



The Importance of Integrating English as a Second Language (ESL) in the Classroom Settings: Applying a Hermeneutical Approach to Language Learning in the Filipino Context

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Abstract

This study explores the importance of integrating English as a Second Language (ESL) in classroom settings through the application of a hermeneutical approach to language learning within the Filipino context. Grounded in interpretive philosophy, the study draws on the ideas of Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Paul Ricoeur to reconceptualize ESL instruction as a process of meaning-making rather than mere linguistic acquisition. In the Philippines, where English functions as both a medium of instruction and a second language, learners often encounter challenges in interpreting language beyond grammatical and structural competence. This study argues that a hermeneutical approach can enhance learners' interpretive skills by situating language within their lived experiences, cultural background, and social realities. The research employs a qualitative and philosophical method, particularly textual and conceptual analysis, to examine how hermeneutics can be integrated into ESL pedagogy. Heidegger's concept of Being-in-the-world emphasizes contextualized understanding, Gadamer's "fusion of horizons" highlights dialogical engagement in learning, and Ricoeur's narrative theory underscores identity formation through language interpretation. Together, these frameworks suggest that ESL learning becomes more meaningful when learners actively engage in interpretation, reflection, and dialogue. Thus, the study concludes that a hermeneutical ESL approach provides a more holistic and context-sensitive framework for improving language education in the Philippines.

1. INTRODUCTION

In contemporary times, the English language is the Second Language of the Filipino, and this language has become the most prominent spoken dialect among the early Filipinos (Cabigon, 2015). This language interprets the unique value of a person in society because they will be known by their actions, and they act accordingly. This language also plays a significant role in expressing and interpreting the values of individuals within society (Bernardo, 2004). Through communication, people are able to convey their thoughts, beliefs, and actions, which in turn reflect their character and social identity. In this sense, language becomes more than a tool for interaction; it becomes a medium through which individuals are understood and evaluated within their social context. Moreover, the use of English in the Philippines contributes to shaping how individuals engage in social and professional environments. It influences how people present themselves, how they are perceived by others, and how they participate in various institutional settings. As individuals communicate, they construct

meaning and establish their presence in society through their linguistic choices and expressions (Borlongan, 2009). English as a second language in the Philippines not only functions as a means of communication but also as a vehicle for cultural expression, social mobility, and identity formation.

However, before English literature became a flourishing force in the Philippines, Filipinos were already known for their rich oral traditions, cultural expression, and indigenous forms of communication. They possessed a strong tradition of storytelling, poetry, and communal narratives that were passed down from generation to generation through narrative languages (Lantolf, 2000). These early practices long before the influence of Western literary traditions. Filipino communication was deeply rooted in community life, where meaning was shaped through shared experiences, rituals, and collective memory (Lantolf, 2000). Languages such as Tagalog, Cebuano, Ilocano, and other regional tongues served as powerful mediums of identity and cultural continuity. Through these languages, Filipinos articulated their understanding of nature, spirituality, relationships, and society (Lantolf, 2000). With the arrival of colonial influences, particularly during the Spanish and American periods, English gradually became integrated into the educational and literary system. However, this did not erase the richness of the indigenous culture, where Filipino identity continued to evolve through both narrative and foreign languages. In this sense, the Filipino linguistic experience is not merely a transition from native to English expression, but a complex interplay of tradition and modernity.

Most of the Filipinos believe that understanding and learning the English language makes one a high-class person in society. In education, language learning is often reduced to grammar accuracy, vocabulary acquisition, and standardized testing. While these aspects are important, they do not fully develop learners' ability to interpret meaning, engage critically with texts, or understand language as a lived and contextual phenomenon (Martin, 2014). As a result, many ESL learners struggle with deeper comprehension, especially when dealing with ambiguous, culturally embedded, or abstract texts especially when dealing with ambiguous, culturally embedded, or abstract texts (Hockly, 2018). This limitation reflects a broader issue in language education: the tendency to treat language as a purely technical skill rather than as a dynamic medium of meaning-making. When learners are trained primarily to follow rules and reproduce correct forms, they may become proficient in structure but remain limited in interpretation and critical engagement (Anderson, 2008). To address this concern, language education must move beyond a purely structural approach and embrace interpretive frameworks that view language as a lived experience. Drawing from the philosophical insights of Paul Ricoeur, understanding language involves not only decoding words but also interpreting symbols, contexts, and human experiences embedded within discourse. Hermeneutics, therefore, offers a valuable perspective in ESL classrooms by encouraging learners to engage with texts reflectively, question underlying meanings, and relate them to their own cultural and personal contexts.

In naming the philosophers who have a contention on hermeneutics, they are: Wilhelm Dilthey, Martin Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur, Jürgen Habermas, and Jacques Derrida. These are the philosophers who interpreted language as a source of everyday living for a person in society, and this kind of living, as mentioned in the discussion, is a form of a form of meaning -making grounded in lived experience and interpretation. In this sense, language is not merely a system of signs governed by rules, but a dynamic medium through which individuals understand themselves, others, and the world they inhabit. For philosophers such as Wilhelm Dilthey and Martin Heidegger, this lived dimension of language reveals that understanding is deeply embedded in human existence itself, where interpretation becomes an essential structure of being. Additionally, Hans-Georg Gadamer highlights that this process of

understanding is shaped by history, tradition, and dialogue, interpreting a continuous interaction between past and present. Similarly, Paul Ricoeur emphasizes that language carries symbols and meanings that go beyond literal expressions, requiring deeper reflection and critical engagement. On the other hand, Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida extend this view by arguing that interpretation must also account for power structures, ideology, and the instability of meaning within language. Thus, language as lived experience is not neutral; it is shaped by social forces and is constantly open to reinterpretation. Therefore, this kind of living is a form of hermeneutic existence, where individuals are continuously engaged in interpreting meanings, negotiating understanding, and constructing reality through language within their social and cultural contexts.

Thus, language, as it is lived and experienced, is inherently non-neutral, and social forces shape it and are constantly open to reinterpretation. This kind of living is a form of hermeneutic existence, where individuals continuously interpret meanings and construct reality through language. In Hermeneutics in ESL Classrooms, learning becomes an interpretive process rather than a purely technical one. Drawing from Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur, learners actively engage with texts, bringing their own experiences into understanding. And in the Filipino context, this hermeneutic approach is particularly significant. English, often associated with education, status, and opportunity, can shape how learners perceive themselves and others. By integrating hermeneutics into ESL classrooms, educators can encourage students to critically examine these assumptions and to interpret language not only as a symbol of proficiency but as a medium of identity, culture, and lived experience. This allows Filipino learners to move beyond surface-level understanding toward deeper comprehension, where language becomes a tool for self-expression, cultural reflection, and meaningful engagement with the world.

This study addresses this gap by analyzing *The Importance of Integrating English as a Second Language (ESL) in the Classroom Settings: Applying a Hermeneutical Approach to Language Learning in the Filipino Context*, emphasizing language as an interpretive and meaning-making process rather than a purely structural skill. Drawing on the philosophical insights of Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur, the study explores how learners engage with texts through their lived experiences, cultural backgrounds, and historical situatedness. Furthermore, it examines how a hermeneutic approach can enhance ESL instruction by fostering critical thinking, deeper comprehension, and reflective engagement with language. In the Filipino context, the study highlights how this approach can challenge the perception of the English language as merely a symbol of social status and instead position it as a tool for self-understanding, cultural expression, and meaningful communication. To guide the study and address the identified gaps in the literature, the following research questions were formulated:

Research Questions:

- 1.1. How can hermeneutics be integrated into ESL classrooms?
- 1.2. How does hermeneutic-based teaching affect reading comprehension and critical thinking?
- 1.3. How can Heidegger, Gadamer, and Paul Ricoeur be integrated into ESL pedagogy?

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study, *The Importance of Integrating English as a Second Language (ESL) in the Classroom Settings: Applying a Hermeneutical Approach to Language Learning in the Filipino Context*, is grounded in philosophical hermeneutics, a theory of interpretation that views language learning not merely as the acquisition of grammatical rules and vocabulary, but as a deeper process of understanding meaning, context, and human experience. Hermeneutics emphasizes that interpretation is central to how individuals engage with language, texts, and the world. In this view, ESL learning becomes a reflective and interpretive activity where

students actively construct meaning rather than passively receive information. From Heidegger's perspective, language is deeply connected to being-in-the-world. He argues that human beings are always already situated in a world filled with meaning, and understanding arises from this lived existence. Applied to ESL pedagogy, this means that learners do not approach English as a neutral or detached system. Instead, they interpret language through their personal experiences, cultural background, and social realities. Language learning, therefore, becomes an existential process where meaning is continuously shaped by how learners exist and interact with the world around them.

Gadamer extends this idea through his concept of the fusion of horizons. He explains that understanding occurs when the horizon of the interpreter (their experiences, beliefs, and cultural background) interacts with the horizon of the text. Meaning is not fixed but is created through this dialogue. In ESL classrooms, particularly in the Filipino context, students bring their own cultural identity, historical background, and lived experiences when reading or interpreting English texts. As a result, learning becomes a dialogical process where meaning is co-constructed rather than simply transmitted by the teacher. Ricoeur contributes further by emphasizing that texts possess multiple layers of meaning and are not limited to the author's original intention. Through his concept of textual autonomy or "distanciation," Ricoeur argues that once a text is written, it becomes open to various interpretations across time and contexts. In ESL learning, this encourages students to move beyond literal comprehension and engage in deeper analysis, symbolic interpretation, and critical reflection. It allows learners to question meanings, explore alternative perspectives, and construct richer understandings of texts.

In the Filipino ESL context, this theoretical framework is particularly significant because English is often associated not only with academic success but also with social status, global opportunity, and power. Traditional ESL instruction in the Philippines tends to emphasize grammatical accuracy, memorization, and standardized testing. However, a hermeneutic approach challenges this limited view by positioning English as a living and interpretative language, deeply connected to identity, culture, and lived experience. It encourages Filipino learners to see English not just as a subject to be mastered, but as a medium for expressing their thoughts, understanding their realities, and engaging critically with the world. Furthermore, this framework promotes a shift in ESL pedagogy from teacher-centered instruction to a more dialogical and reflective learning environment. Teachers are no longer just transmitters of correct answers but facilitators of interpretation and meaning-making. Students are encouraged to question texts, relate them to their personal experiences, and consider multiple interpretations. This process develops not only linguistic competence but also critical thinking, cultural awareness, and interpretive depth. This study conceptualizes ESL classrooms as hermeneutic spaces of interpretation where meaning is continuously negotiated among learners, teachers, texts, and cultural contexts. Through the integration of Heideggerian, Gadamerian, and Ricoeurian thought, language learning is transformed into a philosophical and reflective practice that deepens understanding and enriches the learner's engagement with both language and life.

3. METHODOLOGY

This study is a qualitative research design grounded in conceptual hermeneutical interpretation, focusing on how hermeneutic philosophy can be applied in ESL pedagogy to enhance language learning through interpretation and meaning-making in the critical engagement with texts. The researcher uses a conceptual hermeneutical interpretation in interpreting the ESL teachers who facilitate classroom discussions, as well as the grounds for the classroom settings' interactions, instructional materials, and relevant documents used in ESL instruction. Thus, the researcher used a theoretical approach to demonstrate that ESL learning is not only about grammar and language accuracy but also about interpretation,

context, and meaning-making. To establish how hermeneutic philosophy can deepen learners' engagement with texts by encouraging critical reflection and active interpretation within the classroom.

4. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Understanding Hermeneutics in Education

Understanding hermeneutics in education is important because learning is not only about receiving information but also about interpreting meaning. In the classroom, students and teachers constantly engage in processes of understanding texts, ideas, experiences, and even each other. Hermeneutics, as a philosophy of interpretation, helps explain how meaning is formed through context, language, and lived experience. In education, this perspective challenges the traditional view of teaching as simple knowledge transfer. Instead, it emphasizes that understanding is an active process where learners interpret and reinterpret ideas based on their background knowledge and cultural context. This is especially relevant in language learning, where meaning is not fixed but shaped by usage and situation. In applying hermeneutics in education, teachers can better guide students in developing deeper comprehension, critical thinking, and reflective learning. It encourages dialogue, openness to multiple meanings, and awareness of how interpretation influences understanding. In the end, hermeneutics provides a richer and more meaningful approach to teaching and learning.

In this sense, misunderstanding is not simply an error to be corrected but a starting point for deeper inquiry and clarification. Through discussion, reflection, and interpretation, learners gradually move toward more refined and meaningful understanding. This process supports collaborative learning, where meaning is negotiated rather than simply delivered by the teacher. Applying hermeneutics in education encourages openness to different perspectives. It allows both teachers and students to recognize that texts and ideas can have multiple interpretations depending on context. This makes learning more inclusive, reflective, and dialogical, and hermeneutics enriches education by promoting deeper engagement with knowledge and fostering learners who are critical, thoughtful, and capable of interpreting complex meanings in academic and real-world contexts. Thus, hermeneutics in education positions learning as an active, reflective, and interpretive process rather than passive absorption of information. It emphasizes that meaning is shaped through context, experience, and dialogue between teacher, learner, and text. By valuing interpretation and multiple perspectives, it helps students develop a deeper understanding, critical thinking, and meaningful engagement with knowledge in both academic and real-life situations.

Hermeneutics as a Framework for Language Learning

Hermeneutics offers a meaningful and comprehensive framework for language learning because it treats language not merely as a system of rules, but as a living process of interpretation. In this view, learning a language involves more than memorizing vocabulary and grammar; it requires understanding how meaning is constructed, negotiated, and influenced by context. This becomes especially significant in ESL classrooms, where learners often encounter cultural and linguistic differences that shape how meaning is understood and expressed.

In traditional approaches, language learning is often reduced to accuracy and correctness. However, hermeneutics shifts the focus toward understanding meaning in relation to human experience. Every word, phrase, or text is seen as something that must be interpreted, and this interpretation is influenced by the learner's background knowledge, culture, emotions, and social environment. As a result, language becomes deeply connected to lived experience rather than isolated linguistic structures (Kramsch, 1993). Furthermore, hermeneutics

emphasizes that understanding is not a one-way process. Instead, it is dialogical and interactive, involving continuous movement between the learner, the text, and the context. This idea, often referred to as the “hermeneutic circle,” suggests that comprehension develops gradually as learners move between parts of language (words and sentences) and the whole meaning (overall message or intention). In ESL learning, this allows students to refine their understanding step by step, deepening their interpretive skills over time.

The importance of culture in language learning is not culturally neutral; it reflects values, beliefs, and ways of thinking. Through a hermeneutic lens, ESL learners are encouraged to interpret not only linguistic forms but also cultural meanings embedded within communication. This helps them become more aware of how language operates in different social and cultural contexts, improving both comprehension and communication. In addition, hermeneutics supports a learner-centered approach where students are active participants in meaning-making. Instead of simply receiving correct answers from the teacher, learners are encouraged to question, reflect, and engage in dialogue. The teacher’s role shifts from being the sole authority to being a guide who facilitates interpretation and encourages deeper understanding. This process fosters critical thinking, creativity, and intellectual independence. Thus, hermeneutics provides a holistic and philosophical foundation for language learning. It enriches ESL education by emphasizing interpretation, context, dialogue, and cultural understanding, and language learning becomes more meaningful, reflective, and connected to real human communication.

Interpretation and Meaning-Making in ESL Classrooms

Interpretation and meaning-making are central to learning in ESL classrooms because language is not simply learned through memorization, but through understanding how meaning is created in different contexts. When students learn English as a second language, they constantly interpret words, sentences, gestures, and situations to make sense of communication. This process shows that language learning is an active and cognitive activity rather than a passive transfer of knowledge (Tupas, 2015). In ESL settings, learners often come from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, which affects how they interpret meaning. A single word or expression may carry different connotations depending on cultural context, social use, and personal experience. Because of this, meaning is not fixed; it is constructed by the learner through interaction with language input, peers, and teachers. Meaning-making also involves connecting new language knowledge to prior understanding. Students do not learn in isolation; they rely on existing knowledge of their first language and experiences to interpret new concepts in English (Nolasco, 2008). This interaction between prior knowledge and new input allows learners to build deeper comprehension and more meaningful communication skills.

Furthermore, interpretation in ESL classrooms encourages students to think critically about language use. Instead of focusing only on correct answers, learners are guided to understand why certain meanings are formed and how context influences communication. This develops not only linguistic competence but also interpretive and reflective thinking skills. Thus, interpretation and meaning-making are essential in ESL education because they transform language learning into an active, contextual, and reflective process that supports deeper understanding and effective communication. Interpretation and meaning-making are essential processes in ESL classrooms because language learning involves more than mastering vocabulary and grammar rules. Students must learn how to understand, interpret, and respond to meaning in real communication. Every interaction in the classroom requires learners to make sense of language based on context, intention, and situation.

Martin Heidegger's Hermeneutical Interpretation of Language

The hermeneutical approach of Martin Heidegger provides a foundational framework for rethinking interpretation, understanding, and meaning-making in language learning. From Heidegger's perspective, language learning is not merely the memorization of grammar rules or vocabulary but is deeply rooted in Being-in-the-world, where understanding emerges from lived experience (Heidegger, 1962). Human beings always interpret reality through their cultural background, daily encounters, and historical situatedness; thus, meaning is never neutral or detached but always grounded in experience.

In this sense, every encounter with the world becomes an interpretive act. When individuals experience something, they simultaneously construct meaning from it, making learning an ongoing process of interpretation rather than passive reception (Heidegger, 1971). Each lived experience functions like a "text" that requires reflection and understanding, where learners actively make sense of what they encounter rather than simply absorbing information. Knowledge, therefore, is formed through consciousness of experience, where individuals relate new encounters to prior understanding and lived reality. In applying to language learning, this means that English is not learned as an abstract system separate from life but as something embedded in everyday experience. ESL learners understand language more effectively when it is connected to their real-world contexts, personal experiences, and cultural environments. Consequently, teaching should emphasize meaningful communication, authentic situations, and experiential learning rather than focusing solely on grammatical accuracy.

Thus, within Heidegger's philosophical lens, learning becomes an interpretive and situated process. Knowledge is not passively received but actively constructed through engagement with the world. Language, therefore, is understood as a lived and contextual experience, where meaning emerges through continuous interpretation, reflection, and application in everyday life.

Hans-Georg Gadamer's Hermeneutical Interpretation of Language

The hermeneutical philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer offers a significant framework for understanding language as a dialogical, historical, and interpretive process rather than a fixed system of rules or meanings. Gadamer's approach challenges the idea that meaning can be objectively determined or fully controlled by the speaker or author. Instead, meaning emerges through interaction, interpretation, and the ongoing dialogue between individuals, texts, and traditions (Gadamer, 1996). Central to Gadamer's hermeneutics is the concept of the "fusion of horizons," which refers to the meeting point between the interpreter's existing worldview horizon and the new perspective presented by a text, speech, or communicative act. It is not the reproduction of an original meaning but the creation of a new, expanded meaning that arises from this encounter (Gadamer, 1996). In language learning, this implies that learners do not simply decode English structures; they actively negotiate meaning based on their prior knowledge, cultural background, and lived experiences. This interpretation of language implies that learners are not passive recipients of linguistic input but active participants in meaning-making (Gadamer, 2004). They interpret language through the lens of their cultural background, prior knowledge, and lived experience. This dynamic process of negotiation, where understanding is continuously shaped through reflection, dialogue, and engagement with others, and Gadamer further emphasizes that interpretation is always historically situated; therefore, language, especially English as a second language, is never culturally neutral but embedded in traditions and meanings that learners must critically engage with.

Moreover, in the context of language and education, Gadamer's approach provides a strong philosophical justification for dialogical and interactive pedagogy, and this is the reason

why classroom communication becomes a space where learners and teachers engage in meaningful exchange, allowing different perspectives to interact and reshape understanding. By allowing communication in classroom settings, it is important to recognize how learners can learn the method of construction, which can lead to a perfect constructive theory of English as a Second Language for Filipinos (Alonzo, 2016). This pedagogical interpretation is a very important factor in students' learning because it is through hermeneutics that they can easily gauge their progress. This hermeneutical approach is necessary in the learning method of the students because the discussion of Hans-Georg Gadamer will guide them into a correct dimension of their studies. The learners, in particular, benefit from opportunities to articulate interpretations, question meanings, and respond to texts in ways that connect new linguistic input with their existing cognitive and cultural frameworks. Gadamer also emphasizes the historical and tradition-bound nature of understanding, meaning that interpretation is always influenced by cultural heritage and historical context.

From this hermeneutical foundation emerges a Gadamerian Dialogical-Interpretive of English as a Second Language in the way of a pedagogical approach, where language learning is understood as a process of shared meaning-making through dialogue and the "fusion of horizons" (Gadamer, 1996). In this approach, ESL classrooms become spaces where students actively share ideas, ask questions, and rethink their understanding as they interact with others. Learning is no longer focused on finding a single correct answer. Instead, it emphasizes openness, interpretation, and the continuous negotiation of meaning. Students are encouraged to explore different perspectives and build understanding together rather than simply receiving information. In this way, English as a Second Language is a way where education becomes learner-centered, culturally responsive, and dialogue-driven, where understanding grows through communication, reflection, and the blending of different experiences and viewpoints. Thus, English as a Second Language learning becomes a dynamic process of dialogue and interpretation, where meaning is not fixed but continuously formed through interaction. Students learn by engaging with others, sharing perspectives, and refining their understanding in context. In this way, language education is no longer about memorizing correct answers, but about developing the ability to think, communicate, and understand through meaningful exchange.

Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutical Interpretation

In Ricoeur's Hermeneutical Interpretation, language is seen as more than just words; it is how people express meaning and understand the world. For him, language becomes meaningful when it is used in communication, not just as a system of signs. Once spoken or written, language can stand on its own as a text, open to different interpretations beyond the author's original intention. He believes that understanding language involves both explaining its structure and interpreting its deeper meaning. Language is also symbolic and metaphorical, allowing people to see reality in new ways. Through interpretation, readers engage with the "world of the text" and gain new insights about themselves. Citing the works of Itao, in his paper about Paul Ricoeur's Hermeneutics of Symbols: A Critical Dialectic of Suspicion of faith, he said, to better appreciate the totality of Ricoeur's hermeneutical project, it is important to begin with a brief acquaintance with his conception of man. Following Heidegger, Ricoeur conceived of man as a linguistic being, whereby it is through language that man expresses himself and manifests his being; in other words, it is by means of language that man relates with other beings and with the world (Itao, 2010). Man, then Ricoeur contends, "seems to be no beings in the world. The various linguistic expressions that man creates, in a way, define him (Itao, 2010). This is the discussion of Ricoeur's Hermeneutical approach to language, wherein he managed to illustrate the theory of interpreting, first, the existence of man.

Moreover, Paul Ricoeur argues that the various linguistic expressions that humans create do not merely reflect who they are; they actively participate in shaping their identity and existence. From this perspective, language is not just a passive medium but a constitutive force in human life (Ricoeur, 1991). Through speaking, writing, and symbolizing, individuals articulate their experiences, values, and understanding of the world. In Ricoeur's hermeneutical approach, interpretation begins with the existence of the human person as a being-in-language. Human existence is always already mediated by signs, symbols, and texts, which serve as the means through which reality is disclosed and understood (Ricoeur, 1981). To interpret language is also to interpret the self, since meaning is not isolated from the subject but is deeply intertwined with human experience. Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutical philosophy underscores the role of inquiry and interpretation in the process of language learning. On the other hand, Paul Ricoeur views language not as a fixed system of grammar, but as something that always requires interpretation. For him, understanding a text is not just decoding words; it is a process of making meaning, shaped by context, culture, and the reader's own experience. This is where ESL learning becomes deeply connected to hermeneutics.

In a traditional ESL classroom, students often focus on correctness, grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. But from a Ricoeurian perspective, language learning is interpretative. When Filipino learners read or listen to English, they are not just translating; they are interpreting meaning through their own cultural and linguistic background. This reflects Ricoeur's idea that understanding always involves a "world of the text" and the "world of the reader" (Itao, 2018). Once language is written or spoken, it becomes independent of the speaker. This means that through ESL, learners must interpret texts without relying solely on the author's intention. When students read an English passage, they actively construct meaning by making inferences, examining the context, and relating the text to their own experiences. This process develops their critical thinking skills, not just their linguistic accuracy.

Thus, the relevance of Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutical interpretation to ESL lies in shifting language learning from mechanical decoding to meaning-making. In light of Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutical philosophy, learning English as a Second Language is fundamentally an interpretive and inquiry-driven process. It begins with the learner's questions about meaning and usage, which gradually lead to the development of basic skills such as sentence construction and reading. Through this engagement, language learning moves beyond mere memorization and becomes a meaningful act of understanding, allowing the learner to communicate effectively and relate language to personal and cultural experience.

The Teacher and Students' Relationship in Learning Online Platforms of ESL

The relationship between teachers and students plays a crucial role in the success of ESL learning, especially in online platforms where physical presence is absent. In virtual learning environments, communication, interaction, and engagement become more challenging, making the teacher-student relationship even more important for effective language learning. In ESL online classrooms, teachers are not only facilitators of knowledge but also guides who support learners in navigating language difficulties in a digital space (Eslit, 2025). A strong and positive relationship helps create a sense of trust, motivation, and belonging, which are essential for students to actively participate in language activities and discussions (Brown, 2007). The students, on the other hand, rely on consistent communication and feedback from teachers to improve their language skills. Without face-to-face interaction, clear guidance, encouragement, and timely responses become key factors in sustaining learner engagement and confidence. When the teacher-student relationship is strong, learners are more likely to participate actively, ask questions, and take risks in using the target language.

The online ESL learning requires emotional support and understanding from teachers, as students may experience isolation, technical difficulties, or a lack of motivation (Freeman, & Freeman, 2004). A supportive relationship helps reduce these challenges and promotes a more positive and effective learning experience. Thus, the teacher and student relationship in online ESL platforms is essential because it fosters engagement, supports language development, and creates a learning environment where students feel connected, motivated, and guided despite physical distance. A strong teacher–student relationship in online ESL learning is essential in creating an engaging and supportive learning environment despite physical distance. It enhances communication, builds trust, and encourages active participation, which are all vital for effective language development. When teachers provide consistent guidance, feedback, and emotional support, students become more confident in using English and more motivated to learn.

5. CONCLUSION

In integrating English as a Second Language (ESL) in classroom settings, when grounded in the hermeneutical philosophy, the human person transforms into a unique creation in society. This transformation is not an immediate thing to happen, but it will go into a gradual form of inquiry until the human person can totally access the method of learning in a way of grammar construction, reading comprehension, and understanding the text and the language of English. In Filipino, the context of understanding the English language is not easy, but since interpreting relates to a lot of dynamic information, and the moment they adopt this interpretation and apply a hermeneutical approach, it will not be a burden to anyone. Through the aid of the teachers who became the facilitators of the learners' understanding, the motive of interpretation becomes easy and not hustle to the Filipinos.

Within the Filipino context, this perspective is especially significant, as learners navigate between their native linguistic and cultural frameworks and the structures of the English language. By applying a hermeneutical approach, educators can foster not only linguistic competence but also critical thinking, cultural awareness, and self-understanding, which are essential in shaping learners into reflective and engaged members of society. In this process, language learning is no longer confined to the mechanical acquisition of rules and structures but becomes a meaningful dialogue between the learner, the text, and the broader cultural context. The hermeneutical approach allows students to interpret and re-interpret meanings based on their lived experiences, thereby making the learning of English more personal, relevant, and transformative. Thus, English as a Second Language instruction becomes more than a technical skill; it becomes a process of interpreting meaning, bridging cultures, and empowering learners to participate more fully in both local and global communication.

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