

# UNDERSTANDING THE DYNAMICS OF LANGUAGE CENTERS IN SCHOOL SETTING

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## ABSTRACT

*Language Centers (LC) are gaining local and international reputation for their contribution to English language training or proficiency. However, despite their widespread phenomenon, there is dearth in literature about them locally, or even perhaps globally. Using phenomenology, this paper aimed to explore the dynamics of language centers by identifying their purpose, programs, and practices. Data were gathered through in-depth interview with five language center directors. These LCs are all university-situated. Results of the interview surfaced three important concepts about the dynamics of language centers concerning their purpose which is termed what to harness, their programs termed what to highlight and practices termed how to handle. LCs exist basically to improve proficiency of non-native speakers of English, their language programs are flexible because they are based on the language needs of the clientele/learners, while linkages make these LCs more profitable or successful.*

*Keywords: Language Centers, English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Purpose, Programs, Practices.*

## INTRODUCTION

The need to have communicative competence in English resulted in the establishment and /or proliferation of Language Centers (LC), that are gaining local and international reputation for their contribution to English language training and proficiency of non-native speakers of the language or other foreign languages. However, despite their widespread phenomenon, attempt to document the dynamics of LCs has not been made locally or even perhaps globally.

The widespread phenomenon of LCs may be attributed to the dominance of English in many fields like in education and business, that it has become almost a need to speak the language. Moreover, "the importance of learning English cannot be overstated in an increasingly interconnected and globalized world" (inlinguamalta.com). And, in many instances, "English is a language of wider communication both among individuals from different countries and between individuals from one country. In this way, English is an international language in both a global and a local sense" (Mckay, 2002, p. 5).

Lcs are institutions, that provide lessons in English or other foreign languages for a fee. LCs are form of Shadow Education (SE), because it is done after school either inside or outside of school. SE means "a set of educational activities outside formal schooling that are designed to improve a student's chances of successfully moving through the allocation process" (Stevenson and Baker, 1992, pp. 1639-1640 cited in Sohn, Lee, Jang, and Kim, 2010, p. 26).

Bush (2001) states that "educational management has to be centrally concerned with the purpose or aims of education." Thus, it is assumed that LCs, just like any educational institution or regular school, exist for a purpose. It is also assumed that LCs offer English as a Second Language (ESL) or English as a Foreign Language (EFL) programs. The teaching of English in LCs falls under the context of EFL. EFL courses are different from the way English is taught in mainstream education (britishcouncil.org). Further, EFL refers to teaching people whose first language is not English, but who need to learn it for work, for university education or choose to learn for leisure. Finally, it is

assumed that LCs follow certain administrative practices because “organizational structure provides a framework for vertical control and horizontal coordination of the organization” (Lunenburg and Ornstein, 2012, p. 28).

According to British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) website, “the Philippines is fast becoming the world’s low-cost English language teacher with rapid increases in overseas students coming to learn English or study in English-speaking universities.” It is also stated in the same site that, “the Philippines markets itself as being the third largest English-speaking nation - after the US and the UK - a fact proudly displayed on the Department of Tourism website. Most people speak at least rudimentary English, and the well-educated speak it fluently” (The Philippines: the world’s budget teacher, 2012). In addition, according to Global English website, “the Philippines scored the highest and it was the only categorized as high level of proficiency” (globalenglish.com).

The establishment or proliferation of LCs in the Philippines could be attributed to the reasons stated above. However, although LCs are widespread in the country research literature is not available about such phenomenon. Thus, this study is an attempt to explore the dynamics of LCs in the Philippines in relation to their purpose, programs, and practices.

## 1. Method

### 1.1 Design

Using phenomenology, this paper aimed to explore the dynamics of language centers by identifying their purpose, programs, and practices. Phenomenology is the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view (Stanford Dictionary of Philosophy, 2013). The central structure of an experience is its intentionality, its being directed toward something, as it is an experience of or about some object” whose basic purpose is to reduce one’s lived experiences into a description of the universal essence (Creswell, Hanson, Clark Plano, and Morales, 2007 cited in de Castro & de Guzman, 2010, p. 5).

### 1.2 Subjects and Study Site

Data were gathered through in-depth interview from five language center directors. Creswell (1998 as cited in de

Castro and de Guzman, 2012, p. 5) states that phenomenology requires in-depth interviews from three to 13 subjects. In addition, these LCs are part of higher educational institutions either as separate unit or subsumed under a department or a college/faculty. Further, these LCs were chosen based on the following criteria: (1) it should exist for at least five years; (2) it should be part of an educational institution; (3) it should have mission-vision statement; and, (4) it should offer English courses either ESL or EFL (Table 1).

These LCs are located in key urban cities in Metro Manila, which are Manila and Quezon City, where LCs proliferate based on the internet search made.

### 1.3 Instrument

A researcher-made interview form was used to gather data from five language center directors from higher educational institutions in Manila and Quezon City, Philippines. The interview guide was validated by two experts in research.

The interview questions dealt with purpose, programs, and practices of LCs which were a priori codes. Purpose refers to the reason/s for which the language centers exist which may be manifested in their philosophy, mission, and objectives as a learning institution. Programs pertain to curriculum content or courses offered in language centers. Practices are observable processes that language centers have been using to achieve their institution’s purpose and manage systems within it.

### 1.4 Procedure

An internet search was done to gather information about language centers that are situated in universities. Then, a letter of request for interview, class observation, and documentation of resources was sent to seven language

LC	Years of Existence	Mission-Vision	Course Offerings
LC1	started in 1990s	Has its own	EFL
LC2	24 years	Same with the unit it belongs	EFL and other foreign languages
LC3	1990s	Same with the unit it belongs	EFL
LC4	1970s but revived June 2013	Has its own	EFL and ESP
LC5	5 years	Has its own	EFL and other foreign languages

Table 1. Profile of LCs

centers located in Manila and Quezon City. Next, a priori codes were determined and the interview guide was prepared and validated by two experts. However, only five language centers granted permission for interview and not all language center directors allowed class observation and documentation of resources. The interview was recorded and lasted for an hour. The respondents were requested to express their willingness to participate in the interview in a consent form.

## 1.5 Mode of Analysis

Tape-recorded interviews were transcribed into field texts for analysis. Using a dendrogram, the interview transcript underwent reduction, description, and finding the essence. Reduction is setting aside all biases and prejudices of the phenomenon (Creswell, 1998 as cited in de Castro and de Guzman, 2012, p. 8) while description means "understanding the reality of the subjects" and essence refers to the coding of data into themes, and analyzed to uncover the central meaning of the phenomenon (de Castro and de Guzman, 2012, p. 8).

## 2. Findings

The interview yielded recognizable aspects of LCs in terms of their purpose, programs, and practices.

### 2.1 What to Harness Aspect

In terms of purpose, LCs aim to help their student-clienteles possess communicative competent or hone their English proficiency and to prepare them for tertiary or higher education. As verbalized by the interviewees,

*Usually a language center in general, catered to the foreign language needs of a... a client, a client like for example foreign students.*

*It's really to hone the language proficiency of student particularly foreign students you know.*

*Sometimes when they come in we discover that their English is not college classroom functional, meaning the proficiency level is inadequate for our college purposes. So they cannot function as well as the other students.*

These purposes are manifested in their mission, vision, and objectives as a learning institution. And these LCs usually cater to the language needs of foreign learners who are non-native speakers of English. The kind of market LCs have

may also be the reason why they think there is a need to extend language education beyond the classroom even if these LCs are situated in higher educational institutions and because the need for English proficiency is equated with global competitiveness. As expressed,

*Ahmmm... there is a need for universities to extend language education beyond what they usually offer because of the demand for ahmmm... proficiency. Not just in English but in other languages as well. Because in this age of globalization, there is a need for people to be multilingual, to be proficient, not just in one language but in so many other languages to make them more globally competitive. Ahmmm because global competitiveness is not just about English it's also about being competent or proficient in other languages. And of course UNESCO has its own definition of global competitiveness but one of them, one of the, the condition is effective communication skills not just in English but in other languages as well.*

Although LCs in school setting are income-generating, to earn is not their primary purpose in putting up or maintaining their institution, they still adhere to their educational goals and address the need of foreign learners. As the interviewees said,

*One of the reasons is that it's also the emerging market of foreigners so that's I think this was the 90's or 1990's nine when Doctor \*\*\* put this up in 1990 and then there was a need actually that this EFL are not really ready for a regular class so therefore that's one of the reasons why they put this up.*

*I guess ahmmm... the reason, of course educational goals would be the first goals that motivated the founder of the center in 1989. ahmmm... He wanted to cater to the needs of the specific group of students ah... and adults who'd like to learn ahmmm... English or to hone their skills...*

The honing of the communication skills or improvement in the proficiency level of non- native speakers of English is the very reason why LCs exist and this aspect of LCs is termed what to harness in this study.

### 2.2 What to Highlight Aspect

LCs are expected to offer programs to address the need for

English proficiency of non-native speakers of English and to achieve their educational goals. It is also likely that these programs are different from the programs offered in regular schools in terms of design and features. According to the interviewees, the programs are designed,

*Yeah, it's actually tailored-fit because, though we of course we give an assessment. But definitely we don't just rely on the assessment results and then we try to adjust the program or the curriculum that we have according to the need of the students because some students would say I like to focus on conversation like conversational English. But actually, they have to build on their, you know, on some skills first and language.*

*It's still very new because it has been revived, you know, all of these started June so it's just barely six months so in my case I've developed the program, I've developed the curriculum and had the curriculum, had the curriculum approved by the board of regents so after which we have to revise and then we have to develop the proposals because these, not only the curriculum, each of the program will have to be proposed to the university; So normally I, I prepare a language program depending on their needs.*

The programs in LCs are based on the language needs of their clienteles. An assessment to determine proficiency level of students is done in some LCs studied to design a program appropriate for them.

There are also features of LCs that make them different from regular schools. One, the programs are short-term. Second is small class size. Another feature is cultural immersion. As the language directors explained,

*Ahhmm... they're short term classes and by short term it meant one quadrant for 30 hours that's 2 hours a day, 5 days a week, times 3 weeks, so 3 weeks and at the end of the third week you have if they have completed the program or the quad/ they get a certificate of completion. Uhmmm... so that's one of thing, one distinct feature of the program. Number 2, is small classes, very small classes... But most of the classes are not held here ahh, the computer classes, kasi ang isang ano pa ng, oh by the way, another distinctive feature in each class is the computer component, there is an ICT component.*

*...cultural immersion. And sometimes, we even, just do simple things, let's say, we're going to eat lunch. We're going to have lunch, let's say at \*\*\*, we let them order for their food, and then we observe them. We also have cultural pairing. And then it's usually multi-cultural, I remember in one class we have two Vietnamese, two Iranians, two Chinese, two Koreans ... so in a way it's really very rich and diverse, it's multi-cultural. You know what I did sometime, when I was given a time to teach, I pair one Iranian with a Chinese, and they make greetings. So how do you greet someone in your language, so it's not just English. So it's more, it's usually a cultural thing.*

*Yes, but the immersion could not be done full-fledged in that they would go to the provinces, no. We don't have time for that because we have to concentrate on their improvement of their fluency. So the cultural informants are the students the English majors that they meet in the afternoon \_\_; Well we have specific activities such that they, they engage in conversation with different people not only the people from the academe, not only our English majors, but they also go outside. But within the, at least within Metro Manila so that they don't have to really like spend a lot of time on trips, that I guess is one unique characteristic of our program.*

Learning the culture of the Philippines and fostering cross-cultural communication also happen in LCs. Immersing non-native speakers of English into the Philippine society is one way to learn the culture of the country through first-hand experience. Also, cross-cultural communication is one of the concerns of EFL.

The distinct features of LCs which include programs that are tailored-fit based on the language needs of the students, small class size, and cultural immersion are called what to highlight aspect in this research.

### **2.3 How to Handle Aspect**

There are no required teaching methodologies in LCs even the LC director does not require a specific teaching strategy. The strategies to be used depend on the proficiency level and program the students are enrolled in. As verbalized by the interviewees,

*Well, the center believes that there is no one perfect approach or methodology and were not personally I don't*

*believe in the one size fits all approach.*

*Well I can say it's eclectic now because we cannot say that there is a best method to use. And then I also I always tell my, the faculty who handle these classes. I give them the freedom. Okay this is the, I give them the list of students, this is the module. You can modify the module and everything as long as at the end of the session a student can speak and can write good English.*

LCs also make sure there is quality in their instruction and to ensure quality instruction is met, LC directors get feedback from students, evaluate teachers and observe classes. As expressed,

*No I pass by, I ask the students and then because sometimes I think there is quality education because our faculty that I had chosen are really in the top side or in the high PTE.*

*how? there's ah evaluation. ahhh institutional evaluation, and sometimes the director.. the director's evaluation.*

Since an LC is a small organization, there are very few people running it. In the LCs studied, there is usually a director and one or two clerks. In two LCs, there is only a coordinator handling all the responsibilities and they are at the same time members of the faculty they belong. As the interviewees stated,

*I am the coordinator .... So being the coordinator, actually I do all the tasks. I assign the teacher. I look for teacher who will handle. I look for rooms. preparing for the honorarium so it's basically from beginning to end.*

*ahh it's a very small organization. Usually it's the director, who calls the shots. Even in the signing of the payroll, because this is a unique organization – we prepare the payroll. It's accounting office that does it. Our office prepares for all the other payroll including the other faculty members in the university ... we prepare the payroll based on the number of hours rendered, number of hours, and the compensation of the faculty, so in effect ahmmm there's a lot of work, administrative work that a director does that other director doesn't. but one thing I like about the center is it's small compared to my assignment before –There's one role, that's mine. We have, our setup is there's a director, there's an administrative assistant, there is a secretary.; Yes. She runs the whole thing. There's a secretary*

*and all the rest are faculty. If there is a need, for instance in assessment, we interview each one, each of the students who would come in. That is done by the pool of teachers. So it is not at top reach. We're very streamlined in that sense. I have a board. I operate under a board that meets twice, thrice a year.; Aside the running, the administration of the center is concerned, the director is given leeways to run the way it should be run. But when it comes to matters of policies---*

Problems in relation to management of an LC also arise although it is a small organization. These problems deal with human resources for some LCs and facilities for the others. As mentioned by the directors,

*ahhh as of now it's actually it's more on ahhh asking for staff uhmm ah I didn't experience this but there was a teacher before who had problems with the teaching although senior na siya. I think relationship with students. And eventually she had to, she had to be eased out. Oo. But a very isolated case. Ahmmm problems in relation to management? Ahhh currently teachers don't enter into a formal contract with the university;*

*ok. Since this is again a state-run institution, you know how it is, you know how classrooms here appear, the classrooms here are so—; normally we would bump off one office and—*

The establishment of connection or linkage is observably one essential aspect of successful LCs. It is through their linkages that their number of students increases or becomes steady and that they become known or popular. As expressed,

*International relations. Yes we do. And we welcome the world when it comes to us. Chinese, ang dami foreign students mostly are from China, Japan, the Middle East; yeah Wasada, Wasada ahhh (linkage); we do. The university does it for us. For example ito Okinawa International university that came to us and met with ahh we have an external relations and international relations office, but what it does is coordinate.*

*We are quite active with in the region. Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and the others, and the bishops of the regions because we have priests and nuns coming in.*

*Yes. That's very much important. Because by word of*

mouth they also get to promote—; ahh it's very important that they are pleased with our program so that the next time they'd be--- you know for a while we've achieved this to around two to three universities from China. Like Guangzu University, there's Chinzou University and then there's another university that came.

Most LCs included in this study have their own budget as explained by one respondent, "Yes. We earn our living.; spend. It is a self-supporting center. But it gets support from the \*\*\* by way of us being recognized as a \*\*\* center and we are considered a part of the stronger centers in the university. The centers in \*\*\* contribute to the university. Not the other way around. even as we call ourselves as income-generating. We are not a profit-oriented institution. We can't help it if we can generate income we do, we do." And because these LCs are income-generating, they even become benefactors, as one language director confidently said, "No no no no, because this is an income generating center of the university. We are a benefactor; Did you know that we, we give money to the preschool, \*\*\* preschool and then the \*\*\*, which is an outreach project or foundation of \*\*\*. We also give ah money, millions of pesos, for scholarships."

However, some LCs get their budget from the department or college they are subsumed, as verbalized, "Yeah. It's not separate. That has been my plan but hopefully it will be approved. Because if we really want, if you really want the operations to be much smoother, or to be, what do call this? Maximize the function of the center, it has to be really independent. But as of now ah we need to actually do whatever the administration will tell us, we have to follow."

Teachers in LCs are either faculty members of the department where the LC is subsumed or they teach in LC exclusively. As supported by the following verbalizations,

So in terms of recruitment process, our faculty are actually faculty members of the English Department who are regular faculty members and in order for them to be--- they need to have high performance rating; yes. In terms of ah giving them load ah at \*\*\*, they have to meet some criteria. First one is that they should have a high teaching performance evaluation, we call it TPE. And they should have a Masters degree. And ah in a way the track

record in terms of how students give them the feedback...

So the teachers apply here directly to the director; They are hired base on the interview and demonstration. Yeah and credentials of course kailangan BSE AB-BSE.

Teachers in LCs are given the opportunities for training programs inside or outside of their institution. As one language director said, "Yes, we get to train them at least given the ones that I have because these are all university professors I only get to train them in materials development and some, some of the very few in the facilitation process like how to facilitate for example an EFL class compared to an ESL class that is very talkative..."

Faculty competence is evaluated qualitatively in some LCs which is done by classroom observation and students' feedback. Competence evaluation is likewise done quantitatively in some LCs through the use of an evaluation tool. These evaluations which are done by the students and the language directors become the bases for the teachers' employment renewal. As evidenced in the following,

Tool and then classroom observation; the evaluation... on renewing them or giving them loads the following term.

Observation, but it's qualitative in a way.

The practices in LCs which comprise of establishment of linkages, evaluation of teacher competence, teacher recruitment process, acquisition of resources, policies, management of learning environment, administrators and their roles, quality instruction, teaching methodologies are phrased how to handle aspect in this paper.

### 3. Discussion

The need for communicative competence whether for academic or occupational purposes of non-native speakers of English resulted in the establishment of language centers, since formal school may not address this concern. The findings of this study revealed the dynamics of LCs in terms of purpose, programs, and practices which are termed what to harness, what to highlight and how to handle aspects, respectively.

In relation to purpose, all educational institutions must have a purpose for existence and so LCs do have. Sharif and Ott (1992 as cited in Razik and Swanson, 2010, p. 54) specified the basic elements of an organization which are implicit or

explicit purposes, the ability to attract participants, the ability to acquire and allocate resources to accomplish goals, an internal structure that is used to divide and coordinate activities, and reliance on a member or set of members to lead and manage others. For instance, the mission of the EFL program at Georgetown University is "to provide quality language instruction and cultural orientation to students who require English for their academic, professional, or personal needs. The program supports students with different language backgrounds and learning styles by helping them acquire the ability to use English effectively when speaking, listening, reading, and writing, the ability to communicate in culturally appropriate ways and an awareness of the distinctive qualities of American culture in comparison with their own and other cultures" ([cled.georgetown.edu/programs/](http://cled.georgetown.edu/programs/)).

Further, Bush (2001) states that, "the purpose or aims of education provide the crucial sense of direction to underpin the management of educational institutions" and "educational management has to be centrally concerned with the purpose or aims of education." Moreover, the movement toward gaining long-term skills, the need to develop an independent curricula not dictated by the formal school, and the creation of new programs intended to narrow down "skill gaps" among students gave birth to the learning centers (Aurini and Davies, 2004 cited in de Castro and de Guzman, 2010).

Certain features in LCs make them distinct from regular school. These features include flexible programs, small class size, and fostering of cross-cultural communication. Programs in LCs are flexible since they design their programs based on the language needs and proficiency level of their students. Thus, the training in LCs can be English for Academic Purposes (EAP) or English for Occupational Purposes (EOP), which are both aspects of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). ESP is "a movement based on the proposition that all language teaching should be tailored to the specific learning and language needs of identified group of student and also sensitive to the sociocultural contexts in which the students will be using English" (Johns and Price-Machado in Celce-Murcia, 2001, p. 43).

ESP "continues to be even more common in English as a Foreign Language contexts, where an increasing number

of adult learners are eager to learn business English or academic English in order to pursue their careers or study in English-medium educational institutions" (Johns and Price-Machado in Celce-Murcia, 2001, p. 43). One of the absolute characteristics of ESP is that "it is designed to meet the specific needs of the learner" (p. 44). ESP courses are developed because there is "a demand, because teachers, professionals, students, or others see a need for language courses in which certain content, skills processes are identified and integrated into specialized, often short-term, courses" (Johns and Price-Machado in Celce-Murcia, 2001, p. 45).

Another distinctive feature of LCs is the fostering of cross-cultural communication. According to Hinkel (cited in Celce-Murcia, 2001, p. 443), "to become proficient in English is not sufficient, learners need to attain socio-cultural competence." Further, Hymes (1996 as cited in Hinkel, p. 444) explains that the learning of culture is an integral part of language learning and education because it crucially influences the values of the community, everyday interaction, the norms of speaking and behaving, and the sociocultural expectations of an individual's roles (p. 444). Thus, "learners cannot make the best out of their educational opportunities until they become familiar with fundamental L2 cultural concepts and an ability to recognize and employ culturally appropriate ways of communicating allows learners to make choices with regard to linguistic, pragmatic, and other behaviours" (Hinkel, p. 444). Wiggins (2001) suggests that when planning for an EFL program, "intercultural competence should be developed in every unit and/or lesson, and the teacher provides opportunities for students to engage in cultural observation and analysis" (p. 11).

Further, an EFL teacher can develop cultural issues as materials in the class (Gebhard, 2010). One is adapting behavior, which includes ways to communicate with people from other cultures including nonverbal behavior. Another is cross-cultural communication, which involves problem-solving. Third, know the individuals. Lastly, study one's own culture.

Learning centers are extending beyond subject-centered programs towards a "skill-building" model of teaching that uses a variety of more portable, generic programs. They

rarely borrow school materials or rely upon formal schoolings' classification schemes, such as age or grade level. Rather, they develop their own lessons, workbooks and diagnostic tests, and use the latter to place students into a program, whether remedial or enrichment-oriented (Aurini and Davies, 2004 cited in de Castro and de Guzman, 2010, p. 45).

Class size in LCs is small. It can be from three to a maximum of twenty or even one-on-one. A small class size is advantageous in language learning and teaching. The most widely cited study on the class size effect has been Tennessee's Project STAR, a recent update from the STAR experiment suggests that small class size increases student math performance in the primary years by about one third of a standard deviation (Finn and Achilles, 1999). These studies reported significantly higher achievement test scores in smaller classes in the primary grades than in larger classes (Mitchell and Mitchell, in press; Molnar, Smith, and Zahorik, 1998; Molnar et al., 2000 as cited in Pong and Pallas, 2001).

Although an LC is a small organization, practices in terms of recruitment, evaluation /quality instruction, organizational structure, policies are observed. Teachers in LCs are employed based on their credentials or performance evaluation, if they are also affiliated to the bigger unit the LC is under. Recruitment refers to the "process of generating a pool of competent applicants needed to fill available positions in an organization." When leaders decided that a new person should be appointed, they have a clear picture of the kind of people they wish to have to achieve their goals which may involve a list of skills, capabilities, and qualities that employees should have (Lunenburg and Ornstein, 2012, p. 454).

Teacher performance is also evaluated in LCs which becomes the basis for their reappointment. According to Razik and Swanson (2010), teacher evaluation is done "to detect incompetence, prevent incompetence, or correct deficiencies;" teacher evaluation addresses four purposes: individual improvement, school improvement, individual accountability, and organizational accountability (pp. 194-195).

Because LC is a small organization, very few people run it,

usually a director or coordinator only or a director with one or two staff members. According to Kugler (2001, p. 7), "few successful after-school programs run without a staff member. In most cases, the staff member is assigned to work from late morning until the close of the program. In some cases program coordinators are also teachers or administrators in the school; in others, they are responsible only for the work of the after-school programs, and their school-day time is used in planning and in coordinating with the core day staff."

Opportunities for professional growth are provided for by LCs to their teachers. As Bush and Middlewood (2013) posit "all staff in a school or college may be perceived as having entitlement to training" and "the concern of leaders is to ensure that effective and relevant training is available to support staff of all kinds in a way that is enriching (p. 39). Likewise, Stoll (2003 as cited in Bush and Middlewood, 2013) suggests "involve them, train them to perform roles that will enhance the school, build their personal efficacy, use their skills."

The establishment of linkage or connection makes LCs successful. Foskett and Lumby (2003, p. 86) explain that "the growth of responsiveness to external environments as one of the global metatrends characterizes economic and social policy development across a wide range of political and ideological settings. Further, they say "the rise of the importance of external management goes hand in hand with marketisation, as engaging with the external environment is a key feature of the market place" (p. 96).

### Conclusion

This phenomenological study explored the dynamics of language centers in school setting in terms of their purpose, programs, and practices. Three key features in relation to LCs purpose, programs, and practices surfaced from the analysis, which are termed what to harness, what to highlight, and how to handle aspects, respectively.

Although LCs are form of after-school learning, they have concrete purpose for their existence just like regular school as expressed in their mission-vision and objectives. The most common and basic purpose of LCs in school-setting is to improve the communication skills of non-native speakers of English for academic purposes.

The programs in LCs fall within the context of ESP and EFL and are based on the language needs of the student-clientele, thus, flexible. Further, small class size and fostering of cross-cultural communication are special features that LCs have that make them different from regular schools. A small class size is advantageous because it gives more opportunities for students to learn the English language.

LCs follow certain organizational and management practices which include teacher evaluation and ensuring of quality instruction, recruitment, provision of training and most especially establishment of linkages. Teachers in LCs comply with certain employment requirements. To ensure quality instruction, teachers are evaluated because when they are evaluated, educational organizations can make sure that educational goals are met. Teachers are given opportunities to attend seminars or trainings, therefore, there is professional growth. Interestingly, one practice among successful LCs is linkage, which is one way to market their programs. Thus, global presence makes these LCs sustain their programs.

## Implications

Some implications are generated based on the findings of this study. Class size is a factor in honing the communication skills of students in an EFL class, this may also be true in an ESL class. So, the reduction in the number of students in a regular English class can be a point to consider by school administrators of English programs. Also, school administrators should require all foreign students to enroll in a special English program, that will prepare them for college or post-graduate English. LCs which are just starting may consider the findings of this study as a guide, maybe, for the success of their LC specifically the establishment of linkages.

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