

ABSTRACT

COVID-19 pandemic required Grade 11 Shielded Metal Arc Welding (SMAW) students to study modularized Oral Communication in Context. Focusing on their specialization, while comprehending this subject independently, brought them learning difficulties. This study sought to examine the students' learning difficulties in Modularized Oral Communication in Context during the pandemic and their adopted self-directed learning strategies. Three research questions guided the study which adopted qualitative-phenomenological research design. Sample size of ten students using self-directed strategies was drawn using purposive sampling technique. Three experts validated the interview questions, and three students from other school participated in the pilot test. With valid and reliable questions, the researchers conducted one-shot in-depth interview. Employing Colaizzi's technique, the researchers analyzed and clustered responses into themes. Results revealed that the students experienced subject learning difficulties, home learning environment distractions, concentration difficulties, independent learning adaptation, beneficial self-directed learning strategies, teacher's valuable role, and optimism for the sake of educational benefits. Their self-directed learning strategies encompassed self-preparation, learning environment-preparation, technological learning, non-technological learning, information overload-management, time-management, and persistence-regulatory strategies. Generally, students experienced challenges in studying modules independently. Fortunately, they employed self-directed learning strategies that helped them overcome problems and manage their learning. These inspired the researchers to craft self-directed learning strategy toolbox as students' reference in overcoming the challenges by utilizing reading technique and context clues to understand unfamiliar words and lessons. Further, this paper encouraged learning resource writers to ensure the contextualization of self-learning modules and teachers on the modification or delimitation of modular tasks. Finally, future researchers might also pursue a study on educational key players' perspectives on these findings and evaluation of the toolbox.

Keywords: Covid-19 pandemic, Learning difficulties, Modularized Oral Communication in Context, Self-directed learning strategies, Self-directed learning toolbox

1. INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 pandemic required education sector to rely heavily on the use of Self-Learning Modules (SLMs) for distance learning modality. However, Grade 11 Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL) students experienced modular distance learning challenges at home like work distractions and time constraints (Galias, 2021). These challenges became complicated as Abbas (2021) revealed their difficulties in understanding modular lessons, words, and sentences written in English language. Unfortunately, K to 12 Curriculum offered the core subject Oral Communication in Context, which was not their focus, yet vital to their field. Attending to their specialization while combatting with the challenges, students have gained significant experiences and self-directed learning strategies in studying the modularized subject.

In the global report, Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2020) exposed that Covid-19 pandemic brought major challenges to the education system. In its survey, 36 countries revealed that vulnerable students, most especially TVL ones, experienced difficulties due to English language unfamiliarity, home learning environment distractions, and concentration problems in studying modules independently. Thus, involved countries suggested the utilization of learning measures or self-directed learning strategies among students and presented solutions in overcoming those hardships. However, not all countries, like Philippines, were involved in the survey. Thus, findings and suggested solutions still needed verification in the country.

Alarmingly, TVL students already experienced difficulty in learning the subject with unfamiliar language like Oral Communication in Context even before pandemic. In fact, Zaid and Sarjiyati (2019) discovered that Grade 11

students in Indonesia were slow in composing utterances, passive in conversation, poor in grammatical knowledge, and had limited vocabulary and communication strategies. To address these, students suggested that they wanted to have fun inside the classroom through interesting activities with their teachers. However, realities of the pandemic hardly give these opportunities. Opposite to their desire to learn inside the classroom, distance requires them to manage their own learning through self-directed learning strategies. The big question lies on how they can overcome those difficulties now that oral communication learning is distant and modularized.

In the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) released the Order No. 018, series of 2020 to establish guidelines on the delivery of SLMs. These are self-contained, self-instructional, self-paced, and interactive students' learning resources in the absence of teachers' physical instruction. Despite this alternative, Rayla and Sonsona (2021) reported that Grade 11 students in Misamis Oriental encountered difficulties in studying Oral Communication in Context. They lacked transitional words to connect their sentences, topic knowledge, and language use, which contributed to their problems in elaborating ideas since they could not directly supply words and thoughts.

Basically, the study evaluated students' performance. To understand further and explain reasons for their subject difficulties, it would be beneficial to examine their underlying experiences and self-directed learning strategies. Researchers only encouraged teachers to formulate compendium of strategies to develop students' subject skills. In addition to this, it would also be helpful to craft self-directed learning strategy toolbox for students since they have the most control of their learning during the pandemic.

DepEd Region XI confirmed senior high school students' English difficulties based on the National Achievement Test (NAT) result last 2019. In Davao Dispatch, its official publication, it further stated that students' English proficiency as well as reading comprehension level in the entire Davao Region was low. With this, Davao de Oro was not an exemption. To address the problem, Regional Office planned to enforce the conduct of Reading Assessment. Thus, educators encouraged Grade 11 students, including TVL, to learn English modules well and to practice reading in preparation for the said assessment for School Year 2021-2022 when they turn Grade 12. However, teachers reported that TVL students had difficulties in studying modularized Oral Communication in Context that might affect their reading performance.

Focusing more on TVL students' English learning, there is a public school in Davao de Oro that purely offers TVL strands like Shielded Metal Arc Welding (SMAW) and Beauty Care. Unfortunately, Grade 11 students' first quarter Oral Communication in Context test results were not satisfactory. When teachers asked them, students partially shared their modular distance learning challenges. During the school's Board of Directors' (BOD) Meeting, some parents also claimed that modules contained difficult English words which affected students' modular lesson understanding.

In response to the problems, teachers advised students to employ self-directed learning strategies. However, school leaders still need credible reports regarding those circumstances to create action plan for systematic interventions. Demanding, credible details would not be achieved until a study is conducted. Sadly, no school or district research yet examines students' experiences and self-directed learning strategies.

To verify the global issue in the Philippine context; establish connection between students' learning difficulties before and during pandemic; complement the knowledge gap on the lack of findings for students' experiences, self-directed learning strategies, and development of learning strategy toolbox; and supply the unavailability of school or district research about students' modular experiences and strategies, this study sought to explore their experiences and self-directed learning strategies in studying Modularized Oral Communication in Context. The researcher also aimed to craft a learning strategy toolbox as output.

As modular distance learning continues, the urgency to explore Grade 11 students' experiences and strategies also increases. Educators really need to provide immediate solutions and assistance to these students, who are dealing with their specialization and modularized Oral Communication in Context at the same time. Hopefully, this study might design a self-directed learning strategy toolbox as their guide in conquering modular distance learning challenges by applying strategies in learning the subject independently. Moreover, this could also suggest relevant implications for practice and policy before it would be too late for those students to overcome learning hardships.

1.1 Theoretical Lens

This study basically adhered to the Theory of Transactional Distance by Moore (1997). This theory posits that distance learning exists when teacher and students are separated by time and space. As the level of interaction between teacher and learner decreases, learner autonomy must increase. Thus, learners have to be self-directed by employing autonomous learning strategies and techniques. In relation to this study, the teaching-learning transaction is distant with modular distance learning modality. Teacher only provided Oral Communication in Context modules to Grade 11 SMAW students and let them study these on their own. Thus, transactional distance existed.

To specify and highlight more of those strategies, this study also incorporated the Theory of Self-Directed Learning by Garrison (1997). This theory emphasizes that self-directed learning is helpful in language learning as individuals perform own instructional processes. Self-directed learners demonstrate great awareness of their responsibility in making learning meaningful and monitoring themselves through learning processes. Garrison proposed three overlapping dimensions: self-management (task control), self-monitoring (cognitive responsibility), and motivation (entering and task).

In connection to this study, students might employ self-management, self-monitoring, and motivation processes. They might utilize self-directed learning strategies like self and home learning environment preparation, time-management, and self-management against boredom or information overload (self-management); repeated readings, dictionary or Google searches, context clues, note-taking, and the likes (self-monitoring); and they might also show optimism in learning despite pandemic (entering motivation) through persistence-regulatory strategies (task motivation).

To select students who are more capable of utilizing strategies, this study utilized the Personal Responsibility Orientation (PRO) Model of Ralph Brockett and Roger Hiemstra (1991), specifically on its Teaching-Learning (TL) Component. According to Banz (2009), this focused on students' willingness to accomplish independent tasks through learning processes or self-directed learning strategies. Thus, the researcher utilized its 19-item TL statements in identifying competent participants. These statements conveyed self-direction indicators such as motivation, time-management, learning control, prioritization of learning goals, relating of lesson to own interests, responsibility for own learning, self-reliance, resourcefulness, optimism, self-improvement, independence, and initiative.

Considering also the experiences of Grade 11 SMAW students in studying modularized Oral Communication in Context, this study employed the idea of behaviorism, specifically on stimulus-response by Ivan Pavlov (1902). This states that behavior is learned through interaction with the environment, and it is simply a response to environmental stimuli (Bau, Fox & Robinson, 2018). Hence, this theory focuses on the idea that all behaviors are learned through interaction with the environment. Agreeably, this study also focused on students' experiences and self-directed learning strategies that might be shaped by the environment. Distractions at home (stimuli) might influence students' modular distance learning challenges and thoughts (experiences), which in turn led to their utilization of self-directed learning strategies as response.

1.2 Conceptual Flow

The conceptual flow of the study is diagrammatically illustrated in Figure 1.

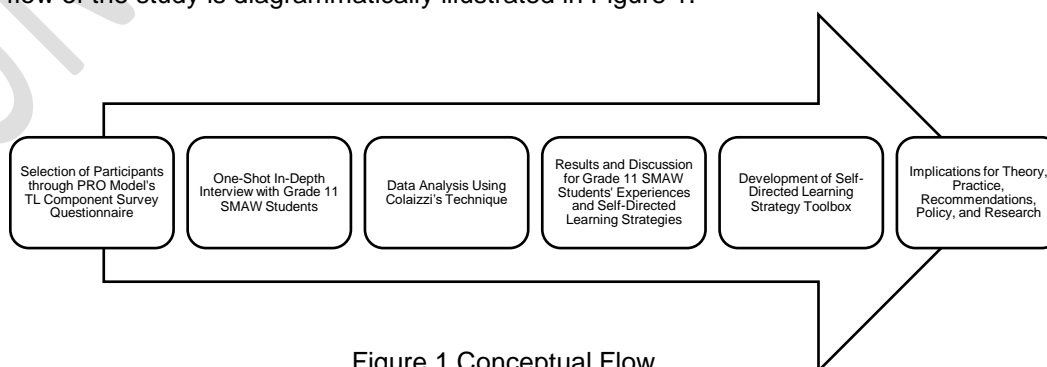


Figure 1 Conceptual Flow

In conducting the study, the researchers selected qualified participants, conducted one-shot in-depth interview, analyzed the data using Colaizzi's technique, presented the results, discussed findings, developed a self-directed learning strategy toolbox, and offered recommendations.

Objectives of the Study

The study examined the learning difficulties of Grade 11 SMAW students in Modularized Oral Communication in Context and their self-directed learning strategies. Specifically, the study examined their coping mechanisms and insights.

1.3 Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What are the experiences of Grade 11 SMAW students in studying modularized Oral Communication in Context?
2. What are the self-directed learning strategies of Grade 11 SMAW students?
3. What self-directed learning toolbox could be designed as an output of the study?

1.4 Philosophical Stance

This study adhered to the philosophical assumptions to articulate the importance of philosophy in research. These assumptions included ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology.

In this study, the researchers considered ontology as they embraced the idea of multiple realities from participants' multiple experiences and self-directed learning strategies in studying modularized Oral Communication in Context. With epistemology, the researchers aimed to reduce bias and subjective data analysis. Moreover, this study also recognized axiology or the role of values in research by making these values known in this study. Finally, the researchers considered methodology or the methods used in the process of this study.

2. METHOD

The method used in this study is presented in this section. This includes the following: Research Design, Research Participants, Sampling Procedure, Research Instrument, Data Gathering Procedure, Data Analysis, and Ethical Considerations.

2.1 Research Design

Qualitative-phenomenological method was employed in this study. The phenomenon was Grade 11 SMAW students' self-directed learning strategies in modularized Oral Communication in Context.

2.2 Research Participants

The participants of this study involved the Grade 11 TVL students, major in SMAW from one of the public secondary schools in Davao de Oro. There were only 10 students who participated in the in-depth interview.

2.3 Sampling Procedure

Purposive sampling was utilized in this study since qualified participants were selected by administering one set of survey questionnaire based on PRO Model's 19 TL Component statements that students rated using the Likert Scale on frequency. When combined to select students with highest level, all of the qualified participants for IDI came from SMAW. The researchers only selected highest level students among them. During in-depth interview, the researchers observed that on the 10th student, responses were repeated and had the same thoughts. This signaled data saturation as researchers' basis to stop the interview. Thus, there were only 10 Grade 11 SMAW students involved in this study.

2.4 Research Instrument

In selecting qualified participants, one set of survey questionnaire was administered based on PRO Model's 19 TL Component statements that students rated using Likert Scale on frequency. Four (4) experts validated the questionnaire, and 45 TVL students from other school participated in the pilot test. The researchers summarized the responses, and the questionnaire gained a very reliable result with a Cronbach Alpha of 0.919. In-depth interview guide questions were utilized in gathering data for students' self-directed learning strategies, together with their experiences. Three (3) experts validated the questions, and (3) TVL students from other school participated in the pilot test.

2.5 Data Gathering Procedure

In conducting the study, the researchers selected qualified participants, conducted one-shot in-depth interview, analyzed the data using Colaizzi's technique, presented the results, and discussed findings. Based on these, the researchers developed a self-directed learning strategy toolbox and offered recommendations.

2.6 Data Analysis

In analyzing students' experiences and self-directed learning strategies, Colaizzi's data analysis technique was employed. Researchers applied seven stages, namely: familiarization, identifying significant statements, formulating meanings, clustering themes, developing an exhaustive description, producing the fundamental structure, and seeking verification of the fundamental structure.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section discusses and analyzes the result of the data on experiences and self-directed learning strategies of Grade 11 SMAW students in studying modularized Oral Communication in Context. The presentation starts with the participants' lived experiences that involve challenges, coping mechanisms, and insights in learning the modularized subject. Finally, it presents their self-directed learning strategies.

3.1 Experiences of Grade 11 SMAW Students

Participants shared their experiences that researcher captured in seven (7) emerging themes, namely: subject learning difficulties, home learning environment distractions, concentration difficulties, independent learning adaptation, beneficial self-directed learning strategies, teacher's valuable role, and optimism for the sake of educational benefits. Table 1 presents these themes.

Table 1. Major Themes and Core Ideas on the Learning Difficulties of Grade 11 SMAW Students in Studying Modularized Oral Communication in Context

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Subject learning difficulties	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>having difficulty since the subject was new and terms were unfamiliar – IDI-05</i>• <i>having difficulties in comprehending English words and deep-meaning questions – IDI-02</i>• <i>being unable to understand some statements – IDI-07</i>• <i>experiencing hardship in understanding some modular tasks – IDI-10</i>• <i>failing to accomplish modular tasks without knowledge on how to do them– IDI-09</i>• <i>experiencing difficulty in answering explanatory questions due to hardship in constructing sentences – IDI-04</i>
Home learning environment distractions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>spending the intended time for reading in doing household chores – IDI-05</i>• <i>getting lazy in answering modules after doing household chores – IDI-03</i>• <i>being distracted at home due to noise, overloaded works, and entering people – IDI-09</i>• <i>having no time for rest because of family's small business – IDI-06</i>

Concentration difficulties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>enjoying more the music and rest than studying –IDI-01</i> • <i>getting sleepy when lying down and forgetting the modular tasks –IDI-02</i> • <i>enjoying the entertainment videos and losing focus in accomplishing modular tasks –IDI-03</i> • <i>having difficulty in accomplishing tasks due to lack of focus and self-concentration – IDI-08</i>
Independent learning adaptation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>becoming independent because of self-learning –I IDI-01</i> • <i>discovering more about one’s self in terms of learning independently --IDI-03</i> • <i>realizing that one’s self is the only asset in learning independently – IDI-04</i> • <i>utilizing strategies to make learning process easy – IDI-06</i> • <i>trusting one’s self in accomplishing new things– IDI-06</i> • <i>learning about the importance of study and the need to stand by one’s self and help it build up – IDI-07</i>
Beneficial self-directed learning strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>helpful in answering modular tasks easily without pressure –IDI-01</i> • <i>facilitative in reading without distractions and encouraging one’s self to finish modular tasks completely –IDI-02</i> • <i>conducive in finding time and gaining willingness to adjust with one’s self –IDI-03</i> • <i>beneficial in building self-learning ability –IDI-07</i>
Teacher’s valuable role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>appreciating the normal class where teacher taught students correctly –IDI-02</i> • <i>claiming that learning was hard without the teacher and nothing can replace her role –IDI-03</i> • <i>conveying that teacher was better than strategies –IDI-04</i> • <i>claiming that learning independently was difficult unlike in school where there was a teacher to instruct –IDI-05</i> • <i>saying that modular way provided few learning than teacher’s instructions –IDI-09</i>
Optimism for the sake of educational benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>never losing hope to have a successful life – IDI-01</i> • <i>continuing learning despite pandemic since education is the only treasure that parents can provide for a better future – IDI-02</i> • <i>having perseverance despite trials and remaining firm to live life alive –IDI-03</i> • <i>standing despite challenges by believing that education is the key to success – IDI-05</i> • <i>sharing the need to be determined in learning for the future since it is difficult to find a job without complete education – IDI-10</i>

3.1.1 Subject Learning Difficulties

This theme refers to students’ hardships in constructing sentences and understanding modular inputs, which involved topics, lessons, terms, words, questions, statements, and tasks of Oral Communication in Context. To illustrate, the researchers highlighted significant narratives.

IDI-05 mentioned that she had difficulty in understanding new subject and unfamiliar terms as she shared that:

“I experienced some difficulties because this subject was new to me, and there were words that I could not yet understand, most especially now that the set-up is self-learning without a teacher to instruct.”

IDI-02 confirmed the same difficulty as he said:

I experienced learning in my own way. Sometimes, there were English words that I could not understand; and sometimes, there were some deep-meaning questions

that I could not easily answer. Being independent in learning was not easy, especially to those students who had no one to ask with.

In addition, IDI-07 also mentioned that she had difficulty in understanding some statements as she pointed out that:

“In studying through modules, it can help me to be independent; but there are some statements that I don't understand.”

The said difficulties in understanding lessons, words, and statements led to hardship in understanding modular tasks as evident in the response of IDI-10 when he narrated:

“Very very difficult because there are some tasks that I didn't understand.”

The lack of modular task understanding brought difficulty to the participants as evident in the response of IDI-09 when he said that:

“The module was very difficult, most especially if you were alone. Thus, when I answered my module, I researched other answers. Letter B. There were tasks that I could not accomplish because I did not know how to do them.”

The mentioned comprehension challenges obviously showed that students had difficulties in comprehending English words. As a result, they also had problem in constructing sentences, which in turn hindered them from answering explanatory questions.

The case was apparent in the narration of IDI-04 when he stated that:

“In answering, I experienced a little bit difficulty, especially in responding to explanatory questions because I am not good in constructing words; but other tasks were quite okay.”

Likewise, Rayla and Sonsona (2021) exposed that Grade 11 students encountered subject learning difficulties. During new normal, they lacked transitional words to connect their ideas and had limited topic knowledge and language use which contributed to their problems in elaborating ideas since they could not directly supply words and thoughts. Thus, researchers suggested that teachers must develop compendium of strategies to develop students' Oral Communication in Context skills. In this study, the researcher aimed to develop self-directed learning strategy toolbox instead of teachers' instructional strategies to help students overcome modular distance learning challenges.

In addition, Abbas (2021) revealed that senior high school students experienced subject learning difficulties. With SLMs, students hardly understood lessons, words, and sentences written in English language. Besides, they found it hard to comprehend modular tasks since language was unfamiliar to them. Identically, Grade 11 students in this study also had problems in understanding lessons, difficult words, complicated statements, and modular tasks. Moreover, Espeña (2020) previously revealed that Grade 11 TVL students encountered difficulties in learning Oral Communication in Context. These hardships involved lack of vocabulary, grammatical knowledge, and sentence construction. These factors contributed to their lack of confidence in learning the subject which was not their major, yet vital to their strand.

Generally, participants' responses and supporting literatures signified that modular distance learning experiences were never easy due to subject learning difficulties. The difficulty of used words in modules and construction of deep English questions added up to their struggle in studying modularized Oral Communication in Context.

3.1.2 Home Learning Environment Distractions

This theme pertained to people or things in a house, physical locations, contexts, or cultures that directed students' attention away from modular tasks. Students encountered distractions since they were spending the intended time for reading in doing household chores; getting lazy in answering modules after doing household chores; being distracted at home due to noise, overloaded works, and entering people; and having no time for rest because of

family's small business. These circumstances impeded their modular learning to the point that they even stopped studying for a while until they could find better place.

To specify home learning environment distractions, the researchers featured some narratives. IDI-05 shared her struggle in balancing time between tasks as she said:

"These problems include lack of time for reading. Sometimes, I spent my time in doing household chores which made me lazy; and I failed to answer my modular tasks since I spent more time in resting."

Similarly, IDI-03 stressed that she was getting lazy in answering modules after doing household chores as evident in her response below:

"And the more time spent in sharing stories with my family, I no longer noticed the duration of consumed time and became lazier after doing household chores."

IDI-09 further elaborated household and learning environment inconvenience as he experienced distractions at home due to noise, overloaded works, and entering people which were evident in his response:

I could not relax properly in our house because it was noisy, and there were lots of works; and I could not sit properly because I was doing many tasks, and many people were entering the house. Besides, I could not find comfortable place since the weather was very hot.

IDI-06 narrated the same experience since he uttered:

"Because of helping my family in our small business, it became my problem since my time was consumed with resting."

Similarly, Calo et al. (2021) proved students' home-learning environment distractions since findings of their study revealed that students experienced challenges in attending to household chores and modular activities at the same time. Fortunately, they overcame these by managing their time, taking breaks, and seeking support from others. Likewise, Angeles et al. (2021) justified students' home-learning environment distractions. Results of their study showed that students had little time in answering their modules because they had to do a lot of responsibilities at home. In fact, household chores distracted them. Consequently, they hardly accomplished their modular tasks on time.

In addition, Oxford Learning (2021) reported that learning environment distractions negatively affected students' learning. In fact, distracted studying could lead to students' poor understanding of concepts and feelings of frustration. In reality, parents commonly heard complaints from their children that they encountered distractions at home. Opposite to students' experiences of household and learning environment distractions, they needed to be in an environment where they could be able to focus on their study. Further, Minero (2020) reported students' problems with their home learning environment distractions. She discovered that one student struggled with work-life balance because of the competing tasks like household works and schoolwork. Consequently, the student had problems with balancing her time and effort. Lack of sleep due to insufficient time also affected her learning.

Opposite to the findings about home-learning environment distractions, Korolkov et al. (2020) revealed that distance learning had advantageous features. One of its unexpected advantage was students' experience of comfortable learning conditions (31%). However, teachers never expected this comfortable living condition in home environment. In fact, even in the advent of distance learning, they already anticipated that home learning environment could be a challenge.

Responses of the participants generally denoted that they experienced home-learning environment distractions since they were having hard times in finding comfortable place to learn, balancing time between doing household chores and studying modules, and adjusting with environmental noise and people distractions. Therefore, they viewed home learning environment distractions as factors that contributed negatively to their modular activities. With these, they utilized strategies to set conducive home learning environment.

3.1.3 Concentration Difficulties

This theme pertained to students' struggles to direct attention in studying modules due to temptations and lack of self-focus. Students found themselves uninterested in learning and could not concentrate on their modules because their minds were busy thinking about other matters. Entertainment temptations also distracted them to focus on their learning. These challenges were evident when students were enjoying music and spending more time in resting than studying; getting sleepy when lying down and forgetting the modular tasks; enjoying the entertainment videos and losing focus in accomplishing modular tasks; and having difficulty in accomplishing tasks due to lack of focus and self-concentration.

To illustrate concentration difficulties, the researchers highlighted relevant narratives. IDI-01 enjoyed more the music and spent more time in resting than studying as evident in her response below:

"...and in listening to music, most of the time, I am vibing more the music than answering modular questions; and in resting, sometimes, I could not control because my rest was longer than my answer time."

IDI-02 experienced the same rest temptation since he was getting sleepy when lying down and forgetting the modular tasks as he narrated:

"...and when I lie down, I could no longer notice that I was already sleeping, and I forgot the modular tasks that time..."

In consonance with entertainment temptations above, IDI-03 enjoyed the entertainment videos and lost focus in accomplishing modular tasks as she stated:

"...in entertaining myself, sometimes I lost my focus since I was enjoying more the videos..."

Likewise, IDI-08 was also having difficulty in accomplishing tasks due to lack of focus and self-concentration as evident in his response below:

"The lack of focus in learning. The roaming of my mind around hindered me from focusing and completing the tasks..."

In consonance, Mañalac (2021) also conveyed that learners' focus and concentration were not a hundred percent guarantee. This happened since there was no enough supervision given to them at home. Also, they averted their attention instead of focusing and prioritizing their modular learning. In this case, there might be a possibility that their modular learning would be affected. Given the concentration problems above, Vierstra (2021) enumerated main reasons for students' lack of concentration. These reasons involved lack of structure, in which students were not guided on what to do; external distractions, when students were distracted with noise and people around; internal distractions because of emotions and stress; and absence of person to monitor them. Accordingly, participants in this study really experienced these and hardly concentrated in doing their modular activities.

In addition, Dangle and Sumaoang (2020) also discovered students' concentration difficulties. Findings of their study revealed that students encountered main challenges like self-studying, lack of sleep and time to answer all the modules, and distractions. Students' lack of focus in doing modular tasks contributed to these. Correspondingly, Chin (2020) pointed out that focus and concentration were great challenges for students in accomplishing modular tasks. The comfort of studying at home with less or no supervision at all may divert students' attention to amusing home activities instead of prioritizing their modular activities. This case indeed happened to the participants of this study, who experienced concentration difficulties and forgot about their modules.

Generally, students' concentration difficulties greatly affected their modularized learning. Since they managed their own learning, it was vital to discipline themselves in focusing on their modular tasks. Without concentration, they hardly achieved successful modularized Oral Communication in Context learning.

3.1.4 Independent Learning Adaptation

This theme encompassed a learning process where learners began to have ownership and control of their learning with own actions through self-reliance and self-directed learning strategies. Participants manifested autonomy by becoming independent because of self-learning. Besides, they were able to discover more about independent learning, realize that one's self was the only asset in learning independently, utilize strategies to make learning process easy, and trust one's self in accomplishing new things. They also learned about the importance of study and the need to stand by one's self to help it build up.

To justify independent learning adaptation, the researchers accentuated some narratives. IDI-01 manifested her learning independence as she mentioned that:

“Self-learning teaches us to study and answer in our own, or should I say, ahm...it teaches to be...ayyy, it teaches us being an independent.”

In addition, IDI-03 also shared her discoveries about herself in terms of learning independently since she said:

“For me, I experienced knowing myself more in terms of managing my time, and I also experienced testing my capability in learning independently.”

IDI-06 supported the claims above since he was trusting himself in accomplishing new things in the new normal as he shared:

“Of course, the trust within one's self that you could do one thing though you did not still adopt the new learning strategies which are prevalent at the present.”

He also applied self-reliance since he utilized strategies in learning independently as he conveyed:

“The experience that I did in learning Oral Communication in Context through self-learning modules was doing my own strategies to ease my self-learning process.”

Further, IDI-04 confirmed learning independence since he stressed that:

“I realized that only we, could help ourselves.”

To further sum up, IDI-07 shared that:

“I learned that is very important to study, even there are pandemic or not. We need to stand by our self, help ourselves to build up.”

Correspondingly, Beltran (2021) also reported that independent learning adaptation was one of the advantages of modular approach. Students manifested independent learning adaptation through flexibility and choice. For flexibility, students had enough time to study and answer all the modular activities. While working in the comfort of their homes, they could research from different websites in case the topic was new to them. For the choices, there were different activities which would make them learn and have fun at the same time. These modular advantages were indeed true indicators of independent learning. Grade 11 students in this study tried their best to adapt independent learning by demonstrating flexibility and choice.

Similarly, students' independent learning adaptation through utilization of self-directed learning strategies adhered to the suggestions of Piseth (2020) amidst radical educational changes. Considering the highly critical situation of the COVID-19 pandemic, self-directed learning has played a crucial role in helping students cope with distance learning demands and help them transform challenges into learning opportunities. Thus, demonstrating self-directed learning strategies is an ideal way forward to adapt the new normal set-up. In addition, Vlasenko (2020) concluded that independent learning adaptation was possible since distance learning allowed students to be flexible. Besides, they could accomplish modular tasks at their own time and place. With this set-up, students learned to work well independently. This learning independence became their asset in the new normal education.

Moreover, Sok (2020) pointed out that independent learning was vital during COVID-19 pandemic since there were no physical interactions between teachers and students. With this, students began to adapt independent learning to cope with the demands of distance learning. This was evident when they employed self-directed learning strategies and motivated themselves to overcome distractions. Thus, independent learning adaptation served as their coping mechanism in the new normal. Further, Valentine (2020) stressed that compared to most face-to-face learning environments, distance learning required students to be more focused, prompt, and independent learners. Hence, modular distance learning provided opportunity for students to learn independently through self-reliance and personal strategies.

In general, students were beginning to adapt independent learning by relying upon themselves as main assets to surpass challenges and face the demands of modular distance learning. In the new normal education, Grade 11 students strived to learn Oral Communication in Context, which was not actually their major subject. They responded to this by utilizing self-directed learning strategies.

3.1.5 Beneficial Self-Directed Learning Strategies

This theme meant that strategies were advantageous to Grade 11 students in studying modularized Oral Communication in Context. Participants said that those were helpful in answering modular tasks easily without pressure; facilitative in reading without distractions and encouraging one's self to finish modular tasks completely; conducive in finding time and gaining willingness to adjust with one's self; and beneficial in building self-learning ability. To emphasize benefits of self-directed learning strategies, the researchers highlighted important narratives.

IDI-01 stressed that self-directed learning strategies were helpful in answering modular tasks easily without pressure as she said:

“It really helps me a lot to relax myself and not being pressured also. When it comes to answering, it helps me think wisely to have a good answer.”

In consonance, IDI-02 claimed that self-directed learning strategies were facilitative in reading without distractions and encouraging self to finish modular tasks completely as he mentioned:

“It was helpful to me in reading properly without problem, and it also helped me convince myself to finish this module, answer wisely, avoid being pressured, and do the modular task completely.”

IDI-03 expressed the same perspective when she said that self-directed learning strategies were useful in finding time and gaining willingness to adjust with one's self, which could be noted in her response below:

“It helps me to find time, to gain willingness to learn my lessons. It also helped me to adjust within myself in times of boredom and inactivity of my brain to study.”

Further, IDI-07 aforementioned that strategies were beneficial in building self-learning ability as she said:

“The impact of these strategies in my Oral Communication in Context through self-learning modules can build my self-learning ability.”

Similarly, Rafferty and Saddler (2020) emphasized that self-directed learning strategies were beneficial to students. Such strategies could be used to increase their opportunities to practice and respond to knowledge and academic skills in the curriculum. Individuals, who could effectively self-manage, contributed support to their behavioral needs and performed modular tasks in meaningful ways. In addition, Gonzales et al. (2020) revealed that self-directed learning strategies were beneficial. Findings of their study revealed that students did not study on a continuous basis before the pandemic. Fortunately, they established self-directed learning strategies during COVID-19. Based on these results, the researchers concluded that COVID-19 confinement changed students' learning strategies to a more continuous habit and improved their efficiency.

Moreover, Sukowati et al. (2020) stressed that students possessed self-direction in learning which motivated them to perform self-directed learning strategies as beneficial assets in learning independently. These helped them

arrange personal goals, plan strategies to achieve certain goal, and evaluate learning behaviors. With these, students better manifested learning independence, most especially in distance learning.

Generally, students' responses emphasized that self-directed learning strategies had positive and beneficial effects in studying modularized Oral Communication in Context. These strategies did not only build learning independence, but also let students accomplish modular tasks through facilitative strategies. Therefore, self-directed learning strategies served as their coping mechanisms in this unprecedented time, where language learning was modularized.

3.1.6 Teacher's Valuable Role

This theme pertained to the important role of teachers in teaching certain subject to students. This was evident when students appreciated the normal class where teacher taught them correctly; claimed that learning was hard without the teacher and nothing could replace her role; said that teacher was better than strategies; argued that learning independently was difficult unlike in school where there was teacher to instruct; and conveyed that modular way provided few learning than teacher's instructions. To further verify teacher's valuable role, the researchers featured some narratives.

IDI-02 appreciated the normal class where teacher taught students correctly as he narrated:

For me, I experienced some difficulties in this time of pandemic by performing self-learning. It was not easy to study at home without a teacher since you were exerting effort to learn using your own way. Sometimes, my learned insights were incomplete or wrong because there was no teacher to guide me in understanding more every subject. It was really different when we were learning in school since there was a teacher there to teach us correctly.

Similarly, IDI-03 claimed that learning was hard without a teacher and nothing could replace her role since she conveyed:

"As I experienced self-learning, I realized deeply the worth and value of a teacher. It was really difficult without them. Nothing can replace the role of a teacher."

Moreover, IDI-04 was saying that teacher was better than strategies as he narrated:

"...it was more convenient when you were there for us to be guided."

IDI-05 claimed the same perspective as she said that learning independently was difficult unlike in school where there was a teacher to teach as evident in her narration:

"It was not really easy to learn without a teacher because you could not understand properly the modular content; hence, it was still different when you were in school with a teacher to teach."

Finally, IDI-09 confirmed the perspectives above as he said:

"It was not easy to learn independently without a teacher who guided you because in modular way, I only learned few compared to teachers' instruction."

Likewise, Estrada (2021) highlighted teacher's valuable role in which she mentioned that modules were not substitutes for teachers. Without a knowledgeable person around who could explain confusing or complicated concepts written in the module, students could not understand modular contents. Given this case, students felt that normal class with teachers was better than the new normal with SLMs only.

Moreover, Baticulon (2020) strengthened teachers' valuable role when he revealed that students encountered difficulty in adjusting their learning styles and habits without teachers. Most of the students reported that they were having a hard time understanding materials on their own. They further added that students had difficulties in

adjusting with distance learning. Hence, they still needed guidance from their teachers. Further, Tibon (2020) agreed on teachers' valuable role since students would have limited opportunities for interaction with their teachers and classmates in distance learning. Thus, their learning outcomes might be affected, and there might be negative impacts on the students who could not easily cope with the change. These circumstances let them appreciate teachers' valuable role in learning and believe that normal class set-up with them was better than the new normal.

Finally, teachers confirmed their valuable role in educating students. This was evident in the findings of Rodriguez (2021), which presented the important services that teachers could offer even during pandemic times. In fact, teachers strived to monitor students' progress and facilitate learning through contextualization of instruction with available resources. They also admitted that there was really a need to build rapport with the students to guide their learning process and respond to their modular distance learning challenges. With teachers' valuable role, Butron (2021) suggested that mentors should monitor students' learning by consistently checking their outputs. They also needed to allocate more time in communicating with students, conducting remedial lessons, and reaching them out since students needed their assistance.

Participants' responses generally denoted that despite their adjustments and adaptations of the new normal education, they still recognized teacher's valuable role. They shared that they missed and appreciated teacher's physical presence in imparting lessons and molding them into better individuals. This made them appreciate more the normal class with teacher's physical instruction than new normal, where learning was purely independent with modules only.

3.1.7 Optimism for the Sake of Educational Benefits

This theme indicated that participants were positive in facing modular distance learning challenges since they believed that education would contribute good things in the future. Students manifested the theme since they did not lose hope for having a successful life. They also continued learning despite pandemic; instilled perseverance despite trials and remained firm to live life alive; stood still despite challenges with the belief that education is still the key to success; and promoted the need to be determined in learning for the future since it is difficult to find a job without complete education.

To prove optimism for the sake of educational benefits, the researchers highlighted some narratives. IDI-01 showed optimism when she aforementioned that she was never losing hope to have a successful life:

“Yes, I would like to share to all, especially to students that do not lose hope. Fight no matter what happen, because this is the way to have a successful and a good life; and do not forget to pray.”

Similarly, IDI-02 added up the optimism of IDI-01 by saying that:

I would like to share this thought to my fellow students that let us continue learning despite pandemic because this is the only treasure our parents could offer us in times of pandemic. We should not give up only because of this pandemic. Just fight for the future.

IDI-03 expressed the same positive outlook based on her statement:

“Sometimes, it is about having perseverance that matters the most. That despite difficulties, trials, problems, and even changes that take place, we should still fight because we need to stand for us to live our lives alive.”

In addition, IDI-05 highlighted the belief that education is still the key to success since she shared that:

I would like to share this to my fellow learners that we should continue believing that education is still the key to success in life. If we will just stay in our situation, no progressive change will happen within ourselves; hence, we will stand for our future.

In general, IDI-10 specified the perspective above into a more practical educational benefit as he expressed:

I would like to share to students that we should exert effort in learning for our future because it is hard to find job because of this pandemic now. It is not easy to find job because you will not be hired if you are not high school graduate.

Likewise, Mensah et al. (2020) proved students' optimism for the sake of educational benefits since their study revealed that in spite of the challenges associated with the abrupt changes to education set-up, more than half (53.6%) of the respondents were still motivated and managed to complete their assignments on time. Only a small percentage of students (3.4%) reported difficulty with staying motivated to learn. This result conveyed that students remained optimistic in learning despite all the challenges that came their way.

In addition, Lyceum of the Philippines University Cavite (2021) revealed that students were resilient and committed to pursue their studies despite the challenges to continue their education at home. They demonstrated optimism by responding positively to the learning hardships. Indeed, Grade 11 students manifested the same positivity as they chose to continue learning despite modular challenges.

Moreover, the value of optimism in learning was relevant. In fact, University of Waterloo (2020) suggested that students should stay motivated and positive in taking the initiative for all stages of the learning process. These stages involved being ready to learn, setting learning goals, engaging in the learning process, and evaluating learning. To do these effectively, optimism should prevail. To further support students' optimism, Imad (2020) also advised educators to help them continue learning during this time of uncertainty. They could do this by using hopeful and optimistic language. She further stressed the value of positivity in learning. Apparently, participants in this study demonstrated this element in learning independently for the sake of educational benefits.

Students' responses conveyed that they remained positive despite all the challenges they encountered. Problems were not reasons to stop them from believing that education is still the key to success. Besides, educational benefits inspired them to endure problems and apply coping mechanisms to overcome trials amidst pandemic. Therefore, students appreciated the value of education as they let optimism dominate within themselves.

3.2 Self-Directed Learning Strategies of Grade 11 SMAW Students for Modularized Oral Communication in Context

This study explored the self-directed learning strategies of Grade 11 SMAW Students in Studying Modularized Oral Communication in Context. Participants shared strategies that researchers captured in seven (7) emerging themes, namely: self-preparatory strategies, learning environment-preparatory strategies, technological learning strategies, nontechnological learning strategies, information overload-management strategies, time-management, and persistence-regulatory strategies. Table 2 presents these themes.

Table 2 Major Themes and Core Ideas on the Self-Directed Learning Strategies of Grade 11 SMAW Students for Modularized Oral Communication in Context

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Self-preparatory strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>eating first before answering the modules – IDI-02</i>• <i>relaxing one's self and sleeping to avoid mind stress – IDI-04</i>• <i>taking a bath, brushing teeth, and putting lotion– IDI-03</i>• <i>putting lotion as defense from mosquito bites – IDI-02</i>

- Learning environment-preparatory strategies
 - *considering learning facility or venue – IDI-04*
 - *finding comfortable place for answering modules – IDI-06*
 - *telling the parents to refrain from giving commands to have time with modular activities– IDI-06*
 - *finding peaceful place for learning like under the trees– IDI-09*
 - *going to friend’s house to do modular tasks there – IDI-10*

- Technological learning strategies
 - *using cellphone dictionary in understanding difficult words– IDI-02*
 - *searching difficult words on Google – IDI-10*
 - *listing down difficult topics and searching them on the internet– IDI-07*
 - *doing research to gather more information – IDI-05*
 - *seeking more information on the internet to widen knowledge – IDI-03*
 - *watching the recommended Facebook live discussion of Oral Communication in Context (TV Eskwela) – IDI-03*
 - *viewing YouTube discussions of Oral Communication in Context – IDI-03*

- Nontechnological learning strategies
 - *translating English words or sentences into Filipino– IDI-03*
 - *utilizing modular inputs and clues in understanding the lesson if nothing could be found on the internet – IDI-03*
 - *writing important details in the notebook to remember lessons– IDI-06*
 - *marking important words to get answers easily –IDI-06*
 - *reading lessons repeatedly until these would be understood – IDI-04*
 - *reading available textbooks at home– IDI-04*
 - *reviewing modular outputs to ensure completeness– IDI-05*

- Information overload-management strategies
 - *lying down and taking rest when overwhelmed with information– IDI-02*
 - *watching vlog and TikTok videos; and scrolling Facebook to chat with friends to entertain one’s self – IDI-03*
 - *playing with siblings or communicating with family for a while– IDI-03*
 - *listening to music while studying modules to relax mind – IDI-10*
 - *taking rest by watching TV to relax one’s self and avoid pressure – IDI-01*
 - *eating chocolates while reading to activate mind– IDI-04*

- Time-management
 - *discovering more about one’s self in terms of managing time– IDI-03*
 - *setting alarm clock to be reminded of the modular time – IDI-02*
 - *managing time for reading and answering –IDI-05*

- Persistence-regulatory strategies
 - *imagining possible consequence like failure and pressuring one’s self to encourage it to continue accomplishing the tasks –IDI-03*
 - *thinking about the future and family, letting things happen, and answering modular tasks if any – IDI-04*
 - *making one’s self unpressured to keep calm in doing tasks – IDI-06*
 - *striving to learn despite internet challenges and being patient – IDI-08*

3.2.1 Self-Preparatory Strategies

Self-preparation referred to students' preliminary ways or processes to prepare themselves physiologically and physically before studying modules. In this study, students utilized self-preparatory strategies to prepare themselves before doing modular tasks. These preparations involved eating first before answering the modules; relaxing one's self and mind and sleeping properly to avoid mind stress; taking a bath; brushing teeth; and putting lotion to freshen one's self and avoid mosquito bites. The researchers captured significant lines to present Grade 11 students' self-preparatory strategies.

IDI-04 made sure that he was able to relax himself first and sleep properly before doing modular tasks as evident in his response below:

"First, I relaxed myself and brain to think properly. I slept well to avoid brain stress."

Aside from sleeping, IDI-02 was very particular of eating first before studying his modules as he mentioned that:

"...eat first before studying module to feed the stomach as well as the brain; and also, find your way where you are comfortable."

After eating, IDI-03 also shared her hygienic preparations based on her statements below:

"I did my personal hygiene for me to be fresh, like toothbrushing, taking a bath, and putting lotion. Those kinds of things."

Similarly, IDI-02 also ate first and put lotion, but his main purpose was to avoid mosquito bites along reading process since he narrated that:

"...and also use lotion before learning to avoid mosquitoes and reading distractions; and eat first before doing modular tasks to feed the stomach as well as the brain..."

The mentioned self-preparatory strategies were evident in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory. This is a motivational theory in psychology that comprises a five-tier model of human needs, which are often depicted as hierarchical levels within a pyramid. From the bottom of the hierarchy upwards, the needs are physiological (food and clothing), safety (job security), love and belonging (friendship), esteem, and self-actualization. This theory further posits that physiological needs should be satisfied first before individuals can attend to higher needs (McLeod, 2020). In this study, students satisfied their physiological needs first by eating and sleeping before doing their modular tasks.

Conformably, Grade 11 SMAW students' self-preparatory strategies were also included in the list of DiGiulio et al. (2021). They accentuated the importance of preparing one's self before learning. Preparation involved sleeping properly, taking a bath, eating first, and consuming dark chocolates to activate mind. Based on the list, students in this study were in the right track of utilizing self-preparatory strategies before studying modules.

In addition, Sturge (2020) also emphasized the value of employing self-preparatory strategies among students. With this, she conveyed that eating first before doing anything else could improve students' mental health while keeping them healthy. Thus, everyone should exert effort in preparing and eating meal first. In this study, Grade 11 SMAW students really tried to cook and eat first before studying modularized Oral Communication in Context. Historically, students' relaxation technique originated in Buddhism with the term 'mindfulness'. This was a popular coping mechanism for stress or anxiety. In fact, clinicians used this to improve patients' physical and mental health since it could significantly lower stress levels. Thus, they also recommended this technique to students (Smith, 2021). Indeed, students prepared their minds through relaxation first before answering their modular tasks.

In general, findings of this study revealed that students really employed self-preparatory strategies to avoid any distractions on the process of their modular learning. Moreover, these preparations helped them ready themselves by ensuring good stomach and mind condition, feeling fresh, staying relaxed, and keeping protected from mosquitoes during their independent modular sessions.

3.2.2 Learning Environment-Preparatory Strategies

This theme referred to ways of ensuring convenient learning locations and family member awareness prior to modular learning. This was evident when students were considering learning facility or venue; finding comfortable place for answering modules; telling the parents to refrain from giving commands to have time with modular activities; finding peaceful place for learning like under the trees with fresh air; and going to friend's house before doing their modular tasks.

To convey setting of conducive learning environment, the researchers featured some narratives. IDI-04 pointed out that learning facility or venue should be considered first before answering modules when he said that:

"The one that I considered was the facility or venue where I could answer."

Similarly, IDI-06 applied the same consideration since he stated that he was finding comfortable place for answering the modules as he narrated that:

"I used self-learning strategies. For example, finding comfortable place for answering. With this, I have the freedom to answer without any disturbance."

IDI-06 further set conducive learning environment as he requested his parents to refrain from giving commands by uttering his lines:

"...and speaking of resting, I told my mother that I was doing my modular tasks for them to refrain from giving commands..."

The same was true to IDI-09 since he also searched for peaceful learning place the moment he said:

"I was finding place to avoid heat like many trees, which were not too hot and for me to inhale fresh air."

On the same vein, IDI-10 made sure that he could have comfortable learning venue by going to his friend's house where he had freedom in doing his tasks as evident in his narration below:

"I asked my aunt if I could go to my best friend's house to do modular tasks there, where I had the freedom to do what I wanted."

In consonance with the findings, Chinese students also employed home learning environment-preparatory strategies. Educators managed to deliver flexible learning and aimed to continue it despite the challenges. Hence, they allowed learners to regulate their own learning by letting them specify the time and place they wanted to study (Huang et al., 2020). Similarly, students' setting of conducive learning environment adhered to the report of Goteka (2020), where she emphasized the value of learning place. She further added that in a home learning environment, students thrived if they had a dedicated space to fix their focus on learning. Without a home environment set-up suitable for learning, the dangers of distraction would appear out of all sorts of corners. Hence, parents should help their children create a productive, motivated learning space, and stress-free learning environment.

In addition, Oxford Learning (2020) suggested home learning environment-preparatory strategies for conducive learning. It further advised students to find most comfortable learning environment before studying. In this study, participants were also finding comfortable learning place away from distractions. Moreover, Tinga (2020) stressed the necessity of preparing home-learning environment for students during pandemic. In the absence of classrooms for learning, students and their guardians must work together to recreate learning experience in their home environments. She also pointed out that each home might have its own unique challenges. In this study, Grade 11 SMAW students really coped with the distractions within their respective home-learning environments.

Summary of participants' responses manifested that conducive learning environment was significant to their learning process. This further showed that students were particular of their study area where they would be comfortable in studying their modules. Definitely, they preferred convenient place away from noise and distractions.

3.2.3 Technological Learning Strategies

Technological learning strategies referred to ways of modular lesson learning that involved the creative use of machines or electronically operated devices to overcome modular learning difficulties or supplement learning. These strategies involved using cellphone dictionary in understanding difficult words; searching difficult words on Google; listing down difficult topics and searching them on the internet; doing research to gather more information; seeking more information on the internet to widen knowledge; watching the recommended Facebook live discussion of Oral Communication in Context (TV Eskwela); and viewing YouTube discussions of Oral Communication in Context. To illustrate participants' technological learning strategies, the researchers highlighted significant narratives.

“...using dictionary in cellphone for me to understand better the difficult English words...”

Similarly, IDI-10 also looked for word meaning; but in this case, he utilized Google as manifested in his response below:

“If there were words that I could not understand, I searched them on Google.”

In addition, IDI-07 also utilized technology by listing down difficult topics and searching them on the internet as she revealed that:

“I apply some strategies to make it easy little bit for me. I will list those difficult to understand and search it on internet.”

Likewise, IDI-05 also did research to gather more information as she expressed that:

“I managed to have a research to gather more information...”

On the same vein, IDI-03 sought more information from the internet to widen her knowledge when she uttered that:

“Ahm like seek more information on internet to widen the knowledge.”

Moreover, IDI-03 maximized the use of technology by watching the recommended Facebook live and YouTube discussions of Oral Communication in Context as she added:

“I was watching Facebook live discussion of a topic in Oral Com which was recommended by our subject teacher. Sometimes, YouTube also has teachers' discussions about a certain topic that I found confusing.”

Despite the mentioned advantages of utilizing internet to supplement students' learning, they still encountered challenges. The notable challenge was the students' wasted effort in opening a lot of links and files on the internet only to find out that those did not coincide with their needed details. Consequently, they got distracted with other websites.

This problem was evident in the narration of IDI-03 when she mentioned that:

Sometimes, there was no accurate or specific explanation related to the topic that confused me. Like, I still needed to open a lot of files for me to come up with the thought I searched. This became more confusing and time-consuming. And the worst, there were no congruent thoughts.

In consonance with the student's positive impressions and problems with technological learning strategies, findings of another study also revealed that senior high school students in Bulacan utilized social media platforms in searching for additional information and improving their communication skills. Hence, this strategy was beneficial to some students. However, other students found social media platform as distraction to their studies (Jacinto et al., 2021).

Despite the distractions that technology brought, Santillan and Daenos (2020) still discovered that Grade 11 students employed different learning strategies such as using dictionary and surfing the internet. These strategies were helpful for them in understanding vocabulary and supplementing their knowledge of the lessons in the SLMs. Moreover, Constantino et al. (2020) confirmed the utilization of technological learning strategies in learning modules. Results of their study revealed that 96% of the respondents had internet connection, and 89% utilized Wi-Fi to have internet access at home. Besides, they utilized personal computers in studying independently. This showed that students supplemented their modular learning with varied information from the internet. However, they still experienced challenges such as lack or limited access to the internet and poor internet connection in their area.

Students' technological learning strategies were also true to Young (2020), who enumerated self-directed learning strategies in language learning. One of the notable strategies involved replacing difficult examples or contents in a set of established learning resources by finding alternative examples on the internet. Through this self-language learning strategy, students explored their own learning styles, discovered their personal preferences, and gained more confidence in learning.

Further, UNESCO introduced the use of Google, TV broadcasts, video lectures, and online channels to students during distance learning. In fact, different countries worldwide utilized these learning platforms during pandemic to continue the education process and compensate distance learning challenges (Tria, 2020). Accordingly, Grade 11 students in this study utilized TV Ekwela, Facebook live discussions, and YouTube videos to supplement their modularized Oral Communication in Context.

In spite of the mentioned technological challenges, majority of the participants' responses manifested the utilization of technological learning strategies in dealing with the actual modular content. They utilized these strategies in understanding and answering modular tasks. Hence, these strategies were helpful to them in studying modularized Oral Communication in Context, where learning was independent without teacher's presence.

3.2.4 Nontechnological Learning Strategies

This theme referred to ways of modular learning without using machines or electronically operated devices. In this study, students still utilized these learning strategies in understanding modular content despite the technological trends. These strategies involved translating English words or sentences into Filipino for easy understanding; utilizing modular inputs and clues in understanding lesson; writing important details in the notebook to remember lessons; marking important words to get answers easily; reading lessons repeatedly until they would be understood; reading available textbooks at home to supplement lesson understanding; and reviewing modular outputs to ensure completeness of the answers.

To illustrate participants' nontechnological learning strategies, the researchers featured some narratives.

IDI-03 utilized translation strategy which was obvious in her response below:

"If I got confused, I did research to make it clear, or sometimes, I translated sentences from English to Filipino."

She added that she was utilizing modular inputs and clues in understanding the lesson if nothing could be found on the internet as evident in her statement below:

"Sometimes. . . I did not complicate the situation. If there was no congruent thought, I just focused on the modular content..."

IDI-06 also applied nontechnological strategy; but unlike IDI-03, he was more concerned with remembering lessons by writing important details in the notebook as he said:

"To remember my learned thoughts, I had a storage of the important details, which I called collection of knowledge. Actually, that was just a notebook."

IDI-06 added another nontechnological learning strategy which was marking important words to easily get correct answers as apparent in his response below:

“To easily get the correct answer, it was effective for me to put signs of the important words.”

IDI-04 shared more nontechnological learning strategies since he applied the repeated reading strategy until he could understand the lesson since he narrated that:

(I repeatedly read the lesson until I got it...)

He also utilized available textbooks at home as he said:

“...I sought help from the textbooks that I saw or read.”

Before ending modular tasks, IDI-05 made sure that she could review her paper to ensure completeness of answers as she mentioned:

“Reviewing to answer in order to gain score or review the paper to see if there were missing and unsubmitted parts.”

Likewise, Santillan and Daenos (2020) substantiated participants' nontechnological learning strategies as findings of their study revealed that Grade 11 students reread difficult words in the module to understand them. Another strategy was using context clues in the same sentence and paragraph. They analyzed how words were used in the sentence. Other strategies they utilized were analyzing word structure, associating difficult words with familiar ones and experiences, and practicing reading as a habit.

Similarly, Fernando (2020) reported some nontechnological learning strategies since he pointed out that modular learning required students to read and reread. Reading plays an important role in understanding lesson inputs. Hence, students must develop reading habit. Apparently, Oxford Learning (2020) also suggested nontechnological learning strategy like organizing information in notes to keep students guided. Thus, it suggested that they should employ organization strategy. This involved listing of important details, tasks, and priorities. In this study, participants organized information by writing important details in their notebooks for easy reference.

Further, Werell (2021) suggested some nontechnological learning strategies. She emphasized the value of reading by scanning text headings, subheadings, and illustrations first. Besides, she also highlighted the need to focus on digesting small pieces of information at once and recall all the lessons. These strategies purely focused on texts without using any technologies. These were helpful in the absence of gadgets and internet connection.

Participants' responses revealed that they still utilized nontechnological learning strategies even in the advent of the new normal education. This happened since they encountered problems like confusion and temptation while searching information on the internet. Besides, internet connection and gadgets were not always available. Hence, they still needed to go back to their usual learning strategies.

3.2.5 Information Overload-Management Strategies

This theme referred to students' techniques and approaches to direct activities and behavior easily for the purpose of regulating learning against information overload. These strategies involved lying down and taking rest when loaded with information; watching vlog and TikTok videos; scrolling Facebook to chat with friends to entertain one's self; playing with siblings or communicating with family members for a while; listening to music while studying modules; taking rest by watching TV; and eating chocolates while reading to activate mind. To verify participants' self-management strategies against information overload, the researchers highlighted some narratives.

IDI-02 narrated that he was lying down and taking a rest when loaded with information as he shared:

“...lie down and rest if could no longer understand the text being read and for the brain to restart...”

Other ways of regulating learning were employing media entertainment strategies and interpersonal strategies as apparent in the response of IDI-03 below:

“Watching vlog, TikTok videos, and scrolling the Facebook. Chat with my friends on FB to entertain myself... or play with my siblings or share stories for a while with my family.”

Another entertaining strategy was listening to music while studying modules as apparent in the response below:

“While studying modules, I played music to make my mind relaxed.”

Next on the list was IDI-01 who used to take rest by watching TV when she mentioned that:

“Get some rest when I'm bored like watching TV...”

On the other hand, IDI-04 said that he was eating chocolates to make the mind active as evident in his statement:

“I put chocolates at my side to make my brain active.”

The presented overload-management strategies were true in the findings of Calo et al. (2021) since they revealed that students in Pagadian City took a break and rest when overwhelmed with too much information. Since students struggled with absorbing lots of information, they had to take short breaks by resting and entertaining themselves. These ways helped them regulate learning by relaxing themselves to be prepared again for the continuation of their modular tasks.

Conformably, students' self-management strategies against information overload were beneficial. Thus, students should find a spot that worked for them. This suggestion implied that they should manage their learning in a way that they would be comfortable. They were free to decide if they needed music for learning, silent, or noisy place as long as they could better manage themselves from information overload (Oxford Learning, 2020). In addition, Cazaly (2021) stressed the importance of employing self-management strategies against information overload. After a period of intense work or focus, individuals should take micro breaks and stay hydrated. They could do these by chatting with other persons and eating snacks to feed the brain. Consequently, brain might work well and reduce cognitive load.

Specifying the snacks, Manning (2020) reported that based on Cargill's new Choco Logic study, one-third of consumers increased their chocolate consumption as a result of COVID-19. Statistically, 75% of the respondents perceived chocolate as a reward, 72% said that it was a mood booster, and 59% agreed that it increased their energy. More than half turned to chocolate to get them through a difficult day. The company also made chocolate with helpful ingredients for people to deal with stress. These benefits justified students' reasons for eating chocolates, most especially that they were having hard time in accomplishing modular tasks.

Responses of the participants indicated that information overload was inevitable during modular session, especially that they were studying modules independently. To overcome it, they took rest by lying down, utilized media entertainment strategies, communicated with persons around, and ate chocolates to make learning active, fun, easy, and comfortable.

3.2.6 Time-Management

This theme referred to students' act in organizing and planning how to divide time between household and modular learning activities effectively and productively. This was evident when each student was discovering more about one's self in terms of managing time; allocating time for reading and answering; and setting alarm clock to be reminded of the modular task. To verify participants' time-management skill, the researchers featured relevant narratives.

IDI-03 shared that she was able to discover her capacity in terms of managing her time as presented in her narration below:

“For me, I experienced to know myself more in terms of managing my time...”

Similarly, IDI-05 also mentioned that she allocated time in reading and answering modules as manifested in her response below:

“I managed my time in reading and answering modules.”

IDI-02 further demonstrated time management when he set alarm clock for modular time as evident in his narration below:

“...and when you wanted to sleep and lie down, set the alarm first to avoid forgetting the module...”

On the same vein, Angeles et al. (2021) proved the development of time-management among students during modular distance learning. Findings of their study exposed that modular distance learning contributed positive impact to students as it taught them to gain more skills like time management and better self-awareness. Time management helped them balance their time between competing activities like modular tasks and household chores.

Similarly, Life & Health Advisor (2020) also conveyed the effectiveness of time-management in dividing hours productively. Life is composed of competing tasks that everyone needs to attend to. However, the challenge lies on how individuals manage their time specifically in learning, working, and resting. With proper time-management, all of the activities could be finished accordingly.

Apparently, time-management was an effective response toward asynchronous activity like modular set-up. Since this learning modality did not provide much sense of accountability and close-monitor as what face-to-face education offered, there was a tendency for students to get lost and disorganize their tasks. Hence, it could be helpful for them to demonstrate one important executive function, which was developing time-management skill (Tutor Doctor, 2021).

In addition, Mensah et al. (2020) revealed that the development of time-management skill was one of the positive outcomes of distance learning. In fact, 21 responses from the in-depth interview conveyed that students had more time to work on assignments. Hence, they learned to self-manage by learning at their own time and pace. Moreover, Garcia (2020) emphasized that students found modular distance learning more flexible, reasonable, and convenient in the current situation. With modular distance learning, students could set their own schedule to finish modular tasks. Indeed, time-management was a good indicator and stepping stone toward embracing the demands of independent learning in the new normal. With time-management skill, students might better accomplish their tasks on time without pressure.

In general, students were able to develop time-management skill in studying modularized Oral Communication in Context. This served as their way of balancing their time between modular learning and other competing tasks at home. Based on the presented literatures, managing time was a manifestation of independent learning since students learned to decide, plan, and take modular activities systematically.

3.2.7 Persistence-Regulatory Strategies

This theme referred to ways of regulating emotion, attitude, motivation, and values to continue learning despite the challenges. Participants demonstrated persistence by imagining consequence like failure and pressuring one's self to encourage it to continue accomplishing the tasks; thinking about the future and family and letting things happen as they were; making one's self unpressured to keep calm in doing tasks; and striving to learn despite the internet challenges, and letting patience dominate.

The strategies were evident when IDI-03 motivated herself by imagining possible consequence like failure and pressuring herself to continue accomplish tasks as evident in her response below:

One way of handling the situation for me is...I thought of the possible outcome when ignoring or tolerating the hardship that I experienced. And through pressuring

myself is my way of encouraging myself that I could do it. Mostly, I used this method in which I took a deep breath and told myself: I could do it!

The other way around, IDI-04 was thinking about the future and family and letting things happen as they were since he said:

“First, I just thought of my future and my family. I just let everything flow on its own way like if there was something to be answered, I just answered it.”

On the other hand, IDI-06 kept himself unpressured in order to be calm in doing modular tasks as he mentioned:

“Of course, the difficult experience was there; so, I make myself unpressured to be calm in doing things that I needed to finish.”

With the same intention to keep persistent, IDI-08 also mentioned that he was still learning despite insufficient internet connection and letting patience dominate as he stressed that:

“The thing that I learned from myself based on my observation in times of pandemic, was the dominance of perseverance or continuation of my education despite the insufficient internet connection...”

In consonance with the students' persistence-regulatory strategies, Tipon et al. (2021) discovered that students were persistent despite modular distance learning challenges. Their high self-efficacy or willingness to try, persevere, and succeed at a task enabled them to continue learning by employing strategies that regulated their persistence. These strategies involved self-motivation and continuous task accomplishment.

Accordingly, Kofahi and Srinivas (2020) also revealed that distance learning trained students to learn self-learning mechanisms by regulating persistence while enhancing their intellectual and thinking abilities. Thus, this type of learning required them to develop self-motivation and self-discipline. They further explained that self-motivation is an inner spirit that drives one's self to be capable of doing whatever the mind requires to do. In the same way, students' motivation directed them to keep persistent in accomplishing modular tasks despite the challenges.

Moreover, Parker (2020) claimed that students' emotional needs should be regulated before learning. Emotions undeniably affected students' language learning, especially during distance learning because of the growing problems. Indeed, participants of this study were in the right track toward facing modular difficulties by regulating their persistence through self-motivation and determination.

As a whole, participants' responses showed that they were utilizing persistence-regulatory strategies by controlling their emotions, attitudes, motivations, and values. These strategies were beneficial for them since their feelings and motivation affected their learning. Hence, they believed that motivation, confidence, and calmness helped them continue their learning despite the temptations, distractions, and troubles.

3.3 Self-Directed Learning Strategy Toolbox

Considering students' learning difficulties and capturing their self-directed learning strategies, the authors created self-directed learning strategy toolbox. This aims to guide and assist students by collecting and presenting tips in overcoming independent learning hardships while studying modules. Below are the topics for this toolbox.

- I. Overcoming Subject Learning Difficulties
 - I.I Learning new and unfamiliar lesson through PQRSST Method;
 - I.II Understanding difficult English words/phrases through Context Clues; and
 - I.III Constructing sentences through basic English rules.
- II. Conquering Home Learning Environment Distractions
- III. Sustaining Concentration Despite Temptations
- IV. Adapting New Normal Education: A Concluding Message

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents the conclusion and recommendations based on the findings of the study.

4.1 Conclusion

Students experienced challenges in studying modularized Oral Communication in Context which involved subject learning difficulties, home learning environment distractions, and concentration difficulties. Despite these, they adapted independent learning, perceived self-directed learning strategies as beneficial, realized teacher's valuable role, and showed optimism for the sake of educational benefits.

Students' self-directed learning strategies included self-preparation, learning environment-preparation, technological learning, nontechnological learning, information overload-management, time-management, and persistence-regulatory strategies. These helped them overcome learning difficulties.

4.2 Recommendations

Based on the aforementioned findings and conclusions of this study, the researchers offer the following recommendations.

Students. They might assess their learning ability and reflect on their learning process upon identification of their experiences and self-directed learning strategies. These might let them realize that modular distance learning challenges were not reasons to stop learning since there were still solutions. Thus, they might utilize the author's Self-Directed Learning Strategy Toolbox: A Student Guide in Overcoming Modular Distance Learning Challenges as output of this study. This toolbox contained scholarly and research-based tips to guide them in surmounting modularized Oral Communication in Context difficulties.

Teachers. It might be beneficial for teachers to reflect on students' experiences and self-directed learning strategies to better understand them, assess their learning process, and act accordingly. Responding to their subject learning difficulties, teachers might consider Modification or Delimitation of Modular Tasks while hitting the needed competencies. Modules contained varied enrichment tasks, and it might be tedious for students to completely submit all the tasks. Teachers might try to limit important activities only and modify difficult tasks to make them comprehensible. Since students also appreciate their valuable role in teaching, they might strengthen communication with students through Messenger chat and text messages. The purposes of this communication are to respond to students' queries, supplement their learning with additional points, enhance their strategies by suggesting tips, and encourage them to continue learning despite hardships.

Parents/Guardians. Parents and guardians also served as teachers in the new normal. With this role, it might be beneficial for them to be aware of their children's experiences and self-directed learning strategies to support them accordingly. Since students experienced home learning environment distractions and concentration difficulties, parents might perform some actions to provide them with a Conducive Home Learning Environment by eliminating noise and turning off distractions at home like television and gadgets; and refraining from giving commands during students' modular sessions. Further, they might also support students' utilization of technology in accomplishing modular tasks by providing them with gadgets if and only they could afford. In regulating students' technological use, they might also advise them on the proper and disciplined use of gadgets.

Learning Resource (LR) Writers. LR writers might consider Contextualization of SLMs to address students' subject learning difficulties due to unfamiliar words, deep-meaning questions, complicated statements, and hard modular tasks. Contextualization involved the simplicity of used words, sentence construction, and question formulation; utilization of SMAW terms or any local scenarios as lesson examples; and appropriateness of modular tasks to students' level and specialization. With this, they might also integrate the idea of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) in designing modular activities by bringing Oral Communication in Context to their field of interest to deliver relevant and meaningful learning.

Curriculum Designers. The revealed experiences and self-directed learning strategies of Grade 11 SMAW students might be considered as guide and basis for curriculum designers in crafting the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs). Since students encountered subject learning difficulties due to lesson unfamiliarity, curriculum designers might consider Unpacking of MELCs to modify content, performance standards, and competencies in accordance to SMAW students' needs, learning strategies, and area of interest. Thus, they might

craft a Specialized Oral Communication in Context MELCs for SMAW students and any other technical-vocational strands. With this, students might relate English to their own context, learn it meaningfully, and utilize it in explaining SMAW procedures. They might also apply it in responding to simulated job interviews, writing application letters for future careers, and performing any other related TVL activities that required language use.

DepEd Policymakers/Educational Leaders. With the students' subject learning difficulties, DepEd might strengthen and enhance its policy on Evaluation of SLMs for Quarters 3 and 4 for School Year 2020-2021 (DepEd Order 001, s. 2021) to establish a systematic process of quality assurance. The researcher suggested the evaluation of SLMs not only for specific quarters, but also for all quarters every school year.

Aside from focusing on modular content, language, and layout/design as general criteria, policy makers might also consider contextualization. This involved the integration of SMAW and any other technical-vocational terms to subject content, presentation, and delivery for easy and meaningful learning. This was aligned to the Policy Guidelines on the K to 12 Basic Education Program (DepEd Order 021, s. 2019), which enforced curriculum contextualization by putting premium to students' needs and interests.

Moreover, they might also consider the advancement of Learning Resource Evaluator (LRE) committee for every SLM evaluation. LRE committee can be composed of a curriculum specialist, subject expert, technical-vocational expert, language expert, and classroom teacher. They might look into the different aspects of SLMs like competencies, lesson content, specialization integration, sentence construction and word usage, and actual educational context.

Further, DepEd might also continue the policy on Adjustment to School Calendar and Activities (DepEd Order 012, s. 2021) every school year to implement Interventions for Learning Gaps and Intensifying Learning Gains for students and In-Service Training (INSET) for teachers. With this policy, schools might focus on the implementation of interventions like scheduled home visits for students at risk; webinar and orientation on self-directed learning strategies via convenient online platforms to enrich students' existing strategies; and contextualized teachers' video lessons for students' most requested topics to better address learning difficulties. They might also equip teachers with competence in assisting students' modularized learning through INSET topics like Online Communication Platforms and Proper Modification or Delimitation of Modular Tasks since students really appreciated their valuable role in learning.

Future Researchers. The findings of this study might inspire future researchers to conduct a related study on Educational Key Players' Perspectives toward Students' Experiences and Self-Directed Learning Strategies. This study might serve as response or feedback to students' experiences and validation of their strategies based on the perspectives of education leaders, teachers, and parents. Since COVID-19 related topics and SMAW studies had only limited reviews and literatures due to currency and rareness, the authors encouraged future researchers to gain competence in maximizing and connecting ideas and have access from varied research sources like ResearchGate, Google Scholar, and Google itself. The authors also conveyed the value of competence, resourcefulness, patience, determination, and persistence as self-assets in finishing a study.

Ethical Approval & Consent

In conducting this study, the ethical considerations of qualitative research such as informed consent, confidentiality, justice, and conflict of interest were considered.

In this study, the researchers obtained participants' agreement to participation after a thorough explanation of the research process. They also kept the identity of participants confidential by keeping and protecting their names. In collecting data, they respected the convenient time and interview mode of the participants without forcing or abusing them to participate the interview despite their inconvenience. Lastly, they positioned themselves outside the participants' responses.

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