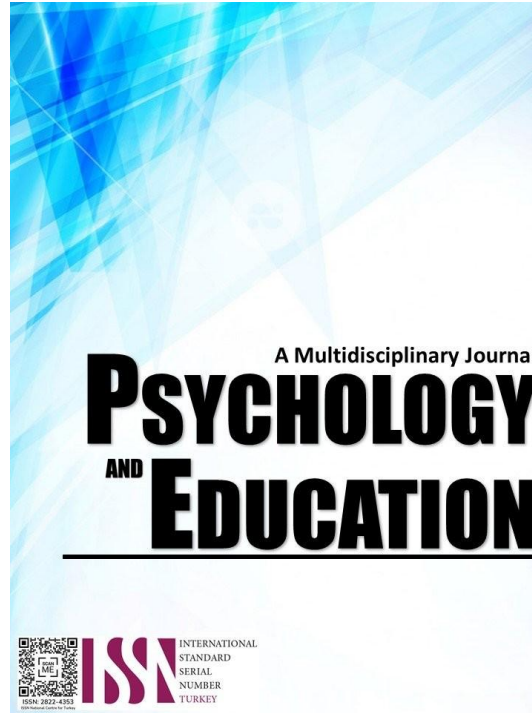


A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY ON TEACHERS' USE OF THE 4A'S FRAMEWORK IN ENGLISH INSTRUCTION



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A Phenomenological Study on Teachers' Use of The 4A's Framework in English Instruction

Lea Joy Bero-Margen,* Kristopher M. Ngilangil
For affiliations and correspondence, see the last page.

Abstract

This phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of teachers' in using the 4A's framework for English Instruction of mainstreamed learners with special needs at Manhuyay Elementary School. Grounded in Stephen Krashen's Input Hypothesis ("i+1".) of his Theory of Second Language Acquisition, the study employed Colaizzi's descriptive phenomenological method to get into the core of these teachers' lives. Analysis of interview data revealed six theme clusters, categorized into three major themes: the empowering inclusive teaching amidst challenges, fostering engagement and language development, and the transformative power of 4A's framework. Findings showed that the framework empowers the teachers to create inclusive and engaging English instruction for mainstreamed context requiring flexibility and resourcefulness, yet they also experience personal growth and resilience. They use the 4A's framework as an effective approach but recommends the necessity for focused support and training, collaboration with SPED, and DepEd support and fund the integration of the 4A's Framework in mainstreamed setting for broader academic impact and adaptability.

Keywords: *4As' framework, English instruction, mainstreamed, learners with special needs, phenomenological study*

Introduction

The word "special needs" encompasses a broad spectrum of diagnoses, from problems that go away quickly to ones that can be a lifetime struggle. Given this diversity, inclusion has become a fundamental principle of many education systems globally (Ainscow, 2020).

Therefore, the call for effective inclusive teaching has intensified. In the absence of such support and customized approaches, learners with special needs risk falling behind, compromising educational quality and equity.

Although there are policies designed to promote inclusivity, many teachers are not familiar with the inclusive education teaching methodology (Zagona et al., 2017). In addition, many teachers are unable to adequately implement inclusive education concepts due to time constraints and large class sizes (Materechera, 2020).

Reported many kids and young people in need of special support Ministry of Education Research (2019) and Nordahl et al. (2018) are not getting the support they need.

These challenges underscored the significant difficulties learners with special needs which hinder their ability to fully engaging with English instruction. This situation highlighted the urgent need for effective instructional frameworks, a variety of teaching strategies can be used while working with students that have learning disabilities, according to Ford (2013).

While the 4A's framework, grounded in Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, could offer a solution that can enhance student engagement and language acquisition (Dewajing et al., 2019). But little is known about the 4A's framework for students with special needs only (Sharma & Salend, 2016). There is limited research on the ways teachers adapted the 4A's framework to fulfill the unique demands of students with particular needs, and understanding these adaptations is important for improving English instruction and learner outcomes.

This study aimed to address these gaps by exploring teachers' lived experiences at Manhuyay Elementary School in using the 4A's framework for English Instruction of mainstreamed learners with special needs.

Research Objectives

This phenomenological qualitative research study aimed to explore teachers' lived experiences in using the 4A's framework for English Instruction of mainstreamed learners with special needs at Manhuyay Elementary School, Malimono District, Surigao del Norte Division.

Literature Review

Legal Basis

The following laws, policies, and official issuances provide the legal foundation for this study:

DepEd Order No. 010, Series of 2024. Policy Guidelines on The Implementation of MATATAG Curriculum
Schools Division Memorandum No. 607, 2024 (Surigao del Norte).

Division Training Workshop for Grades 4–8 Receiving Teachers on SNED Content and Pedagogy and on Filipino Sign Language (FSL) to SNED and General Education Teachers.

DepEd Order No. 23, Series of 2022. Child Find Policy for Learners with Disabilities Towards Inclusive Education

Republic Act No. 11650 (2022). An Act Instituting a Policy of Inclusion and Services for Learners with Disabilities in Support of Inclusive Education, Establishing Inclusive Learning Resource Centers of Learners with Disabilities in All Schools Districts,

Municipalities and Cities, Providing for Standards, Appropriating Funds Therefor, And for Other Purposes

DepEd Order No. 44, Series of 2021. Policy Guidelines on the Provision of Educational Programs and Services for Learners with Special Disabilities in the K to 12 Basic Education Program

DO 42, s. 2016. Policy Guidelines on Daily Lesson Preparation for the K to 12 Basic Education Program

Kolb's Learning Cycle and the 4As Framework in Inclusive English Language Instruction

Since Kolb's Theory of Learning relies heavily on active learning, the Kolb Learning Method is a viable method. The lesson plan was developed using this framework (Kolb, 1984) whose model remains influential (Seaman et al., 2017). It develops vital abilities like communication, teamwork, creativity, and critical thinking (Supena et al., 2021).

Students actively participate in the learning process through experiential learning. A key component of "learning by doing" is student participation (Munge, Thomas, & Heck, 2018). Based on firsthand experience (Seaman, Brown, & Quay, 2017), it is a "hands on," task-oriented procedure (Dorfsman & Horenczyk, 2017) that requires learners to be actively involved (Füz, 2018; Munge). Additionally, it places a strong emphasis on student-centered learning, active participation, and the development of 21st-century skills in addition to critical thinking, teamwork, communication, and creativity (Chan, 2023). In the mainstreamed classroom, this renders learning meaningful from making knowledge through refiguring experience, Dunlap et al. (2016). (Clark et al., 2010) this immediate interaction with learning events requires active student participation, as opposed to the passivity that typically characterizes teacher-led instruction.

In conclusion, Kolb's experiential learning model (1984) comprises four stages, consisting of Lesson's Phases (4As), which constitute an experience-based learning model:

As mentioned in s. 2016 of Deped Order No.42 the policy was released in 2016 with the idea that preparation is essential to guaranteeing the delivery of instruction and learning. The goal of the policy is to assist educators in maintaining high standards of education by reaffirming the significance of instructional planning through the creation of Detailed Lesson Plans (DLP) or Daily Lesson Logs (DLL). In addition to the ten (10) instructional phases listed from a to j with corresponding descriptions, this also includes sections that fall under the method and can be grouped under the four A's listed in this order.

The Activity phase (concrete experience) is the initial stage that serves as the foundation for students' learning, allowing them to build on their prior knowledge and clarify what they will learn. Students get a backward look at the subject and cultivate interest and curiosity through stimulating activities. This stage establishes the foundation for an educational journey that has purpose. Students are given valuable feedback to enhance their learning and are actively engaged (Arianti, 2019). Teacher in this phase, begins the lesson by showing pictures of the topic. Engage the students in a group discussion where they describe the pictures using adjectives, adverbs, etc. Ask them to compare the objects or individuals on the basis of size, height, age, etc.

In addition, the teacher can make participation even more active by including group work by using a 'Think-Pair-Share' protocol. During the 'Think' phase, students reflected on their own thoughts about what they were noticing or wondering about the images. Then they had a chance to share what they had thought with a partner during the 'Pair' phase. At the end of the 'Share' phase, the whole-class shared ideas about the images based on what multiple pairs had thought. This process encourages student participation, and promotes deeper thinking, engages students to voice their ideas and listen to others: and includes perspectives in a collaborative manner.

Analysis phase (active reflection), the second phase probes deeper into the lesson, stimulating students to process and categorize information. Teachers shift from a lecturing to a facilitation role, walking students through provocative questions. By critically examining the validity of ideas, students expand their viewpoint while moving closer to the core topic. Teacher demonstrates examples of comparatives and superlatives and lead the students to form sentences with comparative and superlative forms. Request the students to study the sentences and observe rules and patterns to form comparative and superlative forms. Conduct a class discussion in which students share their findings and observations. And ask them questions to help them deepen their understanding, like "How do irregular adjectives form comparative and superlative forms, or what are the typical suffixes to create these forms?" (Kim et al., 2019) this stage invites learners to engage their critical thinking skills and sharpen their knowledge, which demand them to use necessary questioning, innovation, and cooperation. Teacher in this phase, provide examples, ask the learners to analyze and identify the rules. Teacher facilitates the discussion and pose questions to deepen the understanding.

Abstraction phase (abstract conceptualization), the third phase where the teacher focuses entirely on the lesson, reinforcing students' existing knowledge while guiding them toward a deeper understanding. By asking open-ended questions, instructors help students

assimilate the lesson's importance and make connections to their everyday lives. Students get a sense of ownership and appreciation for the subject matter when the content is connected to real-life scenarios. Lead the students to generalize the main points and ideas of the lesson. Recap the patterns and rules for creating comparative and superlative forms, stressing the need to use them correctly and appropriately in English. Ask students to reflect on actual situations where they can use these language structures effectively. This stimulates students to question, explore challenges, and seek solutions through investigation and critical thinking (Ghaemi & Mirsaeed, 2017).

Application phase (active experimentation), the fourth stage is the that encourages students to implement their learning in practical terms. Through thinking about how they can use their new knowledge, students find creative means to enhance and build on what they have learned. Teacher gives practical activities and tasks in which students can practice what they have learned. For instance, they may write comparative and superlative sentences describing their classmates or make a poster comparing various products or locations.

Asked students to discuss or role-play in which they use comparative and superlative forms to describe opinions and preferences, or make comparisons. And encourage students to think about how they can use these language structures in their daily communication in English. This stage facilitates creativity, problem-solving, and application of knowledge to the world around them. Students that possess critical thinking and problem-solving skills are able to tackle complicated challenges and make wise decisions (Potts, 2019).

It is anticipated that teachers will use the 4As as the framework for their lessons in a variety of areas. According to the policy, experts concur that a lesson plan should try to address the following questions: What should be taught, how should it be taught, and how should learning be evaluated? However, there are limited studies and still underexplored by many researchers on the direct application of 4A's framework in English instruction among learners with special needs in mainstreamed setting suggesting a significant gap in the literature.

Inclusive Education: Global Perspectives and DepEd's Initiatives in the Philippines

Education is frequently described as the equalizer of society because of its capacity to cultivate intellectual and personal development (Singh et al., 2020). Inclusive Education (IE) is the Department of Education's strategy to enhance participation in the Philippines among children with disabilities Baog et al. (2022). The education of children with disabilities continues to be a major challenge on a global scale (Rapp and Corral-Granados, 2024).

Despite its importance, the definition of IE is often inadequate, with students misunderstanding it and teachers needing to properly assess it. (Savarimuthu et al., 2021) observed that in today's society, children with disabilities are the most marginalized and underprivileged group. This highlighted the wide problem of exclusion and inequality which these children experience in so many areas of their lives, from school to health and social contact. Studies have shown (Lualhati, 2022) that inclusion in general classroom environments increases participation and moves learning towards grade-level performance, enhancing the health of students. In their study, Kart and Kart (2021) showed how including students with impairments in regular classroom settings benefits both them and the majority of their peers without disabilities. Nonetheless, it is clear that students with disabilities have difficulty gaining equitable access to high-quality education (Singh et al., 2020). This vision goes beyond conventional education paradigms and requires consideration of what inclusivity actually belongs to our societies and schools (Basit and Arif, 2022).

A report revealed from UNESCO's 2020 Global Education Monitoring (GEM) worldwide, only 68% of all nations have a definition of inclusive education in their policies, practices and laws. Among these is the Philippines, to meet the challenges discussed, the Department of Education has several programs to facilitate inclusive education. One of these is DepEd Order No. 23, Series of 2022, which focuses on identifying students with impairments and guarantees that they have equal access to education without discrimination. In order to guarantee that everyone has access to education, the State is required under RA No. 11650 (2022) to uphold and advance all citizens' rights. Additionally, DepEd Order No. 010, s. The K-12 Basic Education Program emphasizes inclusive education as a core value in 2024, highlighting the need to give every student equitable educational opportunity.

At the DepEd Language and Inclusion Summit on May 19, 2023, Vice President Sara Duterte reiterated this commitment with a focus on providing equal educational opportunities to all learners, including IP, Lumad, Muslim, and PWD learners (Duterte, 2023). DepEd also provided additional support for these projects by issuing DepEd Order No. 44, Series of 2021, which establishes policy guidelines to regulate education programs and services for students with disabilities in the K-12 Basic Education Program. This call towards inclusiveness sits well within the Department's actions in its partnership with the Global Education Monitoring in 2020, (Briones, 2020) further proving its adherence towards inclusive education concerning all learners those who would have special educational needs, like others.

In line with this, the Schools Division Memorandum No.607, 2024 of Surigao Del Norte this is actually about fortifying the educator's capacity so that instruction may become meaningful while fostering skills for diverse needs for learners of the entire division. Nunez and Rosales (2021) found that despite their lack of formal training, teachers in the Philippines still have favorable attitudes and perceptions of inclusive education. On their own, though, they are insufficient. Curriculum specialists must prioritize integrating a unique curriculum while also ensuring that the academic demands of various children are satisfied (Rosales, 2020). Addressing student diversity in curriculum delivery can help teachers fulfill the DepEd MATATAG agenda, which emphasizes the need of fostering a good learning environment, providing inclusive education, and caring for students' well-being (Department of Education, 2023).

(UNESCO, 2020) Ensuring that teachers have the necessary skills and knowledge is essential to recognizing diversity and promoting inclusion in the classroom.

However, a significant gap persists in providing adequate teacher preparation, (Erni & Dewi, 2024) particularly in low-resource settings.

Learners with Special Needs

Many teachers expressed that they felt unprepared to deal with the diverse variety of special needs and learning difficulties found in inclusive classrooms, which could result in instructional gaps. This lack of preparedness might ultimately impede the learning process by causing irritation for both teachers and students (Hadiana, Kulsum, Aminah, et.al, 2024). Children who struggle with language issues in mainstreamed classrooms usually rely on language to communicate. Examples of how language can be for this group include the use of vague words like "thing," filler words like "hmmm" and "ehhh," and simple errors in verb tenses, words, and expressions.

While some people learn better visually, others learn best acoustically or kinesthetically. Nonetheless, some people perform better in a classroom with a lot of structure, while others benefit from more flexibility and spontaneity (Brissett, 2019). Additionally, interacting with proficient children who demonstrated strong academic achievement taught learning impairments a lot as well (Taylor, 2019). (Emmy, 2020) LSENs may have a persistent speech error due to the lack of assistive language devices, which include speech kits and audiometers, among others. Other communication disorders, like fluency disorders characterized by stuttering, aggravate language acquisition further (Saad & Kamel, 2019). (Indriati, 2022) for children diagnosed with autism, intellectual disability, or other neurological impairments, broken brain and speech function will translate to slow development in language. (Guler, 2020) teachers in this concern have difficult time distinguishing challenges in linguistics proficiency from cognitive disability.

Vocabulary, grammar, and articulation are among the linguistic skills that seem to be mostly retained. The challenges with prosody and abstract language use, on the other hand, are readily apparent. According to (Miyauchi, 2020), the particular difficulties that kids with LSENs encounter when learning English in regular classroom environments are being increasingly acknowledged. The phonological errors noticed in cases of autism and echolalia needs to be pinpointed since they significantly influence elementary communication skills (Kiogora, 2021).

However, it's crucial to remember that if a child struggles with language processing, communication, or engagement, these concerns are probably evident in both or all of their languages (Garraffa et al., 2019). Students facing difficulties in oral expression avoid classroom procedures since they are afraid of being ridiculed about their speech (Njoroge & Nyakundi, 2023). (Tambyraja et al., 2020) where interventions are not administered on time, such students will likely be alienated in society and perform miserably at school.

In ID children with ADHD, language development is once again delayed due to cognitive deficits and problems in sustaining attention (Rapport & Eckrich, 2020). (Moses & Mohamad, 2019) in writing English has always been difficult for students learning it as a second language. Students' vocabulary and diction (Fareed et al., 2019), comprehension of grammatical characteristics (Bulqiyah et al., 2021), concept generation and exploration processes (Ceylan, 2019), organization (Toba et al., 2019), and training (Ceylan, 2019) are some of the variables that contribute to the challenges.

However, listening comprehension poses some difficulties for students with learning disabilities at the nexus of their disability (Oefinger and Pevery, 2020) and their growing language skills. In particular, listening comprehension abilities are linked to reading comprehension abilities (Gunnerud et al., 2022).

Teachers' Role in Inclusive Education

Everyone has the right to inclusive education, and educators play a crucial role in giving their pupils hope and bringing about change (Culajara and Culajara, 2023). According to D'Addio and April (2020), teachers are the main force behind welcoming and educating all pupils, regardless of their identity, background, or level of ability. The attitudes and views of important stakeholders, such as the principal, administrators, teachers, peers, society, and parents, are among the many interrelated factors that determine how well inclusive education for students with special needs works (Barton and Tan, 2020). According to Nelis et al. (2023), each commitment is essential to inclusive education's success.

Additionally, inclusive education required teachers to hold positive attitudes towards student diversity and a belief in their responsibility to address it (Santarosa et al., 2021). Professional development initiatives that familiarize teachers with differentiated instruction, cultural sensitivity, and assistive technology greatly enhance preparedness (Palei, 2024). In order to give teachers, the pedagogical abilities they need to meet the learning demands of children with special needs, Mouchritsa et al. (2022) emphasized the importance of professional development.

Advantages and Difficulties of Inclusive Education

Despite having gained popularity in educational policies around the world, the notion of inclusive education is complicated and contentious among scholars, decision-makers, and practitioners (Kefallinou et al., 2020). There remain many questions, doubts, and inconsistencies regarding its meaning, successful implementation, and potential results (Finkelstein et al., 2021). Due to the demonstrated benefits of educational inclusion on the academic performance of students with disabilities and its positive influence on

the subsequent social inclusion of people with disabilities in terms of additional academic opportunities and qualifications, employment opportunities, and the development of personal relationships within the community, Kefallinou et al. (2020) concluded that there is a wealth of research that supports inclusion from both the educational and social perspectives.

Despite the policies for inclusive education, studies indicate that many teachers feel underprepared to address challenges of mainstreamed learners with special needs. One of the barriers to educational accomplishment, according to Materechera (2020), is a lack of professional training in working with children who have disabilities. It is also critical to recognize that in inclusive educational environments, some special needs students may experience peer rejection, which may negatively impact their social behavior and self-esteem (Chen et al., 2022). This makes it possible for students of all abilities to thrive and gain from one another's educational experiences (Natividad, 2022).

Morgan, G., and Hagarty, I. (2020) underlined that it is concerning when students lack social and emotional skills because these abilities help them comprehend and control their emotions, build healthy relationships, and enhance their mental health.

Furthermore, Jomud et al.'s (2021) research showed that teachers had a lot of work to do. They are also highly burned out. In contrast, the work performance of teachers is highly favorable. Teachers' levels of burnout are significantly influenced by their workload. This entails being prepared holistically, which includes being strategic in addition to being upbeat and resolute (Villanueva et al., 2022).

English Language Learning and Special Needs Education

English is regarded as one of the most influential languages in modern globalized world. English has achieved the status of a global language due to its widespread usage, according to Amoah & Yeboah (2021). One of the biggest English-speaking countries is thought to be the Philippines (Cabigon, 2015). Reading, listening, writing, and speaking are the four domains into which English language learning abilities have been divided (Lai, 2019). One of the objectives of government regulations is for students to be able to read, write, talk, and listen (Lestari & Sridatun, 2020). Each learning exercise develops the four abilities, which are then modified to account for the challenges that youngsters face. Children with special disabilities are typically trained to acquire fundamental language skills at the elementary school level (Agustin & Wiratama, 2021). Yildirim & Orsdemir (2019), who show that teaching English to young learners has numerous advantages, strongly support this.

Agustin and Wiratama were motivated to carry this research in 2021 because there haven't been much discussion about the literacy movement's application in schools for kids with exceptional needs. Furthermore, Ashraf (2018) notes that managing learning at that level, particularly for students with special needs, is extremely tough, as is educating young students. Teachers must assist students with special needs in meeting their academic goals despite their limitations (Puspitasari, 2019). Additionally, compared to regular teachers who teach students without special needs, English teachers who work with children who have special needs face more complex obstacles, according to Apriliyanti (2020) and Tithi Paul et al. (2022).

Since 16% of people worldwide live with a disability, the lack of professional development also has an impact on the use of inclusive teaching methods in English language development (World Health Organization, 2023).

Teaching Language in Inclusive Classrooms: Challenges and Strategies

It has been observed that classroom environments affect the English language learning skills of students (Mariam et al., 2022). (Karjalainen et al., 2020) study investigated the importance of teachers' intervention in evaluating and administering classroom communication. Every student has a unique set of intellectual skills and cognitive levels, according to Carter's (2023) hypothesis of multiple intelligences. The performance and aptitude of exceptional pupils can be enhanced by customizing instructional procedures (Stingo, 2024). Many schools are working to create inclusive classrooms for students with special needs, but there are still a number of issues or challenges that need to be addressed (Ramos, 2022).

Apriliyanti (2022) wrote about the challenges teachers face in modifying instruction materials and methods to meet varying learning needs amidst limited resources and institutional support. Similarly, Sari and Rahmawati (2022) highlighted the difficulties in balancing curriculum requirements with special education differentiated instruction. Similarly, they highlighted the difficulties in striking a balance between curriculum requirements and individualized instruction for special needs pupils. Language instruction in inclusive classrooms is challenging, with particular difficulties that call for specific care, according to earlier research (Khasawneh, 2021). (Miranda et al., 2019) Despite the fact that special education instructors have a variety of learning modalities at their disposal, including sheltered topic instruction, they feel that teaching English is effective. (Johnson, Williams, & Wilson, 2024) highlighted the need to improve instructors' abilities to meet a range of learning requirements. All children benefited from teachers in inclusive environments who became proficient in adaptive teaching techniques and differentiation (Manos, 2024).

Encouraging creativity and innovation, fostering a sense of curiosity and inquiry, and building the resilience and flexibility required to handle future difficult situations are all necessary to give students the skills and dispositions they need to succeed in a world that is unexpectedly changing (Shofwan et al., 2023).

Consequently, students with special needs either have little or no English language proficiency or do not learn it at all (Montes et al., 2016).

Students are also hesitant to use English in the classroom, according to Rani (2020). Students with special needs frequently do not receive language instruction, even though there are many documents that highlight the need to reform public policies pertaining to diversity, educational inclusion, and true equality in society (Rapti et al., 2023). (Blázquez Arribas et al., 2020).

A 2019 study by Miranda et al. looked at how well we trained teachers to work with this unusual but common kid. According to Ibna Seraj et al. (2021), some of the difficulties teachers encounter in the teaching and learning process include unsuitable teaching strategies, students' resistance, excessive class sizes, a lack of instructional resources, and an unsupportive atmosphere.

Synthesis. The reviewed literature consistently demonstrated that inclusive education is a priority worldwide and in the Philippines with documented policies, plans, and frameworks for equitable access for learners with special education needs. There is a consensus in the literature that teachers frequently feel unprepared and lack training to successfully practice inclusion especially with the teaching of English. The positive outcomes of inclusion, increased participation, academic progress and achievement, and social interaction for both Learners with educational needs (LSENs) and their peers are well documented.

However, the literature revealed some differences. Some studies were narrowly targeted on policy and systematic approaches, while others described the experience of teachers in the day-to-day learning environment. The characteristics of the reported challenges varied; some studies documented general barriers like, cost, resources and time, while others highlighted the specific barriers that LSENs face learning English, like speech issues, cognitive difficulties and social-emotional issues. In addition, there were few qualitative studies examining teachers lived experiences and coping strategies especially the 4A's framework in inclusive English language classrooms.

In response to this gap, the current study aimed to explore the teachers' lived experiences in using 4A's framework for English instruction in inclusive settings.

Methodology

Research Design

The researcher used a qualitative framework employing the descriptive phenomenology approach of Colaizzi's (1978) utilizing Grand Tour Questions. The research design is considered appropriate because it involved exploration of the lived experiences of the teachers and provide a deeper understanding of how teachers use the 4A's framework in English instruction for mainstreamed learners with special needs at Manhuyay Elementary School, Sitio Manhuyay, Barangay Cantapoy, Malimono Surigao del Norte.

Participants

The informants of this qualitative study were seven (7) teachers from Manhuyay Elementary School who had at least two years in the service and experience directly handling diverse learners in a mainstreamed setting. The informants ranged from kindergarten teacher to grade-6 teachers. Since the school adopted a mixed organizational system, with self-contained classrooms for Grades 1 and 2, and departmentalized instruction for Grades 4 to 6. The kindergarten teacher who did not have kindergarten classes in the afternoon was assigned to teach higher grades during that time. Therefore, the teachers from the school encountered learners with special needs across various grade-levels.

Instrument

The interview guide was used as a primary tool in the data gathering. The researcher's made a Grand Tour Question as an instrument for informants to answer regarding the study. It was developed by aligning the questions with the research objectives to ensure relevant data collection. It was presented to and validated by the experts. It included sections such as lived experiences, application, challenges, impact and influence on learners with special needs in a mainstreamed setting, focusing on how teachers use the 4A's framework in teaching English instruction.

Procedure

The data gathering process for this study was conducted to explore the teachers' lived experiences in using the 4A's framework in English instruction of mainstreamed learners with special needs at Manhuyay Elementary School.

The researcher first developed a Grand Tour Question, which served as the primary tool for guiding the interviews. This open-ended question was specifically crafted to encourage the participants to share detailed narratives about their experiences, challenges, and insights using the 4A's framework for English instruction of learners with special needs in a mainstreamed setting.

Before starting the data collection, the researcher submitted all formal letters requesting permission to conduct the study for approval by the Dean of the Graduate School of Surigao den Norte State University. When granted, the same was attached to the letter of request to the Schools Division Superintendent of Surigao del Norte then to the District Supervisor of Malimono District, and to the School Head of Manhuyay Elementary School.

Once approval was granted, the researcher distributed informed consent forms to the selected participants. These forms provided clear information about the study's purpose, guaranteed confidentiality, and emphasized that participation was entirely voluntary. All

informants gave their informed consent prior to data collection.

The informants were purposively selected based on their current role as teachers had been at least two (2) years in the service and experience directly handling diverse learners in a mainstreamed setting. This criterion ensured that they could provide rich and relevant data. The researcher scheduled individual interviews at times and locations convenient for the informants, usually in quiet rooms within their schools to promote a comfortable and private setting.

Data were gathered through one-one interviews, which allowed the researcher to further probe the informants' responses while staying focused on the research questions. Each interview was audio-recorded with the informants' permission to ensure accuracy and completeness of the data collected.

After the interviews, the researcher personally transcribed the recordings verbatim to preserve the authenticity of the informants' responses. To protect the participants' identities, each informant was assigned a distinct code (A, B, C, D, E, F, and G) which was used consistently throughout the transcription and analysis process.

Data Analysis

The data collected from interviews with teachers about their lived experiences in using the 4A's framework in English instruction for mainstreamed learners with special needs at Manhuyay Elementary School were examined using the methodology of Colaizzi (1978) for phenomenological analysis of data. After transcribing the interviews word for word (verbatim transcription), the following steps of the researcher Colaizzi's process for phenomenological data analysis were followed:

First, involved reading each transcript several times to fully understand its content. During this phase, the researcher focused on the teachers' shared lived experiences, setting aside personal thoughts or biases.

After that, noteworthy quotes that were pertinent to the phenomenon being studied were found and recorded individually. These statements were recorded along with their page and line numbers. This part of the analysis extracting meaningful phrases that directly answers the Grand Tour questions. These statements were coded according to their transcript, page, and line numbers and recorded on different pages.

Subsequently, meanings were developed from noteworthy statements and classified into groups that provided a thorough explanation. The researcher ensured consistency by carefully comparing and analyzing these generated meanings with the original.

After that, the formulated meanings were sorted into categories, clusters of themes, and overarching themes. These meanings were grouped into categories representing clusters of themes, each coded accordingly. Clusters reflecting specific issues were combined to form a distinctive construct of theme. This was checked by an expert to ensure consistency and accuracy.

Finally, the findings of the study should be integrated into an exhaustive description of the phenomenon under study. After merging all the study themes, the whole structure of the phenomenon will be extracted. Then, an expert will review the findings to ensure richness, completeness, and that the description accurately reflects teachers lived experiences in using 4A's framework in English instruction for mainstreamed learners with special needs at Manhuyay Elementary School.

Repetitive, misused, or overstated descriptions were eliminated from the general framework in order to reduce the findings and represent the basic structure of the phenomenon.

The researcher discussed the findings with the informants after returning the research findings to them for validation. This allowed them to understand the transparency and accuracy of the study, ensuring it reflected their experiences and perspectives. It also provided an opportunity for informants to clarify, confirm, or suggest modifications, thereby enhancing the credibility and trustworthiness of the research. The researcher also appropriately cited with in-text references.

Ethical Considerations

The study followed ethical research protocols to establish a respectful and safe environment for all informants:

Conflict of Interest. The researcher ensured fairness and transparency, who made sure that no professional or personal interests affected the study's design, data collection, analysis, or reporting.

Study Goals. The purpose and objectives of the study were thoroughly explained to all informants, which helped them understand the importance of their involvement and voluntarily give their informed consent.

Privacy and Confidentiality. To protect the identity and privacy of the informants, each was assigned a unique code (e.g., A, B, C), and secured each data-set. The researcher assured that no identifiable information would be disclosed in any reports or documents.

Potential Risks. The researcher ensured that the participants would be no financial, psychological, physical, or social risks for the participants from taking part in the study.

Potential Benefit. Informants were made aware that their participation may provide some valuable insights to better understand the

effectiveness and challenges of using the 4A's framework in the English curriculum for learners with special needs in a mainstreamed setting, which may assist with developing future academic support and interventions designed specifically for the needs of these learners.

Sponsorship. The researcher carried out the study independently, without any external funding or sponsorship that could otherwise have influenced the process or the outcome of the study.

Credibility. To ensure the credibility and reliability of the findings the researcher utilized rigorous data collection and analysis techniques as well as verbatim transcription, member checking and audit trail during the entire study.

Results and Discussion

Themes on the lived experiences of Teachers using 4A's framework in English instruction

The following tables present the three (3) emergent themes and the six (6) clustered themes supported by the significant statements from informants and related literature.

Table 4. *Emergent Theme 1: Empowering Inclusive Teaching Amidst Challenges*

<i>Emergent Theme</i>	<i>Clustered Theme</i>
Empowering Inclusive Teaching Amidst Challenges	Teacher Guidance and Professional Growth Addressing Barriers and Challenges Inclusive and Responsive Teaching for Learners with Special Needs

The first theme emerged is the Empowering Inclusive Teaching Amidst Challenges. Prior to the teachers' lived experiences in using 4A's framework in English instruction at Manhuyay Elementary School of mainstreamed learners with special needs, teachers served as key facilitators of inclusive learning through 4A's framework.

Informants consistently modifying the lessons, creating more activities, and using differentiated instruction so every student has access to meaningful support and a chance to succeed, especially students with special needs.

Informant F emphasized in lines 140-144:

"Ang teacher gajud is the most influential person inside the classroom whatever the teacher teaches or told his or her pupils he will become the authority. Meaning to say, whatever the words you utter to the class will be critical to their thinking ability." (The teacher is truly the most influential person in the classroom. Whatever the teacher teaches or says to the students becomes authoritative. In other words, the words spoken by the teacher can strongly influence how the students think.)

Informant A noted in lines 108-110:

"Usa pud na, kanang pagtrain dapat naa gjuv ehk kuan ana nga teacher nga i-assign nga mu-train gjud noh sa kaning gitawag nato sa SPED class." (There should really be a teacher assigned to train others specifically for SPED classes.)

This finding is echoed by (Lee et al., 2015) teachers' training and professional development in this regard also play an important role and preparing teachers for inclusive education is very complex (Miskolci et al., 2021; Ricci & Fingon, 2017).

Informants highlighted the importance of ongoing professional development and collaboration, as well as the need for clear guidance and adequate resources.

Informants highlighted the importance of ongoing professional development and collaboration, as well as the need for clear guidance and adequate resources.

However, they also faced continued barriers in the use of 4A's in English instruction like limitations surrounding materials available, lack of specialized training, and the challenge of addressing the diverse learning experiences of students in mainstream classrooms. What was explained as reported by Informant B in lines 90-92:

"Pagkuan sab nila pag communication, mga instruction usahay lisud sab kaayo maghatag ug instruction." (Sometimes, giving instructions can be really difficult, especially when students find it hard to follow or understand what's being asked of them.)

Furthermore, Informant C explained:

"Second is trained teachers, waya pod ta ani ma-train. Ohh so challenge pod na sa ato ng mo... naay tay special ...special child dinhi special needs pero wa tay ...wa ta magtrain unsaon sila pag handle. unsaon sila pag kuan sa unsaon nato sila pag-konek sa bata to the lesson kay wa man ta ma train ana." (The second challenge is having trained teachers. We don't have anyone properly trained for this. So, it's really a problem for us when we have special children with special needs, but no one knows how to handle them or how to connect them to the lessons because we haven't been trained.)

An article supports this by (Anglim et al., 2018; Mukhopadhyay et al., 2019; Smith and Broomhead, 2019) noted that educators and

teaching assistants feel unprepared for an inclusive classroom environment, and also lack continuing professional development (CPD) regarding work with a heterogeneous classroom. According to other researchers, there are teachers with lack awareness regarding children with autism (Al-Sharbati et al., 2013), and they lack the knowledge, skills, and expertise necessary to support children with SEN (Black-Hawkins, 2012).

Informants recognized that addressing special needs learners is complex and that special needs learners require individualized attention, specialized support and adequate resources to ensure that pedagogical approaches are responsive and appropriate to the learning needs of each learner. These insights reflect the inclusive education ideals that recommend a personalized, strength-based teaching approach that fosters growth and includes all students, particularly those with special needs. As testified in lines 75-76 by informant C:

“Mga pabasa nga simplest ragyod nga word, dili kon komplikado.” (The reading exercises should use very simple words, nothing complicated.)

Additionally, it was supported based on the statement of informant G in lines 113-115:

“Parehas ana sa mga kadtong differentiated instruction so dako gajud tong ahh,,tabang gajud no nga paghatag og activity sa mga bata kay para pod sila dali ra pod makasabot.” (Just like with differentiated instruction, giving different activities really helps students understand easily.)

This supports the notion of differentiated learning, which has been acknowledged as a learning technique that takes into account various student learning profiles, readiness, and learning interests (Carol Ann Tomlinson et al., 2003). It is anticipated that teachers will use the 4As approach as the framework for their lessons in a variety of areas.

Table 5. Emergent Theme 2: *Fostering Student Engagement and Language*

<i>Emergent Theme</i>	<i>Clustered Theme</i>
Fostering Student Engagement and Language Development	Interactive Activities Contextualized Activities

The second theme emerged is the Fostering Student Engagement and Language Development. It captures the that engagement is at the heart of successful learning, especially for language development. This is seen in basic education classrooms, where teachers find the 4A's framework to be engaging since it takes into account how students can become involved through practical experience and real-world application. As Informant D in lines 32-33, highlighted:

“Importante nga ang kalihokan, ang mga activity gajud nga ang mga bata malingaw sila pero nakalearn sila.” (It's important that activities are fun for the students but also help them learn)

Likewise, in lines 31-35 Informant E described interactive approach which aligns with the 4A's framework:

“Magsugud gajud ko sa mga activity. Pinaagi sa mga interactive games sama sa flashcard, matching og story telling gamit ang mga pictures. Usahay pod maggamit sab ko og kanang presentation sa TV.” (I always start with activities like interactive games, flashcards, matching, and storytelling with pictures. Sometimes, I also use TV presentations.)

Corresponding to informants' statements Fernández-Villardón et al. (2020) and García-Carrión et al. (2020) have observed that interactive learning spaces, particularly those mediated by dialogue, facilitate group thinking and learning, improve academic performance, social skills, and social cohesion, and are particularly advantageous for students in vulnerable groups. This reflect teachers' experiences in using 4A's framework which they found to be impactful.

It was also observed by the informants that when students especially those with special needs are allowed to draw from their own experiences or use materials from their local community, learning becomes more relevant and memorable. The use of simple language, repetition, and real-life context not only aids understanding but also builds students' confidence in using

English in daily life. As stated from informant D in lines 37-38:

“Gipakita giunsa paggamit ang mga pulong sa tinood nga sitwasyon.” (They were shown how the words are used in real-life situations.)

In lines 74-75, Informant E highlighted the outcome of teachers' use in 4A's framework in the mainstreamed setting:

Mas nakabalo na sila sa paggamit sa yano nga mga English words sa pang adlaw-adlaw nilang pang komunikasyon. (They now know how to use simple English words in their daily communication.)

This reflects Ukrainetz and Gillam's (2024) growing research indicates that school-age children's language proficiency may be enhanced by combining explicit teaching of several language skills as they work together in "contextualized" activities with real-world applications with isolated, discrete skills training.

The third theme emerged is the Transformative Power of the 4A's Framework, which became quite a game-changer for English instruction in transforming how teachers engaged mainstreamed learners. The step-by-step process allowed for the lessons to break

down into parts that made this process most beneficial for learners requiring more support.

Table 5. Emergent Theme 2: *Fostering Student Engagement and Language*

<i>Emergent Theme</i>	<i>Clustered Theme</i>
The Transformative Power of the 4A's Framework	Structured, Step-by-Step Approach

Informants said that they noticed the strategy helped to not only improve comprehension but also encouraged participation and self-confidence in learners with special needs. This was in line with the assertion of Informant C, in lines 133-136:

"Mao man gajud ni ang pinaka the best nga framework. Bisan pag dili special needs. Mas lalong mas effective kini nga pamaagi kong sa special nga bata gamiton kay step by step man sija." (This is really the best framework. It's effective for all students, but especially for those with special needs because it's step by step.)

This is paralleled by Informant F's statement, in lines 85-86:

"Nakatabang ang 4As framework kay kini structured ug step by step." (The 4As framework helps because it's structured and step by step.)

This echoes that the 4A's lesson plan is a framework widely used by teachers to design effective and student-centered lessons. The 4A's lesson plan promotes active learning, critical thinking, and the practical application of language skills, fostering a comprehensive and engaging learning experience for diverse learners. The 4A's framework is based on the Experiential Learning Theory proposed by David Kolb (1984).

Considering all of the references and claims made by the informants, the findings indicate how 4A's framework can be best and effective in English instruction in a mainstreamed setting. The results highlight that the 4A's framework empowers teachers to create inclusive, engaging, and effective English instruction for mainstreamed learners with special needs. The results highlight the significance of teacher training, differentiated approaches, and a systematic step-by-step method to promote both academic and social learning among diverse learners to address the barriers and challenges encountered. These results highlight how important it is to listen to and instruct kids rather than merely presenting information to the students. There is a great need for in-service support for teachers of the diverse learners in inclusive educational contexts.

Conclusions

The teachers' lived experiences at Manhuyay Elementary School, Malimono District, Surigao Del Norte Division, in using the 4A's framework for English Instruction of mainstreamed learners with special needs include the following:

The 4A's Framework was identified to be effective due to its structured and step-by-step approach that makes English instruction more understandable and accessible for learners with special needs, increasing their participation and sense of belonging.

Teachers note that consistent use of the 4A's Framework facilitates the creation of motivational and inclusive classrooms. This is in spite of challenges such as limited resources, lack of trainings, and the need to accommodate diverse learners' abilities and talents.

The framework's structured approach fosters meaningful language development by connecting lessons to students' real-life experiences and promoting active learning.

The study confirms that learners with special needs benefit from lessons that build confidence through clear, hands-on activities and relatable content.

Further research is needed to investigate how the 4A's Framework can be optimized for different categories of learners with special needs, examining its effectiveness across various disability types, language proficiency levels, and developmental stages

Based on the findings and conclusion, this study illuminated new insights about the phenomenon as follows:

DepEd Officials should support the integration of the 4A's Framework into inclusive education policies and provide funding for teacher training to ensure effective implementation.

School administrators should prioritize professional development on the 4A's Framework and ensure classrooms have the necessary materials and visual aids to support interactive learning.

Teachers are encouraged to use interactive and contextualized activities aligned with the 4A's Framework and collaborate to share best practices for inclusive teaching.

Learning environments should be designed to promote active participation and confidence-building, making lessons that consistently follow the 4A's framework.

Future researchers should investigate the extended effects of the 4A's Framework on academic achievement and its adaptability in various educational contexts.

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Affiliations and Corresponding Information

Lea Joy Bero-Margen

Manhuyay Elementary School

Department of Education – Philippines

Dr. Kristopher M. Ngilangil

Surigao del Norte State University – Philippines