

The History of Bilingualism in the Philippines:

How Spanish and English Entered the Filipino Culture

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Introduction

The Filipinos are widely known to speak English as well as Tagalog or another native language. Up until 1982 Spanish was also used in intellectual circles. The Filipinos' ability to speak English and their facility in learning another language, whether a local Filipino language or a foreign language, has contributed to their being able to work in other countries. In recent years, the abundant supply of English speakers and competitive labor costs have enabled the Philippines to become a choice destination for foreign companies wishing to establish outsourcing operations.

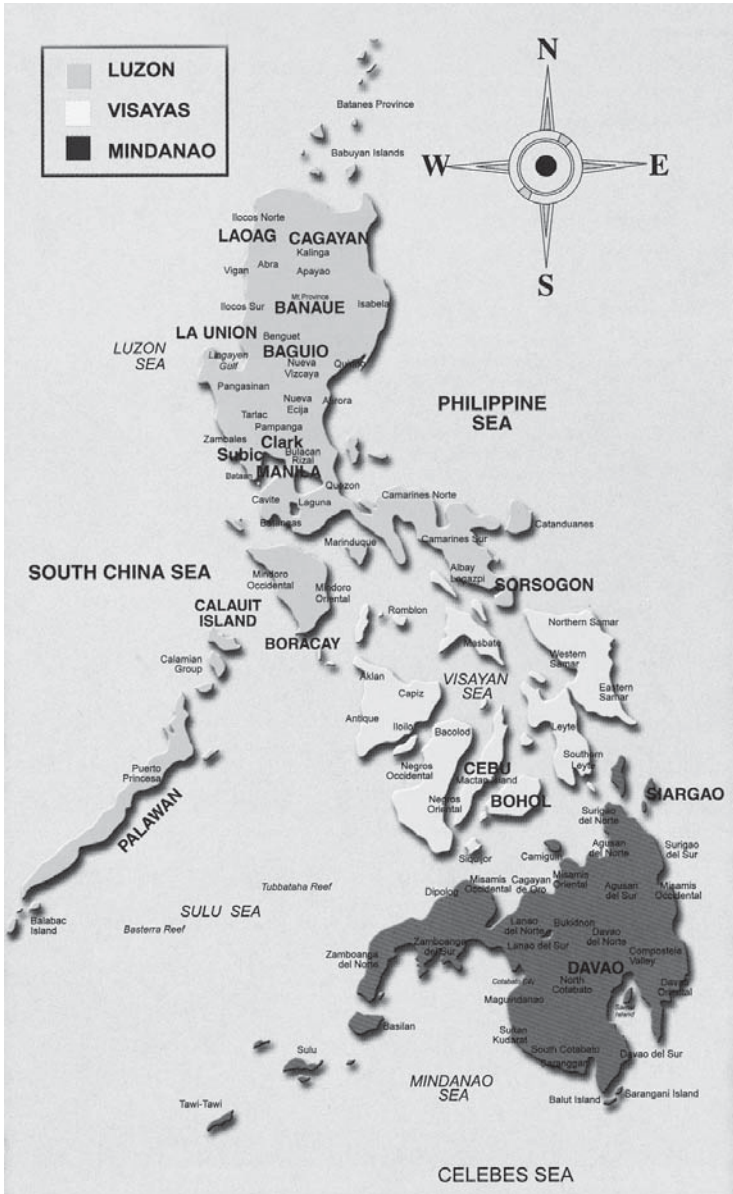
This paper will present the history of bilingualism in the Philippines. It will cover both Spanish and English. A short overview of the Philippines is given in order to better understand the role played by a foreign language. Secondly, it will be shown how the languages of the conquerors, namely Spanish and English, entered the Philippine culture. In the third section, it will be shown how English supplanted Spanish as a major language in the Philippines. Finally, the move to establish a national language will be discussed. A short conclusion will then be made.

The Philippines: an Overview

This section will give a brief description of the geography, languages, and culture of the Philippines.

The Philippines is an archipelago of 7,107 islands stretching from the south of China to the northern tip of Borneo (see map on following page). Three prominent bodies of water surround the archipelago: The Pacific Ocean on the east, The South China Sea on the west and north, and the Celebes Sea on the south. Approximately 45 of the islands have areas of more than 100 square kilometers, accounting for 98 percent of the country's total land area. The country is divided into three geographical areas: Luzon in the north, Visayas in the center and Mindanao in the south. Accounting for 47 percent of the total land area, Luzon is the largest island group. Mindanao, the second largest group occupies 34 percent of the total land area, while the Visayas is a group of smaller islands between Luzon and Mindanao comprising the remaining 19 percent of land area. The capital city, Manila, is in Luzon. Davao in Mindanao and Cebu City in Cebu (in the Visayas) are the next most populous cities. The political division consists of 17 administrative regions with 81 provinces and 118 cities, 1,510 municipalities and 41,995 barangays, the smallest political units into which cities and municipalities are divided. A barangay consists of less than 1,000 inhabitants and is administered by elective officials.

The existence of many islands affects the life and history of the Filipino people. First of all, these islands and seas serve as geographical barriers which prevent close contact and communication among the inhabitants. Thus the ancient Filipinos, that is, migrants from the mainland of Malaysia and from Java, Sumatra, Borneo and other southeast Asian countries, were not able to unite into one solid nation. They divided into tribes which developed different dialects and different customs. The archipelagic topography also prevented the early Filipinos from developing a national



government and a national language.

According to the May 2000 census data, the population of the Philippines was 76.5 million. The overwhelming majority (95.5 percent) belong to ethnic groups that speak Austronesian languages. They are descendants of Austronesian immigrants who came from Borneo and Celebes. The most significant non-Austronesian people are the Chinese (1.5 percent), who have played an important role in commerce since the 9th century when they first arrived in the Philippines for trade. The various types of Filipino mestizos, especially Filipino-Spanish, Filipino-American, or Filipino-Chinese, form a tiny (2 percent) but economically and politically important minority. The remaining 1 percent of the population is composed mostly of the Negrito tribal communities inhabiting the more remote inland areas of the country. Also there are small minority expatriate communities, including Spaniards, Mexicans, North Americans, Japanese, Koreans, East Indians, Arabs and Vietnamese.

There are about 76 to 78 major language groups, with more than 500 dialects spoken in the Philippines and almost all of them belong to the Western Malayo Polynesian language group of the Austronesian language family. There are twelve Philippine languages with at least one million native speakers: Tagalog, Cebuano, Ilokano, Hiligaynon or Ilonggo, Bicolano, Waray, Pampango, Pangasinense, Kinaray-a, Maranao, Maguindanao, and Tausug. These are spoken by more than 90 percent of the population.

The 1987 Constitution of the Philippines states that the national language is Filipino. It continues to develop through loans from other Philippine languages and non-native languages for various situations, among speakers of different social backgrounds, and for topics for conversation and scholarly discourse. However, it is still predominantly based on Tagalog and thus natively spoken by only 24 percent of the population, mostly in Luzon. The Constitution further states that

“for purposes of communication and instruction, the official languages

of the Philippines are Filipino and, until otherwise provided by law, English. The regional languages are the auxiliary official languages in the regions and shall serve as auxiliary media of instruction therein.”

The 2000 Census defined literacy to be a person 10 years or older, having the capability to read and write. The Philippines’ literacy rate then was measured at 92.28 percent, males at 92.10 percent and females at 92.47 percent.

The culture of the Philippines is a mixture of eastern and western traditions. Its foundation is based primarily on the various ethnolinguistic cultures, though greatly mixed with foreign cultural traits, from Chinese, Islam and Hinduism, to Spanish, Mexican and North American. For reasons embedded in its long and complex colonial history, the culture of the Philippines is greatly directed towards Hispanic customs and traditions, having been a colony of Spain for three hundred and seventy-seven years. Interaction with other foreign cultures in the last 107 years has also left its traces on the culture and character of the people. More recent contributions that influence the mentality and practices especially among urban Filipinos have come from pop culture from the United States of America, Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore and China.

Spanish and English: The Languages of the Conquerors

In this section it is shown why the English language took root in the Philippines in a comparatively short time. An important factor is the different approaches between the Spanish colonizers and the American colonizers. First, I will offer three reasons why the Spanish language failed to take hold in the Philippines in three and a half centuries. Then in the second place I will show the factors which promoted English into a prominent position in less than fifty years.

In 1521, Ferdinand Magellan reached the Philippines and claimed it for

Spain, and for the next 377 years, the country was under Spanish rule. A Spanish colonial social system was developed with government centered on Manila and with considerable clerical influence. Spanish influence was strongest in Luzon and the Central Philippines. It was less strong in Mindanao, save for certain coastal cities. The long period of Spanish rule was marked by numerous uprisings. Towards the latter half of the 19th century, western-educated Filipinos or *ilustrados* such as national hero Jose Rizal began to criticize the excesses of Spanish rule and instilled a new sense of national identity. This movement gave inspiration to the final revolt against Spain which began in 1896 under the leadership of Emilio Aguinaldo and continued until the Americans defeated the Spanish fleet in Manila Bay on May 1, 1898, during the Spanish-American War. Aguinaldo declared independence from Spain on June 12, 1898.

At the end of the Spanish-American War Spain ceded to the United States of America the Philippines, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Midway and Guam in exchange for \$2,000,000 in the Treaty of Paris (December 10, 1898). Since the reports received by the US President McKinley indicated that the populace in the Philippines was uneducated, divided by several different local languages, and susceptible to the tyranny of the Spanish-speaking elite, independence was deemed premature and the Filipinos were considered unprepared for self-government. Thus, the Philippines would become a great American experiment in social engineering. The United States would show other colonial powers how to transform the world by infusing the American spirit into Filipinos of all social classes as they were being prepared for democracy.

The Americans asked the military leader Emilio Aguinaldo to help defeat the Spanish forces in the rest of the islands while they remained in Manila. Thus, the Filipinos, who had been fighting for independence, felt betrayed when word came that they would become a colony of the United States whereas Cuba would be granted independence. Unlike the Cubans,

the Filipinos had been rebelling not so much against Spanish repression as against Spanish neglect and had been fighting for independence since 1896. Since 1521 up until Mexico declared independence from Spain in 1821, the Philippines had been ruled through Mexico and had been kept in economic and social isolation. After three hundred years of Spanish rule, the census indicated that less than three percent of the population spoke Spanish. One reason for this occurrence is that the few soldiers, merchants, and civil bureaucrats who came to the Philippines remained in the walled city of Manila or in other garrison towns. Another reason is that early on, the Catholic friars had noted that knowledge of the Spanish language “almost always caused restlessness among the people” and made them difficult to control (Frei 1959:17). In response, the friars learned the local languages and did little to promote the use of Spanish other than to introduce Spanish words in to the local languages for new concepts.

The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, the advent of steam navigation and transoceanic telegraph brought about increased trade in the Philippines which created a new wealthy class of Chinese mestizos who controlled commerce throughout the islands. They learned Spanish and used it throughout the Philippines to enhance their business interests. The Spanish government in Madrid also encouraged the spread of Spanish. In 1863 Madrid ordered that primary schools using the Spanish language be expanded throughout the islands. Spain also opened its universities to the children of these wealthy business families. As a result, many Chinese mestizos studied in Spain, returning as *ilustrados* or enlightened ones filled with the liberal ideas popular in Europe (R. Constantino 1978: 50). They demanded political, religious, and educational reform.

The friars, on the other hand, felt that if the local population did not learn Spanish, they could keep the *ilustrado* propagandists with their calls for reform under control (Frei 1959). Even though the government continued to insist that schools switch to Spanish, there was little money to hire

Spanish-speaking teachers to replace the friars. As a result, Spanish remained the language of the rich with the poor speaking local languages. Only in Manila and other garrison towns did the poor speak the Spanish-based creole Chabacano.

However, the Chinese mestizos were spreading Spanish and liberal ideas through the countryside as they established residences and conducted business through the islands. By the time the Americans arrived in 1898, the Chinese mestizos far outnumbered the friars and other Spaniards. In the mid-nineteenth century, there were 240,000 Chinese mestizos, but only 20,000 Spanish mestizos and 5,000 pure Spaniards (Steinberg 1967: 9). Thus as Sibayan (1994) mentions, although less than three percent of the population spoke Spanish when the Americans arrived, this three percent was a powerful force since the Spanish language controlled the domains of government administration, the judiciary, legislation, higher education, business, and “a special sub-domain of protest” demanding independence.

In 1901, the Philippine Commission headed by William Howard Taft was tasked to establish a civilian government. The focus was on improving transportation, sanitation, and education. The cornerstone, according to Governor Taft, was “widespread common education as a protection of the masses” (Devins 1905: 204). The original plan was to use Spanish or the local languages as the language of instruction. However, the Philippines was divided into anywhere from 75–250 languages and/or dialects (McFarland 1994), though most spoke one of eight regional *lingua francas* either as a first or second language. Not only was the number of languages alarming, the Americans found that few children spoke Spanish and the local languages did not have a literacy tradition.

English

Reason One: Schools and Education

The Taft Philippine Commission decided it would start by establishing free public elementary schools in every barrio and a high school in every province, even in the most isolated areas. English would be the language of instruction since local languages would not open doors to the world of knowledge. The English language would be the tool to enrich, ennoble, and empower Filipinos from every walk of life. A Bureau of Education was established in Manila to manage the system. In accord with the educational policy in the United States, which addressed the task of uniting millions of immigrants and teaching them American ideals, the Bureau of Education set out to establish elementary schools as “universities for the masses,” intermediate schools for the middle classes, and secondary schools and universities for the future leaders.

Reason Two: Trained Native Speakers

The Philippine Commission solved the problem of no teachers and no books by importing them from the United States. In 1901, nearly 1,000 teachers were recruited in what might be considered the precursor of the Peace Corps. The first shipload of 500 arrived August 21, 1901, on the US Military Transport *Thomas*, hence the name Thomasites, which the Filipinos lovingly applied to all American teachers. The qualifications for these teachers were quite high, generally higher than for those teaching in the United States at the time. All had college degrees and most had two years of teaching experience (Sibayan and Gonzalez 1990: 273). Typically they taught children five hours a day, trained teachers one hour, taught adults in evening classes, and supervised barrio schools (Sibayan and Gonzalez 1990: 278). John Devins, an American clergyman who spent two months in 1904 investigating conditions in the Philippines, reported that in 1905 more

Filipinos spoke English after three years with American teachers than those who spoke Spanish after 300 years with the Spaniards (Devins 1905: 188).

Reason Three: Backlash against Spanish. Filipinos wanted to learn English.

Gonzalez (1987) notes that the Filipinos were eager to learn English. Although the Filipino population spoke practically no English in 1898, by the time of the 1918 census 28 percent of the literate population listed themselves as being able to read English. Philippine literature in English began appearing in poetry and literary journals (Fernando-Reyes 1986), and by the late 1920s novels and short stories were being published. A writing tradition that continues today had been born.

Sibayan (1994: 223), in evaluating the use of English as a tool for social engineering during the period 1898–1935, notes that English truly was a great equalizer. Rich and poor had equal opportunities to learn English and gain social mobility. Both rich and poor had equal access to English medium public schools and the quality of education was the same whether in urban or rural areas since American teachers were distributed equally throughout the provinces. Within thirty-five years English had not only been imported to the Philippines, but it had even replaced Spanish in education and government. It was in the process of being accepted by the people as a second language.

In overview it may be said that after the Treaty of Paris in 1898 there was deep disappointment that the Philippines were not given its independence. Yet, in the following thirty-seven years English became a second language. More than the textbooks and budgets a twofold reason explains why the Filipinos accepted English as a second language. First, it is due to the schools with the great number of qualified American teachers of English, who came into the country, and secondly it is due to the eagerness of Filipinos to learn English.

National language

The Filipinos embraced English education, but there was growing impatience about the promised independence from America which kept being delayed since the Jones Act of 1916. With the election of US President Franklin D. Roosevelt the Philippines were reorganized as a commonwealth with independence promised by 1946. Thus, in 1935 the commonwealth of the Philippines was established with Manuel L. Quezon winning the country's first national presidential election.

The constitution for the new commonwealth named English and Spanish as the official languages with the provision for an indigenous national language. Spanish was recognized for historical reasons and for its importance as a language of law, although it had already been officially replaced by English in the courts. After thirty-five years of English education, English had become the language of national unity. Filipinos who spoke different local languages used English to communicate with each other. The 1939 Census indicated that 26.3 percent of the population of 16,000,000 claimed to speak it, making it the most common and the most widespread language.

Because President Quezon wanted a local language that would be easier to learn and would be the symbol of nationalism, he established the new Institute of National Language and gave it the task to decide which language it should be. In 1937 the Institute recommended Tagalog. Thus, after the publication of a dictionary and a grammar, the new national language began to be taught in the schools starting in 1940. But it can be noted that as a national language it had a later start than English. English began to grow into a national language since 1898. Tagalog was declared a national language in 1940.

Tagalog was seen as an appropriate choice for the following reasons. First, it was in an intermediate position linguistically and geographically.

Second, it was also considered to have patriotic and historical backing since it was one of the languages of the original rebellion against the Spaniards, being the national language chosen by Aguinaldo in his original constitution in 1897. Third, Tagalog was also the language used in Manila where a number of prestigious universities could be found, and therefore would have a natural support for the development of vocabulary for academic purposes. Fourth, it was the most widespread of all the indigenous languages, with about 25 percent of the population speakers, second only to English. However, there was one major drawback. The total number of speakers of closely related dialects of Cebuano in Central and Southern Philippines outnumbered Tagalog speakers with about 40 percent of the population (Frei 1959: 87). This manipulation of population figures to favor Tagalog in the decision-making process eventually led to resistance to the spread of Tagalog in the Visayas and Mindanao.

Although English was no longer the only language allowed on the school premises, at first, the promotion of a new national language had little effect on the place of English in the schools. However, since English was not the language of the home, it depended on the schools for its promotion. Two events in the 1940s reduced the quality of this English instruction. The first was an attempt to make schools more accessible to large numbers of children desiring education. The second was the reduction of the amount of English instruction in primary schools.

The Education Act of 1940 shortened the elementary curriculum from seven to six years and placed the public schools on a double shift with the same teacher teaching two classes a day. Tagalog was taught as a required subject in all grade levels from grade one through the university. With a shorter school day and more time devoted to teaching Tagalog, students who wanted to enter high school had only half as much English instruction as before. This prompted the rich to shift their children to private schools where admission depended on English proficiency and the ability to pay

high tuition. This resulted in the best English speakers coming mostly from private schools. Since professional licensing exams and college entrance exams continued to be given only in English, during the 1940s English became a social stratifier rather than a social equalizer.

The Second World War did not have much effect on the amount of English spoken in the Philippines. When the Japanese took over, they tried to use the language issue to gain favor with the Filipinos. They banned Spanish and tried to eliminate English by declaring Tagalog the national language. However, they discovered that they still had to use English for propaganda movies for local consumption, as well as for other business transactions. The Filipinos used English as a sign of resistance because they did not view the Japanese as liberators from colonial oppressors.

However, the war devastated the education system. School libraries had been destroyed, stocks of textbooks had disappeared, nearly all school buildings had been burned down or blown up, and there was a tremendous backlog of children who had never attended school. In 1946, it was estimated that half of the public school teachers had no professional training (Prator 1950: 29). Before the war almost all Filipino teachers had learned English at least partially from Americans and had been able to converse in English with Americans in all parts of the country. However, during the war all Americans were confined to Japanese prisoner of war camps and even after the war there were no American teachers in the schools. As a result the few new teachers who received their training during the war or shortly thereafter had limited English proficiency (Prator 1950: 40).

Thus, after the war the two main language questions were how best to learn English for academic success and how to learn Tagalog for national unity. Linguists from America came to study the situation and recommend better ways to teach English, and various American Foundations funded the new Language Study Center at Philippine Normal College to train teachers

and prepare materials to teach English and Tagalog (renamed Pilipino in 1959). Many Filipino scholars were also sent to various universities in the United States to study linguistics and the teaching of English as a second language. Furthermore, not to be underestimated in the thrust to improve language skills, was the arrival in the 1960s of the new Thomasites, namely the Peace Corps, to supply native speakers of English to teach students and train teachers in provincial schools.

Tagalog

The efforts of the government to promote Tagalog as the new national language caused controversy. The language not only needed to be standardized, but also had to be elaborated to deal with academic topics in the sciences and social sciences once reserved for Spanish or English. Tagalog purists dominated the Institute of National Language and insisted on promoting a rural dialect without the assimilated Spanish and English borrowing common in urban speech (Prator 1950: 5). However, others favored promoting a fusion of Philippine languages based on Tagalog since linguistic studies indicated that these are closely related and frequently share a common vocabulary (E. Constantino 1981, Frei 1959: 11). Although the people preferred to use street Tagalog with a variety of words from Spanish and English, the purists still remained in control of the intellectualization of Pilipino throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

On the other hand, Cebuano, the regional lingua franca in the southern two thirds of the Philippines, was being spoken by more than 40 percent of the population in 1939 as a first or second language when Tagalog was chosen as the national language. Thus, a language war broke out in the Visayas as a reaction to the Tagalog purists. Even though Tagalog was renamed Pilipino in 1959 in order to make it more acceptable as the national language, it was still no more than purist Tagalog ideology in disguise.

As a consequence, many schools in the Visayas refused to teach Pilipino. However, people were still exposed to street Tagalog through comic books, radio, and movies. Massive internal migration for economic or educational reasons also loosened the ties to the local language. As a result, Tagalog spread even in Cebuano speaking urban centers despite local opposition from politicians (Gonzalez 1977, 1991). By 1970 55.3 percent of Filipinos could use at least street Tagalog.

In 1973 Pilipino was renamed Filipino so that the name of the national language would represent all Filipinos and not just Tagalog speakers who do not have an “f” sound. The renaming of the national language signaled a new attitude towards the development of the national language. This time it would no longer be in the hands of Tagalog purists and words and sound from other languages, including English and Spanish, could also be used.

While the media continued to spread Tagalog outside the schools, English maintained its hold on the schools. It had a special domain not only in education, but also in government and law, business, and in many cases religion. People did not consider it to be a foreign language when spoken in the Filipino way. It was simply one of the languages they had to learn in order to be successful. Llamzon (1969) described this Filipino English as a new member of the community of World Englishes. Bautista (1982) noted that it had become almost customary for young affluent or upwardly mobile Filipino families to bring up their children speaking English.

Motivation studies in Metro Manila found that integrative rather than instrumental motivation prevailed in language acquisition. That is, Filipinos learned English to be identified with fellow Filipinos rather than with Americans or other English speakers. Filipino English helped define a person as being Filipino (Llamzon 1984). However, other attitude studies especially outside Manila presented a different view of English. The 1968 Language Policy Survey conducted by the Language Study Center of the Philippine Normal College found that Tagalog (Pilipino) was considered

most necessary for success in manual jobs such as carpenter, farmer, fisherman, or market seller. English and Pilipino were both necessary for success as a clerk, doctor, lawyer, midwife, policeman, priest, secretary, surveyor, teacher, or electrician. English alone was not associated with success in any profession (Otanés 1977, Sibayan 1984). This nationwide survey showed that the motivation for learning English was seen as instrumental rather than integrative. It was seen as the key for education, communication, a good job, and travel.

The early 1970s saw the rise of student activism against English, which was portrayed as a language of colonialism and as a hindrance to the progress of the Filipinos. Although they considered the program to use English to teach democracy and self-government successful, they still demanded that the schools switch to using only Filipino. In reaction to the student activism and social unrest President Ferdinand Marcos declared Martial Law on Sept. 21, 1972. The new constitution of 1973 declared that English and Filipino were the official languages and that Filipino should be developed as a common national language. There was a strong demand by activists to switch the language of the schools entirely to Filipino. However, there were three problems that had to be resolved before the schools could switch from English. First, which languages would be used? Second, who would teach the classes? And third, where would the teaching materials come from?

Although the student activists demanded a switch to Tagalog as a symbol of nationalism, education in Tagalog was not equated with nationalism outside the Tagalog-speaking areas, especially in the southern half of the Philippines where Cebuano was the lingua franca. With regards to who would teach the classes, especially in non-Tagalog speaking areas, the 1970 census found that 52 percent could speak some form of Pilipino and 44 percent English. However, outside Tagalog speaking areas, the language learned was mostly street Pilipino acquired through comics, radio

and movies rather than academic Pilipino since no subject matter classes were taught in the language. It should also be noted that in many cases, the vocabulary necessary to teach high school algebra or physics in Pilipino had not been developed, or if it had, the teachers did not know the words since they learned these subjects in English. Academic Pilipino in the provinces was of little interest because fluency in English and not Pilipino was the key to getting a good job. There were also no textbooks for the new subjects. Gonzalez (1977) noted the overwhelming task of preparing teachers for non-Tagalog areas and for preparing materials for all grade levels.

Faced with these issues, the government through the Department of Education, Culture and Sports announced the Bilingual Policy of 1974. Vernaculars could be used as auxiliary languages for initial instruction and the subjects in all schools from grade one through high school would be divided between English and Filipino. Filipino, music, physical education, health, values education, civics, and social sciences would be taught in Filipino. English, mathematics, natural sciences, and technical education (home economics, industrial arts, agricultural arts, and entrepreneurship) would be taught in English. The universities were allowed to develop their own bilingual programs, though graduates would have to pass professional licentiate exams in English or Filipino. However, because of a lack of materials and teachers for teaching academic courses in Filipino, the bilingual program would be introduced one grade at a time beginning in first grade in 1974 with completion in 1982. A textbook development board coordinated the development of materials at various university centers and massive teacher training programs were instituted at regional staff development centers (Sibayan 1978). Linguistic programs were also developed to describe minority languages as well as to prepare teachers and materials for bilingual education (Gonzalez 1986).

In 1985, three years after the bilingual program was expected to have been fully implemented, a national survey found that many schools were just

beginning the bilingual switch because they lacked teaching materials and trained teachers. Many schools in Cebuano-speaking areas rejected the new arrangement and continued to teach in English. The demands of student activists may have resulted in bilingual education, but the people in general were against it. They insisted that English be maintained for economic reasons since it offered access to social mobility and jobs abroad (Sibayan and Gonzalez 1990).

The 1987 Constitution continued to recognize English and Filipino as official languages and mandated the development of Filipino based on existing Philippine and other languages. To encourage nationwide support and remove Filipino from the hands of Tagalog purists, the Aquino administration created the new Commission on the Filipino Language in 1991. Its board members represent major and minor language groups as well as different academic disciplines whose task was to develop Filipino as a language of literature and academics as well as to preserve and develop other languages (Gonzalez 1997).

Conclusion and Discussion

Geographical as well as historical factors have played influential roles in the development of bilingualism in the Philippines. It was shown in this paper how English supplanted Spanish as a major foreign language. The education program and the presence of native English teachers have played an important part in the development and use of English in the Philippines. The need to have a national language, Filipino, and the widespread use of English in the media, education, economics, etc. have contributed much to the use of both languages in daily life. Although Filipino is not spoken or used in the other non-Tagalog speaking regions, the people are still exposed to it through the media and the different subjects taught at schools. This enables them to use Filipino when they meet with people who speak another

native language or when there is a gathering of Filipinos from various places.

Educated Filipinos are the chief exports of the Philippines (Gonzalez, 1988). In the 1980s the Philippine government through its overseas employment agency sent abroad more than 400,000 workers annually, mostly to the Middle East. In addition, hundred of thousands made their own arrangements to work through Asia, Europe, and the United States. Since overseas Filipino workers are hired largely because of their English and their technical skills, they get top preference in hiring in seamanship, health sciences, technology, education, and management. They also predominate in the entertainment and service industry. The 2006 report of the Commission on Filipino Overseas indicate that there are 8.23 million Filipinos working overseas.

The ability to speak English and the facility for learning another language have been greatly influenced by the reality of living in an environment where English, as well as other languages are used in daily life. This may seem confusing and daunting for some, but for the Filipino it is part of one's reality. There are advantages and disadvantages, issues and challenges that need to be faced with regards to the use of a language for a particular purpose or task, and it is hoped that seeing the history of how Spanish and English entered the Filipino culture and the move to establish a national language, one may better understand the linguistic diversity in the Philippines.

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