

YOUNG FILIPINO FARMERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE USE OF ENGLISH AS A MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION IN AGRICULTURAL TRAININGS IN LA TRINIDAD, BENGUET

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This study attempted to investigate the perceptions of young Filipino farmers about the use of English as a medium of instruction in agricultural trainings. La Trinidad's youth population comprises mostly Indigenous People who speak different dialects and hence, using the national language for communication is practically impossible. This study used descriptive survey method to collect, analyze, and interpret the perceptions of the participants. A questionnaire was administered to 78 young farmers between the ages 20 and 28. The Slovin's formula was used to determine the sample population.

The respondents were mostly in their early twenties and finished college degrees. They believed on new technologies because it gives good efficiency in terms of high yield, controlling pests, and more benefits such as income along the value chain. The transfer of agricultural technologies is understood better with the use of different training equipment and methodologies. Based on the study, the factors that are most impactful for successful training include use of effective teaching methods; trainers qualification; and use of visual aids. Respondents assert the importance of learning agricultural technologies through English. The reasons given by respondents include reading technology materials written in English due to their enhance clarity; trainers' use English since it was the language used in their basic education; and participants employ English for communication. Moreover, the application of English to explain technologies was thought to be useful as modern technologies are also researched by other nationalities. Respondents admitted that lack of English proficiency will be a barrier to keep pace with the progress of other countries. Respondent's proficiency had an effect on their attitude to learn, un-learn and re-learn. Thus, they adopted ways of learning that they thought were best for them.

These young farmers believe that agricultural technologies learned during trainings through English enhances their knowledge, shifts their attitudes, changes their behavior, and updates traditional agricultural practices. Hence, they believe that English is necessary for communication, interaction and assessing scientific research in agriculture through social media platform.

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Introduction

The Philippine Constitution declares that the State recognizes the vital role played by the youth in nation-building and it shall promote their physical, moral, spiritual, intellectual, and social well-being. Empowering the Filipino Youth through provision of agricultural trainings from production to marketing and entrepreneurial skills along the value chain will inspire and make them productive partners in the development in the country's agricultural sector. Presently, the country has a growing population of aging Filipino farmers whose average age is 57 and who are no longer receptive to change. In addition, they are slow in adopting modern technologies to increase productivity owing to their adherence to the practice of traditional technologies and beliefs. Agricultural jobs are frequently beset by low pay, low productivity, lack of social protection, underemployment, and a lack of exposure to a range of risks including inclement and volatile markets. Engaging in agriculture has become less attractive to young Filipinos resulting in a shortage of young farm managers and cultivators with adequate entrepreneurial skills and agricultural technologies.

Agricultural education programs should be improved to meet the urgent need for future agricultural managers including the acquisition and proper utilization of modern technology. The young farmers can achieve this aim with the proper guidance and assistance from technocrats. Supporting the young farmers is not just about financial literacy but helping them establish new ventures like mini enterprise along the value chain and offering moral support to change mindsets and enable them to succeed in their chosen field of career.

The Municipality of La Trinidad in Benguet Province is called "Salad Bowl of the Philippines". It comprises diverse Indigenous groups with the majority belonging to the Ibaloi tribe. It has a land area of 70.04 square kilometers with mountainous terrain and a valley floor elevation of 1,300 above sea level. Its economy continues to be primarily dependent on its agriculture sector. The Ibalois have their own dialect which is always spoken at home, within the community and during gatherings. Between the use of dialect and national language, which is Tagalog, the youth prefer to use English as this is commonly used in school and during their childhood days. Hence, the role of English is pivotal in agriculture's contribution to economic progress because it helps and exposes young farmers to communicate with the rest of the world and to adopt foreign agricultural technologies that make them desirable partners in rural development.

The purpose of the study was to determine the perceptions of young farmers on the use of English as a medium of instruction in agricultural trainings. It attempted to collect the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents such as age, highest educational attainment, number of training sessions attended for the last 5 years, number of years in farming. It also investigated the extent of understanding of modern agricultural technologies when taught in English; factors that influence English as a medium in training; approaches or techniques in training; and strategies to enhance their English proficiency capacity. The socio-demographic characteristics in correlation to the different variables were also considered.

Methodology/Materials

This study aimed to investigate the perceptions of young Filipino farmers about the use of English as a medium of instruction in agricultural trainings. It adopted the descriptive survey method to

collect, analyze, and interpret the perceptions of the participants. Data collection was done by administering a questionnaire to 78 young farmers aged between 20 and 28 in La Trinidad, Benguet. The Slovin's formula was used to determine the sample population. To deliberate their socio-demographic characteristics, the participants were grouped as those who were in their early twenties (20-24) and those in their late twenties (25-28). They were divided into four groups according to the number of trainings attended in the last 5 years: no training; one to three trainings; four to six trainings; and seven to ten trainings. The number of years of farming were categorized as one to five years; six to ten years; eleven to fifteen years; and sixteen to twenty years. The only instrument used to gather data was a questionnaire. Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to compute the reliability of the instrument which revealed a 0.97 result which means that there is an excellent level of reliability.

Results and Discussion

The respondents were mostly in the 20-24 age group (74%). There were 26 respondents or 33% who had completed a college degree and 67% are either elementary, high school graduate and college undergraduates. The reason given was the inability of their parents to send them to school. Forty-five percent of the respondents attended only 1-3 training during the past 5 years due to limited training opportunities offered in the locality. There were 30 respondents (39%) who had 6-10 years of farming while there were 26 respondents (33%) who had less than 6 years of farming experience. This shows that most of the young farmers perform farming activities only during school break or holidays or when they become out-of-school youth. The young farmers' understanding to modern agricultural technologies with the use of different training methodologies in English contributed to the high comprehension of farmers with 4.262 average weighted mean ("much understood"). These methodologies include use of an overhead projector during lectures (4.26 mean) where it allows lecturer to have eye contact with trainees and ensures attention; use of handouts written in English during lectures (4.28 mean) which are distributed after the lecture to clearly support and serve as reference to what was discussed; listening during lecture with an open forum (4.05 mean) encourages them to be orally active by asking questions for clarity; hands-on discussions and application in the farm (4.33 mean) allows lecturer to use actual demonstration, thus exposing the participants for practical learning; and the regular use of examples such as success stories from other young farmers (4.39 mean) that inspires participants to adapt such technology. The use of different methodologies and equipment during training sustains the interest of farmers and supplements verbal explanation. There are several factors that influence English as a medium in agricultural training. These include the trainers' use of effective teaching methods like lecture, discussion, demonstration and exercise allows participants to have face to face type of interaction. Furthermore, varying levels of English proficiency of participants also play a crucial role. Those with higher proficiency capacity were able to grasp the technology easily within a shorter time than those with lower proficiency. However, ultimately all participants were able to learn the technology. The trainers ascertained easiness of activities through exercises and related activities assuring comfort of every participant; communicative competence of trainers can deliver agricultural technology efficiently. The results revealed that the use of audio-visual methods can easily convey the technologies because it helps the trainer clarify, establish, correlate information enabling learning more effective, interesting and meaningful. The participants' level of exposure to English differs and those with less exposure need more demonstration than those who are more exposed. It was found that participants seldom use their mother tongue language (with a mean of 3.89) and it is used only during brektime or asking inquiry to their co-participants.

The importance of English as a medium in agricultural trainings using different approaches such as reading materials in English (4.36 mean) makes it easier and faster to understand agricultural technologies as compared to those written in dialect or national language because the participants have had their basic education in English. The results also show the following: The trainer uses English in lecture (3.94 mean) maintains active participation because it keeps the eye contact between participant and trainer; language in internet is English (4.01 mean) and knowledge in English keeps confidence for interaction; participants speak different dialect thus English serves as unifying language during training (3.89 mean) especially in international trainings; and technologies are

explained in English (3.87 mean) because these are researched also by other nationalities. When young farmers are well informed, they are inclined to adopt these technologies in the farm. The strategies to enhance English proficiency levels of young farmers include self-study (4.18 mean) which is done at their own pace and comfort; attending formal and informal schools (4.23 mean) for continued guidance from persons in authority and module for adoption in formal education; writing in English to friends (3.92 mean) is characterized by a purposeful selection and organization of experience and connects to work, culture, society and to the meanings of life; regularly watching television, movies and surfing the internet (4.08 mean) due to the exposure in English and escape from routinary activity that seek pleasure and entertainment; reading newspapers and books (4.23 mean) because it carries information and make the participants aware of current incidents that changes their outlook in every sector; speaking English at home and with friends (3.87 mean) gives inspiration. The respondents believe that the strategies are effective to develop or improve English proficiency capacity. English is the international language and one of the popular and most spoken in the technology world and is needed to study science subject, or any computer language to communicate with developing countries.

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents Correlating to the Different Variables

Indicators (Variables)	Age			Educational Attainments			Number of Local Trainings Attended for the last 5 Years			Number of Years of Farming		
	df	tc	t.o5	df	Fc	t.o5	df	Fc	t.o5	df	Fc	t.o5
Extent of understand modern agric'l techno in agrie trngs	76	0.72	0.577 ns	7/70	1.118	0.362 ns	3/74	4.322	0.007 s	3/74	1.545	0.210 ns
Factors influencing English as a medium instruction agric'l trngs	76	1.459	0.239 ns	7/70	0.828	0.567 ns	3/74	1.371	0.258 ns	3/74	1.881	0.140 ns
Importance of English in agric'l trngs	76	0.651	0.504 ns	7/70	0.982	0.451 ns	3/74	1.468	0.230 ns	3/74	2.204	0.095 ns
Strategies to develop or improve English prof capacity	76	1.7	0.337 ns	7/70	1.248	0.289 ns	3/74	1.912	0.135 ns	3/74	1.250	0.298 ns

As to the correlation of the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents to the different variables there is no significant difference in the age because most young farmers are exposed to different methodologies and social media networking where they can access new trends and updated technologies. Likewise, the respondents believe that whether a learner is young or old, English as a medium of instruction can be applicable to all trainees. They recognize the importance of English as a common denominator because it connects information and communication from the rest of the world and the enhancement of their English proficiency capacity can contribute to their confidence regardless of age.

As to the educational attainment, there is also no significance to the different variables because whether participant finished elementary, high school or college degree, their understanding of the lesson depends on their focus and attention during training and they have a positive attitude towards English.

As to the number of local training courses attended, understanding the modern agricultural technologies using English as a medium of instruction is significant because of the continuity and correlation in agricultural trainings. Trainings previously attended can be a comparison and reference to the on-going training. But on the other variables, there is no significance because participants who attended more or less than 10 trainings have the same understanding in agricultural trainings. Improving English capacity is not also dependent on the number of trainings attended but, on the attitude, to learn, unlearn and re-learn.

There is also no significance on the number of years in farming because participants on agricultural technology trainings have the same level of expectation and awareness on the subject matter. The use of various methodologies is adequate for farmers with any number of farming experience and methodologies adaptable to one farmer with more farming experience is also adaptable to farmer with lesser years of farming. The use of trainings methodologies to the participants with the higher number of training courses has the same influence as those with lesser number of trainings attended. The learning and adoption of technologies depended on the participant's attitude to learn and apply what was learned.

Conclusions

The young farmers of La Trinidad are more of the younger generation who finished their college degrees but not necessarily agriculture courses. With limited agricultural trainings attended and less farming experience, the technologies applied by them are those inherited from their parents or those learned through neighbors or friends. As to the extent of understanding new agricultural technologies, the use of appropriate and applicable methodologies during training has a great impact on the young farmers because of its attraction and simplicity. Reading materials that are written in English and distributed during trainings to serve as reference and additional information is the most accepted approach to value the importance of English as this can be brought anywhere and read anytime. Attendance to formal and non-formal schools and reading materials are the most welcomed strategy to enhance their English proficiency capacity.

The respondents believe that education serves as the means to bring about the desired change in society, to develop a generation of virtuous individuals who can contribute to the development of good human beings. It can also be concluded that the more trainings attended will lead to a better understanding of agricultural technologies because of continuity and reference for agricultural technologies. Young farmers believe that transfer of agricultural technologies through trainings and the use of English as means of instruction enhances their knowledge, shifts their attitudes, changes their behavior and updates their traditional agricultural practices. English is necessary for communication outside their local area and sourcing in the agriculture field through social media.

Recommendations

1. Young farmers must be given importance and attention by provision of activities like agricultural trainings with after training support such as farm equipment and others that will hone their skills and talents;
2. Trainings even in remote areas must use audio-visual aids for clearer understanding and sustain interest and attention including distribution of reading materials written in English for reference;
3. Modern agricultural technologies must be written in English and trainers equipped with knowledge and ideas commensurate to the subject matter taught;
4. Availability of reading materials on agricultural technologies in English in the local government units including national agencies;
5. Encourage young farmers to continue their formal education or attend non-formal education. Scholarship on agriculture courses must be included as a regular program in the government;
6. Young farmers must be encouraged to attend agricultural trainings including values and population education. Knowledge, skills and attitude must be the cornerstone of rural development;
7. Conduct further study nationwide; and
8. Use of English as a medium of instruction must start in the barangay level (community), which is the lowest form of government.