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**English Dominance Over Tagalog Among Filipino Children**

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## **Executive Summary**

### **Overview**

English proficiency offers undeniable benefits for Filipino children in today's interconnected world. It opens doors to international education, career opportunities, and global communication. However, this trend has led to a growing concern: a decline in the use of Tagalog, the national language. This shift raises questions about the potential weakening of Filipino cultural identity and the importance of maintaining fluency in one's mother tongue. Understanding the factors influencing language preference, such as education systems, media consumption, and parental aspirations, is crucial in navigating this complex situation.

## **Introduction**

The Philippines occupies a unique space in the global landscape. While Tagalog is enshrined as the national language, the historical influence of American colonialism and the country's integration into the globalized economy have cemented English as a dominant force. This phenomenon presents a double-edged sword for Filipino children. On one hand, English proficiency is widely viewed as a key to unlocking a world of opportunities. Fluency in English opens doors to prestigious international educational programs, fosters career advancement in a globalized job market, and empowers participation in international discourse on a wide range of topics. This is particularly relevant in the booming Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) sector, a major contributor to the Philippine economy, where English communication skills are a crucial requirement.

## **Background**

The Philippines, an archipelago nation in Southeast Asia, boasts an impressive linguistic tapestry. Over 180 languages are spoken across its islands, with Filipino, a standardized form of Tagalog, and English serving as the two official languages. This bilingualism reflects the Philippines' rich history. Tagalog, likely the language of a pre-colonial ruling class, embodies the nation's cultural identity. However, English, a legacy of American colonization (1898-1946), became associated with modernization and global connection. This creates a complex situation. The Philippines upholds a bilingual policy, aiming to balance cultural preservation with the benefits of globalization. Yet, a concern arises: Filipino youth may increasingly favor English over their native languages, including Filipino itself. This potential decline of Filipino highlights the ongoing tension between maintaining cultural heritage and embracing the opportunities offered by a globalized world, dominated by English.

## **Purpose and Importance of the Study**

The Philippines, a nation brimming with over 180 languages, faces a unique challenge: Filipino youth increasingly favor English over Tagalog, the base of Filipino, the national language. This stems from the country's history – English, a legacy of American influence, became associated with progress and global connection. Parents, aiming to equip their children for the future, may prioritize English. This study explores this trend, examining the influence of media, education, and societal perceptions. It also investigates the potential downsides, including a weakening of cultural identity and communication barriers. However, the study doesn't just identify problems; it proposes solutions like promoting Filipino-language media and highlighting the value of Filipino in various domains. Ultimately, the goal is to understand this complex situation and ensure Filipino children can thrive in a globalized world while preserving their cultural heritage.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the primary factors influencing Filipino children's preference for English over Tagalog?
2. How does the decline in Tagalog usage affect the cultural identity and historical understanding of Filipino children?
3. What roles do education systems, media consumption, and parental aspirations play in shaping language preferences?
4. What strategies can be implemented to encourage the balanced use of both English and Tagalog among Filipino children?

## **Key Stakeholders**

1. **Filipino Children.** The primary group affected by this linguistic shift, as their language preferences influence their cultural identity and cognitive development.
2. **Parents.** Their aspirations for their children's future often shape language use at home, balancing the desire for global competitiveness with cultural preservation.
3. **Educators and Schools.** Institutions play a critical role in language education, determining the emphasis on English and Tagalog in the curriculum.
4. **Media and Content Producers.** The creators of television programs, online content, and educational materials have the power to make Tagalog appealing and accessible to children.
5. **Government and Policymakers.** Responsible for implementing language policies and supporting initiatives that promote bilingualism.

By examining the interplay between these stakeholders and the factors influencing language preference, this study aims to offer comprehensive insights and actionable solutions to address the declining use of Tagalog among Filipino children.



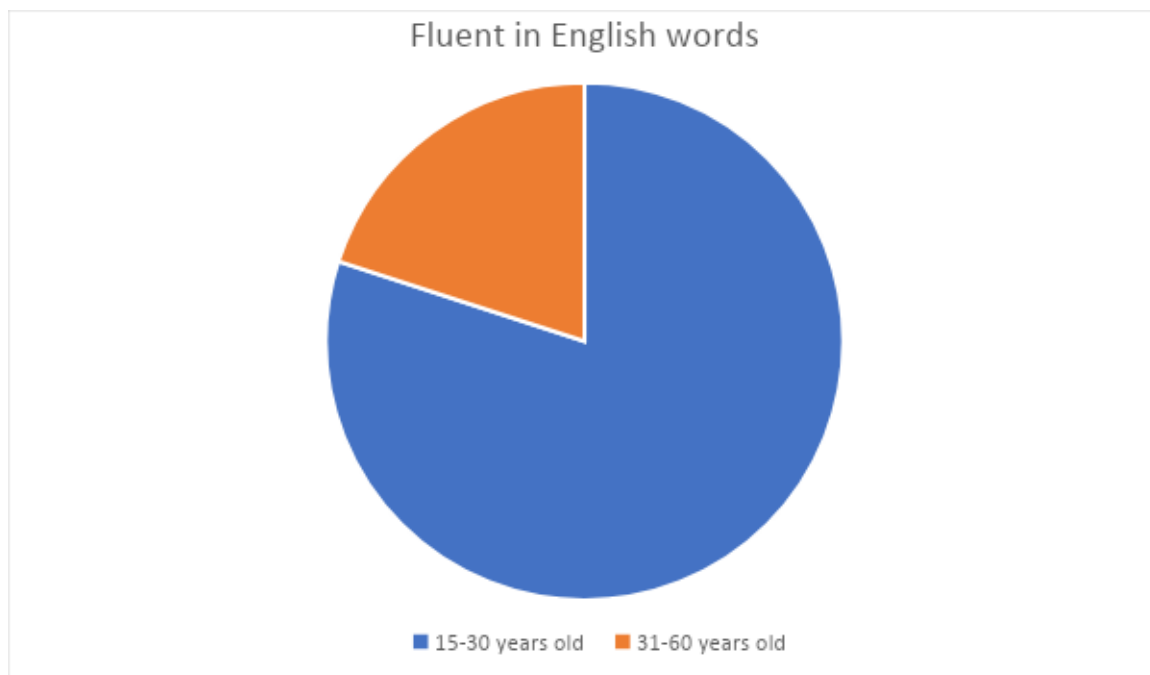
## **Data**

“When Mother-tongue Education is not Preferred” explores the unique role of English in the Philippines, emphasizing its connection to socio-economic mobility, politics, and ethnicity. The study recognizes that there are many different and dynamic language practices in the Philippines, which are influenced by historical and contemporary factors including colonization, ethnic conflicts, and globalization, rather than seeing Philippine English as a single, unified variety.

Which focuses on the Cebuano-speaking region, and looks at how Cebuanos develop their regional identity and connect worldwide in online spaces by employing "Bislish," a combination of Bisaya and English. This hybrid language form captures the complex sociolinguistic context of the Philippines, which is shaped by regional and international influences.

“Philippine English: Linguistic and Literary” This study examines the role language plays in nationalist attempts to decolonize, with an emphasis on the Philippines. Students were forced to give up their native tongues when English was made the only language spoken in classrooms during American colonial control. Classroom conflict resulted from this, which is known as a "war of translation."

In the 1986 discussion of English's dominance in multilingual cultures, Phillipson, Skutnabb-Kangas, and Africa highlighted a situation that was similar to that of the Philippines. They argue that there are serious risks associated with using a language that was once employed by colonists, like English, as the medium of education. Although it can help people of diverse dialects, races, and cultures communicate with each other, English also inhibits regional and native tongues. Minority languages may become neglected as a result of this strategy.



Filipinos aged 15-30 years old are taught English words from an early age without the translations of Filipino words. Having an environment to learn English and Filipino language from an early age has some advantages over those who only learned in school.

Based on the data gathered in "The Impact of English as a Global Language on Filipino Practices", older generation Filipinos are more fluent and well-informed with deep or complex Filipino language.

## Analysis and Discussion

This study delves into the multifaceted role of English in the Philippines, highlighting its complex relationship with socio-economic mobility, politics, ethnicity, and identity formation.

### Key findings:

- **English and Socioeconomic Mobility:** The study suggests a link between English proficiency and access to better opportunities. This aligns with the concept of English as a "gateway language" that fuels aspirations for social and economic advancement.
- **English and Identity:** The research explores how Filipinos utilize English, not as a monolithic entity, but as a dynamic tool for regional and national identity construction. The example of "Bislish" showcases the interweaving of regional languages (Bisaya) with English in online spaces, reflecting a unique Filipino identity shaped by globalization.
- **Historical Context:** The study acknowledges the legacy of American colonialism, where English replaced native languages in classrooms, leading to a "war of translation." This aligns with Phillipson et al.'s (1986) critique of the potential dangers of using colonial languages in education. While English may foster communication across diverse groups, it can also marginalize and neglect indigenous languages.
- **Early Language Exposure:** The research suggests that early exposure to both English and Filipino offers advantages compared to learning solely in school settings. It highlights the importance of fostering multilingual environments that nurture proficiency in both languages.
- **Generational Differences:** The study indicates a potential decline in the depth of Filipino language knowledge among younger generations. This raises concerns about the potential erosion of Filipino identity and cultural heritage.

## Discussion Points

- **Balancing English and Filipino:** The study raises the question of how to best balance the importance of English for socio-economic advancement with the need to preserve and promote Filipino and other indigenous languages. Striking this balance could involve:
  - **Strengthening Filipino language education:** Invest in resources and methodologies to make Filipino language learning more engaging and effective.
  - **Bilingual education:** Explore models that promote fluency in both English and Filipino, potentially through subject-specific instruction in each language.
- **Decolonizing Education:** The historical context highlights the need for a more critical approach to English in education. This could involve:
  - **Localizing curriculum:** Integrate Filipino and regional languages and cultural elements into the curriculum.
  - **Reclaiming Filipino language:** Promote Filipino as a language of scholarship, knowledge production, and higher education.
- **Parental Motivations and Language Use:** Parents may prioritize English over Filipino due to a belief that it unlocks access to higher education and better job prospects. This can lead to a shift in language practices within the home environment, potentially favoring English over Filipino.
  - Parental education campaigns could be developed to highlight the importance of both English and Filipino for a well-rounded education and future success.
  - Educational resources could be provided to parents to support them in teaching and nurturing both languages within the home environment.

## Further Research

1. Impact of Taglish and other code-switching practices on Filipino identity:
  - **Explore generational differences:** Do younger generations use Bislish differently than older generations? How does this reflect evolving Filipino identity in a globalized world?
  - **Investigate the social and emotional aspects:** How does using Bislish or other code-switching practices influence Filipinos' sense of belonging, creativity, and self-expression? Does it create a sense of in-betweenness or a unique hybrid identity?
2. Effectiveness of bilingual education programs in the Philippines:
  - **Consider societal factors:** Investigate how social and economic factors, such as parental education level and socioeconomic status, influence the success of bilingual education programs.

## Conclusion

This study explored the multifaceted role of English in the Philippines, particularly regarding its impact on socio-economic mobility, identity formation, and the potential decline of Filipino language proficiency. Here's how the findings address the research questions:

**1. Parental Aspirations:** Parents prioritize English at home due to the belief that it unlocks better opportunities for their children. This aligns with the concept of English as a "gateway language." (**Answered**)

**2. Educational System:** The dominance of English as the medium of instruction, especially in urban areas, reinforces its perceived importance from a young age. (**Addressed**)

**3. Media Influence:** Widespread exposure to English through entertainment media (TV, movies, online content) further increases its appeal and accessibility. (**Addressed**)

These factors contribute to the key findings:

- **English and Socioeconomic Mobility:** English proficiency is seen as crucial for advancement.
- **English and Identity:** Filipinos use English dynamically to construct regional and national identities, as exemplified by "Bislish."
- **Historical Context:** The legacy of English replacing native languages in education during American colonialism is acknowledged.
- **Early Language Exposure:** Exposure to both English and Filipino from a young age offers advantages.
- **Generational Differences:** A potential decline in Filipino language fluency among younger generations is observed.

## Recommendations

The study highlights the need to balance the importance of English with preserving Filipino and other indigenous languages. Here are some recommendations:

- **Strengthen Filipino Language Education:** Invest in engaging and effective learning resources.
- **Bilingual Education:** Explore models that promote fluency in both languages, potentially through subject-specific instruction.
- **Decolonizing Education:** Take a more critical approach to English by:
  - Integrating Filipino and regional languages with cultural elements into the curriculum.
  - Promoting Filipino as a language of scholarship and higher education.
- **Parental Education:** Develop campaigns highlighting the importance of both languages for success.
- **Support for Parents:** Provide resources to help parents teach and nurture both languages at home.

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