Diwa (Discovery, Interpretation, Word, Analysis): A Framework to Deepen Sense-For-Sense Translation Skills in Tertiary Education.

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ABSTRACT.

This study explored how the DIWA (Discovery, Interpretation, Word, Analysis) strategy could enhance the translation skills of Filipino major students, particularly in moving beyond literal, word-for-word translation toward context-driven, sense-for-sense translation. Recognizing that many learners struggle with idiomatic and complex, figurative texts due to limited exposure and overreliance on direct word matching, the research aimed to: (1) assess students' baseline translation skills, (2) implement a discovery-based, reflective instructional approach, and (3) evaluate improvements in their translation performance. Seventeen (17) second-year BSED Filipino students from Ifugao State University participated in this action research, which utilized a mixed-methods, embedded sequential design. The intervention involved DIWA-based worksheets emphasizing contextual and cultural analysis, pretest–posttest assessments, reflective journals, and peer discussions. Quantitative data were analyzed through descriptive statistics and paired-sample t-tests, while qualitative data from reflections and journals underwent thematic coding. Results revealed statistically significant improvements across three translation dimensions: literal, idiomatic, and complex/abstract phrase translation. The overall mean score rose from 3.28 ("Satisfactory") to 4.37 ("Very Good"), with the most substantial gains in complex/abstract phrase translation (+2.53). The effect size was very large, confirming the instructional impact. Qualitative findings showed that students shifted from mechanical, word-for-word methods to more analytical, meaning-centered strategies, reporting greater confidence and reduced anxiety when tackling challenging texts. The study concludes that DIWA is more than a classroom technique—it is a context-responsive pedagogical model that cultivates cultural sensitivity, fluency, and interpretive depth. Its integration in translation instruction is recommended to bridge the gap between theory and practice, particularly in multilingual educational settings like the Philippines.

Keywords: Translation pedagogy; DIWA strategy; multilingual education; sense-for-sense translation; action research

INTRODUCTION

Translation goes beyond just moving words between languages. It involves a complex process that requires language skills, context awareness, and sensitivity to cultural differences in both the original and target languages (Munday, 2016; Kuhi & Khalilzadeh, 2019). In Filipino education, being skilled in "sense-for-sense" translation is crucial. This method focuses on meaning, tone, and intent rather than sticking to literal translations. Such skills are important for both academic success and cultural understanding (Alhamdu, 2021; Jalilifar & Shahrestani, 2016). However, many students, even those majoring in Filipino, struggle to capture the core meaning and style of texts. This often leads to awkward or inaccurate translations that hinder understanding and cultural exchange (Darwish & Abdulla, 2017).

Scholars agree that effective translation should move beyond word-for-word translations to express ideas naturally and accurately (Molina & Hurtado Albir, 2019; Bahrami & Farahani, 2015), most research focuses on professional translation and theoretical approaches. This creates a gap in teaching. There are not enough classroom-tested strategies aimed at improving translation skills for college students. Additionally, there is a lack of studies that explore the challenges of translating in the Philippines, a country with over 150 languages

and dialects, which makes it hard to develop standard translation skills (Baliber, Cheng, Adlaon, &Mamonong, 2020; Tolentino, 2019).Moreover, students sometimes recognize idiomatic and context-specific expressions, previous research rarely looks at how ongoing, systematic practices could enhance their interpretive and cultural skills in translation (Kazemian, 2018; Ahmadi-Bajgiran&Poorsoltani, 2018). Carr and Kemmis (1986) suggest that these gaps highlight a larger disconnect between theory and practice in education. Action research can help bridge this divide by creating "self-reflective communities" that focus on transformation rather than just observation.

In answer to these challenges, this study uses action research, which is a cyclical, collaborative approach that places inquiry within the context of teaching and learning (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006; Mertler, 2019; Somekh, 2005). The study aims to explore and resolve students' difficulties with sense-for-sense translation. Using the DIWA (Discovery, Interpretation, Word, Analysis) framework, the research intends to: (1) assess current translation skills, (2) implement learning strategies that are discovery-based and sensitive to context, and (3) evaluate improvements in the depth and accuracy of students' translations through repeated cycles of reflection and refinement. By addressing the identified gaps in teaching and research, this study contributes to translation education and illustrates how action research can produce useful knowledge for multilingual learning environments.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This action research utilized a mixed-methods, embedded sequential design situated within the action research framework. Unlike purely experimental approaches, this design allowed the researcher to collect quantitative evidence (pretest–posttest) while integrating reflective cycles and qualitative feedback, enabling iterative refinement of instructional strategies. As McNiff and Whitehead (2006) note, such designs prioritize context-responsive inquiry and transformation over controlled generalizability, aligning with the participatory, developmental ethos of action research.

The central intervention, the DIWA strategy, was operationalized through a series of scaffolded worksheets that guided learners through four recursive stages: Discovery (analyzing meaning and context), Interpretation (identifying underlying cultural and idiomatic nuances), Word (constructing context-appropriate translation choices), and Analysis (evaluating accuracy and fluency). This cycle mirrored the "plan–act–observe–reflect" model (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988), making it both a learning tool and a research mechanism.

Research Respondents

Seventeen (17) second-year Filipino major students from Ifugao State University, Potia Campus, participated. All were enrolled in language and translation-focused coursework. The purposive sample reflects action research's aim to examine practice within a specific, authentic educational setting rather than pursue large-scale generalizability (Mertler, 2019). Their active involvement (completing tasks, providing reflections, and co-identifying learning challenges) was central to the cyclical improvement process.

Research Instrument

1. **DIWA-Based Worksheets** – Designed to promote discovery, interpretation, and contextual analysis, the worksheets contained translation tasks that required students to analyze meaning beyond surface-level wording. Each activity was scaffolded to progressively deepen comprehension and application.
2. **Pretest and Posttest** – Developed to measure baseline and post-intervention translation proficiency, each assessment included texts requiring both idiomatic and context-sensitive translations. Performance was scored using a **five-point rubric**:

Descriptive Level	Numerical Range	Criteria
Excellent	4.51–5.00	Fully captures meaning with precision; fluent and natural language use.

Very Good	3.51–4.50	Conveys meaning clearly; minor, non-disruptive errors.
Satisfactory	2.51–3.50	General message conveyed; noticeable issues in language/structure.
Poor	1.51–2.50	Several mistranslations interfere with understanding.
Very Poor	1.00–1.50	Translation is unclear or inaccurate; major errors present.

3. Reflective Questionnaires and Journals – Post-intervention, students completed open-ended questionnaires about the challenges and perceived benefits of the DIWA strategy. The researcher also maintained reflective journals to document observations, learner behaviors, and iterative adjustments to the intervention.

Procedure

The study followed the DIWA Action Research Cycle, a circular and iterative process designed to capture both measurable outcomes and reflective insights throughout the intervention. The cycle began with Plan (Baseline Assessment), where students' initial translation skills were evaluated through a pretest and observational notes documenting their approaches to meaning transfer and contextual interpretation. Based on these observations, the instructional materials were refined to target specific gaps in student performance. The process then moved to Act (DIWA Worksheets: Discovery, Interpretation, Word, Analysis), where learners engaged in structured, scaffolded worksheet activities. These tasks were designed to shift students' focus from literal translation toward deeper comprehension of context, tone, and cultural nuance. The next stage, Observe (Pretest/Posttest and Reflective Data), involved systematically collecting performance data, including pretest and posttest scores, as well as qualitative inputs such as student feedback and researcher journals. This combination allowed for a more holistic understanding of both skill development and learner experiences. Finally, the Reflect (Adapt Strategies, Identify Challenges, Inform Next Cycle) phase entailed analyzing the collected data to identify recurring challenges, assess the effectiveness of the DIWA approach, and refine instructional strategies for subsequent cycles. The process then looped back to Plan, underscoring the cyclical and iterative nature of action research, where each cycle builds on prior insights to promote sustained improvement in translation skills and pedagogical practice.
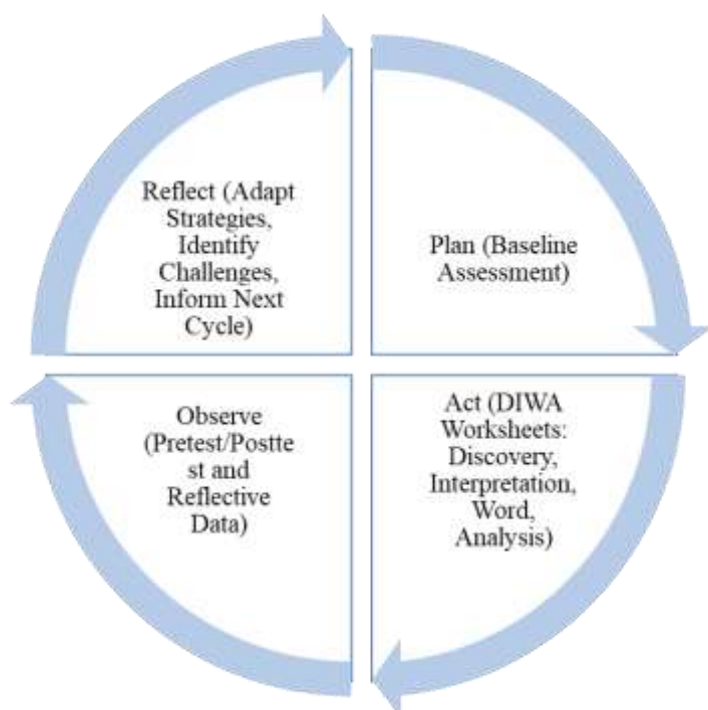
Figure 1: DIWA Action Research Cycle

Data Analysis

The data gathered from the pretest and posttest were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive evaluation of the intervention's effectiveness. For the quantitative component, descriptive statistics—including means and standard deviations—were computed to summarize learner performance, and a paired-sample t-test was employed to determine whether the difference between pretest and posttest scores was statistically significant, thereby measuring the impact of the DIWA strategy on translation competence. For the qualitative component, student reflections and researcher journals were subjected to thematic coding through emergent analysis, identifying recurring themes such as difficulties with idiomatic expressions, vocabulary limitations, and perceptions of improved contextual understanding. These qualitative insights were then triangulated with the statistical findings, offering a holistic perspective on both the measurable outcomes and the experiential dimensions of the intervention (Somekh, 2005).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Translation Competency Levels Before and After the DIWA Strategy

The translation proficiency of seventeen (17) second-year BSED Filipino students was assessed through pretest and posttest scores to determine their competency levels before and after the **DIWA (Discovery, Interpretation, Word, Analysis)** intervention. The tests measured performance across three translation areas: literal translation, idiomatic translation, and complex/figurative phrase translation. Table 1 summarizes the overall pretest and posttest results.

Table 1. Competency Levels by Translation Type Before and After DIWA

Test Phase	Mean Score (Descriptive)
Pretest	3.28 (Satisfactory)
Posttest	4.37 (Very Good)
Mean Gain	**+1.09**

Following the DIWA intervention, the posttest results improved to 4.37 ("Very Good"), a +1.09-point gain. Gains were most evident in figurative phrase translation (from 1.59 "Poor" to 4.12 "Very Good"), but idiomatic and literal translation also improved significantly. Students credited DIWA's stepwise process for this growth:

> *"Discovery made me pause and think about context. Interpretation helped me understand idioms and abstract phrases before translating."* (Student 2)

Peer reflections and discussions also played a role:

> *"When we shared ideas as a class, I understood idioms better. I remembered them because we connected them to real situations."* (Student 5)

The overall improvement indicates that DIWA's structured and reflective framework successfully addressed the gaps in students' translation skills by fostering context awareness, cultural interpretation, and fluency.

Changes in Translation Performance Across Literal, Idiomatic, and Phrase Translation

The pretest and posttest results reveal consistent improvement across all translation categories, but with different rates of progress depending on the complexity of the task. Table 2 highlights mean scores for each category before and after the DIWA intervention.

Table 2. Mean Scores by Translation Category (Pretest vs. Posttest)

Translation Category	Pretest Mean	Posttest Mean	Mean Gain
Literal Translation	3.41 (Satisfactory)	4.56 (Excellent)	+1.15
Idiomatic Translation	3.24 (Satisfactory)	4.31 (Very Good)	+1.07
Complex/Abstract Phrase Translation	1.59 (Poor)	4.12 (Very Good)	+2.53

Students performed best in literal translation tasks on the pretest, as these involved familiar expressions and straightforward vocabulary (e.g., *"Hit the sack"*, 3.59, "Very Good"). Idiomatic expressions were more challenging, with many learners defaulting to literal guesses, while complex abstract passages presented the greatest difficulty, with a Poor (1.59) average for a quotation about liberty.

Qualitative feedback reveals that students felt most overwhelmed by abstract and figurative texts, which required deeper cultural and contextual understanding. One student admitted:

> *"When I read the liberty passage, I couldn't understand the message. I just translated every word and hoped it made sense."* (Student 5)

> *"Idioms were tricky, but the long quotation was worse. It felt like I didn't know how to start because the meaning wasn't clear."* (Student 12)

After the DIWA intervention, all categories improved significantly, but the largest gains were in complex/figurative translation (+2.53). Students credited the Discovery and Interpretation stages for helping them analyze context and infer meaning before translating, reducing their reliance on literal word-for-word equivalents. A learner explained:

> *"DIWA showed me to focus on the idea first. I realized the liberty passage is about earning freedom, not about actual swords or idols."* (Student 7)

For idiomatic expressions (+1.07 gain), peer discussion and cultural examples were key:

> *"When classmates shared real-life examples for idioms, I could finally remember and use them. They stopped feeling random."* (Student 9)

And for literal tasks (+1.15 gain), students noted how the Word and Analysis stages improved fluency:

> *"Before, I just matched words. Now I check if my sentence sounds natural and keeps the meaning."* (Student 3)

The data show that students made progress in every translation area, but the DIWA framework had the most transformative impact on abstract and figurative texts, where learners initially struggled most. By guiding students to discover meaning, interpret cultural context, and analyze linguistic choices, DIWA enabled them to internalize strategies that not only improved their scores but also reduced anxiety when encountering unfamiliar content.

Differences between the pretest and posttest scores of the learners

The translation proficiency of the learners showed a statistically and educationally significant improvement after the implementation of the DIWA (Discovery, Interpretation, Word, Analysis) strategy. The overall mean score rose from 3.28 ("Satisfactory") in the pretest to 4.37 ("Very Good") in the posttest, reflecting a +1.09-point gain. The improvement was consistent across all translation categories, with the largest increase in complex/figurative phrase translation (+2.53).

Table 3. Statistical Summary of Pretest and Posttest Scores

Assessment Phase	Mean Score	Descriptive Level	Mean Gain	Statistical Significance
Pretest	3.28	Satisfactory	—	
Posttest	4.37	Very Good	+1.09	**p < 0.05**

The paired-sample t-test confirmed that the increase was statistically significant (p < 0.05), meaning the gains were not due to chance. From an educational perspective, the shift from a moderate (Satisfactory) to a high (Very Good) level of proficiency shows that the DIWA framework had a substantial instructional impact.

Qualitative data explain *how* this shift occurred. By the second worksheet cycle, students displayed observable changes in translation approach, focusing more on meaning, tone, and context rather than relying solely on literal word-matching. One participant shared:

> *"Before DIWA, I only replaced words with their Filipino meanings. Now, I try to make sure the translation keeps the original feeling and sounds natural."* (Student 4)

> *"Even with hard quotations, I could break them down and find the main idea before translating. That made me more confident."* (Student 7)

These reflections indicate that DIWA not only improved test performance but also cultivated new translation habits, leading to deeper, sustainable skill development.

Effect Size of the DIWA Strategy on Learners' Translation Skills

The DIWA (Discovery, Interpretation, Word, Analysis) strategy demonstrated a very large effect size on the translation proficiency of the seventeen (17) second-year BSED Filipino students. The overall mean score increased from 3.28 ("Satisfactory") in the pretest to 4.37 ("Very Good") in the posttest, producing a +1.09-point gain. This gain, along with the statistical significance (p < 0.05), highlights DIWA's strong instructional impact.

Table 4. Effect Size of DIWA Strategy

Assessment Phase	Mean Score	Descriptive Level	Mean Gain	Effect Size
Pretest	3.28	Satisfactory	—	
Posttest	4.37	Very Good	+1.09	**Very Large**

The very large effect size indicates that DIWA not only improved learners' performance but also had a deep, lasting influence on their cognitive and interpretive skills. Students' qualitative reflections confirm that this growth was tied to the structured and reflective nature of the DIWA cycle, which emphasized cultural meaning, tone, and natural fluency over literal translation.

One learner explained:

> *"DIWA helped me slow down and really understand the text before translating. I don't just match words anymore; I think about the meaning and how it should sound."* (Student 8)

Another reflected on how DIWA helped with abstract and figurative texts, the area of greatest improvement:

> *"I used to panic when I saw long quotations. Now I know to break them down and find the main idea first, then make sure the Filipino version feels natural."* (Student 10)

These insights show that DIWA did more than produce test score gains—it transformed how students approached translation, making them more analytical, context-driven, and confident.

Challenges Encountered in the Implementation of the DIWA Strategy

The DIWA (Discovery, Interpretation, Word, Analysis) strategy significantly improved students' translation proficiency, learner reflections revealed several dimensions of challenge during its implementation. These challenges were not simply linguistic but involved cognitive, affective, and strategic aspects, all of which shaped how students engaged with the translation tasks.

Table 5. Dimensions of Challenges Encountered During DIWA

Translation Focus (Dimension and Discourse)	Representative Student Quotes
Over-reliance on direct word matching[a] Students initially relied on mechanical word-for-word rendering, producing rigid or awkward outputs before learning to adjust for fluency and tone.	*"At first, I just replaced the words one by one. Most of my translations didn't make sense, but I didn't know another way."* (Student 4)
Limited exposure and recognition of idioms[b] Unfamiliarity with common idiomatic expressions led to confusion and literal misinterpretations, often distorting meaning.	*"Some idioms were new to me, so I couldn't understand their meaning right away. I only translated the words, not the idea."* (Student 7)
Anxiety and difficulty with figurative meaning[c] Metaphorical and abstract texts caused hesitation and breakdowns in comprehension, prompting avoidance or literal attempts.	*"When I saw long quotations, I froze. I didn't know where to start because the meaning was unclear."* (Student 10)

[a]Students began the study with a Satisfactory (3.41) performance in literal translation, often defaulting to direct word matching that resulted in awkward or unnatural phrasing. Many admitted to treating translation as a one-to-one lexical substitution, as reflected by one student:

> *"At first, I just replaced the words one by one. Most of my translations didn't make sense, but I didn't know another way." (Student 4)*

After the DIWA intervention, scores in this category rose to Excellent (4.56), a +1.15-point gain, as students learned through the Word and Analysis stages to adjust syntax and word choice for natural flow and cultural appropriateness. Peer discussions further reinforced this shift, allowing learners to recognize that translation requires fluency and tone, not just accuracy, aligning with Molina and Hurtado Albir's (2019) emphasis on meaning-driven over literal translation.

[b]Idiomatic expressions posed consistent challenges, with pretest scores averaging 3.24 ("Satisfactory") and frequent literal misinterpretations. Students acknowledged their lack of exposure to idioms, as expressed by one learner:

> *"Some idioms were new to me, so I couldn't understand their meaning right away. I only translated the words, not the idea." (Student 7)*

Following DIWA, idiomatic translation improved to Very Good (4.31), a +1.07-point gain. The Discovery and Interpretation stages proved critical, prompting students to analyze context and infer figurative meaning before translating. Class reflections and peer modeling also played a vital role, helping learners link idioms to real-life experiences rather than memorize dictionary equivalents:

"When classmates explained idioms using real stories, I understood them better and remembered them more easily." (Student 11)

This growth reflects what Boers (2021) identifies as the value of contextualized idiom instruction in building fluency and confidence.

ᶜStudents showed the lowest baseline performance in complex and abstract texts, scoring 1.59 ("Poor") on the liberty quotation during the pretest. These passages triggered anxiety and avoidance, with one student recalling:

"When I saw long quotations, I froze. I didn't know where to start because the meaning was unclear." (Student 10)

After DIWA, this category saw the largest gain (+2.53 points), improving to Very Good (4.12). The Discovery stage guided students to break down complex texts into manageable ideas, while Interpretation encouraged them to identify figurative and cultural elements before crafting their translations. As one participant explained:

"I realized the liberty passage wasn't about swords or idols literally. It's about earning freedom. DIWA showed me to find the main idea first, then write it naturally." (Student 7)

This shift from anxiety to confident comprehension reflects DIWA's effectiveness in cultivating deep, meaning-driven strategies, supporting Carr and Kemmis's (1986) view that reflective, cyclical learning empowers students to handle challenging, culturally embedded texts.

Across the three translation dimensions, the quantitative gains—from an overall mean of 3.28 ("Satisfactory") to 4.37 ("Very Good")—together with the statistical significance ($p < 0.05$) and the very large effect size, align with the qualitative findings to confirm DIWA's impact. The strategy enabled students to move beyond literalism toward more fluent and natural translations, develop strategies for decoding idioms through context and peer collaboration, and transform their anxiety with abstract and figurative texts into confident, analytical comprehension. Although idiom familiarity and vocabulary growth remain areas for continued development, DIWA empowered learners to view translation as a process of discovery and interpretation rather than mechanical word substitution, establishing its value as an evidence-based model for cultivating sense-for-sense translation skills in multilingual classrooms.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The findings revealed the value of the DIWA (Discovery, Interpretation, Word, Analysis) strategy as more than just a classroom technique; it emerges as a pedagogical model for cultivating deeper translation skills in multilingual and culturally diverse contexts like the Philippines. In guiding students through reflective, meaning-focused cycles, DIWA transformed translation from a mechanical process into an interpretive act of cultural negotiation. For learners, DIWA fosters confidence and autonomy, equipping them to tackle not only familiar expressions but also complex, abstract, and culturally loaded texts with greater accuracy and fluency. For educators, the strategy highpoints the importance of integrating discovery-based and collaborative practices into language and translation curricula, ensuring students develop not just technical accuracy but also interpretive depth. At a broader level, the study bridges the gap between theory and practice, producing insights that inform curriculum design and respond to the linguistic diversity of Philippine classrooms. Ultimately, DIWA offers a context-responsive framework for translation pedagogy that supports the development of cultural sensitivity, critical thinking, and communicative competence, skills essential not only for academic work but also for fostering intercultural understanding in a globalized world. Hence, it is recommended to use the DIWA framework to help students shift from literal word-for-word translation to context-driven, sense-for-sense translation.

Ethical Considerations

Participation was voluntary, with informed consent secured. Anonymity and confidentiality were maintained, and all data were used exclusively for research. The DIWA intervention was integrated into regular coursework

to avoid disruption and was designed to enhance, not replace, existing instruction. The study adhered to accepted standards for ethical educational research (Barratt et al., 2011).

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest. This study was conducted solely for academic and research purposes, with no financial, personal, or institutional interests that could have influenced the outcomes. All procedures and analyses were carried out objectively, and the DIWA strategy was developed and implemented exclusively for educational enhancement without any commercial intent.

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