



Balancing Global and Local: English Language Policy and Cultural Preservation in the Philippines

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Abstract

The language policy in the multilingual societies tends to show the contradiction between global communication and local culture maintenance. This paper addresses the impacts of prioritization of the English language in the Philippines on the socio-cultural activities and preservation of indigenous languages. The study employs a qualitative research methodology, which forms the basis of the study through the use of interviews as a source of research data. The data offer an understanding of how the participants perceive the prioritization of English language and their competency and level of language use. The results will endeavor to point out the influence of the increased focus of the English language on individual identity, education process and socializing among the Filipino communities. Concurrently, the paper also looks into issues touching on the maintenance of local languages and cultural heritage in the context of the growing globalization of language. Through the study of these dynamics, the research is relevant to the debate on the policy of languages as the researchers highlight the importance of a moderate means of strengthening the English language at the expense of the local languages and cultural backgrounds. Finally, the research provides information to policy makers and educators when developing policies in education and linguistics that address the dynamics of multilingual societies such as the Philippines. The results aim to encourage more inclusive language use, which facilitates the global interaction as well as maintenance of linguistic and cultural diversity.

Keywords: Language Policy; English Language Prioritization; Cultural Preservation; Multilingualism; Linguistic Diversity; Philippines

Introduction

The role of the language policy in the multilingual societies is very important in the establishment of educational practices, social identity, and cultural continuity. The linguistically varied country of the Philippines with over 180 languages has over time favored the use of English as a language of education, governance and communication with the outside world. This priority is much affected by the colonial history and globalization where English was made an instrument of economic growth and international competitiveness. The insistence on English however has also raised objections based on effects of English on local languages and local cultures. According to scholars, English proficiency opens opportunities in the global world, but it also discriminates against local languages and cultures (Symaco, 2017). The Philippine government acted in response to these fears by coming up with policies like Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE), which is meant to enhance language inclusivity and learning in early learning. Although these efforts have been made,

there are still tensions between dominance in English and the quest to maintain local languages. It has been observed by research that English still has an important ideological and institutional influence in the world of education and social life (Friedrich et al., 2023). On this background, the paper will analyze the role of English language priority on socio-cultural practices and perceptions in the Philippines as it explores the necessity of balancing the global language and cultural requirements with the local language and cultural identity. The history of American colonization of the Philippines has ensconced a lot in the prominence of English in the Philippines as the Americans put it in institutions of education, administration and other important aspects of the life of people. Gradually, the English language has become synonymous with modernization, social and economic mobility, and access to world opportunities. Consequently, among other things, this has made English proficiency to be viewed as a necessary tool in global communication, work, and international competitiveness in a world where globalization is taking its toll. Such prioritization has greatly influenced the perception of Filipinos towards language and the way they communicate (Tupas, 2024). Nonetheless, domination of the English language has also cast doubt on its effects on the local languages and culture. English remains a prestigious, powerful language in most of the institutional contexts and can result in the establishment of linguistic stratifications that marginalize the local languages, as well as restrict their application in the formal realms (Martin, 2018). Moreover, even though the policies, including Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE), are in effect, even in the educational and social life, the ideological impact of English is still firmly present, and it tends to impact the language preferences and daily communication patterns (Friedrich et al., 2023). The growing focus on English is, therefore, likely to have an effect on the perceptions of native language value among the Filipinos, as well as on their paths to negotiating language in everyday life. These dynamics point to the necessity to study the Filipino attitudes to the priority of the English language and find out how this priority influences the language practices, identity formation, and cultural preservation in the Philippine society.

Statement of the Problem

Philippines is a highly linguistically diverse nation in Southeast Asia, but historically, the language policy of the country has focused on the use of English as a medium of communication and instructional language. This focus is based on colonial past and the perceived economic benefits of mastering the English language. Although English has facilitated competition and international movement around the world, it has also posed a threat to linguistic inequality and marginalization of local languages. Scholars claim that the powerful institutional presence of the English language could also lead towards linguistic imperialism and cultural hegemony which may diminish the position of the native languages in schools and in society. Despite the introduction of the policies that, among others, include Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education, the introduction of the policies remains a problem that is accompanied by various difficulties, among which are ideological opposition, the perceived superiority of the English language (Friedrich et al., 2023). As a result, the issue of impact of English language prioritization on socio-cultural identity, education practices and language attitudes in Philippines raises a critical necessity to study the problem. The dynamics become important to understand how to balance the needs of world communication and the needs of maintaining linguistic diversity and cultural heritage in the development of language policies.

Significance of the Study

In multilingual societies like Philippines, language is extremely important in determining national identity, continuity of cultures, and socialization. Although English has long been the preferred language in the fields of education, governance and international

communication because of its perceived economic and global benefits, this has been the subject of concern, on its possible effects on local languages and cultural tradition. Though much has been done in terms of linguistic research on structural and grammatical aspects of both English and Filipino languages, it has been observed that very little has been done in regard to the overall socio-cultural impacts of prioritization of English as a language on the Philippine society. The study is valuable in the sense that it focuses on the impacts of the rising focus of English on language attitudes, communication patterns, identity, and education on Filipinos. Specifically, it explores the possible impact of the preeminence of the English language on local languages and cultures and their status. The study seeks to elaborate further on the relationship between language policy, linguistic diversity, and socio-cultural development by addressing them using the qualitative approach. Moreover, the results of the study will be added to the existing debate on the language policy and the multilingual education in the Philippines. It is hoped that by making the case on maintaining a balance between global linguistic needs and preservation of local languages, this study would provide useful information to policymakers, teachers, and researchers towards the goal of inclusive and sustainable language policies in multilingual societies. This research aims to investigate how English is used to preserve, maintain, and see Tagalog as a language in the Philippines.

Aim of the Study

The research pays attention to the following dimensions of the study, language shift, multilingualism, and language attitudes in a bid to comprehend the effects of English on the use, value and perception of Tagalog in social and educational settings. Also, the study examines how making English the primary language at the expense of Tagalog affects language proficiency among Filipino citizens, especially the trends in documenting languages, bilingual education systems, and how English and Tagalog are passed down across generations. The research also measures the quality of bilingual programs and policies in various aspects such as in formal school, vernacular and institutional policies to establish the role of language policies in influencing the language practices, identity and the future preservation of local languages. In a culminating study, this research should also seek to provide a reflection on the research that can inform the language policy and educational planning in the Philippines, ensuring a strike between English proficiency and maintenance of local languages and cultural heritage.

Research Questions

- How does the prioritization of English influence the status, use, and perception of Tagalog and other local languages in the Philippines?
- In what ways do Philippine language policies that favour English affect the preservation, promotion, and intergenerational transmission of Tagalog and other indigenous languages?
- How does emphasizing English over local languages impact Filipino language proficiency, language acquisition patterns, and bilingual education outcomes?

Literature Review

The Philippines is a very diverse-linguistic country, with 186 separate languages that are part of cultural identities of different ethno-linguistic groups (Malabonga, 2016). Although it is such a rich diversity, the prioritization of the English language and the standardized Filipino based on the Tagalog language have several implications on other native languages and cultural preservation. The growing ascendancy of English in education, professional fields as well as media has brought fears of marginalization and even jeopardizing the Tagalog and other indigenous languages. Since English is increasingly central to social mobility and the global community, there is a possibility of reduced intergenerational transmission and usage

of Tagalog, leading to the decrease in the linguistic diversity and the culture that is strongly connected to the language. This change does not only test the survival of the local languages but also the identity formation and the maintenance of the Filipino cultural practices. Previous researches give an insight into the investigation of these dynamics, emphasizing the multifaceted nature of the relationship between the policy of the English language, attitudes in the society, and the socio-cultural implications of prioritizing English language in the Philippines. The language policy has a major part to play in determining the linguistic practices, social identity, and cultural continuity of the multilingual societies. The language policy in the Philippines has been historically characterized by the colonialism of the country, the sociopolitical development and the involvement in the global economic systems. The culture and institutionalization of the English language in the American colonial era made the language a significant means of instruction and government, and they have produced long-term consequences on the hierarchies of language and pedagogy (Gonzalez, 1998). English has since then remained in use as a prestige and professional mobility language and international communication within the Philippine society. Porter (2017) emphasizes that the choice of Tagalog as the foundation of Filipino national language played a major role in encouraging regional identity in Tagalog-speaking regions and the development of Filipino nationalism. This linguistic policy standardized communication throughout the archipelago and was also a symbolic gesture of a conscious departure of the colonial language forces to the process of creating an independent national identity. Porter also adds that this inclusion strategy caused tensions between the non Tagalog speaking communities as well as believed to have helped to create tensions between the region and the national unity, a complex relationship between regionalism and national cohesion. The same can happen when English becomes the top language in the Philippines compared to Tagalog. The move to introduce English as the main language in education, government and professional spheres may equally lead to both national and international integration and introduce trends of exclusion among less English proficient communities. This kind of prioritization is likely to marginalize the local languages, weaken the culture and replicate the disparities that were evident during the imposition of Tagalog as the national language. This highlights the need to find a way of establishing a balanced language policy to foster English speaking to enable access to the global world and retain the local language and inclusive representation in the diverse linguistic environment of the Philippines.

Through historical and political processes, scholars have analyzed the emergence of English as one prominent language in the Philippines. As Tupas and Lorente (2014) explain, the adoption of English was also strongly linked to the policy on colonial educational institutions and the rise of English as a symbol of modernization and progress. The consequence of this was that English had become institutionalized into areas like education, government administration, and business. The Philippines continued to use English as one of its official languages even after attaining its independence as a country since it was considered important in economic activities in the world as well as international relations. Although it has positive impacts, the prevalence of English has been a source of concern among the effects on the local language and identity. The Philippines has over 180 languages and it is one of the most language-rich nations in the world (Lewis, Simons, and Fennig, 2016). Nevertheless, in situations where the global language like English is given precedence in education and the general communication, the local languages may suffer in terms of prestige and functional scope. Bautista and Bolton (2008) feel that the heavy institutionalization of English may also lead to linguistic inequality by establishing social classification between English speakers and non speakers.

Lo Bianco (2009) argues that language policies are often embedded within educational systems, shaping which languages are taught and the medium of instruction in schools. In many modern educational contexts, English is prioritized as the dominant instructional language, which can marginalize curricula based on Tagalog and other indigenous languages, thereby reducing their cultural and social significance. This privileging of English in formal education influences language attitudes and practices, reinforcing the perception that English carries higher social and economic value. Malabonga (2016), in his study “Linguistic Suicide,” examines the phenomenon of language death, focusing on the Ayta Alabat Island language. He highlights that the lack of intergenerational transmission often driven by parents’ decisions not to teach their native language to children to avoid social exclusion or economic disadvantage (Beck & Lam, 2009) is a critical factor in language decline. A similar process may occur with Tagalog in the Philippines as English is increasingly prioritized over local languages. Socio-economic pressures, globalization, and institutional preference for English can lead communities to favor English over Tagalog, disrupting the intergenerational transmission of the language. Such shifts not only threaten the vitality of Tagalog but also risk eroding the cultural heritage, identity, and linguistic diversity that are closely tied to its use.

Language attitudes are another factor that is very important in influencing the language use and policy outcomes. Studies offer that English is frequently identified with education, smartness, and economic chances, whereas local languages are occasionally viewed as inferior to use in a workplace (Tupas, 2015). These impressions can affect linguistic preferences in everyday communication of people, which may gradually cause the loss of the native languages. This has been addressed in the literature of sociolinguistics in the form of linguistic hierarchy where the world languages become prestigious at the expense of the local languages where marginalization can occur. To address these worries, the Philippine government introduced the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) policy in 2012 that allowed teaching students using their local languages as the main language of instruction in early childhood education. Research has shown that the first languages of learners can enhance a better understanding, academic achievement and cultural identity (Walter and Dekker, 2011). Nonetheless, the application of the MTB-MLE has been accompanied by a number of challenges such as the lack of educational materials, the problem of teacher training, and the reluctance of the society to accept the importance of using the English language as the means of upward mobility (Lorente, 2013). Moreover, the perceived value of English in the Philippines is still being strengthened by globalization. English has been greatly associated with the possibility of working in foreign sectors like business process outsourcing (BPO), migration and international trade (Frigan, 2007). As a result, most Filipinos regard English as a key instrument of social-economic development despite the efforts of policymakers to ensure linguistic diversity by introducing multilingual education policies. In view of these conflicting forces, researchers believe that a compromised language policy is required to respond both to international and national lingual demands. These policies must encourage the use of English as a means of global interaction and trend still favor the maintenance and cultivation of local languages and culture (Tupas & Lorente, 2014). The significance of learning how the Filipinos view English priority and its impact on language practices is hence important in crafting inclusive language policies in multilingual societies. The work is valuable to the literature, as it will investigate the attitudes of the Filipino to the priority of the English language and how these attitudes influence the communication practice and attitude to the local languages. The proposed research will elucidate socio-cultural implications of language policy to shed light on findings that can be used in a way that can contribute to more balanced and culturally inclusive language planning in the Philippines.

Finally, despite the fact that the idea of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) has been formulated to facilitate the inclusivity of language, the inclusion is limited to the case when major regional languages are supported and the minority language groups are still marginalized. This is critical to the necessity that there exists a concerted and genuine language policy that would not just recognize the rich linguistic heritage of the Philippines but also make it a part and parcel of the national educational process. Making such policies is necessary to resist the pressure of language and cultural homogenization, reduce the influence of English on other local languages, and secure the conservation, rejuvenation, and transmission of diverse linguistic and cultural environment in the country.

Methodology

A qualitative research design was used in this study in order to address the implications of the enactment of restrictions on the use of English as the Tagalog in different contexts of Philippine culture. The various qualitative approaches were considered suitable in this study because they will enable a detailed examination into the organizational patterns, behaviors, and language practices of Filipinos which would give a powerful insight into language priority and its influence on identity, education and social progress. To make the interview convenient, museums arrange the interviews with the help of online applications like WhatsApp, IMO, and Facebook Messenger. Such interviews get answers on language priorities, feedbacks on their use in different areas, construed in terms of proficiency, attitude to English and Tagalog, experiences of bilingual education, and views of language policies. The process of gathering supplementary data entails the use of methods of informant observation, as well as, document analysis. A deductive approach to the analysis of data is carried out on the subject-matter perspectives, which identifies the patterns and themes in a systematic way to reveal hidden meanings. This involves coding the data, sorting codes into themes and describing these themes in an explanatory manner with regard to research questions and theory.

This study selected purposive sampling to sample out its participants in such a way that all age groups, socio-economic backgrounds, educational levels as well as geographic locales within the Philippines were all represented. A total of ten respondents were picked and they represented various walks of life. This study attempted to give a holistic experience and attitudes towards the language preference and proficiency by using a varied sample. Therefore, purposive sampling was employed to select participants to this study to ensure that the sample represented a diverse population in terms of age, socio-economic status, education levels and geographic areas in the Philippines. There were ten participants selected, and they belonged to various walks of life. With the help of the wide range of sample, the aim of this study is to provide comprehensive understanding of attitudes and experiences associated with language preference and proficiency. The concept of acculturation theory developed by John Berry in 1997 brings the very important framework of how individuals and groups adjust to a new cultural setting without losing the bits of the original culture. This theory is comprised of different strategies that people use to solve the problems that cultural changes pose to them and they include assimilation as well as integration, separation and marginalization. The acculturation theory is especially relevant in the given research context since the investigation of the Filipino way of coping with the impact of the English language on their national language, Tagalog, which shares certain historical connections with the process of colonization and is correlated with modern globalization. The acculturation theory is based on the idea that individuals and communities can choose various approaches in the encounter with the dominant culture.

Research Application

Language Preference and Usage:

This paper examines the acculturation strategies that the Filipinos utilize in their language choices but with particular interest to the use of English in different sectors, including home, school, and work place. The effects of this use of languages on Tagalog are also evaluated. The findings indicate that despite the fact that both languages are widely adopted by a lot of Filipinos; there is a very apparent tendency towards assimilation especially amongst the younger generations who have been greatly exposed to the global media and economic opportunities. This study will focus on Filipinos in their language preferences and an analysis of the different cultural changes that are occurring. The paper studies the level of English use in various places like at home, at school and at work, and also explores the effects of the same on Tagalog. The study findings indicate that even though there has been an adoption of both languages amongst a good number of Filipinos, there have been recent tendencies of assimilation particularly amongst younger generations who are lured by the power of global media and economic prospects.

Impact on Cultural Identity:

This paper has applied the principle of accommodation in studying the cultural identity of Filipinos under the influence of linguistic shift. The people who have adopted the plan of integration are likely to be more culturally oriented and this entails not only what practices are tied to their heritage but also embracing the benefits of English. On the other hand, an individual who has a tendency towards simplification will undermine the cultural bonds of Tagalog.

Social Mobility and Identity:

This paper looks at how different integration strategies affect the social dynamics. It proposes that it is possible to acquire English proficiency, but Tagalog organization and sociolinguistic standards are essential. The paper highlights the importance of proper language policies that would enable integration, but not a decision between the English and Tagalog. The concepts of integration can be applied to explain the linguistic landscape in the Philippines based on the dominance of English visually using the concepts of integration in this study. It brings to the fore the relevancy of numerous measures that people and communities use in order to align themselves to their cultural changes without losing their linguistic background. The results of the research are a clear indication of the importance of encouraging bilingualism through supporting relevant language policies and educational activities. In this view, it can be seen that Philippines is enjoying worldwide merits of English, yet the cultural and linguistic heritage of the Tagalog is enjoying the prestige. The research offers examples of how language is intrinsically valuable in terms of priority, identity and complex social processes of communication through the application of the principles of integration.

Data collection

Structured interviews were the main method of collecting the data. The interviews will be carried out and online applications like WhatsApp, IMO, Facebook Messenger, and other online applications will be utilized based on the needs and convenience of the participants. To achieve the answers, interviews will be developed to shed some light on the language priorities, language usage in different spheres (home, school, workplace), attitudes to language skills, perception of English language and Tagalog language, bilingual education experiences, and language policy. Structured interview use gives flexibility in exploration of active themes and is disciplined among the interviews.

Data Analysis

The current research article mostly focuses on the analysis of the qualitative data produced as the result of the semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and document analysis. The aim is to obtain an understanding of the effects of the emphasis on the English language rather than the Tagalog language in various socio-cultural contexts in the Philippines. Thematic analysis method was used to identify patterns, themes, and categories in the data. This technique entailed a number of major steps. To begin with the data was typed in manageable units hence giving a comprehensive meaning of the contents. The researcher got to be acquainted with the information by reading all the interview transcripts severally. Codes were thus created by underlining the pertinent phrases and sentences that answered the research questions. These codes were then pooled together in order to come up with themes that captured repeated notions and qualities that were seen throughout the data. These themes were developed based on relevance and frequency of the codes, and in comprehending how language preferences and practices of the participants were an indication of the socio-cultural interactions in the use of English and Tagalog. These themes were interpreted in the framework of the research questions and theoretical framework. The present research paper seeks to examine qualitative data which were collected through semi-structured interviews, participant observation and document analysis. The aim is to find an understanding of the effect of placing importance on the English language over Tagalog in varying socio-cultural contexts in Philippines. The thematic analysis method was used to identify patterns, themes, and categories of the data. This approach had a number of steps. To begin with, the transcription of the data was conducted to provide manageable units of the information to achieve the extensive comprehension of the content. To become conversant with the information, the researcher read every interview transcript several times. The first set of codes was then created by identifying phrases and sentences taken into consideration by the research questions. These codes were then clustered into themes which were the recurring notions and trends that were evident in the data. The emergence of these themes used the frequency and application of the codes and the emphasis was on the understanding of how the language preferences and practices of the participants were influenced by the socio-cultural interactions of English and Tagalog use. The analysis of these themes was done in terms of research questions and theoretical framework.

Results and Discussion

The responses of the participants indicate that English language is highly valued in the education and work environment as it reflects the perceived economic and global benefits. Respondents were always keen to note that fluency in the English language allows improved career prospects and is connected to global interaction, indicating the predominance of English in the Philippine society. This prioritization however has an effect on the status, use, and perception of Tagalog and other local languages. Tagalog is used only within the framework of family and ancestors and the individuals studied indicated that they felt they were losing touch with their cultural background because of the lesser application and prominence of Tagalog in formal and institutional worlds. Such experiences suggest that the prevalence of English can marginalize indigenous languages and affect the attitude of the population towards their applicability, which is reminiscent of the research that has been conducted on the subject of linguistic hierarchies and cultural erosion.

Concerning the language policy the results indicate that existing education and institutional policies tend to promote English against Tagalog and other native languages. Most of the schools use English as the main language of instruction thus leading to the loss of speaking and writing skills in Tagalog among the students. In their words, participants were worried that such imbalance reduces the linguistic and cultural continuation of Tagalog in the

generations and restricts the possibilities of young generations to embrace the language and culture in their fullness. This shows how the local Philippine language policies in favor of English may unintentionally impede the sustenance, encouragement and continuity of the local languages.

English preeminence also influences both the patterns of language acquisition and the result of bilingual education. Most of them noted their institutional education stressed on English literacy and academic achievement but provided minimal support on Tagalog or other indigenous languages. This imbalance influences language competency, and students are more competent in the English language but not good at keeping high competence in Tagalog. The results indicate that there is need to have balanced bilingual education programs that offer systematic opportunities of both English and Tagalog to ensure that the learners gain proficiency in both languages and at the same time maintain culture identity.

The thematic analysis brings out a number of implications. Extensive bilingual education programs which both focus on the development of the local languages and that of the English language should be given the much-needed attention in order to maximize the proficiency of the local languages of the younger generations without undermining the benefits of English. Also, programs which help to foster the cultural and social relevance of Tagalog can strengthen values of the language and make their usage in the homes the usual practice, i.e., community programs, media coverage, cultural activities, etc. These steps are essential to the protection of the linguistic heritage of the Philippines and the process of language transmission between the generations.

Recommendations for Future Research

Further studies can be directed to understand the perspectives of other smaller language groups and determine whether or not the existing language policies are effective in boosting both English and local language. A study of these dynamics is likely to give a more detailed explanation of the linguistic behaviour, educational results, and socio-cultural effects of making English a priority in the Philippines. The knowledge of such researches would be relevant in the creation of specific and inclusive language policies that would be able to reconcile both the world linguistic needs with the maintenance of the national linguistic and cultural diversity.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the prioritization of English in the Philippines exerts a profound socio-cultural and linguistic influence on Tagalog and other local languages. While English is widely recognized as a valuable tool for economic advancement, global competitiveness, and professional mobility, its predominance has unintended consequences for the national language. The findings indicate that the increasing use of English in education, professional settings, and social domains diminishes the daily use and intergenerational transmission of Tagalog, posing a tangible threat to the Philippines' linguistic and cultural heritage. Interviews with stakeholders highlight the complex interplay between language preference, identity formation, and socio-economic aspirations, revealing that many Filipinos equate English proficiency with social and economic success, yet remain concerned about the erosion of cultural identity associated with the reduced use of Tagalog.

The study also illustrates the unintended consequences of current language policies that favor English. While these policies aim to facilitate international engagement and economic growth, they inadvertently marginalize Tagalog and other indigenous languages, contributing to phenomena akin to "linguistic suicide," where communities abandon native languages

under social and economic pressures. This dynamic undermines linguistic diversity and weakens cultural resilience.

In response, the research underscores the importance of balanced and inclusive language policies and educational programs. Comprehensive bilingual education initiatives that equally prioritize Tagalog and English, coupled with efforts to promote cultural awareness and community engagement, are essential for preserving the Philippines' rich linguistic heritage. These findings provide valuable guidance for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders seeking to harmonize the benefits of English proficiency with the imperative of sustaining and celebrating local languages, ensuring that the country's multilingual and multicultural identity remains vibrant for future generations.

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