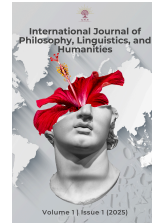




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### Research Article

# Tboli Student's Lived Experiences in a Hiligaynon-Speaking Public school

Bernice Faith C. Ureta<sup>1</sup>  | Amira Mae C. Gumanoy<sup>2</sup> 

<sup>1</sup> Sultan Kudarat State University

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### Abstract

Every child has the right to quality education regardless of cultural or linguistic background. A safe, supportive school environment nurtures students' skills, talents, and potential. This qualitative study, using transcendental phenomenology, explored the lived experiences of ten Tboli senior high school students enrolled in the Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL) strand at Talisay Integrated School, a Hiligaynon-speaking public school in Lake Sebu, South Cotabato. The study examined how these students navigate cultural and linguistic challenges and envision their future. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and analyzed thematically. Ten themes emerged from the lifeworld and experiences of the students: Cultural and Linguistic Adaptations; Cultural Sensitivity and Overcoming Stereotypes; Social Connectivity; Positive Interactions Fostering Integration; Impact of Bullying on Emotional and Social Well-Being; Cultural Bridging to Overcome Linguistic Barriers; Social Skills and Building Connections through Linguistic Adaptation; Confidence and Self-Esteem; Cultural Fluidity and Selective Assimilation; and Cultural Assimilation and Its Impact. Three themes described the students' future self-concepts: Professional Expertise, Linguistic Competence, and Agent of Change. Findings indicate that Tboli students overcome challenges through resilience and adaptation, with aspirations rooted in growth, leadership, and advocacy. This study provides valuable insights into their daily struggles and successes. The findings underscore the need for inclusive, culturally sensitive curricula and support programs that empower Indigenous learners. The study advocates for increased Indigenous representation in policy, enhanced student leadership opportunities, and integration of Indigenous knowledge into mainstream education to foster equity, empowerment, and a brighter future for Indigenous youth. These insights critically inform current policy and educational practices.

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<sup>1</sup>Corresponding Author: Bernice Faith Ureta

\*Corresponding Email: [bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph](mailto:bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph)

## Introduction

The right to education belongs to every child, regardless of race, gender, nationality, ethnicity, economic or social background. Thus, a safe and supportive learning environment is essential in developing the capacities of all learners, reaffirming the universal commitment that all children, youth, and adults should have access to quality education. Hence, schools need to create an enabling and inclusive environment to meet the diverse needs of all learners.

Across the world, Indigenous students faced systemic barriers that hindered their educational progress. According to Luo et al. (2022), Indigenous students often struggled due to linguistic marginalization, discrimination, and curriculum frameworks that failed to incorporate their cultural heritage. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) stated the importance of education in Indigenous languages, but many education systems continued to prioritize dominant languages. Keane et al. (2017) emphasized that in countries such as Canada and Australia, Indigenous students experienced lower academic achievement and higher dropout rates due to language barriers and a lack of culturally responsive pedagogy. Freeman and Staley (2017) highlighted that since British colonization, Aboriginal students in Australia had been significantly disadvantaged by an Anglo-European schooling system that required them to leave their cultural assets at the school gate. These global challenges mirrored the struggles encountered by Tboli students in the Philippines, where linguistic diversity was both an asset and a source of inequality.

In the Philippines, language barriers remained a major challenge for Indigenous learners. The Department of Education (DepEd) implemented the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) policy to address language-related learning difficulties. However, Tupas and Martin (2017) stated that the

effectiveness of this policy remained questionable, particularly for Indigenous students who spoke languages that were not designated as mother tongues in their schools. According to Oda and Vizconde (2021), research showed that when Indigenous students were forced to learn in an unfamiliar language, their comprehension, participation, and self-confidence suffered. Additionally, according to Galla (2019), educational materials and resources were often produced in dominant languages, leaving Indigenous students with limited access to learning tools that reflected their cultural and linguistic background.

The Tboli tribe in the province of South Cotabato stood out as representative of the fight for equitable access to education. The Tboli, an Indigenous group in Mindanao, were among the stakeholders who thrived in the art of weaving but lived a life of discrimination, geographical isolation, and poverty while remaining culturally astute. Siwale (2022) discussed that students often had to cross mountains and rivers for hours to reach their school, demonstrating their determination despite the odds. Raballe et al. (2021) stated that students often were bullied, discriminated against, and marginalized in predominantly non-Indigenous school settings in Southern Palawan. Barcibal et al. (2023) highlighted that students experienced difficulties in comprehension, expression, and classroom participation.

Furthermore, Tboli students in Hiligaynon-speaking public school face significant linguistic, cultural, and social barriers that hinder their academic performance, emotional well-being, and social integration. The dominant use of Hiligaynon and English in educational settings, as reported in the SMEPA 2018, contributes to a lack of cultural representation in the curriculum, resulting in low literacy. This creates a sense of alienation and cultural dissonance among Tboli learners. These

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<sup>1</sup>Corresponding Author: Bernice Faith Ureta

\*Corresponding Email: [bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph](mailto:bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph)

challenges not only impact their ability to fully engage in the learning process but also contribute to feelings of marginalization, discrimination, and exclusion, which affect their overall educational experience and academic success. The Indigenous Student Empowerment program is an initiative designed to support and enhance the academic success of Indigenous students while addressing their linguistic, social, and cultural needs.

Although previous studies investigated the lived experiences of Indigenous students, particularly in areas of language, safety, bullying, discrimination, and educational outcomes, there was limited literature focusing on specific thematic issues and their relationship to students' educational experiences. Still, a gap remains in the knowledge and population about how Tboli students interacted with their Ilonggo classmates. Indeed, this gap highlights educational systems that often fail to accommodate Indigenous ways of knowing and learning, which contribute to a sense of alienation and lower academic performance. By identifying these problems and proposing strategies for culturally responsive education,

the study can contribute to creating a more inclusive school environment, enhancing Tboli students' sense of belonging, preserving their cultural identity, and ultimately improving their educational outcomes. This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the lifeworld of Tboli students in a Hiligaynon-speaking public school?
2. What are the contexts of the lived experiences of Tboli students in a Hiligaynon-speaking public school?
3. How do Tboli students view themselves being in the Hiligaynon-speaking public school in the future?
4. What program can be designed to support and enhance the academic success of the Tboli students while addressing their social, linguistic, and cultural needs in an educational context?

## Materials and Methods

### Research Design

The study utilized Transcendental Phenomenology. It is qualitative research, which focuses on investigating a person's lived experiences; both what was experienced and how it was experienced (Neubauer et al., 2019). Relatively, Creswell and Poth (2018) argue that qualitative research is inherently inductive, focusing on understanding individual meanings and the complexity of human experiences. They highlight those qualitative researchers aim to capture the richness of participants' perspectives, which requires a flexible and adaptive approach to data collection and analysis. The authors also stress the importance of ethical considerations in qualitative research, advocating for transparency and reflexivity throughout the research process.

Specifically, this followed Moustaka's (1994) transcendental phenomenology, which provides a systematic, thorough, deliberate, and detailed set of processes and procedures in deriving knowledge from a full description of the lived experiences of people to the phenomenon under study. Moustakas (1994) named four processes and steps in conducting phenomenological research. These are epoche, (bracketing) phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis of meanings and essences.

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<sup>1</sup>Corresponding Author: Bernice Faith Ureta

\*Corresponding Email: [bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph](mailto:bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph)

## Subjects and Sampling

The study's participants were ten (10) IP Students who enrolled in the Grade 11 TVL track, which has three strands the Agri-fishery Arts, Information Communication Technology and Industrial Arts in Senior High School at Talisay Integrated School, Lake Sebu, South Cotabato. Given that the participants were minors, the researcher has obtained parental consent. Grade 11 students are typically in a unique developmental phase where they have a solidified sense of cultural identity and can express their experiences coherently. This stage of development is crucial as students are forming their self-concept and are more insightful about the cultural dynamics in their educational environment. The inclusion criteria required participants to be Grade 11 students under the (TVL) track who were identified as Tboli and currently studying in school. They

must have been schooling within the Hiligaynon-speaking school for at least one school year to ensure significant exposure and provide informed consent, with parental or guardian consent. On the other hand, students were excluded if they did not identify as Tboli, were not in Grade 11 TVL, and were not officially enrolled in Talisay Integrated School. In addition, withdrawal criteria allow participants to leave the study voluntarily at any time, either by their own decision or at the request of their parents or guardians. Additionally, participants showing signs of emotional or psychological distress or failing to comply with study requirements may also be withdrawn. These measures ensure the study remains focused, ethically sound, and representative of the intended population.

## Data Collection

In this transcendental phenomenological study, data collection was systematic and rigorous to investigate the essence and meaning of participants' lived experiences. According to Creswell (2013), the steps for acquiring data in a transcendental phenomenological study were as follows: Participant Selection, Informed Consent, Semi-Structured Interviews, Audio Recording and Transcription, Bracketing, Data Saturation, Data Analysis, Verification, Rich Description.

**Participant Selection:** The researcher selected a sample based on the needs of the study. Participants were chosen based on the sample's purpose and the study's requirements. It involved identifying individuals or groups who were particularly knowledgeable or experienced with the topic of interest (Creswell, 2013).

**Informed Consent:** Before data collection, participants were given clear and detailed information regarding the study's goal,

procedures, and possible risks. They were allowed to provide voluntary and informed consent to participate (Creswell, 2013).

**Semi-Structured Interviews:** The primary data collection method in the study was semi-structured interviews. The researcher conducted in-depth interviews with each participant, using open-ended questions to encourage participants to share their experiences in their own words (Creswell, 2013).

**Audio Recording and Transcription:** The interviews were audio-recorded to accurately capture the participants' responses. The audio recordings were transcribed verbatim, preserving the participants' original phrases and subtleties (Creswell, 2013).

**Bracketing:** The researcher used bracketing, a process in which personal biases and preconceptions were temporarily set aside

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<sup>1</sup>Corresponding Author: Bernice Faith Ureta

\*Corresponding Email: [bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph](mailto:bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph)

during data collection and analysis to prevent undue influence on the interpretation of participants' experiences (Creswell, 2013). The researcher focused solely on listening to and interpreting the Tboli students' narratives about their experiences in Hiligaynon-speaking schools, without imposing personal perspectives on their challenges or achievements.

**Data Saturation:** Data collection continued until data saturation was achieved, meaning no new significant information or themes emerged from the interviews. Saturation ensured that the data were comprehensive and sufficient to address the research question (Creswell, 2013). Two buffer participants were selected as backups if some participants were absent, withdrew, or provided insufficient information.

**Data Analysis:** The researcher used thematic data analysis of the interview transcripts. The thematic analysis emphasizes identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes)

### Data Analysis

In doing data analysis, Thematic Analysis (TA) according to Braun and Clarke (2006) was used. The thematic analysis emphasizes identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data. It organized and described all data in detail. There were six steps, covered in the thematic analysis:

First, familiarizing with the data; in this step, the researcher needs to read and re-read data to become familiar with what the data needs and pay attention to the patterns that occur. The researcher must complete data collection by transcribing data into written form.

Second, generating initial codes; the researcher generated the initial codes by documenting where and how patterns occur. This happened through data reduction where the researcher collapses data into labels to create categories for more efficient analysis. Data complication was also completed here. This involves the

within the data. It involved organizing and describing all data in detail. The researcher familiarized themselves with the data, generated initial codes, searched for themes, reviewed the themes, defined and named themes, and finally produced the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

**Verification:** The researcher engaged in member checking, where participants were allowed to review and validate the researcher's interpretations of their experiences (Creswell, 2013). A debriefer with a track record in qualitative research was included to review and verify the emerging themes. This ensured the accuracy and credibility of the findings.

**Rich Description:** Throughout the data collection procedure, the researcher emphasized rich descriptions when summarizing the participants' experiences, providing thorough and vivid explanations to help readers understand the essence of the phenomena (Creswell, 2013).

researcher making inferences about what the codes mean.

The third was searching for themes; the researcher combines codes into overarching themes that accurately depict the data. It is important to develop themes that describe exactly what the themes mean, even if the theme does not seem to fit. The researcher also describes what is missing from the analysis.

Fourth, reviewing themes; in this step, the researcher looked at how the themes support the data and the overarching theoretical perspective. If the analysis seems incomplete, the researcher needed to go back and find what is missing.

Fifth, defining and naming themes; the researcher needs to define each theme, which aspects of data were being captured, and what is interesting about the themes.

<sup>1</sup>Corresponding Author: Bernice Faith Ureta

\*Corresponding Email: [bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph](mailto:bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph)



Sixth, producing the report; in the last step, when the researcher wrote the report. The researcher decided which themes make meaningful contributions to understanding what is going on within the data. The researcher also conducted member checking. This is where the researcher returned to the sample at hand to see if their description accurately represents it.

### Trustworthiness of the Study

The researcher used approaches such as credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability to increase the study's trustworthiness while admitting and resolving potential biases and personal influence on the research process (Creswell, 2013).

**Credibility** is the degree to which the study's findings and interpretations are credible and plausible. Establishing credibility in qualitative research is critical to ensuring that the study accurately reflects the participants' experiences. In this study, the researcher employed member checking, where participants reviewed and validated the researcher's interpretations of their experiences. Additionally, utilizing a transparent and methodical approach to data analysis and providing extensive descriptions of the research process can help increase trust in the findings

**Confirmability** ensures that the study's findings are rooted in the data and not biased by the researcher's preconceptions or values. It is about establishing objectivity and neutrality in the research process. To enhance confirmability, the researcher worked to maintain objectivity and ensured that the findings were grounded in the students' authentic experiences rather than shaped by the researcher's preconceptions

### Ethical Considerations

Permission from the Schools Division Superintendent was secured through a letter endorsed by the research adviser. The participants were requested to provide their consent or waiver before the interview. To

Lastly, the debriefing procedure. It was an essential step in qualitative data analysis. It involved a systematic review and discussion of the findings, interpretations, and decisions made during the analysis to ensure consistency, reliability, and validity. Additionally, it evaluated the trustworthiness of the analysis.

**Transferability** is the degree to which the study's findings can be applied or generalized to other situations or groups. In qualitative research, transferability refers to providing enough information for readers to decide the findings' applicability to their situations. In this study, the researchers provided comprehensive and detailed descriptions of the individuals, the context, and the phenomena being studied. In this study, the researcher would provide rich and detailed descriptions of the participants, the context, and the phenomena under investigation. Additionally, the researcher should explicitly discuss the limitations of the study, acknowledging factors that may impact the transferability of the findings to different settings.

**Dependability** is the consistency and stability of research findings throughout time and among researchers or situations. It concerns the dependability of the study's methodology and data analysis. Thus, to ensure dependability, the researcher documented all research decisions and processes. This includes providing a detailed account of the research design, data collection methods, and data analysis procedures.

safeguard privacy, participants utilized aliases. They were guaranteed that they had the right to withdraw at any point and declined to answer questions that made them uncomfortable. The study adhered to ethical principles established

<sup>1</sup>Corresponding Author: Bernice Faith Ureta

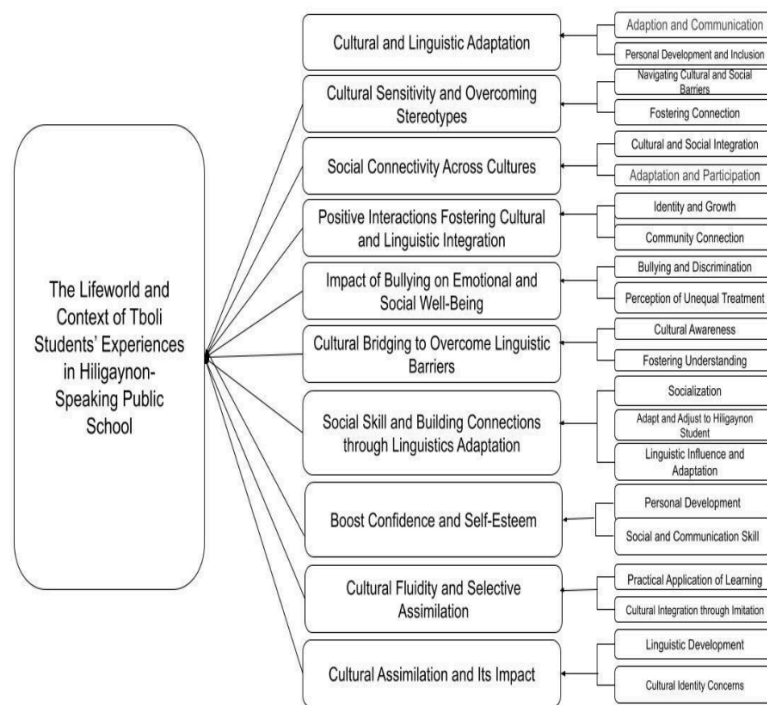
\*Corresponding Email: [bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph](mailto:bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph)

by Sultan Kudarat State University. The researcher prioritized building trust with participants by ensuring anonymity and confidentiality within the limits of the law.

## Results

This portion discloses the presentation of the study's findings. The consecutive presentation encompasses the pertinent themes derived from the real-life encounters of Tboli students in Hiligaynon-speaking school.

### Emerging Themes on Lifeworld and Context of Tboli Students' Experiences in a Hiligaynon-Speaking Public school



**Figure 4.** The Schematic Diagram on the Lifeworld and Context of Tboli Students' Experiences in a Hiligaynon-Speaking Public school

Figure 4 presents the lifeworld and Context of Tboli students in Hiligaynon-speaking School. Ten (10) emerging themes were articulated through arduous procedural data analysis and interpretation. They were all synthesized from twenty-nine (29) formulated initial themes and twenty-one (21) clustered themes.

It was revealed that Tboli students described their lifeworld and Context of Tboli Students in Hiligaynon-speaking school as one of the cultural and linguistic adaptations, cultural sensitivity and overcoming stereotypes; social connectivity across cultures; and positive actions fostering cultural and linguistic integration;

<sup>1</sup>Corresponding Author: Bernice Faith Ureta

\*Corresponding Email: [bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph](mailto:bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph)

impact of bullying on emotional and social well-being; cultural bridging to overcome linguistic barriers; social skill and building connections through linguistics adaptation; boost

confidence and self-esteem; cultural fluidity and selective assimilation; and cultural assimilation and its impact.

### Emerging Theme 1: Cultural and Linguistic Adaptations

This theme focuses on the lifeworld of Tboli students in Hiligaynon-speaking schools. Theme 1 is characterized by two (2) clustered themes namely adaption and communication; and Personal Development and Inclusion.

Additionally, these were formulated by four (4) initial themes such as adaptability to language and communication; social interaction; personal growth and adjustment; and recognition and inclusion.

Tboli students describe their lifeworld as cultural and linguistic adaptations when they said:

“As an IP learner maam kailangan naming sumabay sa bawat [need to get along with every] languages upang kami ay maintindihan din [for me to be understood]” S1

“dapat kabalo kaman makipag halubilo ka sa kapwa [you should know how to interact with others] S4

“I adjusted easily in my studies” S7

“...boost my confidence and feel special to everyone” S6

### Emerging Theme 2: Cultural Sensitivity and Overcoming Stereotypes

Theme 2 is characterized by two (2) clustered themes namely navigating cultural and social barriers; and fostering connection and belonging. This was formulated by four (4)

initial themes such as fear of judgment and stereotyping; efforts for cultural integration; positive interaction despite challenges; miscommunication and misinterpretation.

Tboli students describe their lifeworld as cultural sensitivity and overcoming stereotypes as they said:

Ang experience ko ay hindi ko maintndihan ang English subject at medyo mabubulol ako sa pagsasalita ng English. [ I experienced being not able to understand English subject because I stammered when I speak] S5, 28-31

Upang maging konektado maam bilang isang IP kailangan naming magsalita ng language ng Hiligaynon para maging konektado sa kanila upang hindi rin kami mapahiya sa bawat salita. Akala nila bina backstub naming sila nagkakaroon kami ng gulo kasi hindi kami nagkakaintndihan. [For us to be able to connect to them ma'am as an IP we need to speak the Hiligaynon language for us to be able to connect with them and we won't get embarrassed word we used. They thought that we backstub them that it caused chaos because we couldn't understand each other.]” S1

Sa aming klase mayroon kaming mga activity na ginugrupo upang makipagsalimuha sa iba naming kaklase pero natatakot ako baka...[pause] ijujudge nila ako bilang isang...[pause] bilang

<sup>1</sup>Corresponding Author: Bernice Faith Ureta

\*Corresponding Email: [bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph](mailto:bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph)



Tboli student. [In our class we have an activity that they grouped us for us to be able to socialize with each other but I'm scared maybe...[pause] they will judge me as a... [pause] as a Tboli student.]

### Emerging Theme 3 Social Connectivity Across Cultures

Theme 3 is characterized by two (2) clustered themes; cultural and social integration; and adaptation and participation. This was formulated by three (3) initial themes such as

socializing within and beyond cultural circles; fostering friendship through interaction, and adapting to group dynamics.

Tboli students describe their lifeworld as social integration as they said:

Ahh... [pause] pakikipaghalubilo sa mga kaibiganat sa mga katulad ko pong Tboli. [ Ahh... [pause] socializing to my friends and my fellow Tboli like me. ] S6

Kailangan ko talaga sila pakisamahan para makipag-usap at makipag-kaibigan...[pause] makakahalubilo tapos para naring makipag-sabayan sa kanila.[ I need to socialize with them and talked and be friends with them... [pause] I need to socialize and keep up with them. ]”S3

### Emerging Theme 4: Positive Interactions Fostering Cultural and Linguistic Integration

Theme 4 is characterized by two (2) clustered themes; identity and growth; and community connection. This was formulated by two (2)

initial themes such as a sense of belonging; cultural integration; and a positive social environment

Tboli students describe their lifeworld as excelling academically as they said:

I always participated in my classes and performance task regarding our studies S7

Madami po akong mga pangyayari dito sa eskwelahan kasi since elementary ako dito ako nag-aaral tapos masaya naman po makahalubilo yong mga Ilonggo po at tsaka marunong na po ako magsalita ng Hiligaynon. [I have many experiences here at school because I’ve been studying here since elementary and it’s fun to interact with the Ilonggos, and I know also how to speak Hiligaynon. ]S10

### Emerging Theme 5: Impact of Bullying on Emotional and Social Well-being

Theme 5 is characterized by clustered (2) clustered themes; bullying and discrimination; and perception of unequal treatment. This was

formulated by two (2) initial themes such as experiences of bullying and discrimination.

Tboli students experience the impact of bullying on emotional and social well-being as they said:

Ano maam na bully...na experience ko maam nga ma bully as a Tboli maam ma experience gid nila nga sunlogon kay amo ni sila daw gna discriminate ang ila nga tribo. [I've been bullied ma'am... I experienced being bullied as a Tboli I experience being tease that our tribe are being discriminated. ]S4

<sup>1</sup>Corresponding Author: Bernice Faith Ureta

\*Corresponding Email: [bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph](mailto:bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph)

Kakaiba ang aking buhay dito sa Hiligaynon public speaking school dahil minsan hindi mo alam...[pause] dahil minsan kapag nagkamali ka saiyong pagsasalita yong iba binubully ka dahil alam nila sa tono palang ng iyong pagsasalita ay Tboli kana at maari sila mag discriminate saiyong. Mga experience ko din ditto ay nakabase sa mga Ilonggo kong anu ang trato nila sa akin dito. [My life is different here in Hiligaynon public speaking school because sometimes you don't know... [pause] because sometimes when you make mistakes while speaking some other people was bullying you because when they know your tone is Tboli they will discriminate you. My experience here is based on the Ilonggo and how they treat me].S2

### Emerging Theme 6: Cultural Bridging to Overcome Linguistic Barriers

This theme focuses on the context of the experiences of Tboli students in Hiligaynon-speaking school. Theme 6 is characterized by two (2) clustered themes; cultural awareness; and fostering understanding.

This was formulated by three (3) initial themes such as desire to learn the Hiligaynon language for communication; awareness of linguistic and cultural differences; and effort to bridge cultural gaps.

Tboli students experience cultural bridging to overcome linguistic barriers as they said:

“palaisipan lang talaga ay kailangan kong matutunan yong language nila para maka-usap ko sila ng maayos at para narin magkaintindihan na rin kami ganon.” [I thought I need to learned their language so I can communicate with them and so we can also understand each other. ] S3

“Iniisip ko na Tboli ako tska sila Hiligaynon so that kailangan ko na matutunan yong kanilang language para maint dhan din nila ako.” . [I thought that I'm Tboli and they are Hiligaynon so that I need to learn their language for them to understand me] S1

### Emerging Theme 7: Social Skill and Building Connections through Linguistics Adaptation

This theme focuses on the context of the experiences of Tboli students in Hiligaynon-speaking school. Three (3) clustered

themes characterized theme; learn to socialize; adapt and adjust to Hiligaynon students; and Linguistic influence and adaptation.

This was formulated by three (5) initial themes such adjust to being one of theme; adapt the environment; be friendly; impact of language use on peers; and sharing cultural identity through language. Thus, Tboli students feel having a social skill and experience building connections through linguistics adaptation as they said:

Dapat maging friendly at marunong makisama sa lahat ng mga kaklase kong mga Ilonggo. [ We need to be friendly and know how to socialize with my Ilonggo classmates.]S5

Madami... dapat...[pause] dapat makipaghalubilo ka sa kanila maam at tsaka mag adjust sa kanila. [A lot... We need... [pause] we need to blend with each other and we also need to adjust for them.] S10

<sup>1</sup>Corresponding Author: Bernice Faith Ureta

\*Corresponding Email: [bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph](mailto:bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph)

Naapektuhan sila sa pamamagitan ng aking pagsasalita kasi ginagamit ko yong mga nilalaman kong salita sa kanila.” [It affects them through the way I speak because I used the words, I know to them. ]S9

### Emerging Theme 8: Boost Confidence and Self-Esteem

Theme 8 is characterized by two (2) clustered themes; personal development; and social and communication skill. This was formulated by two (2) initial theme such increased self-confidence; and improved social skills and adaptability.

Hence, Tboli students experience boost confidence and self-esteem as they said:

“...nag glow ang akon nga confident and then ng anu... damo2 na ako sang nabal-an nga dapat i.assess sa sarili ko and akon nga confident nag boost[...]” glowed my confidence and I learned how to assess myself and my confidence boost. ]S4

“Mga pagbabago...hmm marami eh pero mas natuto akong makipag socialize sa ibang tao at makipag... natutunan ko ring uhhh.. pananalita ko at mkipag halubilo.” [Changes... hmm a lot but I learned more to socialize to other persons and to... I learned to uhhh.. the way I speak and socialize. ]S3

### Emerging Theme 9: Cultural Fluidity and Selective Assimilation

Theme 9 is characterized by two (2) clustered themes; practical application of learning; and cultural integration through Imitation. In addition, this was formulated by two (2) initial themes such as selective application of learning; and cultural linguistic application.

Tboli students experience cultural fluidity and selective assimilation as they said:

Yong iba ay inaapply ko rin sa bahay yong mga natutunan ko yong iba naman yong mga hindi importante wala lang yon yong mga importante lang talaga ang inaapply ko at ginagamit ko hanggang ngayon.”.[The other I apply the thing I learned at our house while the things that are not important I ignored it the only thing that matters is the important thing I learned I apply and still using now. ]S3

Natutunan kong maging isa sa kanila at gayahin ang salita ng kanilang sinasabi. [I learned how to be one of them and imitate the words they said. ]”S2

### Emerging Theme 10: Cultural Assimilation and Its Impact

Theme 10 is characterized by two (2) clustered themes; linguistic displacement; and cultural identity concern. Furthermore, this was formulated by two (2) initial themes such as forgetting native language due to exposure to another language; fear of losing cultural identity.

Tboli students experience cultural assimilation and its impact as they said:

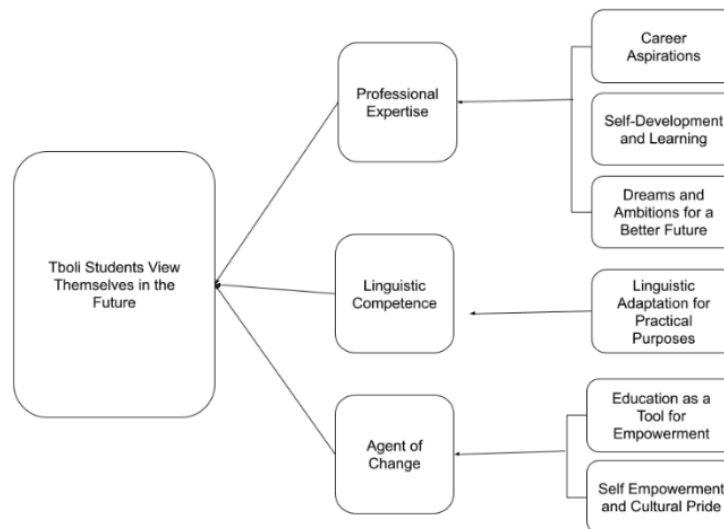
Nakakaapekto po kasi medyo nakakalimutan ko na po yong pagsasalita ng Tboli sa amin” [It affects me because I forgot on how to speak our Tboli language. ]S10

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\*Corresponding Email: [bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph](mailto:bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph)

Kay daw feel ko nga basi naisip nila nga damu na ko na nalimtan nga mga words sa Tboli kay damu na ko natun-an nga mga words sa Tagalog kag English kag basi makalimtan ko pati cultures.” [ I feel that they thought I forgot a lot of words in Tboli because I learned a lot of words in Tagalog and English and maybe I forgot our cultures] S4

### Emerging themes on How Tboli Students View Themselves in the Future.



**Figure 5.** Schematic Diagram on How Tboli Students View Themselves in the Future

Through arduous procedural data analysis and interpretation, three (3) emerging themes were articulated. They were all synthesized from six

(6) formulated clustered themes and seven (7) initial themes. Thus, they are professional expertise; language user; and agent of change.

#### Emerging Theme 1: Professional Expertise

This theme focuses on the description of of Tboli students in Hiligaynon-speaking schools on how they view themselves in the future. The themes were characterized by three (3) clustered

themes; career aspirations; Self-Development of Learning; and dreams and ambition for a better future.

This was formulated by two (2) initial themes; aspiration for professional success; and future goals and dreams.

Evidently, Tboli students view themselves as professional expert in the future as they said:

“...magiging successful na lawyer mam” . [I will be... gonna successful lawyer ma'am. ]S4

<sup>1</sup>Corresponding Author: Bernice Faith Ureta

\*Corresponding Email: [bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph](mailto:bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph)

“maging successful dahil sa mga bagay na natutunan ko...” [I will be successful because of the things I learned....]S1

“...maging successful sa life po”.[‘... being successful in life’. ]S10

uhmm... nakikita ko ang aking sarili o naiisip ko na baka soon magkaroon ako ng magandang trabaho o makamit ko ang aking mga pangarap.” . [Uhhh... I saw myself or I thought that soon I can have a good job or I can reach my dreams because I see all the things I did that will be favorable to me.]S2

## Emerging Theme 2: Linguistic Competence

Additionally, the theme is characterized by one (1) clustered theme; linguistic application. This

was formulated by one (1) initial theme; practical use of language skills in life.

Tboli students view themselves as language competent in the future as they said:

Being ano po nakapagsalita ng Hiligaynon pwede ko po itong magamit sa life ko..” .[Being able to speak Hiligaynon I can use it in my life...”]S10

## Emerging Theme 3: Agent of Change

While, the theme 2 is characterized by two (2) clustered themes; education as a tool for empowerment; and self-empowerment and cultural pride. However, this was formulated by

two (2) initial themes; the importance of education for overcoming stereotypes; encouraging fellow Tboli learners to pursue their dreams.

Tboli students view themselves as agent of change in the future as they said:

Being a Tboli learner kahit Tboli tayo ay dapat makapag tapos tayo ng ating pag-aaral para hindi tayo titingnan na mababa ng ibang Ilonggo and encourage Tboli learner to pursue their dreams come true dahil tayong mga Tboli kaya nating makipag galingan ng kaalaman. . [Being a Tboli learner even if where a Tboli we need to finished our studies for us not to be looked down by the Ilonggo and encourage Tboli learners to pursue their dreams come true because us a Tboli we can keep up in terms of knowledge. ]S8

## Program that supports and enhances the academic success of the Tboli students.

The Indigenous Student Empowerment is a comprehensive program designed to support students’ academic, social, emotional, and cultural development. It integrates cultural identity, language competency, academic assistance, career exploration, and leadership training to create a well-rounded learning experience.

Overall, the activity serves as a transformative experience that nurtures students’ confidence, resilience, and sense of identity while equipping them with the skills necessary for lifelong success.

<sup>1</sup>Corresponding Author: Bernice Faith Ureta

\*Corresponding Email: [bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph](mailto:bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph)

## **The Lifeworld and Context of Tboli Students' Experiences Being in a Hiligaynon-Speaking Public school**

The Lifeworld and Context of Tboli Students' Experiences Being in a Hiligaynon-Speaking Public school were characterized by ten (10) emerging themes. These include cultural and linguistic adaptation, cultural sensitivity and overcoming stereotypes, social connectivity across cultures, and positive interactions fostering cultural and linguistic integrations,

impact of bullying on emotional and social well-being; cultural bridging to overcome linguistics barriers; social skill; boost in confidence and self-esteem; building connections through linguistics adaptation; cultural fluidity and selective assimilation; and cultural assimilations and its impact.

### **Emerging Theme 1: Cultural and Linguistic Adaptation**

Cultural and linguistic adaptation is a crucial process in which learners adjust to the cultural and linguistic expectations of a new environment. This adaptation is essential for effective communication, collaboration, and success in multicultural and multilingual settings. Soroka (2022) emphasized that fostering resilience among students ensures a high level of adaptability as they navigate multicultural environments. Linguistic adaptation, in particular, involves modifying language use to align with community norms, whether by mastering a new language, adopting a different dialect, or adjusting one's manner of speaking.

Cummins (2021) asserted that for Tboli students, learning dominant languages is necessary for effective communication and social acceptance in school. Language adaptation plays a fundamental role in academic success and social integration, enabling students to bridge linguistic gaps and cultivate a sense of belonging. Garcia (2021) further highlighted the importance of social adaptation, noting that students who engage with peers in a shared language build stronger relationships and actively participate in school activities. Their research indicates that language acquisition is closely linked to social identity, and multilingual students often experience increased social acceptance and self-confidence.

### **Emerging Theme 2: Cultural Sensitivity and Overcoming Stereotypes**

The cultural sensitivity experiences of Tboli students stem from both their cultural positioning and the discrimination they encounter in Hiligaynon-speaking schools. Gonzales et al. (2019) highlighted that Indigenous student often face anxiety in academic and social settings due to perceived discrimination and exclusion. This fear underscores the challenges they face in navigating social interactions and linguistic barriers while striving for acceptance in diverse educational environments. The emotional burden of overcoming biases while engaging in peer interactions further amplifies their hesitation and

self-doubt, which is closely tied to their struggles with language.

McCormick et al. (2015) emphasized that linguistic challenges contribute to self-doubt and social apprehension, as language barriers can impact students' confidence and participation. Indigenous students may experience alienation in mainstream educational environments, particularly when their linguistic abilities are questioned. This struggle with language proficiency not only affects their academic success but also their ability to integrate socially, reinforcing their feelings of exclusion and internalized stigma.

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<sup>1</sup>Corresponding Author: Bernice Faith Ureta

\*Corresponding Email: [bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph](mailto:bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph)



The necessity of code-switching as a survival strategy, as Indigenous students frequently adapt to dominant languages to foster connections and avoid conflict. This adaptation, however, is a double-edged sword—it helps them navigate social interactions, yet it also places pressure on them to conform, often at the cost of their cultural identity. The fear of misinterpretation or being negatively labeled adds to the stress of language adaptation, further highlighting the importance of fostering culturally inclusive school environments that validate Indigenous identities and linguistic diversity.

Smith et al. (2021) highlighted those negative experiences of peer victimization, such as exclusion or discrimination, influence students' self-perception and may lead to feelings of anxiety and depression. These psychological effects are compounded by linguistic struggles and the pressure to assimilate, making it essential for schools to implement culturally sensitive approaches and high-quality learning environments. By doing so, Tboli students can be better supported in overcoming both social and linguistic barriers, ultimately enhancing their educational experiences and personal development.

### **Emerging Theme 3: Social Connectivity Across Cultures**

Gonzales et al. (2019) suggested that Indigenous students often feel more comfortable and confident when surrounded by peers from similar cultural backgrounds, as this fosters a sense of belonging and identity affirmation. The experiences of Tboli students in a Hiligaynon-speaking school environment highlight the significance of peer connections and cultural solidarity in navigating social interactions.

However, true social inclusion requires cross-cultural interactions, as exclusively engaging with one's cultural group may limit

opportunities for language development, academic collaboration, and broader social integration.

Fostering cross-cultural dialogue in schools can help Indigenous students overcome stereotypes and form meaningful connections beyond their cultural groups. To achieve this balance, Cummins (2021) suggested that schools should implement inclusive programs that facilitate intercultural peer interactions, ensuring that Indigenous students like the Tboli can develop confidence, challenge stereotypes, and fully integrate into the academic community.

### **Emerging Theme 4: Positive Interactions Fostering Cultural and Linguistic Integration**

Alhazmi and Kaufmann (2022) suggested that peer interactions and immersive environments play a crucial role in second-language acquisition and social inclusion, providing Indigenous students with natural opportunities for language practice and relationship-building. This underscores the importance of social engagement and participation in helping Tboli students adapt to a diverse school environment. The respondent's answer illustrates how active classroom involvement enhances both academic skills and integration into the school community, while long-term exposure to a linguistically

diverse setting fosters bilingualism and cultural adaptation.

Participation in both formal and informal social settings helps students navigate cultural differences, reducing anxiety related to language barriers and fostering a sense of belonging. Similarly, McCormick et al. (2015) highlighted that schools promoting inclusive environments and encouraging cross-cultural interactions enhance students' linguistic and cultural integration, leading to improved academic outcomes and social well-being. By actively engaging in class activities and peer interactions,

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<sup>1</sup>Corresponding Author: Bernice Faith Ureta

\*Corresponding Email: [bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph](mailto:bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph)

Tboli students not only develop linguistic competence but also form meaningful

relationships that contribute to their overall educational success.

### **Emerging Theme 5: Impact of Bullying on Emotional and Social Well-being**

Daungsupawong and Wiwanitkit (2024) highlighted that bullying, which occurs in schools and other educational institutions, has significant and long-term effects on a child's emotional and social development. It can manifest in physical, verbal, relational, and cyber forms, all of which contribute to psychological harm and future adversities. This issue is particularly concerning for Tboli students, who often face social exclusion due to their cultural background. Bullying shapes students' psychological states, affecting their

general temperament and significantly influencing their academic performance and overall well-being.

Sembiante et al. (2020) emphasized that linguistic discrimination reinforces stereotypes, making Indigenous students feel alienated and marginalized. This form of exclusion can lead to emotional distress, low self-esteem, and a diminished sense of belonging among minority students.

### **Emerging Theme 6. Cultural Bridging to Overcome Linguistics Barriers**

Smith et al. (2018) emphasized that cultural mediation involves facilitating interaction between different cultures to encourage shared understanding, negotiation, and the resolution of barriers in communication, teamwork, and social engagement. As globalization and multiculturalism continue to expand, cultural mediation becomes increasingly essential in preventing misunderstandings, stereotypes, and exclusion. One effective strategy in this process is creating spaces where students can express their thoughts and opinions in their native dialect, fostering a supportive system that enhances social-emotional learning within humanities education. Beneficial intercultural contact strengthens students' identification with their demographic groups while encouraging cultural exchange through shared activities, values, and experiences crucial for their growth as engaged citizens.

The experiences of Tboli students in Hiligaynon-speaking schools reflect their awareness of linguistic differences and their proactive efforts to bridge the gap. As they strive to acquire Hiligaynon, they engage in linguistic adaptation, a key factor in promoting social inclusion and reducing communication barriers. Their determination to learn the dominant language not only enhances their communication skills but also fosters stronger connections with their peers. Furuta et al. (2015) emphasized that beyond language acquisition, cultural adaptation, and awareness are essential in ensuring that Indigenous students feel valued and included within their educational environment.

### **Emerging Theme 7: Social Skill and Building Connections through Linguistics Adaptations**

Social skills, defined as the ability to establish fellowship and a sense of belonging in school, are essential for building meaningful relationships. These skills encompass communication, trust-building, and the exchange

of personal experiences, emotions, and concerns across different relational contexts—whether with family, peers, or broader social networks. This aligns with Vygotsky's (1962) socio-cognitive theory, which emphasizes that

<sup>1</sup>Corresponding Author: Bernice Faith Ureta

\*Corresponding Email: [bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph](mailto:bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph)

human development is fundamentally a social process. Children learn and internalize cultural norms, ways of thinking, and problem-solving strategies through interactions with more knowledgeable individuals. Through such interactions, learners construct knowledge by analyzing, visualizing, and storing information in mental schemas.

In the context of Hiligaynon-speaking schools, Tboli students face the dual challenge of academic engagement and cultural adjustment. Their emotional and academic stability is intricately tied to how well they adapt both socially and linguistically. Social integration fosters optimism, confidence, and resilience—qualities that contribute to successful learning and active classroom participation. When students feel connected and culturally affirmed, they are more likely to accept academic goals and perform better. This

notion is supported by Seligman et al.'s (2015) positive psychology theory, which posits that happiness and achievement stem from cultivating positive emotions, strong relationships, and an optimistic outlook. Tisza (2021) adds that the element of fun in learning plays a critical role in boosting students' motivation and educational outcomes.

Language, as Ricklefs (2021) explains, serves both as a means of inclusion and differentiation. For Tboli students, developing proficiency in Hiligaynon goes beyond communication—it becomes a bridge for forming friendships, avoiding social isolation, and expressing their cultural identity. Li and Croucher (2020) further highlight that linguistic adaptation is not merely about conforming to the dominant language but also about using language to share one's own culture, thereby fostering mutual respect and understanding within the school community.

### **Emerging Theme 8: Boost Confidence and Self-Esteem**

Ryan and Deci (2020) emphasized that self-determination and intrinsic motivation are key contributors to a student's confidence, particularly in unfamiliar linguistic and cultural environments. As Tboli students in Hiligaynon-speaking schools gradually adapt, they experience a transformation in their self-perception, gaining confidence in both academic and social settings. This increased self-confidence enables them to participate more actively in class discussions, articulate their thoughts without fear of judgment, and engage in group activities with greater ease.

Schwager et al. (2019) highlighted that social integration and positive peer interactions further enhance students' self-esteem by fostering a sense of belonging and acceptance. As Tboli students develop proficiency in Hiligaynon, they also build resilience and adaptability—qualities that are essential for their academic success and personal. These experiences illustrate that the development of self-confidence and self-esteem is an ongoing process influenced by personal effort, supportive learning environments, and meaningful social connections.

### **Emerging Theme 9: Cultural Fluidity and Selective Assimilation**

Grover (2017) introduced the concept of selective assimilation, describing how individuals adopt aspects of a dominant culture while preserving valuable attributes of their original culture. This process enables immigrant and minority groups to integrate into a broader society without entirely abandoning their cultural heritage. They argue that this selective

approach to cultural adaptation enhances a sense of agency, as it allows individuals to navigate new cultural expectations while maintaining core components of their self-identity.

Sembiante et al. (2020) highlighted the role of translanguaging in the cultural and linguistic adaptation of multilingual learners, enabling

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<sup>1</sup>Corresponding Author: Bernice Faith Ureta

\*Corresponding Email: [bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph](mailto:bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph)

them to strategically employ different languages based on context. This aligns with the experiences of Tboli students in Hiligaynon-speaking schools, who engage in cultural fluidity and selective assimilation by integrating new linguistic and cultural elements while retaining aspects of their indigenous identity. Language learning is deeply connected to identity construction, as students adopt

linguistic behaviors that reflect their evolving social identities while staying rooted in their cultural traditions. Khrais (2020) emphasized that cultural assimilation through imitation allows students to blend into new social environments while still preserving their indigenous identity, reinforcing the concept of cultural hybridity.

### **Emerging Theme 10: Cultural Assimilation and Its Impact**

Grover (2017) described cultural assimilation as a process in which an inferior culture is replaced by a dominant one, offering advantages such as social acceptance, economic mobility, and access to resources. While assimilation can provide individuals with equal opportunities in education, employment, and social relations, it often comes at a significant cultural cost. Innovation also plays a key role in integration, as individuals who embrace the dominant culture are more likely to be accepted by society.

such as the Tboli, to surrender their cultural identity to the hegemonic culture. This dynamic perpetuates systemic inequalities, erases cultural differences, and isolates indigenous knowledge.

The integration should be approached alongside cultural preservation, allowing communities to retain their traditions while adapting to the broader society. This balance fosters mutual respect for multicultural diversity and prevents cultural erasure.

However, Uhlich et al. (2021) highlighted the negative consequences of assimilation, particularly for marginalized groups. The loss of cultural heritage, belief systems, and language can lead to feelings of alienation and cultural confusion. The pressure to conform often forces individuals from less powerful communities,

Karacsony et al. (2022) emphasized the importance of social strategies in promoting positive cultural adjustment. In Hiligaynon-speaking schools, Tboli students develop pro-social behaviors to cope with academic, interpersonal, and cultural challenges.

### **Tboli Students' View of Their Self in the Future**

Tboli students' views of their future selves are shaped by a blend of their cultural heritage and the opportunities presented in Hiligaynon-speaking schools. These students envision a future where they can balance their Indigenous identity with the skills and knowledge gained through formal education. Their aspirations often reflect a desire for

personal success, social integration, and the preservation of their cultural traditions, emphasizing the importance of self-confidence and cultural pride in achieving future goals. It was characterized by three (3) emerging themes: these include professional expertise, language competence, and agent of change.

### **Emerging Theme 1: Professional Expertise**

Page et al. (2016) highlighted that career aspirations play a crucial role in motivating students, as those with clear professional goals

are more likely to persist in their academic pursuits and overcome obstacles. The desire of Tboli students to excel in various fields

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<sup>1</sup>Corresponding Author: Bernice Faith Ureta

\*Corresponding Email: [bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph](mailto:bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph)

demonstrates their strong commitment to education and self-improvement. Muthanna (2024) emphasized that self-development through learning is fundamental in this journey, as education provides students with the necessary skills and knowledge to achieve their ambitions. Additionally, future-oriented thinking fosters resilience and perseverance, particularly among Indigenous students facing cultural and linguistic challenges.

Karacsony et al. (2022) highlighted the resilience of students as they adapt to new

learning environments, a concept that aligns with the experiences of Tboli students adjusting to a Hiligaynon-speaking school. This adaptation not only strengthens their language proficiency but also supports their cultural assimilation into the broader community. Similarly, Anyichie and Butler (2023), as cited by Gay (2018), emphasize that students achieve greater success when they develop an appreciation for diverse cultures within their classrooms.

### **Emerging Theme 2: Linguistic Competence**

Linguistic competence is another theme that emerges in the context of Tboli students' experiences in Hiligaynon-speaking schools. This describes the scope of competence with which a person can utilize a language fluently in multiple scenarios, showing comprehension as well as parental skills in speaking, reading as well as writing. A linguistically competent person is one who not only knows the rules of the language (grammar, syntax, vocabulary) but also applies them appropriately according to the situation. Tboli students were able to understand, speak, read, and write in Hiligaynon, allowing them to communicate across a range of contexts throughout their Hiligaynon-speaking school context.

This is in line with (Zhang et al., 2015) as cited by Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which

characterizes language learning as a socially mediated process, with learners gaining linguistic competence through the interaction with more competent speakers. Tboli students develop Hiligaynon competence through social interaction with peers and teachers, and through immersion in the classroom environment where Hiligaynon is the language of instruction.

Additionally, Sembiente et al. (2020) highlighted that multilingualism enhances cognitive flexibility and adaptability, which are crucial for navigating diverse linguistic and cultural environments. Moreover, Indigenous students who acquire additional languages while maintaining their native language experience a strengthened sense of identity and confidence.

### **Emerging Theme 3: Agent of Change**

Bandura (2000) highlighted that individuals who perceive themselves as agents of change actively shape their future and influence their communities. Tboli students view themselves as change makers, recognizing their capacity to drive transformation within their society. This self-perception is instrumental in shaping their goals, motivations, and perseverance, especially in overcoming adversity.

In their pursuit of academic success and personal growth, Tboli students inspire their peers by taking on leadership roles in school and community initiatives. By setting positive examples for younger generations, they reinforce a culture of ambition and resilience within their community. Education is a powerful tool for breaking stereotypes and challenging misconceptions about Indigenous communities,

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<sup>1</sup>Corresponding Author: Bernice Faith Ureta

\*Corresponding Email: [bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph](mailto:bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph)

as access to quality education enhances self-confidence and social mobility among marginalized groups.

academic and leadership skills contribute to societal change by advocating for their communities and promoting cultural resilience.

Furthermore, Kwapisz et al. (2021) asserted that Indigenous students who cultivate strong

### **Program that supports and enhances the academic success of the Tboli students.**

The Indigenous Student Empowerment is a comprehensive program designed to support students' academic, social, emotional, and cultural development. It integrates cultural identity, language competency, academic assistance, career exploration, and leadership training to create a well-rounded learning experience.

Similarly, the Academic Support Session plays a key role in enhancing academic performance by providing structured tutoring and study skills instruction, fostering independent learning. The Lunch and Cultural Sharing session further reinforces this sense of community by using communal meals and storytelling to enhance cultural identity, empathy, and social connections among students.

Galla (2019) emphasized that engaging in traditional arts strengthens Indigenous values and fosters a sense of belonging, making the Cultural Enrichment Workshop a vital opportunity for students to connect with their heritage. Additionally, storytelling plays a crucial role in preserving cultural knowledge, ensuring that traditions are passed down to younger generations. In the Bilingual Language Workshop, Ameer Bakhsh (2016) asserted that game-based learning significantly enhances vocabulary retention and motivation, as interactive activities encourage active participation. Furthermore, language games make learning more enjoyable while improving word recall. Stobbe et al. (2023) suggested that structured social breaks, like those in the Break and Socializing session, improve students' emotional intelligence, teamwork, and academic engagement, which are essential for both personal and academic growth.

Moreover, Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) activities strengthen self-awareness, resilience, and peer relationships, which contribute to improved mental health and academic success. By fostering a sense of belonging, SEL sessions help reduce feelings of isolation among students, ensuring a supportive educational atmosphere. The Career Exploration and Leadership session further builds on this by exposing students to relatable professionals, increasing their motivation and career aspirations.

Finally, the Reflection and Closing Ceremony serves as a moment of consolidation, enhancing self-awareness, goal-setting, and critical thinking. By participating in this comprehensive program, students not only develop cultural pride but also gain academic support, leadership skills, and social connections.

### **Implications**

The implications of this study on Tboli students' lived experiences in Hiligaynon-speaking public school highlights the importance of integrative educational practices and systemic policy changes to address linguistic and cultural marginalization. Schools must implement culturally responsive teaching methods and multilingual education to ensure Indigenous students feel included while preserving their cultural identity. Incorporating Indigenous perspectives into the curriculum fosters cultural pride, belonging, and academic engagement.

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<sup>1</sup>Corresponding Author: Bernice Faith Ureta

\*Corresponding Email: [bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph](mailto:bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph)



Additionally, policies addressing bullying, discrimination, and emotional well-being are essential to create a safe and supportive environment for Indigenous learners. Educators should also facilitate activities that encourage interaction and socialization between Tboli and Ilonggo students, fostering mutual understanding and cultural exchange. Professional development programs should equip teachers with the skills needed to accommodate diverse learning backgrounds and cultural sensitivities effectively. The Indigenous Student Empowerment program provides holistic support to Indigenous learners by integrating academic, cultural, and social-emotional interventions. Language workshops enhance bilingual proficiency, allowing students to navigate both their native language and the dominant school language with confidence. Academic tutoring and social-emotional learning (SEL) programs ensure students receive continuous support for their intellectual and emotional development.

Furthermore, expanding community and family involvement fosters a collaborative network of support, reinforcing students' sense of identity and motivation. Career development initiatives, such as mentorships and internships, equip Indigenous students with the skills and aspirations needed for higher education and professional success. Beyond the school setting, government agencies and policymakers must invest in initiatives that preserve cultural heritage, support Indigenous education, and promote social equity. Policies should encourage linguistic and cultural integration while actively combating prejudices and discrimination.

Additionally, community organizations play a key role in fostering cultural interaction, awareness, and advocacy by implementing programs that celebrate and sustain Indigenous traditions. These institutions can strengthen anti-discrimination efforts and promote cross-cultural dialogue to create a more inclusive society where Indigenous voices are valued and respected.

Media and the broader community also play a vital role in empowering Indigenous students and preserving cultural heritage. Through storytelling and increased Indigenous representation, media can combat stereotypes, amplify Indigenous voices, and promote cultural diversity. Meanwhile, local communities can actively support Indigenous students by engaging in cultural programs and initiatives that foster cross-cultural understanding and social transformation. Collectively, these efforts create a more equitable educational landscape, ensuring that Indigenous students thrive both academically and culturally while fostering mutual respect and social harmony.

## Conclusion

The study revealed that Tboli students in a Hiligaynon-speaking public school face significant social, cultural, and linguistic challenges. Despite these, they actively adapt through peer support, cultural sensitivity, and resilience, creating a sense of belonging while preserving their identity.

Social interaction plays a vital role in their adjustment. While many Tboli students tend to remain within their peer groups for comfort and support, this limits broader integration. This behavior, though protective, highlights the need for intentional efforts to promote cross-cultural interactions.

The findings also point to a potential drawback in overly segmented cultural strategies under DepEd's COT Indicator 8. While well-intentioned, such approaches may unintentionally isolate indigenous learners. A more balanced strategy is needed—one that fosters both cultural pride and inclusive engagement.

Furthermore, the Tboli students demonstrate a strong sense of purpose and envision themselves as future change-makers. Empowerment programs that combine cultural education with academic support and leadership development are crucial. These initiatives not only enhance self-esteem and resilience but also prepare

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<sup>1</sup>Corresponding Author: Bernice Faith Ureta

\*Corresponding Email: [bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph](mailto:bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph)

students for meaningful participation in a diverse society.

Ultimately, the study underscores the importance of inclusive education that nurtures identity while promoting social cohesion—essential for the holistic success of Indigenous learners.

## Limitations of the Study

This study offers valuable insights into the lived experiences of Tboli students in a Hiligaynon-speaking public school; however, it is not without limitations. One significant constraint is the small sample size, which may not fully capture the diversity of experiences among Tboli students in other contexts. Additionally, the research is geographically limited to Talisay Integrated School in Lake Sebu, South Cotabato, and therefore its findings may not be generalizable to other schools or regions with different sociocultural and

linguistic dynamics. The use of Hiligaynon and Filipino as the primary languages for interviews and data collection may also have introduced language bias. Furthermore, the phenomenological nature of the study highlights individual, subjective experiences that, while rich in detail, may not be easily generalized or quantified. Despite these limitations, the study remains a meaningful contribution to understanding the educational experiences of Indigenous learners in linguistically diverse settings.

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The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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<sup>1</sup>Corresponding Author: Bernice Faith Ureta

\*Corresponding Email: [bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph](mailto:bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph)

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<sup>1</sup>Corresponding Author: Bernice Faith Ureta

\*Corresponding Email: [bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph](mailto:bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph)

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<sup>1</sup>Corresponding Author: Bernice Faith Ureta

\*Corresponding Email: [bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph](mailto:bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph)

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<sup>1</sup>Corresponding Author: Bernice Faith Ureta

\*Corresponding Email: [bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph](mailto:bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph)



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<sup>1</sup>Corresponding Author: Bernice Faith Ureta

\*Corresponding Email: [bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph](mailto:bernicefaithureta@sksu.edu.ph)