

FILIPINO LANGUAGE IN THE MOUTH OF ALPHA GEN: A MIXED METHOD RESEARCH APPROACH

Charish Mae D. Jubahib¹, Rammel T. Bayani EdD²,

¹ Basic Education Faculty, Assumption College of Nabunturan, Philippines

² College Professor, College of Teacher Education, University of Mindanao, Philippines

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the use and recognition of the Filipino language among Alpha Gen, children born from 2010 onwards, focusing on their fluency in speaking and proficiency in understanding Filipino. Employing both qualitative and quantitative methods, the research examines the perspectives, skills, and habits of the youth regarding the Filipino language. Qualitative methods, such as semi-structured interviews, offer narratives about the participants' experiences using Filipino in various contexts, including home, school, and social media. Quantitative methods, including surveys and questionnaires, provide data on the level of proficiency in Filipino. Data were collected from thirty respondents and ten participants from the Alpha Generation using a modified survey questionnaire tailored to gather specific information relevant to the study. The collected data were analyzed through descriptive statistics, including data counting, percentages, mean, and standard deviation, along with thematic analysis. The findings reveal varying levels of proficiency and recognition of the Filipino language among participants, with some being more proficient in English and frequently using it in their daily lives. Despite this, there is a noticeable desire among some participants to maintain Filipino as a significant part of their identity. Based on these results, the study recommends enhancing the integration of the Filipino language in modern teaching and communication methods to encourage Alpha Gen to use Filipino in daily interactions. This approach aims to foster a deeper connection with the language and promote its use among younger generations.

Keywords: "Filipino Language, Alpha Generation, Mixed Research, Language Use."

1. INTRODUCTION

The study explores the influence of the Alpha Generation, children born from 2010 onwards, on the use and recognition of the Filipino language. This generation is deeply immersed in technology, which shapes their perspectives and learning methods. Research by Melchor et al. (2023) and Santos (2020) [1] highlights that technology and globalization lead to a shift in language use from Filipino to English and other international languages among the youth. The rise of social media and instant messaging apps significantly impacts this shift. Articles in South Africa, Ziatdinov and Cilliers (2021) [2] indicate that global proficiency in English could overshadow the appreciation of native languages and cultures. As Alpha Gen grows up in a technology-driven world, preserving their language and cultural identity becomes challenging. Gobo (2016) [3] notes that globalization increases interaction through social media, affecting people worldwide, contributing to the decline in the use of the Filipino language among students. The study underscores the importance of integrating the Filipino language into modern education and communication to encourage its daily use among the Alpha Generation. Despite the diverse linguistic environment in places like Davao City, few studies have addressed this issue, with significant research last conducted by Demeterio and Dreisbach in 2017[4]. Educational institutions must adapt to the needs of Alpha Gen by addressing these linguistic challenges and opportunities to preserve cultural identity.

1.1 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This section contains academic and professional readings related to research. It aims to provide a more detailed understanding of the literature and studies included in the research, with the goal of expanding the knowledge of our readers, especially in the Importance of the Study section. There are also parts that contribute to current issues, particularly in the context of research.

Filipino Language: The national language of the Philippines and one of the country's official languages, along with English. According to the Philippine Constitution, this language is based on Tagalog but evolves and progresses using the existing languages throughout the archipelago. Filipino symbolizes national identity by incorporating elements from various local languages of the Philippines. Amid the rapid advancement of technology and globalization, the use of the Filipino language by Alpha Gen (those born from 2010 onwards) has changed and continues to change.

According to Reyes (2023), the presence of technology and globalization has brought changes to the use of Filipino by Alpha Gen. Through digital assistants, the language is becoming hybrid, with a mix of foreign words and cultural influences, while still retaining the essence of Filipino. Changes in the way Filipino is used present opportunities for deeper study and the development of methods to maintain and develop the language in a modern context.

Almario (2023) adds that socio-economic disparities affect Alpha Gen in terms of the quality of education in Filipino. The lack of access to the internet and digital devices hinders the equal opportunity for learning the language.

By understanding all aspects that describe the unique characteristics of Alpha Gen's behavior, it is possible to predict how this future society will act when they join the job market. There is a general aim to examine the behavior of this studied generation in family and school settings and how it will relate to organizations, and specific aims to investigate with parents, teachers, and children of this age group. Determine the behavioral characteristics of this generation in the fields of family and school and discuss the results to predict how the characteristics of the Alpha generation may affect the organizational environment. To understand the characteristics that constitute Alpha Gen.

The Filipino language reflects the multilingual nature of the Philippines, with influences from colonial languages such as Spanish and English, as well as local languages and dialects (Cruz, 2019). Therefore, it is essential to examine the factors contributing to the decline of the Filipino language to emphasize and preserve it. The Filipino language is a vital part of the national identity of the Philippines. It is a living and evolving language that originated from Tagalog and continues to be open to other local languages. Filipino is important in the fields of education, communication, and strengthening the national culture, which should not be lost and must be preserved.

"Generation Alpha is the generation born after Generation Z. The entire Alpha generation consists of individuals born in the 21st century. In a study conducted on the post-Z generation in 2015, McCrindle identified this generation as "Generation Alpha" (Nagy & Kölcsey, 2017).

Stefanov et al. (2018) used the term "homo tabletus" for this generation. It is estimated that this generation was born between 2010 and 2025. The Alpha generation includes infants, babies, and those yet to be born. Starting education at an early age, the Alpha generation achieves higher education compared to other generations.

The happiness and education of this generation are heavily dependent on screens. Furthermore, over time, it will be understood what kinds of codes may emerge for global decision-makers related to screen immersion. The iPad was launched in 2010, when the eldest of this generation was born, and Instagram entered social channels, making "app" the word of the year. Therefore, the fixed-screen experience of past generations is insufficient to meet their fluid and fully mobile experiences. Screenagers are a unique feature of this generation (Kaynak, 2017).

Most importantly for this generation is the digital environment in which they were born. Technology, parents, teachers, and other social interactions affect their daily lives. The concept of "connection" is central to this generation, more important than to the previous Generation Z (Tootell et al., 2014).

In general, the characteristics of this generation can be explained as dependencies on screens and the world of touch screens. Carter (2016) noted that this generation prefers communication through images and audio rather than writing messages, and they need more attention because they are overly softened by their parents. He added that this is a generation adept in technology.

Barkowitz (2016) dubbed the Alpha generation as creative individuals because even in their communication and language use, they can be considered innovative and developed due to their capabilities as the Alpha Generation."

1.2 Statement of the Problem

This research aims to gather essential data using statistics to provide more valid answers to the following questions. This approach has provided answers to the following specific quantitative questions:

1. What is the level of fluency of Alpha Gen in speaking the Filipino language?

2. What is the level of proficiency of Alpha Gen in understanding the Filipino language?

This study explores the experiences of Alpha Gen students in the Basic Education Department, particularly in understanding the Filipino language. The aim of this study is to answer the following qualitative research questions:

1. What are the reasons why Alpha Gen cannot speak the Filipino language properly?
2. How does their lack of proficiency in speaking Filipino affect their performance in the Filipino subject?
3. What actions are they taking to address the problem of speaking the Filipino language?

2. METHODS

After obtaining approval from the Panel of Examiners and an endorsement letter from the Office of the Dean of the Graduate School, the researcher began data collection through the following steps: The researcher prepared and sent a letter to the Principal of Assumption College of Nabunturan to request permission to conduct the study at the selected school. Following the approval, a letter was given to the head teacher of the said school to gain access to the respondents. The researcher also provided a permission letter to the respondents and participants to collect their data. The respondents were given the questionnaire, along with clear instructions on how to answer it. The respondents completed the questionnaire at their own time using paper and pencil for the quantitative part, and the interviews with participants were recorded for the qualitative part.

2.1 Data Analysis

Data analysis is the most crucial part of research because it determines the success and actual results of the study (Regoniel, 2012). Additionally, according to his statement, it is essential that the data is accurate, honestly collected, and reliable to prove that the research is true or valid. Therefore, after obtaining all the essential information and acquiring a comprehensive picture, the gathered data was immediately documented to facilitate the analysis of the collected data.

The collected information will be processed and organized according to the research questions. This means that each piece of information will be scrutinized, reducing some statements and selecting essential information that will respond to the ongoing study. This will serve as the basis for forming themes for each question.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Quantitative Phase

The results section of the explanatory-sequential mixed-method study presents the findings from the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data. Additionally, tables are included to better illustrate the results of the research.

This part presents the results of the quantitative data gathered through survey questions. It shows the level of fluency in speaking the Filipino language among Alpha Gen as well as their proficiency in understanding it.

Table 1 shows the level of fluency in speaking the Filipino language of Alpha Gen. Overall, the data indicates that the students have an overall mean interpretation of 2.5 (SD=1.106) with a description of "sometimes."

Table 1
Level of Fluency in Speaking the Filipino Language of Alpha Gen

Indicators	Mean	SD	Description
Speaks Filipino words properly.	2.8	0.3	Often
Speaks deep Filipino words.	2.4	0.01	Sometimes
Presents ideas in class using the Filipino language.	2.3	0.2	Sometimes
Participates in class using the Filipino language.	2.6	0.01	Often
Uses the Filipino language in communication.	2.4	0.01	Sometimes
Total	2.5	1.106	Sometimes

It is a fact that the participants of this study are exposed to the English language as it is the primary medium of instruction in many schools and is also used in media and the internet, as well as in daily communication. There is a high possibility that students will be more accustomed to speaking English than Filipino.

Specifically, the students revealed that they speak Filipino words properly with a somewhat related implication. This is indicated by the highest average rating of 2.8 (SD=0.3). This shows that the participants often speak the Filipino language as a medium of communication.

However, the student respondents confirmed that they sometimes present ideas in class using the Filipino language. This is indicated by a weighted mean of 2.3 (SD=0.2). This means they find it challenging to make a complete, continuous, and comprehensive statement using the Filipino language.

Table 2 shows that the proficiency of Alpha Gen in understanding the Filipino language has an overall mean score of 2.72 (SD=0.184), described as "often." This means that the respondents' awareness and appreciation of their own culture also affect their proficiency in using the Filipino language. Additionally, exposure to Filipino through television, radio, social media, and other forms of media is also important. Generation Alpha grew up in a digital age with a lot of content in different languages, and if they have many opportunities to focus on using the Filipino language in writing and speaking, this can improve their appreciation for using Filipino as a medium of instruction.

Table 2
Level of Proficiency of Alpha Gen in Understanding the Filipino Language

Indicators	Mean	SD	Description
Understands Filipino words.	3.0	0.28	Often
Understands deep Filipino words.	2.4	0.32	Sometimes
Properly grasps instructions written in Filipino	2.9	0.18	Often
Gets accustomed to Filipino words.	2.6	0.12	Sometimes
Answers questions written in Filipino.	2.7	0.02	Often
Total	2.72	0.184	Often

In particular, the indicator "Understands Filipino words" received the highest mean rating of 3.0 (SD=0.28), described as often rated by respondents. This means they often understand statements written in Filipino, but they find it difficult to express themselves. It is essential to ensure that students understand Filipino words, and a combination of proper education, family and community support, sufficient exposure to media, and personal interest and motivation in learning the language is important.

Additionally, the respondents revealed that they sometimes understand deep Filipino words, with this indicator receiving the lowest mean rating of 2.4 (SD=0.32). This means that the study participants find it difficult with deep words because these are not often used in daily conversation and are less frequently seen in books, media, and other modern materials. Furthermore, due to globalization, the use of English becomes more dominant, and Alpha Gen is more exposed to foreign culture than their own, making them unfamiliar with deep words.

After analyzing the responses regarding the Alpha Gen's experience in speaking the Filipino language, the following themes emerged: (1) Reasons for Not Speaking Filipino Properly, (2) Effect of Being Alpha Gen on Speaking Filipino, (3) Effect of Lack of Proficiency in Speaking Filipino, (4) Difficulties Experienced Due to Not Being Fluent in Filipino, (5) Ways to Help Themselves Address the Problem in Speaking Filipino, (6) Steps Taken to Become Proficient in Filipino. Table 5 shows the various main ideas that explain each significant theme shared by the participants during the interview.

3.2 Qualitative Phase

The qualitative discussions are divided into four parts: experiences, challenges, coping mechanisms, and recommendations. This section highlights each of the emerging themes. Each structured theme provides significant themes/topics discussed below and is supported by various literature and studies.

Reasons for Not Being Able to Speak Filipino Properly. The emerging themes: Lack of exposure to the Filipino language, Difficulty, more exposure to the English language, Difficulty in pronouncing Filipino words, Learned English before Filipino. These show that the participants belonging to the Alpha Generation are not very proficient in using the Filipino language. The interviews revealed that they are not exposed to the language and are more comfortable using English because it was the first language they learned, making it difficult for them to pronounce and communicate.

According to Reyes and Mendoza (2021), children of the Alpha Generation have been more exposed to English from a young age due to families prioritizing English for broader opportunities in the future. The language at home and the language used on multimedia platforms is primarily English, explaining why they are more proficient in this language than in Filipino.

Gonzales (2020) added that the widespread use of English in media, particularly on social media platforms, results in less exposure of children to Filipino. His study shows that most readily available educational materials used in schools are typically in English, making it the primary literacy language for the youth.

Impact of Being Alpha Gen on Speaking Filipino. The emerging themes: Preference for English, Frequent use of cellphones, Difficulty speaking Filipino, Difficulty pronouncing Filipino words when speaking, usually speaks in English. These themes show the significant impact of being Alpha Gen on their knowledge of the Filipino language, as technology is deeply involved in their daily lives, leading to difficulties in speaking and using Filipino. They struggle to engage because the primary language brought by technology is English.

Santos (2022) stated that integrating technology into teaching Filipino improves students' abilities in the language. Meanwhile, de la Cruz (2018) reported that focusing on English as the primary language of instruction in schools negatively affects students' abilities in Filipino. Additionally, the strong influence of media using English causes further confusion among the youth regarding the correct use of Filipino. Martinez (2023) mentioned that a culture inclined to use English in formal contexts results in a lack of confidence in using Filipino in academic and professional situations.

Effect of Lack of Proficiency in Speaking Filipino on Performance in Filipino Subjects. Due to their difficulty with Filipino, they struggle to express themselves, choose to remain silent even when they want to participate, and do not understand everything the teacher says. They find it hard to process new words and understand concepts better when translated into English.

Soriano (2020) found that students struggling with Filipino are often inactive in class discussions. The lack of confidence in speaking Filipino causes a fear of making mistakes, leading them to stay silent. His study also shows that proficiency in English does not directly help participation in classes primarily conducted in Filipino.

Cruz (2019) indicated that the lack of understanding of the language used by the teacher in instruction hinders effective learning. Concepts explained in Filipino are better understood when translated into English, where they are more proficient.

Ramirez (2021) noted that students struggling with new Filipino vocabulary often experience confusion and hesitation in class. Their lack of skills results in an inability to express their thoughts, leading to a preference for not participating in discussions. Bautista (2022) highlighted that students learning under a bilingual system often struggle with Filipino, especially when their primary exposure is to English. Their training in English as the primary communication language at home and in media explains why they are more comfortable in English than in Filipino.

Struggles Experienced Due to Lack of Proficiency in Speaking Filipino. The interviews revealed that they genuinely struggle, relying on the guidance provided by the teacher, expressing a desire to participate but being afraid because they stutter when speaking and cannot easily process what they want to say in Filipino. They do not deny that they can read Filipino words, but they struggle with comprehension and expressing their understanding in Filipino.

Horwitz (2020) and Dewaele and MacIntyre (2018) stated that fear of speaking and anxiety in language learning are major barriers to active student participation. "Foreign Language Anxiety" (FLA) causes stuttering and fear of mistakes, leading to low self-confidence among students.

Bautista and Barrios (2020) mentioned that students' primary problem with Filipino is focused on their ability to express and understand complex concepts. Reading and understanding Filipino texts are not as problematic as formulating ideas in speaking and writing. Cummins and Persad (2017) showed that "scaffolding" is an essential strategy to help students achieve better understanding and expression in Filipino. Scaffolding refers to providing support to the student while gradually removing it as they become more independent.

Ways to Help Themselves Address the Problem of Speaking Filipino. To address the problem of speaking Filipino, participants guided themselves to find ways to solve the language issue. They mentioned that to be part of and involved in class, it is necessary to understand and comprehend Filipino, and training must start with themselves, not others. They also sought help from their parents and teachers, tried to pronounce Filipino words correctly, and used Filipino daily.

Wang (2019) noted that self-practice is a crucial aspect of language learning. His research showed that students who regularly practice speaking their second language develop better speaking skills. Activities such as reading aloud, pronunciation practice, and writing speeches in Filipino have proven effective.

Ishimaru et al. (2017) found that parental support positively impacts students' language skills. Active parental involvement in school activities and helping their children at home contribute to the development of their second language skills.

Cruz and Santos (2022) showed that the regular use of Filipino in daily situations results in better language skills. Simple activities like talking with friends, conducting daily activities in Filipino, and watching Filipino programs increase language exposure and boost students' confidence in using it.

Ervin-Tripp et al. (2019) demonstrated that “pronunciation practice” is a critical component of improving speaking skills. Focusing on the correct pronunciation of words helps reduce confusion and stuttering when speaking.

Steps to Improve Filipino Language Proficiency. To achieve proficiency and excellence in Filipino, respondents indicated that they would watch Filipino videos and use Filipino at home. Due to the desire to understand concepts in Filipino, they realized that intensive training and utilizing technology to understand Filipino are necessary. It is a significant challenge to test oneself in incorporating and living the Filipino language, but through determination and purpose, such issues can be overcome.

Derwing et al. (2017) noted that pronunciation practice is essential for clearer communication. Regular pronunciation practice helps reduce stuttering and mispronunciation, improving overall fluency in Filipino.

García (2022) mentioned that contextualized language learning is a strategy that enhances students' understanding of the language by using it in meaningful contexts. This practice expands vocabulary and improves language skills through practical applications like role-playing and contextual exercises.

Technology offers various tools and resources that aid language learning. Luo et al. (2020) showed that using mobile apps, educational websites, and other digital platforms led to faster language skill development. The use of technology provides interactive activities and feedback essential for effective learning.

De Guzman and Bautista (2018) stated that using Filipino at home is a crucial aspect of strengthening language skills. Regularly using Filipino to communicate with family contributes to more stable proficiency and confidence in the language. Activities like conversing at the dinner table, reading books, and playing in Filipino are beneficial.

Wang et al. (2021) showed that intensive practice is essential for achieving fluency in a second language. "Intensive language practice" helps develop automaticity in using the language and improves listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The Filipino language in the mouths of the Alpha Generation has not been as meaningful to them. The depth of understanding of Filipino concepts has been replaced by an understanding of the English language.

The use of the Filipino language by the Alpha Generation is becoming a significant challenge due to the widespread prevalence of English in their environment. This exposure results in a higher level of understanding and proficiency in English compared to Filipino, causing a less profound understanding of concepts in the Filipino language.

Students are becoming more familiar and comfortable using English, which becomes their dominant language, while Filipino is often a second language used only in specific situations and not consistently.

This kind of trend not only affects the language skills of the youth but also their identity. The language used by the youth greatly influences their cultural identity. The lack of proficiency in Filipino hinders their ability to understand and appreciate Filipino traditions, history, and culture. Consequently, their connection to their own language and culture becomes limited, potentially leading to “cultural disconnection” or alienation.

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