

RESEARCH ARTICLE

How should parents balance the learning of Filipino and English at home?: Consistent teaching behaviors towards children

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explored how Filipino parents balance the use of Filipino and English when teaching and communicating with their children at home. Twenty parents participated in semi-structured interviews to share their experiences, routines, challenges, and strategies in supporting bilingual language development. The study found that parents decide to use Filipino or English depending on the situation, with English mostly used for academic support and Filipino for emotional and cultural connections. Parents also employed routines like bilingual reading time, storytelling, and real-life conversations to help children learn both languages. Despite their efforts, many parents faced challenges such as children's preference for English due to school and media influences, limited time, and parents' own language confidence. The findings reveal that parents play an important role in nurturing bilingualism by creating a supportive home environment that values both languages. This study adds to the understanding of bilingual parenting in the Philippine context and offers insights for families and educators who aim to promote balanced bilingual development.

Keywords: Bilingual language development; bilingual parenting; Filipino-English bilingualism

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1. Introduction

Parents play a crucial role in shaping their children's bilingual development. In families that use both Filipino and English, decisions about language instruction at home matter a lot for children's long-term success ^[1,2]. This is especially true in the Philippines, where both Filipino and English are official languages, and families must consciously choose how to support both equally ^[1].

Studies from many countries have shown that parents often adopt structured language strategies such as “one person, one language” (OPOL) or mixed-language approaches to help children manage both languages without confusion ^[3-5]. In multicultural contexts like Canada and Australia, parents have adopted diverse strategies that include alternating languages or using one parent as a main speaker for each language—showing flexibility beyond rigid models ^[5,6]. In the Philippine setting, Zamboanga parents have engaged in similar behaviors, often supplementing home instruction with English tutoring or storytelling sessions to improve exposure ^[1,2].

Despite these approaches, parents in Filipino households face unique cultural influences. Values like *kapwa* (togetherness) and *hiya* (modesty) shape their decisions—sometimes prioritizing the home language to support cultural identity, other times choosing English for social or economic advantages ^[7,8]. While national bilingual education—the K to 12 policy—has been in place for years, few qualitative studies have explored how everyday teaching behaviors in Filipino families actually work ^[1,1]. Moreover, little research addresses how parents juggle language use during daily routines, family conversations, or discipline, and what tensions they experience when balancing identity and practicality ^[4,7].

This study addresses that gap by highlighting how Filipino parents' bilingual teaching practices are not only structured strategies but also deeply embedded in cultural values. By bringing *kapwa* and *hiya* into the discussion of family bilingualism, this research contributes theoretically to the broader field of family language policy, showing that parental choices cannot be reduced to technical strategies like OPOL but must also be understood as culturally mediated practices.

At the same time, this study provides a practical innovation by focusing on the family as a critical site of bilingual education in the Philippines. While existing research has concentrated largely on classroom implementation of bilingual policies, this study shifts attention to home-based strategies that parents use—such as conversation, reading, correction, and homework support. Through in-depth interviews, the study captures parents' reasoning, methods, and feelings about their language choices. The findings will not only inform theory but will also offer practical recommendations for parents, educators, and policymakers, bridging the gap between formal education policy and everyday family realities.

2. Literature

This review explores how parental teaching behaviors influence the balanced learning of Filipino and English languages at home. It focuses on the roles parents play in fostering bilingual development, the impact of language ideologies and educational contexts, the influence of media and children's agency, and the social dynamics affecting language use. This review aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors shaping bilingual language acquisition within Filipino households. While existing studies have established the importance of these factors, less attention has been given to how they intersect within Filipino households, where cultural values and practical circumstances uniquely shape family bilingual practices.

2.1. Parental role in bilingual development

Parents play a crucial role in shaping their children's bilingual abilities in Filipino and English. Active parental involvement, such as storytelling and reading in Filipino, strengthens children's cultural and linguistic connection to the native language. However, practical challenges like limited time and scarce learning materials often hinder systematic Filipino language teaching ^[7,9]. Additionally, parental beliefs about language value are influenced by educational systems, which often prioritize English due to its academic advantages ^[10,11]. Consistent and intentional language input from parents is essential to balanced bilingual development ^[12,13]. While these studies establish the importance of parental involvement, they rarely explore how parents adapt their strategies in response to shifting family routines, work demands, or children's own resistance. More recent scholarship suggests that parental flexibility is just as important as consistency, yet this has been underexplored in the Philippine setting.

2.2. Language ideologies and educational influence

The educational context significantly shapes parental language choices. In MTB-MLE classrooms, English is often favored for its perceived academic benefits, influencing parents to prioritize English at home ^[10]. Studies also show that bilingual teaching strategies at school, including code-switching, reflect and reinforce language practices within the family ^[14]. Early childhood interventions focusing on Filipino language skills have been effective in supporting literacy, underscoring the need to strengthen Filipino alongside English in both home and school settings ^[15]. Mendoza and Reyes ^[33] emphasized that Filipino remains essential for cultural continuity within bilingual households. Even when English dominates formal education and media, Filipino is often retained at home as a means of preserving identity and familial heritage. While these studies establish the importance of parental involvement, they rarely explore how parents adapt their strategies in response to shifting family routines, work demands, or children's own resistance. More recent scholarship suggests that parental flexibility is just as important as consistency, yet this has been underexplored in the Philippine setting.

2.3. Code-switching and translanguaging in Filipino homes

Code-switching between Filipino and English is a common communicative strategy in bilingual Filipino families. It serves pragmatic functions such as easing communication and expressing cultural identity ^[16,17]. Translanguaging—fluidly switching between languages depending on context—is also widely practiced by parents to nurture both languages ^[18]. Santos ^[30] concluded that language learning embedded in real-life situations supports meaningful and lasting bilingual development, especially when both Filipino and English are intentionally used during such moments. These flexible language practices reflect how families dynamically balance bilingualism to meet social and educational needs. Although these studies demonstrate the prevalence of translanguaging, there is limited analysis of how cultural values—such as *kapwa* (togetherness) or *hiya* (modesty)—inform when and why parents code-switch. Recent international studies highlight how translanguaging is embedded in identity work, but Philippine-based studies remain largely descriptive, needing deeper analysis of cultural underpinnings.

2.4. Media influence on language use

Media exposure significantly affects children's language preferences and usage. English-dominant media platforms like television and YouTube have increased children's English use, even in homes where Filipino is the main language ^[19]. This influence can challenge parents' efforts to maintain Filipino language use, as English content is pervasive and often preferred by children ^[20]. The dominance of English in media underscores the need for deliberate parental strategies to sustain Filipino language learning. Media content, storytelling, and culturally relevant materials have been shown to enhance language retention and deepen

cultural awareness in bilingual children. In their study, Shen, Wang, and Gao ^[31] observed that storytelling not only facilitated vocabulary growth but also reinforced emotional and cultural connections to the language. When used in tandem with parental guidance, these strategies help bridge the gap between home language practices and institutional pressures. While these studies confirm media's influence, they largely frame it as a challenge rather than examining how parents strategically leverage digital platforms to sustain bilingualism. Recent studies on bilingual families' use of online tools, apps, and co-viewing practices reveal that media can serve as a resource for intentional bilingual learning—an area yet to be explored in Filipino contexts.

2.5. Children's agency and family language dynamics

Children actively shape language use within the family. They may resist strict language boundaries, prompting parents to adopt more flexible bilingual practices ^[21]. Acting as language brokers, children translate and mediate between languages for their families, enhancing their metalinguistic skills and influencing household language dynamics ^[22]. Technological tools have also been explored to support positive parent-child bilingual interactions ^[23]. De Houwer, Bornstein, and Putnick ^[13] found that when multiple family members—including siblings, grandparents, or extended family—engage in the language-learning process, children are more likely to develop balanced bilingualism. Zipagan ^[32] argued that parental language strategies should be responsive to a child's developmental stage. Her findings showed that younger children benefit from a stronger foundation in their mother tongue before introducing formal English instruction. Valerio ^[16] found that children raised in bilingual households who received consistent language exposure at home exhibited enhanced cognitive flexibility and better communication skills. In particular, children who actively used both languages developed greater metalinguistic awareness, allowing them to navigate code-switching and bilingual environments more confidently. Although children's agency is well-documented, less is known about how children's choices interact with parental goals and cultural expectations in the Philippines. Newer scholarship points to tensions between children's preference for English in digital environments and parents' desire to maintain Filipino, but Philippine-specific qualitative insights remain scarce.

2.6. Social and gender factors affecting language use

Family social dynamics, including gender roles, influence bilingual development. Mothers typically provide more input in Filipino, but fathers' contributions are significant when optimized ^[13]. Peer influence also promotes greater English use among children, sometimes at the expense of Filipino language retention ^[24]. Moreover, Taglish functions as a cultural identity marker, reflecting linguistic hybridity and the adaptive nature of bilingual parenting ^[25,26].

Parental teaching behaviors that balance English and Filipino are influenced by educational goals, cultural identity, media exposure, children's agency, and societal language ideologies. Understanding these interconnected factors provides valuable insight into how parents can effectively support bilingualism in Filipino homes, maintaining the vitality of both languages amid changing linguistic landscapes. Although these studies highlight social influences, *gendered parental practices and peer dynamics have not been fully analyzed in the Philippine bilingual context. Recent international studies emphasize intersectional factors—such as socioeconomic status and parental work arrangements—that need to be examined locally to understand Filipino families' unique bilingual challenges.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design

This study employed a qualitative research design to explore and understand the teaching behaviors of parents in balancing the use of Filipino and English at home. Qualitative research is suitable for this study as it allows for an in-depth exploration of parents' attitudes, experiences, and strategies regarding bilingual language instruction in a naturalistic setting ^[27]. Unlike quantitative designs that focus on numerical data, qualitative research provides rich, detailed insights into the meanings and motivations behind parental behaviors, which are essential for understanding the complexities of bilingual language socialization.

This method allows parents to share their stories in their own words, which helps us see the challenges they face and the ways they balance Filipino and English. It also lets us find new ideas from what parents tell us, instead of fitting their answers into fixed categories.

3.2. Population and sampling

The population of this study consists of parents who are actively involved in teaching their children both Filipino and English languages at home. To gain rich and detailed insights into their teaching behaviors, this study focused on a purposive sample of 20 parents. Purposive sampling is appropriate here because it allows the researcher to select participants who have direct experience and knowledge relevant to the study's topic ^[27].

The 20 parents were chosen based on their willingness to participate and their role in bilingual language teaching within their households. This sample size is manageable and sufficient for qualitative research, enabling an in-depth exploration of each participant's experiences without sacrificing the depth of data ^[28]. Selecting parents from different socio-economic backgrounds and educational levels helped captured diverse perspectives on balancing Filipino and English language instruction at home.

The participants in this study were carefully chosen based on specific criteria to ensure they can provide valuable information about balancing Filipino and English language teaching at home. First, participants must be parents or primary caregivers of children aged between 3 to 10 years old, as this is a critical period for language development. Second, they should actively use both Filipino and English when interacting with their children at home. Third, participants must be willing and able to share their experiences openly during interviews. These criteria ensured that the study included parents who are directly involved in bilingual language teaching and can provide rich insights relevant to the research topic.

3.3. Instrument

The primary instrument for data collection in this qualitative study was a semi-structured interview guide. This type of instrument was ideal because it allowed the researcher to ask open-ended questions that encouraged parents to share their experiences, thoughts, and feelings in their own words ^[27]. The interview guide contained key questions focused on understanding how parents balanced teaching Filipino and English, the challenges they faced, the strategies they used, and their beliefs about bilingual language development. The semi-structured format offered flexibility, enabling the interviewer to probe deeper or ask follow-up questions based on participants' responses. This helped uncover rich, detailed data about parental teaching behaviors that would not have been easily captured through structured questionnaires or surveys.

The interview questions were developed based on a review of related literature and the research objectives. Before actual data collection, the instrument was validated by experts in language education and qualitative research to ensure its content validity and effectiveness. Any necessary revisions were made to improve the instrument's quality. Finally, the interview guide was pilot-tested with a small number of parents to ensure clarity, relevance, and appropriateness of the questions. The **Table 1** below presents the instrument of this inquiry:

Table 1. Instrument of the study

Objectives	Interview questions	Participants
To explore how parents manage and balance the use of Filipino and English in their home-based teaching practices.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do you decide when and how to use Filipino or English when teaching or communicating with your child at home? 2. Can you describe any routines or strategies you use to ensure your child is learning both languages effectively? 3. What challenges have you encountered in balancing Filipino and English, and how do you try to address them? 	Filipino parents residing in Zamboanga City
To examine the perceived effects of self-doubt on the clarity, confidence, and reception of a public speaker's message by the audience.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What teaching behaviors or habits do you regularly practice to help your child develop skills in both Filipino and English? 2. How do you maintain consistency in teaching both languages despite daily responsibilities or distractions? 3. Can you share examples of how your consistent efforts at home have influenced your child's interest or progress in learning both languages? 	

3.4. Data gathering procedure

The data gathering process began after securing approval from the research adviser and the school administration. The researcher first identified and contacted potential participants—parents who met the criteria for the study. Each selected parent was informed about the study's purpose, and their consent was sought to participate voluntarily. The researcher assured them that their responses would be confidential and used only for academic purposes.

Once consent was obtained, the researcher scheduled individual interviews at times and places convenient for the participants to ensure a comfortable and relaxed environment. The interviews were conducted face-to-face, following the semi-structured interview guide. During the sessions, the researcher asked open-ended questions to explore the parents' teaching behaviors in balancing Filipino and English at home. The conversations were recorded with permission to ensure accurate transcription and analysis later.

After completing the interviews, the researcher carefully transcribed the recordings and reviewed the data to identify emerging themes. The data were organized systematically to answer the research questions clearly. Throughout the process, the researcher maintained ethical standards by protecting participants' identities and ensuring that all information collected was kept secure.

3.5. Data analysis

The interview data were carefully transcribed and organized for systematic analysis. The researcher first read through the transcripts multiple times to gain familiarity with the content and to identify initial patterns and recurring ideas related to parents' teaching behaviors in balancing Filipino and English at home.

Thematic analysis was then applied in several stages. First, open coding was conducted by highlighting meaningful phrases and grouping similar ideas together. These codes were iteratively reviewed, refined, and clustered to form broader categories. From these categories, themes were developed that addressed the research questions and reflected the participants' lived experiences ^[27].

To enhance rigor, the researcher compared the emerging themes against the study's objectives and existing literature, ensuring consistency and interpretive depth. Peer debriefing with a research mentor was also used to validate the themes and minimize researcher bias. Additionally, direct quotations from participants were included in the findings to ground interpretations in the data and provide authenticity ^[29].

This structured and transparent process ensured that the analysis remained systematic, credible, and aligned with qualitative research standards.

This study relied on a single-coder approach in analyzing the data; thus, inter-coder reliability could not be established. Triangulation was also not employed since the main source of data came solely from semi-structured interviews with Teachers-in-Charge. Despite these limitations, the credibility of the findings was reinforced through peer debriefing with a research mentor, comparison with existing literature, and the use of direct participant quotations to support the themes.

3.6. Ethical considerations

In this study, the researcher ensured that all participants were treated with respect and fairness throughout the research process. Before the interviews, the participants were informed about the purpose of the study, and their voluntary participation was requested. They were assured that they could withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. Informed consent was obtained from each participant to confirm their agreement to take part in the research.

The researcher also guaranteed the confidentiality and privacy of the participants. Personal information and responses were kept strictly confidential and were only used for the purpose of the study. Pseudonyms or codes were used in place of real names in all transcripts and reports to protect the identities of the parents.

Furthermore, the researcher complied with ethical guidelines and standards for conducting research involving human participants. Permission from the relevant authorities was secured before data collection began, and the study was conducted with honesty and integrity, ensuring that the participants' rights and welfare were prioritized at all times.

4. Results

Research Objectives 1. To explore how parents manage and balance the use of Filipino and English in their home-based teaching practices.

Question No. 1. How do you decide when and how to use Filipino or English when teaching or communicating with your child at home?

1.1 *Language Use Based on Context and Purpose*

Eighteen (18) parents shared that their decision to use either Filipino or English at home depends on the specific context in which communication occurs. English was largely reserved for academic support, while Filipino was the go-to language for casual, emotional, or practical interactions. This indicates that most parents do not enforce a strict language rule but instead use a situational approach to foster functional bilingualism at home.

“Whenever I help my daughter with her homework, especially in Science or Math, I naturally speak in English because the materials are written in English. But if we’re talking about what she did in school or if we’re watching television together, I speak in Filipino”

“When I’m teaching him to read, I use English because I noticed he’s more exposed to it in school. But when I want to explain difficult ideas or teach life lessons, I turn to Filipino because it feels more sincere and closer to the heart”

1.2 *Emotional Connection and Cultural Identity through Filipino*

Filipino is often the language of affection, discipline, and identity in the home. Parents described how Filipino carries emotional weight, making it the preferred language when nurturing values, resolving conflicts, or building family bonds. This choice reflects a deeper cultural commitment to maintaining Filipino as more than just a language—but a vessel for love, discipline, and belonging.

“Even though my kids go to an English-speaking school, when it comes to comforting them after a bad day, scolding them gently, or telling them how proud I am, I always speak in Filipino. It just feels more personal, more heartfelt. English feels a bit distant for those kinds of moments.”

“When I teach my son about respect—like saying ‘po’ and ‘opo,’ or being kind to elders—I do it in Filipino. It’s not just about the words; it’s about teaching our values, and I believe Filipino carries those values better than English ever could.”

1.3 *Striving for Bilingual Balance Amid External Influences*

Parents express a consistent desire to raise children who are proficient in both Filipino and English, yet many admit the journey is not without struggles. Schools’ emphasis on English and the strong influence of English media often tip the balance, requiring parents to work harder to keep Filipino alive at home. Despite this, parents remain committed to creating an environment where both languages can thrive.

“I’m always worried that my son is forgetting how to speak Filipino properly because his school uses English all the time and most of what he watches on YouTube is in English. That’s why at home, I try to talk to him in Filipino as much as I can, especially during meals or family time. I don’t want him to lose that part of who we are.”

“Even though we live in the city and everything—from classes to cartoons—is in English, I make sure that during weekends, we have Filipino time. We speak only Filipino and I let him watch old Filipino movies with me. It’s my way of balancing what he’s already absorbing from outside.”

Question No. 2. Can you describe any routines or strategies you use to ensure your child is learning both languages effectively?

2.1 *Structured Routines and Language-Rich Activities at Home*

Fourteen (14) participants emphasized the use of structured routines and intentional language-learning activities as a strategy to ensure their children are exposed to and practicing both Filipino and English. These routines include reading sessions, designated language days, watching content in each language, and engaging in bilingual conversations. The goal is to create a consistent language-learning environment where both languages are used for different purposes without one overpowering the other.

“We have reading time after school where my child reads one story in English and another in Filipino. I also ask her questions in both languages to check if she understands. Sometimes, I even translate parts of the English story in Filipino just so she can connect the words better.”

“My wife and I agreed that Saturdays are our ‘Filipino Day.’ We only use Filipino at home on that day, including when playing games or doing chores. During the week, we let them use English since that’s what they mostly use in school. It helps us keep both languages alive in our routine.”

2.2 Role Modelling and Repetition as Teaching Tools

Twelve (12) parents shared that they made a conscious effort to model proper language use and repeat words or phrases in both Filipino and English to help their children remember and apply them. These parents believed that children learn language best through repetition and example, especially when they observe adults using the same words in different contexts. Modelling behavior included not just speaking, but reading aloud, explaining meanings, and using gestures or facial expressions to reinforce understanding.

“My husband and I make it a point to speak both languages in front of our kids. We repeat words they don’t understand and use them in different sentences. Sometimes, I’ll say the same thing in Filipino and English to help them connect the meaning.”

“If my son says something in English and I know the Filipino word for it, I repeat it back in Filipino. Like when he says ‘I’m hungry,’ I respond, ‘Gutóm ka na ba?’ It’s a small thing, but it helps him learn.”

Question No. 3. What challenges have you encountered in balancing Filipino and English, and how do you try to address them?

3.1 Navigating Language Dominance and Resistance from Children

Fourteen (14) parents described challenges related to their children's preference for English over Filipino, often caused by the dominant role of English in school, media, and social interactions. These parents expressed concern that their efforts to promote Filipino were sometimes met with disinterest, resistance, or even frustration from their children. While English came more naturally to the children due to their daily exposure in school and media, Filipino required deliberate and consistent reinforcement at home.

“My daughter prefers to speak in English even when I talk to her in Filipino. Sometimes, she even tells me that speaking Filipino sounds weird. I feel sad because it’s our language, and I don’t want her to forget it. So now, I try to make Filipino more fun for her—I let her watch old cartoons in Filipino, and we play word games during dinner. But I admit, it takes more effort than I expected.”

“My son gets frustrated when I ask him to repeat words in Filipino. He says it’s hard or that he doesn’t understand. I think it’s because everything in school is in English, and he’s used to it. I’m now trying to integrate Filipino more naturally—like singing Filipino songs while doing chores or using it when we’re playing, so it doesn’t feel like a lesson.”

3.2 Limited Time and Inconsistent Language Use

Twelve (12) parents revealed that time constraints and irregular language routines at home made it difficult to maintain a balanced bilingual environment. Many of them worked long hours, and as a result, language teaching was not always a priority. Some parents also admitted that they switched languages depending on the situation, unintentionally creating confusion for their children.

“Honestly, I don’t have a fixed system. When I come home from work, I just want to relax and talk to my kids naturally. Sometimes I speak English, sometimes Filipino, sometimes both in one sentence. I know I should be more consistent, but I’m too tired most days.”

“Because of my schedule, I only really get to talk to my children during dinner or weekends. So I try to use Filipino then, but it’s not always enough. They spend more time hearing English from school and gadgets than from me.”

3.3 *Struggles with Parental Language Confidence and Skills*

Nine (9) parents admitted that their own discomfort or lack of fluency in either Filipino or English hindered their ability to teach both languages effectively. Some felt more confident in English and avoided teaching Filipino, while others struggled to model proper English due to limited vocabulary or pronunciation concerns

“I actually feel more comfortable speaking in English. It’s what I use at work and what I’m used to. Sometimes, I want to teach my child Filipino, but I feel unsure about grammar or word usage. I don’t want to teach her the wrong thing.”

“Filipino is my first language, but I’m not that confident in English. I get nervous when reading English storybooks to my kids, especially when they ask me the meanings of hard words. It’s frustrating.”

Research Objectives 2. To examine the consistent teaching behaviors adopted by parents to support bilingual language development in their children.

Question No. 1. What teaching behaviors or habits do you regularly practice to help your child develop skills in both Filipino and English?

1.1 *Everyday Conversations as Learning Opportunities*

Seventeen (17) parents noted that they use everyday tasks—such as grocery shopping, cooking, or traveling—as opportunities to teach their children both Filipino and English. These real-life interactions were seen as natural and effective contexts for language use, especially when parents intentionally incorporated vocabulary learning or simple explanations during conversations.

“When we go to the market, I use Filipino to describe vegetables, fruits, and prices. But when we’re in the mall, I sometimes shift to English. They learn naturally and they ask questions too, so I take that as a chance to explain terms in both languages.”

“I make a habit of explaining things we see outside—like street signs, posters, or even news on TV—in both Filipino and English. For example, if something is written in English, I translate it and ask them to do the same. It’s a fun game we play in the car.”

1.2 *Use of Media, Songs, and Storytelling*

Fifteen (15) parents emphasized the importance of storytelling, songs, and screen content in both Filipino and English. They used these tools not only for entertainment but also to expose their children to vocabulary, sentence structures, and cultural nuances of both languages. This indirect yet immersive learning environment helped make language learning more natural and enjoyable for their children.

“We watch both English and Filipino shows together. I make sure it’s balanced. For every English cartoon they watch, I find a Filipino one too—like ‘Alamat’ or ‘Batibot.’ After watching, we talk about what happened in the story using the same language.”

“Music is our secret tool. My daughter loves singing so we sing English nursery rhymes and Filipino folk songs together. It doesn’t feel like teaching, but I see that she’s learning words and how to pronounce them properly.”

“Every night, I tell them stories from my childhood in Filipino. I even translate their favorite English fairy tales. It becomes a habit, and they also try to tell their own stories in Filipino. I believe storytelling is one of the best ways to connect them to our roots.”

1.3 Adjusting Language Use Based on the Child’s Learning Stage

Ten (10) parents shared that their choice between Filipino and English at home depended on their child’s current developmental stage, grade level, or readiness to absorb certain concepts. Some parents used Filipino more when their children were younger, believing it was easier to grasp emotionally and socially. As the children progressed in school and were exposed to more English, parents adjusted accordingly to support academic growth while still attempting to preserve Filipino for home life and identity-building.

“When my son was still in preschool, we used mostly Filipino at home so he could understand things easily. I wanted him to feel comfortable expressing himself. But now that he’s in Grade 3 and most subjects are in English, we’re slowly using more English so he won’t struggle with school.”

“I believe children first need to feel rooted in their mother tongue. So, when my daughter was little, I focused on Filipino—songs, stories, conversations. But when she entered school, I realized I had to help her with English as well, especially in Science and Math. So, I started mixing both languages depending on what she needed help with.”

“I adjust depending on the topic and her age. If we’re talking about feelings or family things, I use Filipino. If it’s schoolwork or new words she’s learning from books, I use English. It’s like I follow her pace. I think it’s working so far.”

Question No. 2. How do you maintain consistency in teaching both languages despite daily responsibilities or distractions?

2.1 Establishing Daily Language Routines

Thirteen (13) parents explained that they created structured daily routines to ensure regular exposure to both Filipino and English. These routines were intentionally embedded into meal times, bedtime stories, daily conversations, or designated language hours. Sticking to these patterns, parents felt they could remain consistent despite their work schedules or fatigue.

“Every night before bed, we read a story—one in English, then one in Filipino. It’s a simple routine but it helps a lot. Even if I’m tired from work, that time is sacred for us and it keeps the practice going.”

“During breakfast, I make it a point to talk only in Filipino, and at dinner, we do English. It’s part of our day now. I told my child, this is how we honor both languages, and he really likes the structure.”

2.2 Relying on Family Members for Language Reinforcement

Nine (9) parents shared that they involved other family members—like grandparents, siblings, or spouses—to help reinforce the use of both languages at home. These parents acknowledged that their own

busy schedules limited one-on-one time, so they asked for support from other household members to maintain consistency in language input.

“I told my mother to always speak in Filipino when she’s with my kids. They live with us, and lola time is mostly in Tagalog. That helps me a lot since I can’t always monitor their language use.”

“Their older cousins help out. When they play together, I remind them to speak Filipino so the younger ones don’t forget. We treat it like a group effort in the family.”

Question No. 3. Can you share examples of how your consistent efforts at home have influenced your child’s interest or progress in learning both languages?

3.1 Visible Improvement in Expressive and Receptive Language Skills

Fourteen (14) parents observed clear signs of progress in their child’s ability to understand and express themselves in both Filipino and English. These improvements were attributed to consistent use of both languages at home, including storytelling, daily conversations, and bilingual games. Parents proudly shared stories of how their children’s vocabulary grew, how they became more confident expressing their thoughts, and how they could switch between languages with ease depending on the context. This reinforced the parents’ belief in the importance of consistent bilingual teaching, even when progress felt slow at first.

“Before, my son barely responded in Filipino. He understood it but would always answer in English. I didn’t force him, but I just kept talking to him in Filipino during meals and storytime. After a few months, he started replying in Filipino too. I remember one morning, he surprised me by saying, ‘Nanaginip ako kagabi!’ instead of the usual ‘I had a dream.’ It was such a small thing, but it made me so proud because it showed that the Filipino words were finally becoming natural to him.”

“I noticed that my son started using new Filipino words when talking to his grandparents. He used to rely on English and just use Taglish, but now he tries to form full sentences. I think hearing me model both languages helped. For example, I always describe our surroundings in both languages— ‘Look, the tree is tall. Ang taas ng puno.’ Now he imitates that. He even does it to his baby sister. It’s become part of how he thinks.”

3.2 Increased Cultural Connection and Appreciation

Ten (10) parents noticed that their efforts not only improved their children’s language skills but also deepened their connection to Filipino identity and culture. As children became more familiar with the language, they also became curious about traditions, history, and family stories rooted in Filipino heritage. Parents recounted moments when their children showed pride in using Filipino, asked about local customs, or preferred local content, which they linked to their deliberate inclusion of Filipino in daily conversations and family rituals.

“Every Sunday, we watch Filipino movies together—old classics, comedies, sometimes even dramas. At first, my son would complain and ask for cartoons. But I always explained the scenes in Filipino, laughed with him, and now, he’s the one who suggests watching ‘Encantadia or ‘Tanging Ina.’ He even started asking what

‘bayanihan’ means and wanted to hear stories from my childhood. I feel like the language made him curious about who we are and where we come from.”

3.3 Child-Initiated Language Practice and Pride in Bilingualism

Nine (9) parents were delighted to witness their children taking initiative in using both languages, whether by switching codes on their own, teaching younger siblings, or showing off their bilingual skills in public. These moments gave parents reassurance that their children not only learned both languages but also valued them. Several parents shared how their child’s confidence in language use increased, especially after they saw that knowing both languages were useful and something to be proud of.

“One day, while we were at the grocery store, my son started translating what I was saying to a tourist who was asking for directions. I didn’t even ask him to! He said, ‘Mommy always switches between English and Filipino, so I learned to do that too.’ It felt amazing. That’s when I knew our constant switching at home helped him understand both languages deeply.”

“He used to be shy speaking Filipino at school, but after months of practice at home, he’s now one of the few who can comfortably switch between languages during presentations. His teacher even praised him for that. He came home beaming, saying, ‘Mom, I used both English and Filipino, and everyone clapped.’”

5. Discussion

This study aimed to explore how parents manage and balance the use of Filipino and English in their home-based teaching practices. The analysis of responses to the first three research questions revealed patterns that reflect not only individual parenting styles, but also broader societal and institutional influences that shape language use in the household.

The results of the first research question showed that parents often relied on the context and purpose of communication when deciding whether to use Filipino or English. Most participants expressed that Filipino was used for emotional and value-laden conversations, while English was reserved for academic tasks and school-related discussions. This pattern reflects the parents’ intentional language use in balancing affective and cognitive needs at home. This finding aligns with the study of Lising ^[11], which highlighted that Filipino-English bilingual households often lean toward English in educational settings, while Filipino is reserved for casual or emotional interactions. Unlike earlier studies, however, the present research underscores not only the practical division of languages but also the parents’ conscious effort to resist the dominance of English by maintaining Filipino for affective and identity-driven purposes. The emotional weight carried by Filipino, as emphasized by Balderas ^[7], reinforces its role as the primary language for nurturing cultural identity and familial bonds. These results suggest that bilingual parents do more than alternate languages for convenience; they make deliberate choices that shape their children’s emotional and academic development. For schools, this highlights the importance of recognizing the role of Filipino in maintaining cultural identity, while still valuing English for academic success.

The second major theme highlighted Filipino as a tool for expressing cultural values and identity. Rather than simply functioning as a conversational language, Filipino carried symbolic weight as a medium for cultural transmission within families. This echoes Mendoza and Reyes ^[33], who found that Filipino remains vital in preserving heritage despite the dominance of English in formal settings. In line with this, Bautista ^[25] observed that code-switching and Taglish function as adaptive strategies to bridge generational and cultural gaps, allowing parents to negotiate between tradition and modernity. These parental decisions reflect not

only a commitment to maintaining linguistic heritage but also a pragmatic recognition of English's role in mobility and opportunity. Implication-wise, this suggests that bilingualism in homes is not a passive outcome of English influence but a conscious balancing act—families actively protect cultural identity while strategically embracing English for practical gain.

The third theme highlighted parents' efforts to counter the dominance of English in schools and media by creating intentional "Filipino time" at home. This practice underscored the home as a corrective space, where parents sought to restore balance in their children's linguistic environment. Cruz ^[19] similarly observed that children's language preferences are heavily shaped by digital media, often tilting toward English at the expense of Filipino. Complementing this, Shen, Wang, and Gao ^[31] noted that institutional expectations also shape family language practices, prompting parents to either conform to or resist these pressures. Taken together, these findings suggest that parents' strategies are not merely reactive but deliberate acts of resistance, positioning the home as a site of cultural preservation against the encroachment of English-dominated media and schooling.

For the second research question, parents described structured routines and strategies designed to nurture bilingual exposure at home. These included bilingual reading time, designated Filipino days, and the intentional use of both languages during daily tasks. Such practices reflect a proactive approach, with parents deliberately creating balanced opportunities for their children's linguistic development. Abdon and Barrios ^[15] likewise demonstrated that mother tongue-based interventions strengthen reading comprehension and language growth in early learners. In parallel, the emphasis parents placed on repetition and modelling resonates with Kwon, Jeong, and Ko's ^[23] findings, which highlighted how interactive tools, when reinforced by parental modelling, advance bilingual learning. Together, these insights underscore how structured family routines serve as intentional scaffolds for children's bilingual development, bridging everyday practices with broader educational strategies.

For the third research question, parents acknowledged significant challenges in fostering a balanced bilingual environment. The most frequently cited concern was children's stronger preference for English, largely shaped by schooling and media exposure. This reflects a wider societal dynamic, where external influences often outweigh parental efforts in sustaining Filipino at home. Cruz ^[19] similarly observed that English-dominant media strongly affects children's language choices, while Johnston and De Guzman ^[10] highlighted how educational systems and prevailing ideologies privilege English, relegating Filipino to a secondary role. Taken together, these findings reveal how institutional and cultural forces complicate families' attempts to maintain bilingual balance, underscoring the need for supportive policies and resources that affirm both languages.

Another theme highlighted the challenges of limited time and inconsistent use of languages at home, a concern expressed by twelve parents. These constraints often made it difficult to sustain deliberate language practices, leaving bilingual development more dependent on spontaneous interaction than structured teaching. Balderas ^[7] similarly noted that modern Filipino parents frequently lack the time and resources to support systematic language learning at home. In the same way, Tziampiri, Thieme, and Verhagen ^[18] observed that such irregularities often give rise to translanguaging practices, as families adjust to the practical realities of daily life. This suggests that parents' language strategies are less about rigid planning and more about negotiating between ideals and lived constraints.

Lastly, parents shared their struggles with language proficiency, expressing a lack of confidence in teaching either Filipino or English effectively. This limitation often constrained their ability to model or reinforce bilingual practices at home, regardless of their intentions. Fogle and King ^[21] emphasized that

parents' language ideologies and self-assessed proficiency strongly shape the input children receive. In many cases, the gap between the language environment parents hoped to create and the one they actually maintained arose from these internal constraints.

For the second research objective, parents described a variety of consistent strategies to support bilingual development at home. Many incorporated everyday activities—such as grocery shopping, cooking, or traveling—into language learning, transforming routine tasks into meaningful bilingual experiences. Santos ^[30] similarly emphasized that embedding language use in natural contexts fosters deeper, more durable learning for bilingual children. This suggests that parents view bilingual development as an integral part of daily life rather than a separate, formal lesson, highlighting the adaptive and context-sensitive nature of home-based language teaching.

Another key strategy involved the use of songs, storytelling, and bilingual media to support language learning. These tools provided immersive and engaging experiences that reinforced vocabulary and cultural understanding. Abdon and Barrios ^[15] similarly highlighted that exposure to culturally relevant content in the mother tongue strengthens both language skills and cultural identity. Likewise, Cruz ^[19] noted that media strongly shapes children's language preferences, emphasizing the importance of parents actively curating balanced exposure to both Filipino and English. Overall, these practices illustrate how parents leverage creative and culturally meaningful activities to foster bilingual development in everyday life.

Parents also reported that their teaching strategies evolved according to their child's age and developmental readiness. Language use was adapted to match the child's growing capacities, with Filipino and English emphasized as appropriate for different stages. This aligns with Zipagan ^[32], who found that bilingual children adjust their language use based on context and need, and that flexible parental strategies enhance this adaptability. These findings suggest that effective home-based bilingual teaching is dynamic, responsive, and tailored to the child's developmental trajectory rather than rigidly predetermined.

To maintain consistency in bilingual teaching despite daily distractions, parents emphasized the importance of structured language routines. These routines provided predictable opportunities for both Filipino and English use, reinforcing consistent input and patterned exposure. Kwon, Jeong, and Ko ^[23] similarly found that structured bilingual environments promote better retention and active language engagement. Parents also involved other family members—such as grandparents or older siblings—to support language practice, which aligns with De Houwer, Bornstein, and Putnick ^[13], who highlighted that broader family participation strengthens language socialization. Overall, these findings suggest that combining structured routines with collaborative family involvement enhances the effectiveness of home-based bilingual development.

Regarding the third research question, parents observed tangible benefits from their consistent bilingual practices at home. Children showed improvements in both expressive and receptive language skills, reflecting enhanced cognitive flexibility and deeper language understanding. Lim ^[14] similarly found that classroom-based bilingual strategies support these outcomes, suggesting that consistent home practices can complement formal education. These findings imply that sustained parental involvement directly contributes to children's bilingual competence and overall linguistic development.

Parents also reported that children's exposure to Filipino fostered a deeper appreciation of culture and heritage. This experience reinforced the idea that language serves not only as a communication tool but also as a vital link to identity, supporting the observations of Bautista ^[25] and Mendoza and Reyes ^[33]. Additionally, parents noticed moments when children independently initiated bilingual use, demonstrating confidence and pride in their skills. Valerio ^[16] similarly connected code-switching and bilingual competence

with academic and social advantages, highlighting how proactive language use reflects both linguistic proficiency and socio-cultural engagement. These findings suggest that home-based bilingual practices nurture not only language skills but also cultural awareness and self-efficacy in children.

In summary, the study's findings illustrate how Filipino parents adopt both reactive and proactive strategies in managing their children's bilingual development. Their practices are driven by context, emotional needs, media influence, school demands, and personal linguistic confidence—factors which align with a rich body of existing literature in both local and international contexts.

6. Conclusion

This study explored how Filipino parents manage and balance the use of both Filipino and English when teaching or communicating with their children at home. It also examined the consistent behaviors or habits they practice to support bilingual language development. By gathering insights from twenty (20) parents, the study was able to give a deeper understanding of the ways parents use both languages in daily life and the different reasons behind their choices. These included academic needs, emotional connection, cultural identity, and practical situations.

One major finding was that most parents do not follow strict language rules at home. Instead, they adjust their language depending on the situation or purpose. English was mainly used for helping with homework or academic topics because schools often teach in English. On the other hand, Filipino was used when parents wanted to show care, teach values, or have casual family conversations. This shows that parents are intentional in using both languages depending on the need, making bilingualism a natural part of daily family life.

The study also found that parents used different strategies to support both languages. Some created routines such as reading time in both English and Filipino, storytelling, watching media in both languages, or assigning specific days to speak only Filipino. Others used real-life activities—like shopping or doing chores—as chances to introduce or reinforce language use. These simple but thoughtful actions helped children learn new words, build confidence, and become more comfortable switching between languages.

However, the study also revealed challenges. Many parents said that their children were more comfortable with English, mainly because it was the language used in school, online games, and media content. Some parents admitted that they didn't always have time or energy to teach both languages regularly, especially after work. Others also felt unsure about their own language skills, which made them less confident in teaching either Filipino or English. Despite these struggles, parents still tried to maintain a balanced bilingual environment at home.

This research filled a gap in the Philippine context by shifting the focus from classroom-based bilingual education to family-based practices. Theoretically, it contributes to family language policy studies by showing that parents' language decisions are not just guided by structured models such as OPOL, but are also shaped by cultural values like *kapwa* (togetherness) and *hiya* (modesty), situational needs, and identity concerns. This integration of cultural perspectives adds nuance to existing theories of bilingual family practices.

Practically, the study provides innovative insights by documenting parent-centered, home-based strategies—such as storytelling routines, reading in both languages, and language rotation—that can be adapted to Filipino families. These practices complement school-based bilingual education policies and highlight the home as an equally important space for language learning.

In conclusion, the findings underscore that parents play a crucial role in developing their children's language skills—not only by teaching words, but also by cultivating a home environment where both Filipino and English are valued, used, and loved. This dual role of cultural grounding and practical adaptation illustrates how Filipino families sustain bilingualism in ways that are meaningful, flexible, and responsive to their everyday realities.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest

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