

THE TIE THAT KNOTS US ALL

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Have you ever wondered why the Philippines ranked 15th out of 80 countries in English Proficiency Assessments in 2019 yet Filipinos are afraid to use English with a fellow Filipino? We have ranked probably because in the past 5 years, there has been a bunch of TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) and English Trainings offered to our countrymen in the field of customer assistance (call center). This result is quite contradictory to the assessment conducted to Junior High School students back in 2018 where Philippines ranked 78th out of 78 countries in reading. These results indicate a powerful information that everyone in education deserves to know.

What differences can we find in teaching TESOL as a training and teaching English as a subject? I have speculations that may tap into the presented data. The essential skills are neglected in most schools. To date, learners find it difficult to listen and to read English selections with comprehension. Furthermore, learners find it more difficult to speak and to write in English. These skills are usually set aside because teachers are too busy making students copy notes from the board. They usually indulge themselves in the easy way by means of skipping topics that will take most of their time discussing. Sad yet true. When you ask learners to read, they actually can. But when you start asking HOTS questions, they begin to turn their face down and tell you that they do not know the answers.

Another factor I can identify is when teachers do not speak English in their discussions. The teacher is considered to be the best visual aid. Students need not to view or watch foreign movies to learn how to speak in English if teachers demonstrate and

show how speaking in English is done. It is absurd to expect that learners will converse and arrive at a meaningful discourse when the teacher does not speak in English. It is an important reminder to practice what you preach.

What is it in TESOL trainings that is hardly seen in teaching English as a subject in the Philippines? When we look more closely, the TESOL training is focused on the practical application of the language. It highlights the main purpose of the training and that is to communicate effectively anywhere in the world. Gone are those ineffective writing sessions. TESOL learners are always at work. Majority of the time is spent in practicing the macro skills than just learning concepts and definitions.

What do you think will happen when the approach and method used in TESOL trainings are also applied in teaching English in the classroom? Can we rank 15th in the International Assessment? Who holds the key toward defeating the typical teaching of English? This is an opportunity for our English teachers to rethink their pedagogies and update their teaching strategies. English is more than just a subject. We must teach it as a language. After all English is the tie that knots us all.

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