

INTERNAL CONTRIBUTORY FACTORS OF THE NEW NORMAL LEARNING MODALITIES' STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES IN DEVELOPING MACRO SKILLS OF GRADE 8 STUDENTS

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Abstract

Background: The two distance learning modalities- online and modular, differ in terms of how learning is made to happen without face-to-face interaction. In Online Distance Learning (ODL), teaching and learning take place through video calls by using online platforms such as Google Meet and Zoom. The researchers decided to conduct the study with the hopes of helping the schools, especially teachers, to improve the development of macro skills among students by providing appropriate activities aligned with their learning styles and preferences without compromising the standards and competencies set upon by DepEd and MELCs.

Methods: As quantitative research, it used survey questionnaires and interviews as data-gathering tools to assess, describe and differentiate the impacts of new normal learning modalities on developing macro skills. Using concurrent nested design, data gathered using descriptive-comparative survey method used was embedded to supplement the data gathered from multivariate analysis as the quantitative procedure.

Result: In terms of competency development, reading and writing skills are mostly developed regardless of the learning modality. Students in Modular Distance Learning, on the other hand, are not as developed in speaking and listening because their primary source of learning was through answering activities in their modules, with no learning interaction or engagement.

Conclusion: Many students under MDL find the learning experience in such modality as non-helpful when it comes to developing their macro skills.

Keywords: Learning Modality, Macro Skills, Online Distance Learning, Modular Distance Learning.

Background

In the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) adopted a Basic Education Learning Community Plan (BE-LCP) as an adaptive measure taken for the new normal education. There were 2 main adjustments introduced in BE-LCP: 1. learning competencies under DepEd were reduced to 60% to focus on the most essential ones and 2. schools' adoption of new learning modalities: distance learning (modular, online or tv/radio-based), blended learning, and homeschooling (DepEd Order No. 012, 2020). With the adoption of learning modalities, both teachers and students were affected. In such a short period of time, all needed to upskill and reskill, especially on how to learn and teach in such a setup were conducted.

Because of the continuous increase in the number of COVID-19 cases in the country, the majority of schools continue to choose distance learning among all the other learning modalities available, specifically, online and modular. And with such learning modalities, it is no secret that interaction and communication between and among students as well as with their teachers have decreased. According to Hossain (2015), interaction and communication play a vital role in the development of language macro skills, especially on the productive skills, namely, writing and speaking. As stated by Nan (2018), the 4 skills are interrelated.

The two distance learning modalities- online and modular, differ in terms of how learning is made to happen without face-to-face interaction. In Online Distance Learning (ODL), teaching and learning take place through video calls by using online platforms such as Google Meet and Zoom. On the other hand, Modular Distance Learning (MDL) emphasizes independent learning because learning takes place by answering either printed or digitized modules.

Given the above-mentioned situation and problem, the researchers aim to look deeper into how ODL and MDL impact the development of macro skills among students by identifying both internal and external factors that lead to the fulfillment and non-

fulfillment of the standards and competencies on macro skills set by the Department of Education.

The researchers decided to conduct the study with the hopes of helping the schools, especially teachers, to improve the development of macro skills among students by providing appropriate activities aligned with their learning styles and preferences without compromising the standards and competencies set upon by DepEd and MELCs. This study will also help teachers and parents to provide right scaffolding for the learners especially given the new learning modalities by providing recommendations and suggestions based on their research findings.

Methods

Research Design

This study aimed to ascertain the impacts of new normal learning modalities on developing macro skills among the grade 8 students of Calasiao Comprehensive National High School S.Y. 2020-2021. As quantitative research, it used survey questionnaires and interviews as data-gathering tools to assess, describe and differentiate the impacts of new normal learning modalities on developing macro skills. Using concurrent nested design, data gathered using descriptive-comparative survey method used was embedded to supplement the data gathered from multivariate analysis as the quantitative procedure. Both descriptive and experimental methods were used in the research study.

Respondents of the Study

In selecting the respondents for the study, the researchers applied multistage sampling, wherein they employed two sampling methods. The researchers first applied a purposive sampling method in choosing the school and the grade level. Calasiao Comprehensive National High School as the school selected for the study was chosen for aside from it being the largest school within the locale of the researchers, it also offers more than one distance learning modality. For the grade level (Grade 8 - S.Y. 2020-2021), such was chosen because they are the batch who experienced at least one (1) school year each for face-to-face and distance learning. Second, the researchers employed convenience sampling because of the time-frame allotted for the accomplishment of the study. Students and teachers who were readily available served as the respondents of the study.

In selecting the target number of respondents, the researchers made sure that the number of teacher and student-respondents under each learning modality is equal in order to assure the accuracy of treatment and analysis of data. Due to the limited time allotted for the accomplishment of the study, the set minimum requirement of twenty-five (25) respondents served as the basis of the researchers to

decide on selecting (1) teacher-respondent and twelve (12) student-respondents under each learning modality to have a total of twenty-six (26) respondents.

Instruments of the Study

Teacher-respondents under each learning modality were made to answer a survey questionnaire regarding students' achievement of competencies set for each macro skill.

Student-respondents under each learning modality were made to answer a survey questionnaire wherein they will be assessing themselves with regards to their level of achievement of the competencies set for each macro skill.

Data Gathering Procedure

Seeking Permission to conduct the study. The researchers' first task was to ask permission from the school head of Calasiao Comprehensive National High School to allow them to conduct data-gathering procedures online.

Preparation of the Research Instruments. The researchers based the research instruments on the competencies stated in the MELCs and narrowed them down based on the skills they cover. The research adviser checked and validated the survey questionnaires and questions after they were created.

Data Processing Method

This study's data processing method took eight days. The researchers began by contacting the teachers whose names had been supplied by the English Department head. The researchers scheduled and conducted a separate Google meeting with the teachers after contacting them. In addition to the interview, it was ensured that the teachers completed the survey questionnaires.

Following the completion of data collection among teacher-respondents, the researchers requested a copy of the class list containing the names of the grade 8 students they had worked with the previous school year. For their convenience, the researchers were added to their former class messenger group chats. Before collecting data from student respondents, it was ensured that the students had no classes during that time period. To begin with the data-gathering, instructions and the link to the survey questionnaire were sent to the class messenger group chats. After five days, the survey questionnaire was able to receive twelve (12) responses for each learning modality. Lastly, data were then recorded and prepared for data analysis.

Results

Students' Profile	Learning Modalities			
	ODL		MDL	
	f	%	f	%
I. Age				
a. 11-15	12	100%	9	75%
b. 16-20	0	0.00%	3	25%
II. Parent's Employment Status				
a. Both Parents are Employed	7	58.33%	3	25%
b. Only One Parent is Employed	5	41.67%	5	41.67%
c. Both Parents are Unemployed	0	0.00%	4	33.33%
III. Number of Family Members				
a. 1-5	8	66.67%	7	58.33%
b. 6-10	3	25%	5	41.67%
c. 11-15	1	8.33%	0	0.00%
IV. Available Learning Resources at Home				
a. Cellphone/ Tablet	11	91.67%	11	91.67%
b. Laptop/Desktop	12	100%	2	16.67%
c. Books/Journals	4	33.33%	1	8.33%

Table 1: Profile of Student-Respondents

In terms of age, 12 or 100% of ODL student-respondents are between the ages of 11 and 15. On the other hand, 9 or 75% of MDL student-respondents are between the ages of 11 and 15, and 3 or 25% are between the ages of 16 and 20. The employment status of ODL students' parents, 7 or 58.33% said both of their parents' work, while 5 or 41.67% said only one of their parents' works. However, 3 or 25% of MDL students reported that both of their parents are employed, 5 or 41.67% reported that only one of their parents is employed, and 4 or 33.33% reported that neither of their parents is employed. The total number of family members have 8 or 66.67% of ODL students' families are made up of 1-5 members, 3 or 25% are made up of 6-10 members, and 1 or 8.33% are made up of 11-15 members. In contrast, 7 or 58.33% of MDL students belong to a family of 1-5 members, while 5 or 41.67% belong to a family of 6-10 members. Finally, the educational resources available in ODL students' homes, 11 or 91.67% have either or both cellphone/tablet, 12 or 100% have either or both laptop/desktop, and 4 or 33.33% have either or both books/journals. On the other hand, 11 or 91.67% of MDL students own one or both cellphones/tablets, 2 or 16.67% own one or both laptops/desktops, and 1 or 8.33% own one or both books/journals.

Learning Modalities	Age	Highest Educational Attainment	Years in Teaching	Available Teaching Resources at Home	
				Cellphone/ Tablet	Laptop/Desktop
ODL	34	Doctorate Degree	14	Both	Both
MDL	25	Master's Degree	5	Cellphone Only	Desktop only

Table 2: Profile of Teacher-Respondents

The ODL teacher-age respondent's is 34 years old. The MDL teacher-respondent, on the other hand, is 25 years old. The highest educational attainment of the teacher-respondents is a doctorate degree, while the MDL teacher has a master's degree. In terms of teaching experience, the ODL teacher has already taught for 14 years, while the MDL teacher has only been teaching for 5 years. Finally, the ODL teacher has a cellphone, a tablet, a laptop, and a desktop computer at her disposal for teaching purposes. On the other hand, the MDL teacher only has a cellphone and a desktop computer at home.

Data Gathered on the Internal Contributory Factors

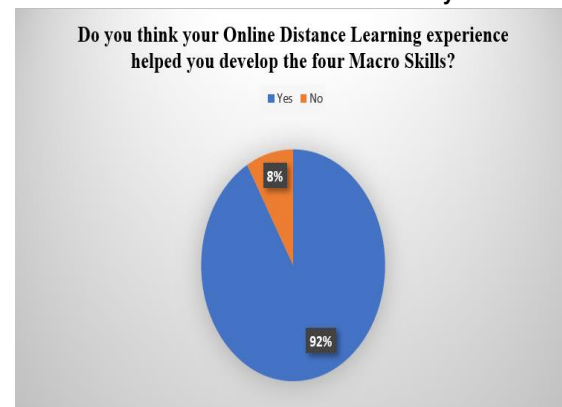


Figure 1: Perceived Efficacy of Online Distance Learning among ODL Students

According to the data collected, 11 or 92% of ODL students stated that their learning modality aided them in developing their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, while 1 or 8% stated that ODL was ineffective.

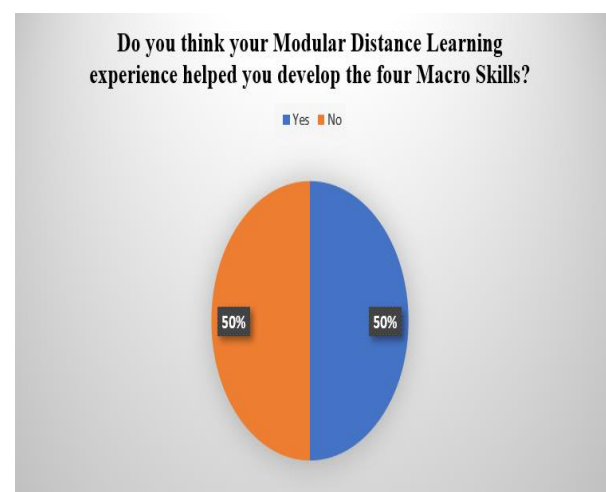


Figure 2: Perceived Efficacy of Modular Distance Learning among MDL Students

Figure 2 depicts MDL students' perceptions of the efficacy of Modular Distance Learning in developing their listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. It was discovered that 6 or 50% of the

students believe MDL is effective in developing their four macro skills, while the other half do not.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Online Distance Learning Modality

A. Strengths according to the ODL teacher and student-respondents

a. ODL resulted to development of technological literacy

Teachers made some adjustments to ensure that education was still delivered, resulting in new learning opportunities, because the new learning modality restricted the conduct of some activities that were easily executed in face-to-face classes.

Students and teachers learned how to use technological advancements like virtual classrooms like Gclassroom and Google Meet to conduct classes. Teachers also used Google Docs to conduct live collaborative work for their students. Students also learned how to use Google Drive, which served as a platform for them to compile some of their tasks. Kahoot! To make learning more interactive, Nearpod and Flipgrid were also used. Google forms were used to conduct assessments for both objective and subjective questions, allowing for easier checking and recording because Google forms provided automatic ratings for objective types of tests.

The development of technological literacy, as well as the use and exploration of the aforementioned applications and websites, were deemed less possible in the traditional learning mode.

b. High learner-engagement

Learners were highly engaged because they were captivated by the fact that, as members of Generation Z, technology was their strength. As a result, incorporating technology into learning made them more motivated because they were learning in the context of their world:

"They were having fun discovering a lot of technological applications..." a quote from the interview with the teacher-respondent. Aside from the incorporation of technology, lessons and activities were presented in a variety of formats that catered to the students' diversity while meeting their various learning needs.

Virtual classes helped students overcome their communication struggles. Online classes assisted shy students in overcoming their anxiety by allowing them to virtually communicate their ideas to others. Students reported that virtual classes were less stressful than face-to-face classes.

B. Weakness according to the ODL teacher and student-respondents

a. Unstable Internet connection hindered smooth lesson delivery

Everyone in the ideal ODL class has a strong and stable Internet connection, which was not always the case. Due to internet connection issues, technical difficulties and glitches arose, making lesson delivery less smooth. Due to poor connection, students frequently turned off their cameras during Google Meetings. As a result, teachers were unable to effectively monitor their students. Recitations as a class were also not possible due to students' varying Internet connection strengths.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Modular Distance Learning Modality

A. Strengths according to the MDL teacher and student-respondents

a. MDL is flexible.

MDL promoted self-directed learning, in which students learned at their own pace and completed their modules when it was most convenient for them. Because MDL was self-directed, students felt less pressure, which caused them to be more focused on their learning because there was no competition.

B. Weaknesses according to the MDL teacher and student-respondents

a. Students learned and were assessed through their modules alone.

Teachers were unable to properly assess some macro skills, particularly listening and speaking, because only reading and writing skills were used in answering their modules. MDL students claimed that the lack of teacher-student interaction had a significant impact on them and that they wished to have a teacher as their guide even though the modules provided to them were designed for self-directed learning.

ODL Skills

Advantages	Disadvantages
• Promotes retention • Presence of a more knowledgeable other (MKO) • Development of higher order thinking skills (HOTS)	• No disadvantages were mentioned

Table 3: Advantages and Disadvantages of ODL in Listening Skills

The table 3 above shows that ODL has no disadvantages in developing the listening skills of students. ODL was advantageous because it promoted higher retention (especially to those auditory learners). The presence of the teacher who served as MKO was also beneficial because the students were properly guided throughout their learning experience. The interaction between

teachers and students during virtual class sessions paved the way for teachers to ask students questions, resulting in the development of students' higher order thinking skills (students perceived this as "a good brain exercise"). Because students could raise clarifications/questions during sessions and receive immediate responses, teachers were able to assess and keep track of their students' learning- whether they understood the concepts or not.

Advantages	Disadvantages
• Boosts self-confidence • Improves fluency and accuracy	• Students' limited participation • Poor Internet connection

Table 4: Advantages and Disadvantages of ODL in Speaking Skills

According to Table 4, ODL increases students' self-confidence for virtual classes that are deemed to put less pressure on students, so students feel more comfortable communicating their ideas with the given modality. Furthermore, the development of their self-confidence paved the way for the development of their collaborative and leadership skills.

ODL has improved students' speaking fluency and accuracy. They were able to practice these two areas in their virtual class discussions by adapting to the speaking techniques of their classmates and teachers.

Students' limited participation imposed some constraints on both teachers and students. Students were too shy to volunteer and refused to open their cameras and microphones during sessions, resulting in "dead airs" in the class. As a result, teachers couldn't tell if their students were still present and had to call them one by one.

Poor Internet connection also contributed to this factor because the primary reasons students turned off their cameras were to have a faster connection and to save data. Because of their poor connectivity, students appeared to be lip syncing and buffering every time they recited. These flaws made it difficult for teachers to properly assess their students' speaking abilities.

Advantages	Disadvantages
• Teacher's competence • Enriches vocabulary	• Students' attitude towards reading • Health-related issues

Table 5: Advantages and Disadvantages of ODL in Reading Skills

According to Table 5, the teacher's competence aided students in developing their reading skills. Teachers exposed students to a variety of online reading materials and provided them with a variety of activities in which they could practice and discover different reading techniques as well as broaden their vocabulary.

Some students, on the other hand, consider reading to be time consuming. Because of their short attention span, they saw reading as a chore. Furthermore, because the materials were mostly softcopies, students' eyes became irritated after prolonged exposure to their devices.

Advantages	Disadvantages
• Refreshes students to the old lessons • Use of Internet • Variety of writing activities	• MELCs' standards and competencies • Instant grammatical corrections • Limited time

Table 6: Advantages and Disadvantages of ODL in Writing Skills

Table 6 shows that the benefits and drawbacks of ODL in writing skills were somewhat similar, as they presented the positives and drawbacks of each point.

The MELCs' standards and competencies assumed that students were competent in writing, had mastered grammatical rules, and knew how to use correct punctuation marks, which was not the case. Because MELCs did not cover grammar awareness, teachers would make an extra effort to incorporate it into their lessons. Teachers see this as a benefit because students were given the opportunity to review the fundamentals. The Internet's presence was both an advantage and a disadvantage. Students could use it to search for words and translations online, but it also limited their options because they became dependent on these advancements because other writing platforms, such as Microsoft Word and Google Docs, offer instant corrections. Furthermore, because they rely on technology, students are unable to independently execute their writing skills.

Even the variety of writing activities was beneficial and detrimental. The benefits were that it exposed students to different types of texts, but the disadvantage was that students were bombarded with a lot of activities to complete in a limited amount of time.

MDL Skills

Advantages	Disadvantages
No advantages were mentioned	MDL only tap reading and writing skills

Table 7: Advantages and Disadvantages of MDL in Listening and Speaking Skills

Table 7 shows that MDL only focused on reading and writing skills. Teachers stated that because there were no activities in the module involving listening and speaking, they did not have enough data to assess students in these areas. Students only got to practice their listening and speaking skills when their parents guided them through answering their modules.

Advantages	Disadvantages
- Widens vocabulary - Teaches time management	- Insufficient and unclear content - No-little reading intervention - Lack of teacher-student communication

Table 8: Advantages and Disadvantages of MDL in Reading Skills

Because students were given a lot of printed materials to read, MDL broadened their vocabulary. Because of the volume of reading materials distributed to MDL students, students learned to better manage their time in order to complete tasks on time.

Modules did not provide students with enough content. Some instructions were unclear, and some materials were printed poorly, making it difficult for students to read. Some students were poor readers, but given the modality, no-limit reading interventions were implemented (mostly, interventions only come from parents as they were the only ones to serve as the MKOs at home). There were Messenger group chats for students enrolled in MDL, but students had a hard time asking questions and having consultations with their teacher since most students don't have access to the Internet and some don't have mobile phones.

Advantages	Disadvantages
- Penmanship improvement - Variety of writing activities	- Repetitive module content - Poor foundations in writing - Cheating - Insufficient writing materials

Table 9: Advantages and Disadvantages of MDL in Writing Skills

The table 9 shows that MDL has a lot of writing activities and the writing activities helped students improve their writing penmanship. It was also revealed that modules' contents were repetitive and some of its activities were inappropriate for the learners' needs. Also, students were lacking foundations in writing skills especially in grammar usage and spelling as reflected in their modules' answers. Teachers also traced some cheatings especially to students who live in the same neighborhood- they had the exact answers in subjective parts of the modules. Some parents even answered the modules for their children themselves. MDL students also lacked writing materials such as pens and papers (students weren't allowed to answer nor write anything on their modules).

Conclusion

Based on the age ranges of the student-respondents, more MDL students are older which implies the possibility that some of them may have been dropouts, repeaters, or have had failing grades, etc. Socioeconomic backgrounds and availability of resources highly affect students' learning modality of choice. Teachers' experience and engagement on continuous professional development highly contributes to their competencies and skills as teachers.

Many students under MDL find the learning experience in such modality as non-helpful when it comes to developing their macro skills. Online Distance Learning is perceived to be distinctively more effective in developing the four macro skills because of the student-teacher interaction it provides. ODL on the development of macro skills opened doors to learning other skills, and provided a motivating and less pressured atmosphere for both teachers and students. Unstable internet connection affects the smoothness of class discussions, thus affecting the listening and speaking skills development experience. The flexible nature of MDL enabled learners to learn and develop the macro skills at their own pace. Lack of student-teacher interaction in MDL has led to poor development of listening and speaking skills among the students. The content and quality of learning materials in MDL is also seen as a weakness. MELCs presume that all students have already mastered the basic foundation of writing. Majority of students prefer to be enrolled in ODL if resources were not an issue.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare there are no significant competing financial, professional, or personal interests that might have influenced the performance or presentation of the work described in this manuscript.

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