

Internal Stakeholders' Responsibility in Maintaining an English-Only School Environment and Its Relationship to Students' Language Proficiency and Sense of Filipino Identity

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Abstract: This study explored the responsibilities of internal stakeholders in maintaining an English-Only School Environment (EOSE) and its relationship to students' language proficiency and sense of Filipino Identity. Fifteen internal stakeholders of St. Bernadette Montessori Academy (SBMA), purposively selected from the administration, teaching staff, and support staff, participated in this study conducted during the School Year 2025-2026. A qualitative descriptive design was employed. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using Braun and Clarke's six-phase thematic analysis. The findings revealed that maintaining the EOSE is a shared responsibility among internal stakeholders and is carried out through language management, language ideology, and language practices, including consistent English modeling, encouragement, constructive feedback, meaningful interaction, and creation of supportive opportunities for learners to practice English in both classroom and non-classroom settings. The EOSE was perceived as positively influencing students' English language; however, the benefits were not experienced equally by all students. Learners with lower English proficiency were perceived to experience anxiety, intimidation, discouragement, and reduced participation when the policy was implemented too rigidly. Regarding students' sense of Filipino Identity, internal stakeholders perceived that learners could develop strong English proficiency while maintaining their Filipino identity when deliberate opportunities were provided to use Filipino and engage with Filipino culture. However, insufficient opportunities to use Filipino were associated with reduced familiarity with Filipino cultural practices. At the same time, the findings revealed that English can serve as a medium for preserving and expressing Filipino culture when Filipino history, literature, traditions, values, celebrations, and culturally relevant content are deliberately integrated into lessons and school activities. The study concludes that the EOSE should be retained but strengthened through a more consistent, supportive, learner-centered, and culturally responsive approach.

Keywords: English-Only School Environment, English-Only School Policy, Internal Stakeholders, Language Management, Language Ideology, Language Practices, English Language Proficiency, Sense of Filipino Identity.

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's interconnected world, English has emerged as the dominant language for global interaction, commerce, and learning. As noted by International Language Centers (2025), mastering English is essential for thriving in a globalized society and for opening doors to collaboration, communication, and personal development. Consequently, educational institutions worldwide now prioritize English proficiency, recognizing its importance for students aiming to succeed in a

borderless economy. This focus leads to specific language policies in schools that aim to create an immersive environment to accelerate language learning through regular exposure and practice.

In the Philippines, the use of English as a medium of communication and instruction is rooted in educational and linguistic history as well as in its status as one of the official languages, alongside the national language, Filipino. While there are no specific data on the percentage of schools enforcing "English-only" policies, many private educational institutions and tertiary schools have adopted this approach to ensure their graduates possess high-level communication skills. However, implementing this language policy creates a complex interaction between the pursuit of global competitiveness and the need to preserve national identity. As Pradia & Bawa (2023) pointed out, although English is emphasized as an essential tool for successfully navigating the global arena, it also poses a dissonance with local language use and cultural expression.

At St. Bernadette Montessori Academy (SBMA), the "English-Only" school environment is a key part of its identity, requiring the exclusive use of English for teaching and daily communication. Maintaining this school environment requires coordinated effort and active support from its internal stakeholders, including administrators, the principal, teachers, and staff. These people help enforce the rules and shape the social and academic environment where learners are expected to speak English. The success of a language policy relies on the constant involvement of internal stakeholders, who act as gatekeepers of the language environment (Nimes & Libago, 2024).

The nature of this school environment can be understood through the lens of Bernard Spolky's Tripartite Model, which asserts that language management, language ideology, and language practice are the three primary components of language policy (Fulop, Flih, & Gurses, 2025). In relation to SBMA, this framework shows how internal stakeholders' personal and professional beliefs shape learners' language experiences.

Despite the academic goal of maintaining an English-only school environment, there is an increasing need to explore how these responsibilities affect students' overall development. While this policy is designed to improve SBMAers' language proficiency, it also exists alongside students' developing awareness, appreciation, and expression of their own culture, values, and identity. Hence, this study arises from the need to explore and understand the responsibilities of internal stakeholders in maintaining an English-only school environment while promoting English mastery without undermining students' awareness of Filipino identity.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Design

The researcher used a qualitative descriptive research design. According to Ayton (2023), qualitative descriptive studies aim to provide a comprehensive summary of events and emphasize the understanding of human experiences through in-depth analysis. It is primarily exploratory research that aims to explore the nuances of participants' perspectives and gather detailed descriptions from individuals or groups, creating a narrative that reflects their lived experiences. This research design is used to obtain participants' perspectives, providing a deeper understanding of a relatively new phenomenon, specifically the responsibilities of internal stakeholders in maintaining an English-only school environment and its perceived relation to students' language proficiency and sense of Filipino identity. In this context, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. How may the profile of the participants be described in terms of:
 - 1.1 age;
 - 1.2 sex;
 - 1.3 highest educational attainment;
 - 1.4 designation; and
 - 1.5 length of service?
2. How do internal stakeholders describe their responsibilities in maintaining an English-Only school environment?
3. How do internal stakeholders perceive the influence of an English-Only school environment on students' English language proficiency and sense of Filipino identity?
4. What insights can be drawn from the experiences and perceptions of internal stakeholders to improve school language policy implementation?

B. Participant

Participants in this study were selected through purposive sampling. Initially, participants were grouped according to their roles within the school —namely, the administration, the teaching staff, and the support staff. From each group, five internal stakeholders were intentionally selected based on the inclusion criteria to ensure they could provide data relevant to achieving the study’s objectives. Specifically, the participants must:(a) have the longest tenure in service, and (b) have direct involvement in implementing school language policies.

This study comprised 15 participants, ensuring representation across internal stakeholders.

TABLE 1. DISTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPANTS

Internal Stakeholders	No. of Participants	
Administration	School Administrator	1
	School Principal	1
	Grade Level Supervisor	3
Teaching Staff	Elementary Teachers	5
Support Staff	School Nurse	1
	Canteen Staff Member	1
	Utility Worker	2
	School Guard	1
Total		15

C. Instrument

The researcher developed a semi-structured interview guide aligned with the research questions to obtain the necessary data. The instrument consisted of open-ended interview questions designed to elicit detailed information about the participants’ responsibilities in maintaining an English-only school environment and their relation to students’ language proficiency and sense of Filipino identity.

To ensure the validity, appropriateness, and adequacy of the research instrument, the researcher consulted his adviser and experts in the relevant field.

D. Data Analysis

After the interview, the collected data were transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis. According to Ahmed et. al. (2025), thematic analysis offers a systematic yet flexible framework for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning within datasets. It emphasizes interpretive depth and flexibility, enabling both descriptive and rich conceptual analysis. Specifically, the researcher employed Braun and Clarke’s six-phase thematic analysis framework, as it offers a systematic yet flexible method for examining qualitative data, enabling researchers to produce meaningful and insightful interpretations (Ahmed et al., 2025). This method follows six structured steps, which include (1) familiarization with data using transcriptions, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) writing the report.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section of the study elaborates the results and translates the gathered data on participants’ profiles, responsibilities in maintaining an English-Only school environment, and its influences on students’ English language proficiency and sense of Filipino identity perceived by the internal stakeholders.

A. Profile of the Participants

This study involved fifteen (15) internal stakeholders of SBMA, comprised of both teaching and non-teaching personnel. In terms of gender distribution, the majority were female, with 11 (73%) participants, while 4 (27%) were male. This suggests that female employees constituted the larger proportion of participants.

Regarding age, the participants of this study ranged from 25 to 44 years old. Many of the participants, 12 or 80%, belonged to the 25-34 age bracket, while the remaining 3 (20%) were aged 40-44 years. This implies that the participants were generally adults with varying levels of experience and professional maturity.

In the matter of educational attainment, three (3) participants had earned a master's degree, four (4) were pursuing a master's degree, four (4) were bachelor's degree holders, and four (4) were high school graduates. Thus, the participants represented diverse educational backgrounds, demonstrating the inclusion of both professional educators and non-teaching personnel in this research.

As regards the designation or position, five (5) participants were teachers, three (3) were grade level supervisors, one (1) was a school principal, one (1) was a school administrator, one (1) was a school nurse, one (1) was a canteen staff member, two (2) were utility workers, and one (1) was a school guard. This distribution indicates that the study obtained perspectives from different sectors of the school community – namely, the administration, the teaching staff, and the support staff. This equal representation allows a more comprehensive understanding of the implementation of an English-Only school environment.

As for the participants' length of service at SBMA, the majority have been serving between 3 and 8 years. Specifically, eleven (11) participants have been working at SBMA for 3-5 years, three (3) for 6-8 years, and one (1) for 15 years. These figures indicate that most participants are relatively experienced internal stakeholders of the school community, while one participant has extensive long-term service. Thus, most participants possessed sufficient experience to offer informed insights regarding the SBMA's English-only school environment.

B. Responsibilities in Maintaining an English-Only School Environment

Language Management

The responses revealed that Internal Stakeholders demonstrated language management in maintaining the English-Only School Environment (EOSE) through consistent monitoring, reminders, reinforcement, corrective feedback, and implementation of school rules.

Educators reported encouraging learners to use English not only during classroom discussions but also when communicating with classmates, teachers, and other school personnel outside the classroom setting. Through constant use of English in classrooms, hallways, the school cafeteria, offices, and school activities, internal stakeholders help establish an environment in which English becomes the primary medium of communication. Moreover, the implementation of the EOSE is embedded in students' daily school experience as English is regulated and encouraged across various areas within the school community. This also suggests that students learn language behavior through continuous exposure to English.

Many participants recognized that some learners often experience fear, anxiety, and a lack of confidence when speaking English. The data reveal that rather than relying solely on consequences, most participants employ positive strategies such as corrective feedback, praise, incentives, encouragement, and recognition to help students build their confidence and comfort using English. This combination of supportive and corrective strategies further implies that internal stakeholders attempt to maintain policy compliance while addressing differences in students' proficiency and confidence. In particular, the use of a supportive approach, constructive feedback, and gentle correction demonstrates an effort to prevent policy implementation from becoming a source of embarrassment or anxiety.

Participants reported reinforcing language use, monitoring compliance, developing language-related routines, coordinating reports and observations, and implementing interventions when necessary. The data showed that language monitoring extends beyond formal classroom instructions to hallways, break areas, the canteen, clinic, school activities, and other informal spaces. At the administrative and supervisory level, participants contribute by establishing rules, coordinating with teachers, and developing strategies and routines that strengthen consistent English use. These active involvement and collaborative efforts ensure that English is consistently practiced not only inside classrooms but also in common areas and school activities.

Language Ideology

Regarding language ideology, the responses revealed that internal stakeholders acknowledged English as essential to learners' academic development, communication skills, confidence, future opportunities, and global competitiveness. This suggests that English has acquired a position that extends beyond its function as a subject or instructional medium. Within the SBMA's school environment, English has become associated with academic readiness, effective communication, confidence, professionalism, and preparation for wider social and professional opportunities.

Internal Stakeholders' language ideology also emphasized the importance of language modeling. The administration members, teachers, and other school personnel therefore viewed themselves as language models whose regular use of English could affect learners' own language behavior. This means that their use of English is not merely adherence to the school language policy but also a significant contribution to the sustainability of the EOSE. The consistent emphasis on internal stakeholders as linguistic models further suggests that participants believe language behavior can be developed through observation and participation.

The data also indicated that English is expected to function across different school contexts, including classroom instructions, school activities, informal interactions, and communication among members of the school community. Learners are expected not only to comply with the EOP but also to internalize the use of English as a normal part of school life. This finding highlighted the significance of support and active involvement of internal stakeholders in reinforcing appropriate English usage across various school settings as crucial agents in language-policy implementation.

Generally, the participants' language ideologies highlighted the importance of sustained exposure, consistent modeling, and commitment. Thus, the SBMA's English-only environment is maintained through the beliefs and behaviors of its internal stakeholders.

Language Practices

The data showed that Internal Stakeholders' language practices were reflected in the consistent use of English, the provision of authentic communication opportunities for learners, guided interaction, and scaffolding.

The data indicate that the participants support the EOSE by consistently using English in their daily interactions. In particular, the teachers reported using English during classroom instruction and informal interactions with students and other school personnel. This implies that participants reinforce the EOSE through the actual use of the expected language in their everyday interactions. Although regular use of English may appear to be a simple and routine strategy, its continuous practice can have a significant effect in sustaining the EOSE. When internal stakeholders consistently model English in their daily interactions, they provide learners with an opportunity to hear, observe, and use English in authentic situations.

The participants extend their responsibilities beyond enforcement by providing learners with authentic opportunities to practice English. Support staff, such as the school nurse, canteen staff, utility workers, and the school guard, contribute to language development by interacting with learners in English outside of the classroom through meaningful daily tasks, such as buying food, asking for directions, or during school clinic visits. These authentic interactions enable students to apply language skills naturally in real-life contexts.

When students encountered difficulty, participants adjusted their communication by speaking slowly, using simple vocabulary, providing additional explanations, and giving students time to respond. This finding implies that internal stakeholders do not simply require learners to speak English but rather seek to create opportunities for students to participate in English communication successfully. The use of scaffolding is essential because it shows awareness of differences in students' language abilities. Learners who are not yet proficient in English are not merely expected to comply with the policy; they are given guidance to gradually participate. Moreover, internal stakeholders also employed various strategies, including additional reading activities, vocabulary-building exercises, patient correction, continuous encouragement, and language workshops. These data suggest that internal stakeholders facilitate student confidence and language growth. Their language practices involve helping students overcome language barriers through different strategies.

Overall, the language practices of internal stakeholders at SBMA demonstrate that policy implementation is most effective when English use is consistently modeled, reinforced, and supported through meaningful communication and appropriate assistance when students encounter difficulties.

C. Perceived Influence on Students' English Language Proficiency and Sense of Filipino Identity

English Language Proficiency

The responses revealed that Internal Stakeholders perceived the influence of an English-Only School Environment (EOSE) on students' English language proficiency positively. Most participants consistently described improvements in learners' speaking fluency, communication skills, vocabulary, pronunciation, comprehension, writing ability, and overall confidence in using English. They highlighted that regular practice and constant exposure to English through daily school interactions, both inside and outside the classroom, increase students' readiness for academic and global communication and enable them

to become more comfortable expressing their ideas. Likewise, several participants noticed that learners progressively manage language anxiety and increase their willingness to communicate when English is practiced deliberately within a supportive learning environment.

Interestingly, a few participants noted that while sustained exposure to English helps most learners develop confidence and comfort over time, the strict implementation of EOSE may also make students with lower levels of English proficiency feel anxious, intimidated, and discouraged from engaging in communication due to fear of making mistakes.

These data suggest that Internal Stakeholders recognize the EOSE as an effective strategy for increasing learners' English language proficiency. Consequently, continuous exposure to English within a positive environment supports language acquisition, enhances students' confidence, and develops their communication competencies necessary for academic success and global competitiveness. This further indicates that authentic and consistent language use can strengthen learners' communicative competence. Although continuous exposure generally promotes learners' confidence, this benefit is not experienced equally by all students. The EOSE can negatively affect students who are less proficient in English, especially when rigidly implemented.

Overall, the participants' responses indicate that the EOSE contributes positively to learners' language development, but its effectiveness depends on the interaction of continuous exposure, meaningful communication, structured instruction, and appropriate learner support.

Language Identity

The responses concerning students' language identity show a more complex and balanced picture. Several participants perceived that EOSE helps students develop competence and confidence in English while allowing them to sustain their relationship with Filipino when opportunities for local language use are deliberately preserved. Internal Stakeholders recommended that Filipino may continue to be used in Tagalog-based subjects and other appropriate contexts. Through this effort, learners can improve English proficiency while continuing to speak and practice Filipino. However, other participants expressed concern that extensive use of English may lessen learners' familiarity with Filipino. Some noted that students had trouble expressing complex ideas in Tagalog, while others stressed that learners may begin to view English as the language of academic success and Filipino primarily as a language for informal communication.

The findings above imply that the EOSE can influence not only learners' language competence but also the relative position of English and Filipino in their linguistic experience. Moreover, students have more opportunities to practice English than Filipino because English is used regularly across various settings at SBMA. The data further suggest that if chances to use Filipino are insufficient, learners may receive fewer opportunities to develop a connection with the Filipino language and build confidence in expressing their ideas in their native language. Thus, the influence of the EOSE on language identity depends largely on how the school and its personnel maintain relationships between English and Filipino. When properly balanced with opportunities to use and appreciate the Filipino language and culture, the EOSE enhances English proficiency without undermining learners' sense of Filipino identity. However, if English is emphasized at the expense of the Filipino language and cultural practices, it may weaken learners' connection to their linguistic and cultural heritage. Overall, the development of the English language and the preservation of a strong relationship with the Filipino language are not mutually exclusive but can coexist when SBMA deliberately promotes and equally supports both languages.

Cultural Awareness

Regarding students' cultural awareness, participants perceived the influence of the English-Only School Environment as having both potential challenges and positive possibilities.

Internal stakeholders who perceived negative influences expressed that learners decline familiarity with practices such as the use of *po* and *opo*, *pagmamano*, local traditions, and other cultural practices. One participant also mentioned that some learners spend more time engaging in mobile games and appear less familiar with traditional Filipino games. Such observations indicate that cultural awareness may diminish when Filipino cultural experiences are not consistently reinforced in students' daily interactions and everyday environment. At the same time, the responses provide evidence for an alternative possibility that English can function as a medium for cultural preservation rather than cultural displacement. Several internal stakeholders believed that learners strengthen English communication skills while sustaining awareness and appreciation of Filipino culture when cultural content is intentionally integrated into learning. Participants identified that when Filipino history, literature, traditions, values, celebrations, and culturally relevant stories are deliberately

integrated into lessons and activities, students can preserve their connection to their heritage. This suggests that English can be utilized as a medium through which students understand, articulate, and express their own culture. These findings further imply that English itself is not necessarily the direct cause of diminished cultural awareness. Rather, the problem arises when English dominance is experienced with limited opportunities for learners to encounter, practice, and appreciate cultural traditions. Generally, the influence of an EOSE on students' cultural awareness is largely dependent on the implementation of a balanced, culturally responsive language policy.

Insights for Strengthening the English-Only School Environment

The results imply that EOSE implementation should be treated as a shared responsibility of the entire school community, not only by groups or members of internal stakeholders.

Likewise, the findings indicate that existing SBMA's school language policy should be strengthened and refined. While the English-Only School Environment (EOSE) is generally effective in improving learners' English language proficiency and confidence, its implementation should avoid being overly rigid because some students experience anxiety and difficulty due to limited proficiency. The results also indicate that the policy's effectiveness depends not only on consistent enforcement but also on supportive, positive, and learner-centered practices that reduce learners' language difficulties and build confidence in English communication. SBMA's policy should therefore shift toward this approach, in which internal stakeholders model English use and create authentic opportunities for learners to practice English both in classrooms and in common areas on the school's premises.

The findings further imply that the current school's language policy would benefit from a more balanced and culturally responsive implementation. English development should not weaken students' sense of Filipino identity, but instead, Filipino language, traditions, values, literature, and culture should be deliberately integrated into lessons, activities, and school programs.

Finally, successful implementation requires school-wide collaboration and institutional support through provisions of clearer guidelines, professional development and staff training, consistent monitoring, visible reminders, parent involvement, and regular feedback mechanisms.

Overall, the results suggest that the policy should remain in place but be implemented more consistently, compassionately, and in a culturally responsive way. An effective EOSE is achieved through consistent implementation, institutional support, and a balanced approach that fosters both English language proficiency and Filipino identity.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Conclusions

1. Female internal stakeholders dominate the sample group. Most participants had sufficient experience and familiarity with the institution's policies and practices. Moreover, the participants represent a diverse group of SBMA internal stakeholders with varied designations, educational backgrounds, responsibilities, and years of service, providing relevant and informed perspectives on how the English-Only School Environment (EOSE) is implemented across different levels and areas of school operations.
2. The implementation of EOSE is sustained through the shared responsibilities of internal stakeholders, particularly through their language management strategies, beliefs, and practices. Effective implementation requires active and coordinated participation from teachers, administrators, and other school personnel in modeling appropriate English usage, guiding and encouraging students, monitoring the consistent application of the policy, providing authentic opportunities for English communication, and assisting learners who encounter language barriers.
3. The EOSE has a generally positive influence on learners' English language proficiency, particularly in speaking fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, comprehension, writing ability, communication skills, and confidence, but its benefits are not experienced equally by all learners. The policy's effectiveness is best achieved when it is implemented through a supportive, learner-centered, and confidence-building approach. The development of English proficiency and the preservation of Filipino identity can coexist, but only through the deliberate integration of Filipino language, culture, and values into lessons, activities, and programs. Intensive emphasis on English may create anxiety among less proficient learners and may weaken their sense of Filipino identity.

4. The existing SBMA's language policy remains relevant and beneficial, but its effectiveness depends on consistent, visible, supportive, learner-centered, and culturally responsive implementation across the school community. The policy should be treated as a language-development framework rather than a rigid compliance mechanism. Its implementation should be regularly monitored and evaluated based not only on the frequency of English use but also on its effects on learners' proficiency, confidence, participation, well-being, and appreciation of Filipino identity.

B. Recommendations

1. The SBMA may involve representatives from both teaching and non-teaching personnel in reviewing and improving the implementation of the EOSE to ensure that the policy remains inclusive and responsive to the needs of the whole school community. Moreover, future studies related to this matter may include parents and students to obtain broader perspectives on an English-only school environment.
2. The SBMA should conduct regular faculty and staff development sessions that clarify goals, responsibilities, and appropriate implementation of the EOSE to ensure and promote consistent understanding and participation among all internal stakeholders.
3. SBMA should not view the EOSE solely as a mechanism for enforcing English use. Rather, it should be implemented as a supportive, learner-centered, and culturally responsive school-wide language program. The SBMA should institutionalize contextualization by integrating Filipino history, literature, traditions, values, celebrations, local practices, and traditional games into appropriate lessons, activities, and school programs.
4. The SBMA may conduct a comprehensive review and refinement of its existing language policy to ensure its consistent, balanced, learner-centered, culturally responsive implementation.

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