

Exploring the Experiences of Filipino Assistant Language Teachers working with Japanese Elementary School Teachers

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Abstract: *The research study aimed to investigate the experiences of Filipino Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) collaborating with Japanese elementary school teachers, with the goal of creating a professional packet. Seven Filipino ALTs in Ibaraki Prefecture, Japan participated in in-depth online interviews, following a qualitative approach and Colaizzi's data analysis method. The study identified three key themes. Theme 1 delved into understanding Japanese teachers, encompassing their personalities, teaching roles, perspectives on English classes, and their influence on class participation. Theme 2 highlighted both the teaching and non-teaching roles of ALTs. Theme 3 stressed the importance of comprehending the ALT job. The research culminated in the development of a professional packet designed to provide guidance for Filipino ALTs working in Japanese elementary schools. This resource aims to foster fruitful experiences for both ALTs and Japanese schools, mitigating potential challenges and ensuring the provision of high-quality English education to Japanese students.*

Keywords: Assistant Language Teacher, team teaching, ALT, Japanese Teacher of English, JTE, support teacher, main teacher, Japanese homeroom teacher, Japanese elementary school

1. Introduction

English proficiency is a highly sought-after quality by employers worldwide. Many students seek to enhance their English skills, acknowledging that English is no longer a uniform language but comprises various forms (Kirkpatrick & Deterding, 2011). Students often prefer learning from teachers hailing from diverse English-speaking countries, including Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, the United States, South Africa, and the Philippines. In the Philippines, English serves as a medium of instruction in schools, reflecting its historical ties to the United States. English is recognized as a co-official language in various sectors such as government, law, and education (Chang, 2011; Bolton & Bautista, 2004). Due to the reputation of Filipino English teachers for their clear neutral accent and effective teaching, many international students choose to study English in the Philippines. Filipino teachers' proficiency and the comprehensible manner in which they pronounce words, emphasizing vowel and consonant sounds, make them trusted providers of quality English education.

Filipino English teachers contribute to the Philippine economy by attracting students to study English in the country. However, many teachers seek opportunities abroad, including in Vietnam, Thailand, Indonesia, and Japan, primarily due to the more lucrative salary packages offered. Japan stands out as a particularly attractive destination for Filipino English teachers, with compensation ranging from PhP 100,000.00 to PhP 250,000.00. Nevertheless, working in Japan entails tax obligations and a high cost of living. Various job opportunities exist for Filipino teachers, with the deregulation of the Worker Dispatch Act in 1999 allowing dispatch companies to hire more foreign English teachers for

public schools. Schools in Japan, including English Conversation Schools (Eikaiwa), International Schools, kindergartens, and public schools, actively welcome Filipino English Teachers. In public schools, Filipino teachers serve as Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs), a role attainable through government initiatives like the Japan Exchange Teaching (JET) Programme or private recruitment agencies like Chesham Recruitment Incorporated. The minimum requirements for ALT positions include a bachelor's degree, a certificate demonstrating at least 12 years of English instruction, and prior English teaching experience.

Many Filipino English teachers work as Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) in Japanese public elementary schools, contributing to economic benefits. However, these positions come with unique challenges when collaborating with Japanese teachers to provide high-quality English education. Japanese elementary school teachers educate students in Grades one to six, aged from six to twelve, with English now part of the core curriculum and the potential for it to become a compulsory subject. Foreign English teachers, including Filipinos, support Japanese teachers in delivering English lessons, often taking on the role of Assistant Language Teachers. Japanese educators require significant support to provide quality English education, and in some instances, ALTs lead the class with Japanese teachers focusing on classroom management. To ensure the success of making English a compulsory subject, Japan may need to provide additional training to Japanese elementary school teachers or hire more foreign teachers.

Filipino Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) in Japan have varying experiences influenced by their location, assigned schools, and colleagues. They are known for their strong work ethic and reliability, and their numbers in Japanese public schools are increasing. While they enjoy similar

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privileges to their Western counterparts, adapting to the Japanese workplace presents challenges. Working abroad entails sacrifices, demanding resilience and dedication. Integrating into the Japanese work environment is a formidable task for Filipino ALTs. Experiences of Filipino ALTs collaborating with Japanese elementary school teachers are unique to each individual. Some thrive in Japan, while others face discrimination due to their non-native speaker background. This study explored the diverse experiences of Filipino ALTs working with Japanese elementary school teachers, offering valuable insights for those considering this career and Filipinos already in Japan.

2. Design and Method

This research study adopted a qualitative approach, specifically descriptive phenomenology, to delve into the personal experiences and perspectives of Filipino assistant language teachers working with Japanese elementary school teachers (Neubauer, et al., 2019). Descriptive phenomenology was chosen as it allows for the examination of participants' descriptions, categorizing them into meaningful statements that contribute to the core concept of the study. This approach is particularly suited for situations where limited knowledge exists about a specific issue and the objective is to gain a deeper understanding of the fundamental meaning of the phenomenon by exploring the perspectives of those directly involved (Giorgi, 1997). To ensure the objectivity and neutrality of the data collected, the researcher applied phenomenological reduction, a critical method to set aside personal biases and preconceived notions about the experiences of assistant language teachers in Japan (Lopez & Willis, 2004). This reduction process aimed to prevent the researcher's judgments from affecting the research findings, enabling the extraction of the genuine nature of the Filipino teachers' experiences as assistant language teachers in Japan.

Prior to commencing this research, ethical clearance was granted by the University of the Visayas – Research Ethics Committee. This clearance ensures the ethical integrity of the study and highlights our commitment to safeguarding the well-being and confidentiality of our research informants. The study was conducted in Ibaraki Prefecture, located northeast of Tokyo. This coastal area is home to a significant Filipino population, including assistant language teachers. This study collected data from seven Filipino assistant language teachers in public elementary schools in Ibaraki Prefecture, Japan. In-depth interviews were conducted to gain insights from individuals with direct experience

working with Japanese elementary schools. Participants were selected purposively based on specific criteria: they had to be Filipino assistant language teachers assigned to public elementary schools in Ibaraki, Japan, and possess at least one year of teaching experience in this context. The researcher, who was well-acquainted with all the participants, confirmed their eligibility. Those teaching in junior high schools or with less than one year of experience in public elementary schools in Japan were excluded from the study. The researcher conducted online interviews to gain insights into the experiences of Filipino assistant language teachers collaborating with Japanese elementary school teachers. Participants were asked open-ended questions to provide a comprehensive description of their experiences. The researcher reached out to potential participants, explained the interview's nature, and conducted interviews using digital platforms like Skype, Zoom, and Google Meet due to the participants' diverse locations and demanding job nature. The decision to conclude data collection after conducting seven interviews was supported by the repetitiveness of information, as every participant shared similar viewpoints, suggesting that conducting additional interviews would not likely provide further data. The attainment of data saturation can be influenced by the particular focus of the research, as was the case here. When investigating a well-defined research study with clear variables, data saturation tends to occur more quickly. This was exemplified in Constantinou et al.'s (2017) research, where the smallest sample size to reach saturation was five interviews in a study involving a homogenous research population and a focus on broader categories. After the interviews, the researcher followed Colaizzi's strategy, a reliable method for understanding people's experiences. This seven-step process ensures a comprehensive analysis closely tied to the data, ultimately resulting in a concise yet thorough explanation of the phenomenon under study, which were validated by the participants (cited in Sanders, 2003; Speziale & Carpenter, 2007).

3. Results and Discussions

Participants were interviewed regarding their working experiences with the Japanese elementary school teachers. After the transcription provided by the participants during the in-depth interview conducted by the researcher, the researcher went over the collected data several times to make sure all information given were understood. Three major themes were formed from the clusters of themes. The table below shows the three emergent themes.

Table 1: Emergent Themes

| Theme Clusters | Emergent Themes |
|---|--|
| Japanese Teachers` Teaching Roles | What We Need to Know about Japanese Teachers |
| Japanese Teachers` View on English Classes | |
| Japanese Teachers` Impact on Class Participation | |
| Japanese Teachers` Personalities | What We Need to Know about Assistant Language Teachers |
| ALTs` Non- Teaching Roles | |
| ALTs` Teaching Roles | What We Need to Know about The ALT Job |
| How to Build a Good Working Relationship with Japanese Teachers | |
| Impact of Knowing the Japanese Language on ALTs | |
| Team Teaching with Japanese Teachers | |

Note: This table shows the three emergent themes from the extracted significant statements of the participants using Colaizzi's method of data analysis.

Theme 1: What We Need to Know about Japanese Teachers

Building strong relationships with Japanese teachers is essential for Filipino Assistant Language Teachers in Japanese elementary schools. Success depends on understanding Japanese teachers' personalities, routines, and teaching roles. This knowledge aids in developing effective working relationships.

Japanese teachers' personalities. Even with prior teaching experience, Filipino Assistant Language Teachers still face a challenge to adjust in a foreign working environment. Adjusting in a new workplace is already a struggle, even more so adjusting to the new colleagues who have different backgrounds, different culture and different language.

Filipino Assistant Language Teachers in Japan divulged that Japanese teachers in public elementary schools are generally supportive and welcoming to them. Though language barrier limits smooth communication, Japanese teachers assure Filipino ALTs that they are treated well and appreciated. The participants of this study also added that Japanese teachers puts so much importance in creating a harmonious working place for all. Having known them as polite individuals, they tend to suppress their real emotions or opinions, especially the negative ones, just to maintain an environment free of arguments and indifferences. Filipino ALTs also acknowledged Japanese teachers' emphasis on the importance of time. Japanese teachers show utmost admiration and have a lasting positive impression to Filipino ALTs who follow what they do.

According to a study conducted by Sato, Mason, and Kataoka (2020), Japanese teachers faced challenges when teaching specialized subjects like foreign languages. As a result, they acknowledged the significance of further trainings as a means to improve their learning by exchanging ideas and resources with fellow teachers. Moreover, Japanese teachers have expressed concerns about their workload and how it affects their ability to collaborate with other teachers on tasks like lesson planning. They feel that time is a crucial factor in their work. This is clearly aligned to what the participants of this study described Japanese teachers in elementary schools. They are very much supportive and willing to help support Assistant Language Teachers if they are guided and provided with enough skills training. Additionally, both the study and the participants' experiences revealed the Japanese teachers' attitude towards time management and punctuality.

Japanese teachers' view on English classes. As globalization continue to increase throughout the years, there's also demand pressure on knowing a global language like English. Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology has been constantly revising its Foreign Language curriculum to meet the demands of the current times. As more English classes are now done in elementary schools, Japanese teachers, who are still in need of more trainings in leading and handling English classes, have different views on teaching English classes with an Assistant Language Teacher.

This difference in attitude towards team teaching between young and older Japanese teachers can be attributed to various factors. One possible explanation is the generational gap and the changing dynamics of education in Japan. Firstly, younger Japanese teachers have grown up in an era where globalization and cultural exchange are more prevalent. They have been exposed to a wider range of teaching methods and educational philosophies, which emphasize collaboration and interaction with native English speakers. As a result, they may view Assistant Language Teachers as valuable resources for enhancing students' language skills and cultural understanding. On the other hand, older Japanese teachers may have received their education during a time when English language instruction was more traditional and focused on grammar-based learning. Consequently, they might feel less confident or knowledgeable about incorporating communicative language teaching methods into their lessons. Through the revelations of the Filipino Assistant Language Teachers, it can be sensed that most Japanese teachers still don't have enough confidence to lead English classes. They rely on the ALTs teaching skills to successfully deliver English lessons. Some Japanese teachers are open to taking minimal responsibilities in conducting English classes but still most prefer not to be directly involved in its implementation to efficiently utilize the time to fulfill other work obligations unrelated to the English education curriculum.

According to a survey conducted by Inoi (2009), Japanese teachers feel anxious about the extra responsibility of teaching English. They are concerned about planning lessons and doubting their own English skills. Additionally, some teachers have an independent mindset when it comes to participating in English instruction activities. The study of Shiobara and Sakui (2019) revealed that some Japanese teachers wanted to teach younger grades only so that they can avoid teaching English. This survey has confirmed the experiences of the seven participants in this study, indicating that Japanese teachers still lack confidence in leading English classes. It is evident that further training and exposure are necessary for them to develop a positive impression of the implementation of English classes in Japanese elementary schools.

Japanese teachers' teaching roles. The Foreign Language Curriculum is originally designed to be implemented by the Japanese teacher with the assistance of a foreign English teachers functioning as an Assistant Language Teacher. As previously discussed, teachers in elementary schools in Japan still need further improvement in leading the English classes, notwithstanding the lack of proficiency in speaking the language. Because of this, there has been a shift of roles in conducting English classes in elementary schools in Japan. ALTs who are initially tasked to be "assistants" are now taking over and lead the class.

Previous studies by Winslow (2012) have examined the teaching roles of Japanese teachers. His research revealed that Japanese teachers demonstrate a high level of respect and dedication when working together with others. It stated that in Japanese education, collaboration among teachers is highly valued. They actively exchange methods for presenting materials and collaborate in the preparation of

lessons and teaching materials. Unfortunately, this not the case in the implementation of English Instruction in Japanese elementary schools where Japanese teachers and Assistant Language Teachers` collaboration is affected by the language barrier. In a study by Aline & Hosoda (2006), they looked at how teachers work together in English classes. They found that some teachers just watch from the sidelines, while others help translate or learn alongside the students. Unfortunately, these roles don't really encourage students to use their communication skills. This is entirely reaffirmed by the Filipino Assistant Language Teachers interviewed in this study. This only mean that the teaching roles of Japanese teachers in English classes have remained unimproved over the years.

Japanese teachers` impact on class participation. Working in elementary schools in Japan, Filipino Assistant Language teachers, though knowledgeable in terms of the contents of the lesson, still need guidance and support from the Japanese teachers. Japanese students spend only 45 minutes per class with the ALT and the rest of the day with their Japanese homeroom teachers. They are still of great importance and resource of information as Filipino Assistant Language teachers can gain information from them about students` preferences, learning styles, personalities and behaviors.

When Japanese students witness their Japanese teachers having fun during English classes, it creates a positive and engaging learning environment. It not only breaks the stereotype that learning English is dull and difficult but also instills a sense of excitement and curiosity among the students. Seeing their teachers enjoying the English class helps students develop a more positive attitude towards language learning. They become motivated to actively participate, ask questions, and explore different aspects of the language. The enthusiasm displayed by their teachers becomes contagious, fostering a love for English within the students themselves. Moreover, when Japanese teachers have fun during English classes, it demonstrates that language learning is not limited to textbooks and grammar rules. It shows that communication and cultural exchange are equally important aspects of mastering a foreign language. Japanese teachers` willingness to take part and actively engage themselves have proven increased students` motivation to study English according to the Filipino Assistant Language Teachers` accounts. Doing such will not only foster students` positive attitude towards English education but also generate additional professional knowledge to Japanese teachers to have further understanding on the English teaching job.

Yazawa (2017) discussed the impact of low self-efficacy on students. Those who doubt their abilities to perform tasks in English often feel anxious and give up easily when faced with difficulties, even if they have the necessary skills. However, these students feel more at ease when their Japanese homeroom teacher is present in the classroom. It's super important for Japanese teachers to be totally involved in teaching to make sure the lessons go smoothly. This was proven when the students started getting distracted and not paying attention as revealed in the study conducted by Pearce (2020). This only proves that even with their language ability, Japanese teachers still create a big impact

on students` participation in English classes as evidenced by the experiences of Filipino Assistant Language Teachers.

Theme 2: What We Need to Know about Assistant Language Teachers

It is a given fact that one will have a successful career if he/she knows his/her job very well. Becoming an Assistant Language Teacher in Japan entails many steps that all must go through. One of those is to religiously and diligently be equipped with all the information about the roles and responsibilities of Assistant Language Teachers in and out of the classroom. Assistant Language Teachers in Japan continue to make substantial positive contributions to the Japanese society. Being considered as respectable professionals, aspiring and current ALTs should uphold the ideas of an upright Assistant Language Teacher.

ALTs` teaching roles. To have a successful teaching career in Japan as an Assistant Language Teacher, one must carefully be familiarized of the diverse roles that ALTs must realize inside the classroom. Teaching in Japan requires understanding in their education system, teaching styles, the foreign language curriculum and the different cultural norms integrated in their way of instruction. Filipino Assistant Language Teachers in Japan have varied experiences regarding their teaching roles.

The most common experience of all the Filipino ALTs who were interviewed was about being the main/ lead teacher of the English classes. The job title "Assistant" doesn't conform to the role anymore. Given that most Japanese teachers struggle in communicating and understanding English, they already entrust all the technical responsibilities to Assistant Language Teachers. Some elementary schools encourage both the ALT and the Japanese teachers to team teach but due to language barrier, this concept still has a lot of hurdles to overcome. One significant fact that Filipino ALTs should always bear in mind is to not be involved in disciplining students as ALTs are prohibited in doing so. A simple analogy to describe the roles of Filipino Assistant Language Teachers and Japanese teachers would be, Filipino ALTs is to teaching the subject matter as Japanese teachers is to classroom management. In an effort to enhance English education in Japan, Assistant Language Teachers were hired to support Japanese teachers in delivering high-quality English lessons (Turnball, 2018). Based on the questionnaire research conducted by Kano & Ozeki (2018) and Ohtani (2010), it has been found that ALTs depend on HRTs for managing classrooms, maintaining discipline, and addressing students by their names. However, ALTs occasionally teach classes independently (Hiratsuka, 2013). This is very similar to the experiences of the interviewed Filipino Assistant Language Teachers in Japan. Over the years, Japanese teachers and Assistant Language Teachers have developed certain expectations for their respective roles in teaching English to Japanese students.

ALTs` non-teaching roles. The duties and responsibilities of Filipino Assistant Language Teachers in Japan extend beyond the four corners of the classroom. They create a lasting positive impact to students and Japanese teachers not only with delivery quality English lessons but also in nurturing a healthy relationship with the people around them.

ALTs' classroom experience becomes even more meaningful when they are able to form an encouraging relationship that provisions a better and enduring understanding of the lessons learned inside the classroom.

While it is true that Assistant Language teachers in Japan may encounter certain happenings at school that they don't initially understand, it is important to approach this situation with an open mind and a willingness to learn. Rather than dismissing these occurrences as something they should simply get used to, it would be more beneficial for Filipino Assistant Language teachers to actively seek understanding and engage in cultural exchange. Japan has a unique cultural context, and schools often reflect this distinctiveness. There may be traditions, customs, or practices that are unfamiliar to foreign teachers, including Filipino teachers. Instead of feeling overwhelmed or isolated by these differences, it is crucial for them to embrace the opportunity for personal growth and intercultural learning.

Since students showed more interest in the content-focused context, it might be more valuable to view the ALT as a cultural informant rather than just an English language expert (Pearce, 2020). This study coincides with the data provided by the participants of this study. Assistant Language Teachers in Japan come from different parts of the world including the Philippines. Teaching English to students does not only involve contents relating to the language itself. It is also a chance for the Filipino ALTs to integrate our culture and make it known to Japanese students. Elementary schools in Japan also have extracurricular activities ranging from sports to cultural appreciation events. In the Guidebook for foreign languages activities and foreign language at elementary schools (MEXT, 2017), it says that ALTs have this role where they get to show off their home country's life and culture. They do this by talking about stuff that's related to what the class is learning about. And, get this, they also get to learn about the students' country by talking and hanging out with them. Filipino ALTs interviewed in this study are very much aware of this role but they fear that their participation in such events may add additional burden to the school as your presence may halt preparations. Assistant Language Teachers' involvement to these activities may be limited but it's a common trend that all Assistant Language Teachers experience in elementary schools across Japan.

Theme 3: What We Need to Know about the ALT Job

As the demand of Filipino Assistant Language Teachers in Japan continue to rise, many teachers in the Philippines dream of becoming an international educator. Expectation versus reality has become a sensational trend that people use to jokingly express their frustrations and regrets about whatever they do. For this not to happen, ALTs should be prepared and are exposed to the inside information of the job. Knowing the details will empower them resulting to ultimate job satisfaction for both the Assistant Language Teacher and the Japanese schools.

Impact of Knowing the Japanese Language on ALTs. Adapting to a foreign work environment is already tantamount to stress, let alone being unable to speak and understand their language. One is not required to be a

Nihongo master but having such skill, even just learning the basics, can definitely experience a more convenient and trouble-free execution of the duties of a foreign English teacher in Japan. The benefits of knowing the language provide so much comfort not only within the school but also makes it easy for Assistant Language Teachers to merge and adapt to the Japanese way of life. Effective lesson planning and building meaningful professional relationships in Japanese elementary schools as a Filipino Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) are greatly facilitated when both the ALT and the Japanese Teacher can communicate fluently in the Japanese language. Therefore, it's crucial for Filipino ALTs, who choose to work in Japan, to be proficient in Japanese. Having a good command of the Japanese language, preferably with at least a conversational level before arriving in Japan, is strongly advised based on the experiences of the participants in this study. This language proficiency is instrumental for a successful teaching career in Japan.

One common challenge that is frequently discussed in relation to ALT jobs is communication. This difficulty is not only present in intercultural communication between ALTs and Japanese teachers, but it is also often cited as a major obstacle to achieving success in a teaching career overall. (Miyazato, 2011). As evidenced by the experiences of Filipino Assistant Language Teachers gathered, learning the Japanese language plays a crucial role in the many aspects of the life of ALTs in Japan. According to the ALT survey conducted by Amaki (2008), it seemed like a lot of English teachers aren't very good at speaking English themselves. They relied too much on Japanese in class, which means students aren't getting enough practice speaking and listening in English. The result of this survey is relevant to what the participants of this study has revealed. It is very ideal for Japanese teachers to be proficient in English and contribute more in the content of the lesson but the Filipino Assistant Language Teachers insisted that learning Japanese will be even more beneficial in improving their working relationships with the Japanese teachers.

Team Teaching with Japanese Teachers. As Filipino Assistant Language Teachers are not licensed teachers in Japan, Japanese teachers are mandated to be physically present in the classroom. Japan's Ministry of Education continue to strive to make Japanese teachers prepared to handle and implement the Foreign Language curriculum in elementary schools. Aside from the language barrier, team teaching is still an ongoing struggle for both the ALT and the Japanese teachers because of the heavy workload that most of the Japanese teachers have to perform.

According to Ferguson (2021), some Japanese teachers are comfortable with the idea of letting the Assistant Language Teacher take on the role of the main English teacher. However, there is no effort made by either teacher to collaborate and team teach together. While teachers do provide support to the ALT in areas such as classroom management and organizing teaching materials, most of the communication between them is non-verbal. Ferguson refers to this type of support as "team support" rather than "effective team teaching." This highly affirms the participants' experiences where Japanese teachers mostly supports the teacher ALTs in classroom management and

physical assistance. Furthermore, Japanese teachers being super stressed out is a big problem that many researchers have studied and talked about (Machida, 2016). More so, this study also showed that it's still a big problem today too. In this regard, Japanese teachers still have a lot of improvement when it comes to being directly involved in the technicalities of English language teaching.

How to Build a Good Working Relationship with Japanese Teachers. Even with the existence of the different hurdles of Filipino Assistant Language Teachers in elementary schools in Japan, countless ways can still be employed to establish a good working relationship with the Japanese teachers. Their working relationship directly influences the lesson flow, students' participation and the over-all satisfaction of the ALTs' experience as a foreign worker in Japan.

Learning Nihongo has been repeatedly echoed by the participants of this study as it also affects how Filipino Assistant Language Teachers' relationship with the Japanese teachers grow. Cultural sensitivity should also be considered when engaging in small conversations so as to not start arguments or misunderstandings. It is also admirable to keep on commending Japanese teachers' efforts in trying to be of great assistance during English classes as it enhances their confidence. Japanese teachers are regarded as honored members of the society so ALTs should ensure appropriate respect is given no matter what role they have in English classes. It is recommended to also show appreciation by sharing small presents/snacks to Japanese teachers, especially those that are from the Philippines. Through this, Japanese teachers can feel the ALTs to adapt to the work culture of Japan and can also be a very effective conversation starter and a channel to introduce Filipino culture to the Japanese people. When it comes to classroom discipline problems, simply discussing them may not always result in finding solutions. However, by sharing ideas and opinions, both Assistant Language Teachers and Japanese teachers can gain a better understanding of each other, broaden their perspectives, and become more aware of their own cultures (Tsuidou, et al., 2012). Furthermore, according to a study conducted by Walter & Sponseller (2020), it is strongly advised to offer additional chances for Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) and Japanese teachers to enhance their collaboration skills. Indeed, this point was emphasized by the Filipino Assistant Language Teachers during their interviews. Creating more chances for Japanese teachers and Assistant Language Teachers to engage in regular interactions can certainly contribute to the development of a strong working relationship.

4. Conclusions

The valuable information collected from the participants was used to create a professional packet for Assistant Language Teachers containing significant inputs about Japanese Teachers, Filipino Assistant Language Teachers and the ALT job. This packet offers Filipino teachers a clear guide to having a fulfilling experience as an English teacher in Japanese elementary schools. It aims to assist both the Assistant Language Teachers and the Japanese elementary schools in preventing any potential challenges that may arise and ensuring the delivery of high-quality English education

to young students in Japan. The distribution of this packet to Philippine recruitment agencies and the Labor Department of the Philippines will also enable them to continuously equip Filipino Assistant Language Teachers with helpful information prior to leaving the country.

The research findings on the experiences of Filipino Assistant Language Teachers who work with Japanese elementary school teachers are significant for unlocking the complete potential of these Filipino teachers. The professional packet is beneficial to various sectors such as Japanese schools, Japan's Board of Education, Foreign Language Education Coordinators, and government agencies responsible for sending workers overseas. It provides valuable information to these entities. The results of this study have important implications for Filipino Assistant Language Teachers in terms of their understanding of their career, their readiness for their career, and their awareness of different cultures. Understanding these implications can greatly enhance convenience and improve working conditions in all sectors within the ALT job industry.

The findings of this research on the experiences of Filipino Assistant Language Teachers working with Japanese elementary school teachers featured ways on how to achieve career satisfaction and improved working experience with the Japanese teachers. When the findings of this research are acknowledged and understood, all relevant sectors, particularly the Filipino Assistant Language Teachers, can enhance the working experience of Filipinos employed in Japan. One must understand that working as an Assistant Language Teacher in Japan goes beyond just teaching English. It involves immersing oneself in a completely different culture, which requires a high level of adaptability and cultural sensitivity. The narratives shared by the participants serve as tangible proof that adopting and embracing the Japanese way of life is an indispensable requirement for anyone aspiring to be a successful Assistant Language Teacher in Japan. While the process of assimilating into an unfamiliar culture demands substantial time investment, it can still be achieved when we display willingness to embrace and accept the cultural differences.

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