parallel study by Demuyakor (2020) investigated students' satisfaction with online learning and discovered that undergraduates reported difficulties with slow connectivity.

Furthermore, according to Banna et al. (2015), students who experienced technical difficulties like hardware, operating systems, and connectivity issues reported having difficulty with active participation in online learning sessions, implying that technical difficulties hampered students' learning and participation. As we can see from the results of this study, most native students encountered technical difficulties while utilizing the online learning platforms, which caused delays. It hindered the learning process as well as the learning outcomes.

Difficulties in understanding the English language

Moreover, one of the crucial problems that native students experience is the difficulty in understanding the English language as a medium of instruction used for online learning. The respondents explicitly said that they perceive space and gap between their native language and the language used as instruction in the new learning system. Although English is considered one of the most helpful and valuable languages in the Philippines used for educational instruction, many Filipino students, including native IP students, face difficulties in using it (Reyes et al., 2021). As a result, the responses from the eight participants were similar, and most of them stated that they struggle with grasping and understanding some English terminologies that are too unfamiliar to them. It has also

contributed to difficulties in understanding the lessons since the language used is English. With that, native students face difficulties processing all the lessons the teachers discuss.

Hence, when the respondents answered that English is a medium of instruction in online learning platforms, most respondents confirmed that they have difficulty understanding the language. Specifically on the terms or words and overall context of the lesson, as they were not fluent in English. Krog and Slentz (2001), cited by Zulkefly and Razali (2019), support their claim that learning another language is more accessible when the material is complete and appropriate. It implies that the language used for instruction should be meaningful and practical. Furthermore, students and teachers find it easier to understand through contextualized language. Many students need help with using language, mainly English. This matter is covered in primary and secondary schools and higher education (Reyes et al., 2021). The results of this study indicate that even in higher education, some students, particularly native learners, have difficulty using and understanding the English language.

Teacher-student interaction needs to be improved

Gathered responses revealed that poor teacher-student interaction was prevalent among native students' experiences with online learning. According to the respondents, there is a significant difference between online and face-to-face learning. Some respondents observed that online learning does not support or encourage the teacher-student relationship, hindering their motivation to learn and participate in class discussions. In a similar study, Adarkwah (2021) investigated students' online learning experiences during the pandemic using a narrative inquiry approach. Findings revealed that students considered online learning ineffective due to several difficulties. One was a need for more interaction and engagement between students and teachers. As a result, native students have difficulty understanding lessons because the teacher cannot address their concerns and clarifications about the lesson. This matter was crucial to the native students' learning experience because it directly affected their learning outcomes.

Besides, some respondents' responses confirmed they had a non-interactive and engaging online learning experience due to poor teacher-student interaction. Students' engagement has already been studied primarily within traditional, face-to-face classes, which links to many positive outcomes, including improved academic performance and critical thinking (Dogan, 2015; Lei et al., 2018). Over the last few decades, many classes have been through online modality. According to the Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (2019), it is easier to maintain the same level of engagement as face-to-face classes when the course is delivered online. It is one of the challenges that institutions and instructors face. The results of this study revealed that due to poor teacher-student interaction, native students are hesitant to engage deeply with the class, which affects their learning experience and motivation.

Incompatible location for online learning

The incompatible location for online learning has also been a problem for native learners. Respondents indicated that the area where they were situated had been a detrimental factor in their online learning. As seen in their responses, some respondents said that geographical location had been their primary concern for online learning. The native students confirmed that the distraction from their environment makes it difficult to concentrate and interrupts their focus. Undoubtedly, geographic location matters when it

comes to participation in online learning, particularly in higher education. According to an article published by (National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education 2017), divided distractions from the environment also disrupt learning. As a support, a recent study by Smalley (2020) revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic compelled Higher Education to shift toward online learning, disrupting the system of conventional learning environments where students learn and study. Aside from that, the results show that most native students in online learning lived in remote areas with limited access to technological mechanisms for online learning.

Besides that, native students also have difficulty finding a stable internet connection and signal in their specific locations. The study by Kavita Rao et al. (2011) explores the creation of virtual classrooms for remote and rural areas. It asserts that people living in villages or communities far away from towns or cities, specifically the indigenous and native people, struggle with online learning due to their geographical situation. According to the findings, most native students live in remote areas with limited access to technological mechanisms that they can use for their online learning. As a result, the native students in this study prefer the traditional learning style because they are more comfortable with it than with online learning.

Coping Mechanism of Native Learners in the Utilization of Online Learning Platforms in the New Normal

Discovery and individual learning

The study reveals that online learning platforms promote discovery and independent learning. Under the first sub-question, the researchers asked the participants how to keep up with the learning demand in the new normal. It found that native students research unfamiliar terms using Google or YouTube to clarify some terms or lessons after the discussion when an explanation is insufficient. Developing self-made strategies to learn autonomously was also visible in the respondents' answers. A study by Swan (2019) found that using the Internet impacted the growth of online learning. Students are privileged to utilize this as an avenue for learning beyond the Learning Management Systems.

Subsequently, in the second question, where they were asked about their strategies to counter their negative experiences, embracing the new normal through self-exploration was seen as prevalent in the participants' experiences. Support to this interpretation is the study of Milligan & Littlejohn (2014) that suggest online learning students under the online curriculum are free to adjust their learning according to their needs flexibly. In fact, in online learning, students are active participants in the process through the self-directed process (Yilmaz, 2016). Also, these students shared their primary coping mechanisms as native students when the language used in the online learning platforms was too challenging to understand. Typical responses were about browsing or searching unfamiliar English terms or words on the Internet as a reference for translation and utilizing the YouTube app for a detailed explanation. Under the thorough interpretation, native students thrive in their virtual classes through their independent learning strategies.

It is visible in the participants' responses that most of them struggle to understand complicated English terms utilized in the platforms. Therefore, exploring the Internet to search platforms is a supplementary learning method. The opportunity for self-exploration aligns with *Garrison's Model of Self-Directed Learning (SDL)*, which suggests learners assume autonomous learning as they have the control and responsibility to construct their

learning meaningfully (EdutechWiki, 2021). With the use of online learning platforms, native students came up with this initiative of self-directed learning through the motivation of having the most significant control of their learning.

In addition, a theory of Bandura called *Observational Learning* under the *Social Learning Theory* can be connected with the notion of independent learning as it requires a process of mimicking or modeling rather than purely experiencing learning at hand to acquire learning (Cherry, 2021). Through online learning platforms, native students shape their learning based on what they learn through the virtual class making it still possible to learn by transferring this learning.

Asking relevant questions

Meanwhile, asking relevant questions to peers and instructors was revealed in this study as a way native students cope with the challenges of the new normal under the online curriculum. Inquiring or seeking help from more knowledgeable others was the standard answer among the interviewed native students on the first question. In addition, asking for clarifications about the discussion and connecting with peers to understand the lesson was said to be their strategy to counter their difficulties in learning through online platforms. In connection to this, *Lev Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory* is parallel with this finding. As such, learners can learn and move through the Zone of Proximal Development through the scaffolding and guidance of more knowledgeable others (Cherry, 2021). On the last question about their coping mechanisms, redirecting the questions to the instructors was seen as the most typical response when there is difficulty in understanding language use. A study by Sotiriou et al. (2020) about Inquiry-based learning and E-learning poses a notion that embedding inquiry methods into online learning experiences fosters problem-solving and a better understanding of the lessons and their materials. It is comprehensive that the inquiry method significantly reinforced learning gaps among online learners. With this, *Inquiry-based Learning Theory* can be a supplementary model that supports the efficacy of inquiry while learning in online learning platforms (Gradepowerlearning, 2018). Accordingly, this approach inculcates that students ask questions and transfer these ideas independently.

Technical preparations to utilize online learning platforms

Moreover, technical preparations to utilize online learning platforms are one of the effective blending strategies in coping with the educational challenges brought by the new normal. On the first question, adjusting to the new learning systems, utilizing different online learning platforms as an opportunity for growth, and accommodating to the new learning environment are the most common methods to keep up with the demand of online learning. While on the second question under the third main question, preparing the technical aspects and organizing the necessary things for the online learning session was the most common response. It means testing and practicing the devices and equipment needed during the virtual class.

In addition, an article from Canvas.net (n.d) noted that acceptance of technology also refers to how students are willing to exercise and learn new technologies. On the third question, adapting to solution-focused behavior is seen as the most frequent coping mechanism in the challenge of comprehension difficulty to language use. Circumstances such as finding the most suitable place with the most stable internet connection are the preferred term for solution-focused behavior. Azbigmedia's (2020) article also suggests

that learning to use the technology before entering classes and securing a stable internet connection enhances online learning experiences. These findings visibly reflect how crucial it is for a native learner to become well-accustomed to utilizing these platforms.

Strategic reading and learning practice

Additionally, participants' responses reveal **strategic reading and learning practice** as one of the blending strategies used by native students to cope with the challenges faced while utilizing online learning platforms. This reading and learning practice refer to the students' initiatives in learning beyond the online learning experience. On the initial question about managing native students to keep up with the demand of online learning, sparing time for reading and self-study marks the most typical answer. Also, reading through complicated terms and looking for context clues was seen as the most effective strategy to counter the difficulties that native students do encounter in attending the online class. In the last question that states the native students' coping mechanisms in terms of understanding the complex terms used or the language itself, reading repeatedly and constant reading practice to fully comprehend the context of the lesson was the most prevalent theme. Correspondingly, this finding can be in parallel with the study of Farrell (2015), which found that reading interventions through repeating patterns attained higher academic comprehension. Concerning the challenge of understanding, respondents' sentiments revealed that they could understand unfamiliar words through repeated reading practice. Daily reading expands students' comprehension skills, especially with their vocabulary (ACC, 2019).

Furthermore, such findings can be interpreted as that language difficulties are visible in the respondents' experiences and that they managed to respond that this can be bearable through reading exercises. Consequently, strategic reading and studying practices effectively deal with difficulty in understanding language use. Consequently, the *Behaviorist Theory of Reading* is the most fitting framework to support this research finding. Accordingly, repeated reading can influence students' language learning capacity (Schifferdecker, n.d.) This theory was developed in 1970 and posited that a series of isolated skills would help a child to read and understand a language even more.

The productive mindset in online learning

Furthermore, a productive mindset in online learning is one of the blending strategies used to cope with the challenges of utilizing online learning platforms. Participants also shared their lived experiences concerning this matter. They noted that positive mind conditioning and determination are one of the causes of why they still manage to keep up with the demand of online learning. Also, remaining calm in every situation is the most prevalent strategy among native students when confronted with challenges from online learning. Despite these challenges, the determination to continue pursuing the educational endeavor to manage such difficulties. In coping mechanisms, asking for help from peers and self-exploration is the most common. Therefore, this theme is only applicable to the first and second sub-questions. Through interpretation, sentiments shared by the participants regarding self-motivation and focus are essential for keeping a learner thriving under an online curriculum. With this, a published article by Connor (2016) suggested that staying motivated in online learning requires looking at the bigger picture and keeping the focus ahead of the goal. In addition, a national study was connected with this research about the online learning experiences of Filipino College students during the pandemic (Giray et al.,

2022). Accordingly, Giray et al. (2022) noted that most research respondents of the said study shared that the fear of being unable to graduate on time, household influence, and the urge to help their family was the primary motivation of students to cope with the challenges.

Setting a positive learning environment

Finally, when participants were asked about their blending strategies in the new normal, setting a positive learning environment ranks last among the possible choices. On the initial question, respondents answer that finding a place with a better internet connection is also vital in keeping up with the demand for online learning. Using the platforms the school requires, it must attain stable connectivity to avoid communication delays such as internet disruption and inaudible discussion, which the participants always mentioned. A study by Rasheed et al. (2020) even noted that there had been disparities and potential divides due to the differences in online connectivity among students. Thus, the internet connection must be strong enough for online learning. Also, in the second question that entails the strategies of a native student to counter such negative experiences, a distraction-free study area is the most suitable setup.

Furthermore, an article by Goldberg (2019) suggests that preparing a study zone will enhance learning focus, especially online learning. He also added that eliminating possible distractions can improve a student's retention of the lesson (Goldberg, 2019). On the third question, this theme needed to be visible among the responses when it came to the challenge of the language gap. Therefore, in conclusion, although of less frequency, a conducive learning environment is inspired by the native students. Regarding internet connectivity, as online learning is dependent on it, native students shared that setting a suitable environment for studying is directly relevant as a blending strategy to utilize online learning platforms fully.

To summarize, this streamlined blending strategy is grounded in Jean Piaget's Adaptation Theory of Development, which states that humans tend to adapt to the environment where they thrive by corresponding their previous experience to the new experience (Cherry, 2021). This study revealed that native students adapt to these learning modalities by altering their learning methods to meet the educational situation's demands.

SUMMARY

Based on the findings of the study, the native student participants revealed the opportunities and challenges of utilizing online learning platforms and the variety of coping mechanisms that native learners have developed in order to sustain themselves in the virtual learning sphere. Initially, the native learners take their learning adventure using online platforms readily available in their institution. With the use of these tools, the study discovered both positive and negative experiences in e-learning settings and the utilization of the various learning tools that go along with this new learning environment. There were positive experiences spotted in the investigation. However, the negative experiences overpowered the positive ones. Nonetheless, this study's first target revealed that the student respondents had mixed online learning experiences.

Under the second research target, the researchers explore the challenging experiences of the participants. Moreover, the indigenous students were unprepared for the new learning setup. It can be noticed in respondents' responses that they have difficulties coping with online learning and using online learning platforms, dramatically

impacting their learning experience. The detrimental effect of online learning may hinder the quality of learning outcomes as expected by the native students, yet they still manage to dwell with the mainstream students.

The final findings of this research suggested that all together, native students believed that the challenges in the new standard could be bearable through their streamlined blending strategies that encapsulate six common strategies to counter these difficulties. These blending strategies are relevant to keep up with the demand of learning in the new normal, to counter the difficulties that native students encounter in online learning, and as their coping mechanisms when the language used in the online learning platforms is too complex and unfamiliar to understand. Overall, online learning platforms brought disparity to students' usual way of learning. Nevertheless, students have morphed into the flock and accommodated these educational changes through blending strategies.

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