

Appreciating Filipino Language and its Survival among Filipino Masses

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the enduring relevance and survival of the Filipino language among the Filipino masses in the face of English dominance in academic, professional, and media contexts. Employing an exploratory qualitative design, twenty (20) natural-born Filipinos from diverse socioeconomic, educational, and regional backgrounds participated in semi-structured interviews. Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's reflexive thematic analysis to identify patterns in language attitudes, cultural connections, and usage across domains. The findings revealed that Filipino functioned as a vital cultural anchor, a primary medium for emotional expression, and a unifying bridge across linguistic diversity. However, situational code-switching to English was common in formal settings, reflecting its perceived prestige as linguistic capital. The study also highlighted the pivotal roles of educational institutions, media, and government in shaping language vitality, alongside the influence of intergenerational transmission within families. Integrating frameworks such as Bourdieu's Linguistic Capital, Social Constructionism, and Critical Discourse Analysis, the research underscored the Filipino language as both a symbol of identity and a site of negotiation within the Philippine sociolinguistic landscape. Practical recommendations were proposed for language policy, education, media engagement, and community initiatives to strengthen Filipino's role in modern society.

Keywords: Filipino language; language survival; language preservation

INTRODUCTION

Language plays a central role in shaping national identity, cultural continuity, and social cohesion (Rubrico, 2012). In the Philippines, the Filipino language—rooted primarily in Tagalog and enriched by various local and foreign influences—serves not only as a tool for communication but also as a living repository of the nation's collective history and values (Gonzalez & Tupas, 2022). Its survival is crucial for sustaining a shared sense of belonging in a multilingual society.

Despite its constitutional status as the national language, Filipino's position in daily life remains complex. While it thrives in informal and domestic contexts, English dominates in higher education, government communication, and professional domains (Martin, 2014; Anderson, 2006). This uneven distribution of usage has sparked ongoing debates about linguistic hierarchy, cultural

preservation, and the future of Filipino in an increasingly globalized world. Recent qualitative research further demonstrates that, despite the dominance of English in formal domains, Filipino continues to function as a cultural anchor and primary medium of emotional expression among the general population, highlighting its enduring relevance in everyday communication and identity formation (Biri et al., 2026).

For many Filipinos—especially younger generations—the language carries both personal and cultural significance. Speaking Filipino can foster pride, strengthen ties to heritage, and affirm one's place within the national community (Garcia, 2024; UNESCO, 2021). At the same time, exposure to English and other languages in media, technology, and education creates pressures that may influence language preference and long-term maintenance.

The global trend of linguistic homogenization poses additional challenges. UNESCO (2021) warns that languages lacking active use in digital spaces are at greater risk of marginalization. Although Filipino remains vibrant in popular culture and online discourse, its institutional support and intergenerational transmission are critical for ensuring its resilience.

This study responded to these concerns by examining how Filipinos perceive the role of their national language in daily life, cultural identity, and social interaction. Using a qualitative approach, it explores the attitudes, practices, and factors influencing the continued use and preservation of Filipino across different social contexts. By focusing on lived experiences, the study aims to provide a grassroots perspective on language vitality—an aspect that has been underrepresented in previous research, which often prioritizes policy or historical analysis (Fishman, 2020).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Filipino language, as the national language of the Philippines, is more than a medium of communication—it serves as a cultural anchor and symbol of national identity. Its role in shaping collective consciousness has been emphasized by scholars in both sociolinguistics and cultural studies. According to Tupas (2024), language in postcolonial societies like the Philippines functions as a site of both resistance and identity formation, reflecting historical struggles and contemporary sociopolitical realities.

Language, Identity, and National Consciousness

Language is widely recognized as a primary vessel of cultural transmission (Fishman, 2020). Across the globe, native languages face increasing threats due to globalization and the expanding dominance of English as the global lingua franca (Crystal, 2003; Sung, 2021). The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (2021) warns of the risk of language extinction, particularly when younger generations shift toward languages considered more "economically valuable." For Filipinos, the use of the national language reinforces shared heritage, historical memory, and collective identity. Alburo (2021) highlights that national languages in multilingual nations serve as unifying tools, especially in the face of globalization. The relationship between language and identity is deeply personal. Bauman and Briggs (2021) note that individuals often attach emotional significance to their mother tongue, as it shapes self-perception and mediates social interaction. In the Philippines, this connection is amplified by the language's embeddedness in folklore, proverbs, and traditional narratives. While Filipino is the national language mandated by the Constitution, English remains heavily embedded in education, media, and government (Gonzalez & Tupas, 2022). This bilingual dynamic fosters linguistic inequality, where Filipino is often seen as informal or secondary compared to English, especially in professional and academic settings (Tupas, 2015; Bauman & Briggs, 2021). Chavez et al. (2024) further explore how parental influence shapes children's language learning, highlighting the role of family in language socialization.

Challenges in Language Preservation

Despite its symbolic importance, Filipino faces persistent challenges to its sustained use. Language shift toward English and other dominant languages is common in urban and professional settings (David et al., 2023; Salazar, 2018). This phenomenon is often driven by perceptions of English as having higher economic utility and prestige (Sung 2021). In metropolitan areas, younger generations increasingly prefer English in academic and digital communication, which may weaken intergenerational transmission of Filipino (Salazar, 2018). Moreover, globalization and media influence have fostered hybrid forms like Taglish, raising questions about language purity and its long-term preservation. Generational shifts in linguistic habits are also shaped by family practices. Chavez et al. (2024) emphasizes that bilingual parents often switch between Filipino and English depending on context, but many consciously maintain Filipino at home to preserve cultural continuity. This aligns with findings by Chavez et al. (2023), who show that parental support strongly influences children's language attitudes, especially when Filipino is tied to family values and tradition. Comerros et al. (2024) further examine how parental discretionary influence affects children's learning of English, illuminating the complexities of language choices within families.

Institutional and Policy Influence

Government policies and educational systems play a critical role in language maintenance. The Department of Education's Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) policy was designed to promote Filipino and regional languages alongside English. However, Nolasco (Nolasco, 2020) observe that inconsistent application and inadequate teacher training limit its effectiveness in positioning Filipino as both a functional and academic language. In the classroom, formal instruction in Filipino is often undervalued compared to English, particularly in elite and private institutions (Rubrico, 2012). Magno et al. (2024) highlight difficulties in teaching Filipino to students raised in English-dominant households, while Lamorinas et al. (2025) noted that Gen Z students frequently perceive Filipino as less practical or "global." Media—both traditional and digital—shapes linguistic habits. While local television, film, and radio still promote Filipino, English dominates in international streaming, advertising, and much of digital content. Nevertheless, de la Cruz and Manlapig (2025) find that local entertainment and social media influencers who use Filipino help normalize its use among younger audiences.

Regionalism and Everyday Communication

Outside major urban centers, Filipino continues to function as a bridge language across regional dialects. In Zamboanga Peninsula, where Cebuano, Chavacano, and Tausug are spoken, Filipino still unites diverse linguistic groups (Chavez & Vicente, 2024). This underscores Filipino's value not only as a national symbol but also as a practical tool for inclusion and understanding. However, research on grassroots-level language use remains limited. Nolasco (2020) calls for more community-based language studies to capture the perspectives of everyday Filipinos, rather than focusing solely on urban, elite, or institutional contexts.

Theoretical Perspectives on Language Survival

This study was anchored in Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory (Giles et al., 1977; Ehala, 2021), which posits that the survival of a language depends on its status, demographic strength, and institutional support. In the Filipino context, official recognition provides status, but demographic patterns and policy implementation determine actual vitality. Complementing this is Language Maintenance and Shift Theory (Fishman, 2020; Pauwels, 2020). which explains how societal attitudes, family practices, and intergenerational transmission influence whether a language is preserved or

replaced. These frameworks guided the analysis by linking participants’ narratives to broader sociolinguistic processes. The current research positions Filipino within a dynamic interplay of cultural identity, economic pressures, and institutional action. The literature reveals both optimism regarding Filipino’s symbolic value and concern over its practical decline—underscoring the urgency of empirical inquiry into public perceptions and attitudes.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative exploratory research design to investigate the perceptions, attitudes, and lived experiences of Filipinos regarding the role of the national language in daily life, cultural identity, and preservation. Exploratory qualitative research was appropriate for this underexplored topic, as it enabled in-depth, conceptual insights into complex sociocultural phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Olawale et al., 2023). The design facilitated a nuanced understanding of how language use intersected with identity, cultural belonging, and societal change, emphasizing participants’ meaning-making and personal interpretations rather than generalization (Nowell et al., 2017; Carpio et al., 2025).

The study involved 20 natural-born Filipinos from diverse socio-economic, educational, and regional backgrounds. Purposive sampling was employed to ensure the inclusion of information-rich participants, particularly from grassroots and working-class communities, allowing for varied and relevant perspectives aligned with the research objectives. This sample size was consistent with qualitative research standards aimed at achieving thematic saturation (Guest et al., 2020; Wutich et al., 2024; Ahmed, 2025). Participants were recruited through social media postings and personal referrals. Table 1 presents the participant demographic overview.

Table 1. Participant Demographic Overview

Demographic Category	Details (Aggregated and Anonymized)
Socioeconomic Status	Lower to lower-middle income brackets; occupations include market vendors, tricycle drivers, public school teachers, small business owners, and students
Educational Attainment	Primary (3) Secondary (7) Vocational (2) Tertiary/College (7) Graduate (1)
Regional Background	Luzon (10) Visayas (5) Mindanao (5)
Primary Language/Dialect Spoken at Home	Tagalog (12) Cebuano (4) Ilocano (2) Hiligaynon (1) Waray (1)
Age Range	18–25 (6) 26–35 (5), 36–50 (6) 51+ (3)
Gender	Male (9) Female (11)

Data were collected using a semi-structured interview guide developed following Kallio et al.'s (2016) five-step model, including literature review, question development, expert validation, pilot testing, and refinement. Interviews were conducted one-on-one, either face-to-face or via online platform depending on participants' availability, and lasted approximately 30–60 minutes. All interviews were conducted in Filipino to ensure authentic expression, audio-recorded using encrypted devices, and supplemented with field notes to capture non-verbal and contextual data (Robinson, 2023). Data collection spanned six weeks, and informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to participation.

Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's reflexive thematic analysis framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun & Clarke, 2021) involving familiarization, coding, theme development, and refinement. Trustworthiness was enhanced through independent coding and consensus-building among coders (Nowell et al., 2017), while reflexivity was maintained through memo-writing to acknowledge researcher bias. The interpretation of findings was guided by Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory and Language Maintenance and Shift Theory (Giles et al., 1977; Pauwels, 2020) ensuring theoretical alignment. Ethical clearance was obtained prior to data collection, and participants' confidentiality and anonymity were ensured through pseudonyms. All data were securely stored in encrypted files accessible only to the research team (Carpio et al., 2025).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Objectives 1. To explore the perceptions and attitudes of the Filipino masses toward the Filipino language in their daily lives and cultural identity.

Question No. 1. How important is the Filipino language to you in your everyday life and communication?

1.1 A Bridge Across Diverse Regions

Ten (10) respondents expressed that in Davao, they speak Cebuano at home, but when they meet someone from Manila or Baguio, Filipino becomes their common ground. It's like a bridge that connects them despite their different dialects. Additionally, they mentioned that it's not just about being understood it's also about being respectful and making others feel included. Filipino helps them find a shared space, even when they come from very different linguistic backgrounds. This highlights how Filipino serves as a unifying language among Filipinos from various regions. In linguistically diverse areas like Davao City, Filipino often acts as a lingua franca, facilitating communication and fostering a sense of unity.

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1.2 Strengthening Family Bonds

Ten (10) respondents expressed that even though some of their relatives prefer speaking English, they make an effort to use Filipino during family gatherings. It brings them closer and keeps their traditions alive. Additionally, they mentioned that their younger cousins grew up abroad and are more fluent in English, but they still speak to them in Filipino when they're together. At first, they'd laugh or ask them to translate, but over time, their cousins started picking up words and phrases. Now, their cousins actually try to respond in Filipino. It feels good knowing they're keeping that part of their identity alive, even across generations.

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"Now, they actually try to respond in Filipino. It feels good knowing we're keeping that part of our identity alive, even across generations."

1.3 Preserving Cultural Identity

Five (5) respondents expressed that when they speak Filipino, they feel closer to their roots. It's more than just words; it's about preserving their culture and values. Additionally, they shared that whenever they use Filipino especially deep, old-fashioned words their grandparents used they are reminded of how rich their heritage is. It's not just a way to communicate, it's a link to their ancestors, to the stories they told, and the way they saw the world. Speaking the language helps them honor where they came from. The Filipino language encapsulates ancient proverbs, folk tales, and traditions that connect individuals to their heritage.

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Question No. 2. In what ways does speaking Filipino connect you to your culture and identity as a Filipino?

2.1 Preserving Cultural Traditions

Ten (10) respondents expressed that when they speak Filipino, they feel like they are holding onto the traditions their grandparents taught them. It's more than just a language, it's a way to keep their customs alive and pass them on to the next generation. Additionally, they mentioned that their lola used to tell them folk stories and old sayings in Filipino, and they still remember them vividly. Now, when they use those same words or expressions with their nieces and nephews, they feel like they are continuing a legacy. Speaking Filipino keeps those stories, lessons, and values alive. This sentiment echoes the idea that the Filipino language serves as a vessel for preserving cultural narratives, stories, and customs, safeguarding the nation's historical narratives and collective memory.

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2.2 Expressing Untranslatable Emotions

Ten (10) respondents expressed that there are feelings they can't express in English. Words like 'kilig' or 'gigil' capture emotions that are uniquely Filipino. Speaking Filipino allows them to convey these feelings authentically. Additionally, they mentioned that sometimes when they try to explain how they feel in English, it just doesn't hit the same. But when they say something in Filipino like 'nakakatampo' or 'nakakapanlumo' it captures exactly what they mean. Their language has this emotional depth that reflects how they really experience life as Filipinos. The Filipino language

encompasses expressions that convey emotions and concepts without direct translations, reflecting the rich cultural nuances of the Philippines.

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2.3 Celebrating Filipino Identity

Five (5) respondents mentioned that speaking Filipino make them proud of who they are. It's a reminder that their language is a symbol of their identity and unity. Additionally, they mentioned that whenever they hear the Filipino language being spoken especially in formal events or even in songs they feel a strong sense of national pride. It reminds them that they have their own voice, their own way of seeing the world. Using Filipino isn't just about communication it's about standing tall in their identity as a people. The Filipino language is a cornerstone of national identity, promoting unity and a sense of belonging among Filipinos.

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Question No. 3. How do you feel when others use or promote the Filipino language in media, schools, or public spaces?

3.1 Pride and Validation

Ten (10) respondents expressed that it makes them proud when they hear Filipino used in films, news, or even commercials. It reminds them that their language is just as powerful and expressive as English. It feels like their culture is being recognized and valued. Additionally, they mentioned that whenever they watch a well-made Filipino movie or hear a powerful speech in Filipino, they feel a deep sense of pride. It proves that their language can be used not only in casual settings but also in intellectual, artistic, and emotional ways. It shows the world and their selves that Filipino is rich, beautiful, and capable of expressing complex ideas. This reflects how public use of Filipino in meaningful contexts helps elevate its status, affirming its value not just as a native tongue, but as a medium of art, intellect, and national identity.

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"It shows the world and ourselves that Filipino is rich, beautiful, and capable of expressing complex ideas."

3.2 Cultural Preservation

Ten (10) respondents expressed that it's refreshing to hear Filipino in media, especially when they use deep or poetic words. It keeps their language alive. Kids today are growing up speaking more

English, so seeing Filipino promoted helps balance things. Additionally, they mentioned that they get excited when they hear classic or old Filipino words used in songs, podcasts, or dramas. It reminds them of the richness of their language words they don't often use anymore but carry so much meaning. It's a good way to show younger people that Filipino isn't outdated or boring it's actually deep, expressive, and beautiful. This emphasizes how using poetic or traditional Filipino words in media helps reconnect younger generations with the language, showing its emotional depth and cultural importance in a modern context.

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3.3 Sense of Belonging

Five (5) respondents expressed that when they see Filipino used in schools or government signs, they feel more included. It shows that their own language is important and not just something used at home. It helps unify people from different regions too. Additionally, they mentioned that Seeing Filipino used in official documents or announcements makes them feel seen. It's like the government is speaking directly to them, not just to the educated or English-speaking crowd. It makes things feel more accessible, and it reminds them that Filipino is for everyone not just something for casual conversations. This response highlights how the public use of Filipino can foster inclusivity, accessibility, and national unity. It reinforces that Filipino isn't just a "home language," but a language that belongs in official and formal spaces too.

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Research Objectives 2. To examine the factors that influence the continued use and preservation of the Filipino language among various social groups in the Philippines.

Question No. 1. What do you think encourages people in your community to keep using the Filipino language?

1.1 Cultural Connection

Ten (10) respondents expressed that they think people keep using Filipino because it connects them to their culture and roots. It's the language of their stories, their jokes, and their everyday life. It just feels natural and familiar. Additionally, they mentioned that Filipino is the language they grew up hearing whether it's in bedtime stories, family conversations, or even street jokes. It's tied to so many memories and experiences. Using it reminds them of who they are and where they come from, which is why people naturally continue to speak it. This response emphasizes how deeply ingrained the Filipino language is in daily life and emotional memory. It reflects how the language becomes second nature because it's linked to family, community, and the small but meaningful moments that shape identity.

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1.2 Sense of Belonging

Five (5) respondents expressed that using Filipino helps people feel like they belong. Whether you're talking to neighbors, vendors, or co-workers, speaking Filipino makes things more personal and relatable. Additionally, they mentioned that speaking Filipino breaks down barriers. When you talk to someone in Filipino, especially in public places or work, it immediately builds a sense of trust and connection. It makes people feel at ease, like you're part of the same community, regardless of your background. This response emphasizes how Filipino acts as a unifying tool helping people connect across social, economic, or regional differences by creating a shared, familiar space in everyday interactions.

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"Speaking Filipino breaks down barriers. When you talk to someone in Filipino, especially in public places or work, it immediately builds a sense of trust and connection."

1.3 Daily Use and Practicality

Ten (10) respondents expressed that honestly, most people just find it easier. It's what they use at home, in the market, even in school when they're not in class. It's more convenient and expressive than trying to speak in English all the time. Additionally, they mentioned that Filipino just flows more naturally in everyday conversations. Whether you're buying food, asking for directions, or joking around with friends, it feels more real. English can feel stiff or formal sometimes, but Filipino lets you express yourself the way people actually talk. This highlights how Filipino remains the preferred language for daily interaction because of its accessibility, emotional range, and ability to capture the informal, spontaneous nature of real-life communication.

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Question No. 2. Are there situations where you or others choose to speak in another language instead of Filipino? Why?

2.1 Professional and Academic Settings

Ten (10) respondents expressed that in school or at work, especially in formal settings, they often switch to English. It's expected in presentations, reports, or interviews. Sometimes, it just sounds more professional, even if they're more comfortable in Filipino. Additionally, they mentioned that in meetings or class recitations, they usually speak in English because it's what the environment calls for. Even if they think in Filipino first, they translate it in their head. It's not that they don't want to use Filipino it's just that English feels like the 'default' when you want to be taken seriously. This highlights the social pressure and institutional norms that often push people to use English in academic or professional settings, even when Filipino might feel more natural. It also touches on the internal conflict between comfort and conformity.

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"In meetings or class recitations, I usually speak in English because it's what the environment calls for. Even if I think in Filipino first, I translate it in my head."

2.2 To Be Inclusive

Five (5) respondents expressed that sometimes they speak English when they are with friends from other regions who don't speak Filipino fluently. Especially in college, where some classmates are more comfortable in Bisaya or Ilocano English becomes the common ground. Additionally, they mentioned back in college, they had dormmates from different provinces some spoke Waray, others Ilocano or Hiligaynon. They all had different mother tongues, so they'd often use English to make sure everyone understood. It wasn't about rejecting Filipino, it was just the easiest way to communicate equally. This response shows how language choice can be a matter of inclusivity and practicality in multilingual settings, especially among students from diverse linguistic backgrounds.

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2.3 Influence of Media and Upbringing

Ten (10) respondents expressed that some kids they know grew up watching mostly English shows and were raised in homes that prioritized English. So even in casual talk, they default to English. It's more about exposure than preference. Additionally, they mentioned that their younger cousins speak mostly in English, even when talking to fellow Filipinos. It's not that they don't understand Filipino they do but their go-to expressions and humor are all from English shows or social media. They think it's what they've been surrounded by, so it just became their default. This response emphasizes that language habits, especially among younger generations, are often shaped by media consumption and family environment. It's not always about rejecting Filipino, but about what feels most natural based on daily exposure.

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Question No. 3. What role do schools, media, or government play in helping preserve the Filipino language?

3.1 Schools as the Foundation

Ten (10) respondents expressed that schools play a big role because that's where kids really start learning the formal rules of Filipino not just how to speak it, but how to write and understand it deeply. If schools continue to treat Filipino as important as English, kids will grow up valuing it more. Additionally, they mentioned that in school, they didn't just learn how to speak Filipino they studied poems, essays, and history written in their own language. That helped them see Filipino as more than just a casual language. If schools keep promoting that kind of depth, students will learn to respect and appreciate it just like any global language. This response emphasizes how exposure to Filipino literature and academic content in school helps deepen students' understanding of the language's richness, encouraging them to view it as a meaningful part of both education and identity.

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3.2 Media Shapes Everyday Use

Ten (10) respondents shared that media has a huge influence. When people see Filipino used in mainstream films, news, or music especially by popular artists or influencers it makes the language feel relevant and cool. It's not just something for the classroom anymore. Additionally, they mentioned that when they see artists rapping in Filipino or vloggers using it naturally in their content, it really changes how people view the language. It shows that Filipino can be fun, expressive, and modern not just formal or traditional. Media helps normalize it in everyday settings, especially for younger generations. This highlights how modern media and digital creators play a powerful role in making the Filipino language feel current, relatable, and integrated into pop culture helping preserve it by keeping it visible and engaging.

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3.3 Government Sets the Tone

Five (5) respondents mentioned that the government can lead by example. If they consistently use Filipino in public speeches, documents, and campaigns, it sends a message that it's a language of leadership, not just daily life. Additionally, they mentioned that when government officials speak in Filipino during important events or issue statements in our language, it makes people feel more connected and respected. It shows that Filipino isn't just for casual conversation it's a language that can carry serious, national-level messages too. This response highlights how consistent use of Filipino by government leaders reinforces its legitimacy as a language of authority and unity, helping raise its status in the eyes of the public.

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"When government officials speak in Filipino during important events or issue statements in our language, it makes people feel more connected and respected."

Research Objectives 1. To explore the perceptions and attitudes of the Filipino masses toward the Filipino language in their daily lives and cultural identity.

Our findings strongly corroborate the notion that Filipino functions as a vital cultural anchor and a primary medium for emotional expression. Participants consistently highlighted the language's role in strengthening family bonds and preserving cultural identity. This aligns with Fishman's (2020) perspective on language as a primary vessel of cultural transmission and Bauman and Briggs (2021) observation that individuals attach emotional significance to their mother tongue, as it shapes self-perception and mediates social interaction. The ability to express "untranslatable emotions" like 'kilig' or 'gigil' further underscores the language's deep cultural embeddedness, a nuance that English often fails to capture. This emotional depth reflects how Filipinos experience life, reinforcing the idea that language is not merely a communication tool but a repository of collective history and values.

Furthermore, the study confirms Filipino's role as a unifying bridge across linguistic diversity, particularly in regions like Davao where various dialects coexist. Respondents emphasized its function as a "common ground" for individuals from different linguistic backgrounds. This supports Alburo (2021) assertion that national languages in multilingual nations serve as unifying tools, especially in the face of globalization. The practice of using Filipino to foster inclusivity with friends from other regions who may not be fluent in other local dialects also reinforces this unifying aspect. The public promotion of Filipino in media, schools, or public spaces evokes a sense of pride and validation, affirming its value as a medium for art, intellect, and national identity.

Research Objectives 2. To examine the factors that influence the continued use and preservation of the Filipino language among various social groups in the Philippines.

Despite Filipino's strong cultural and unifying roles, the study's results echo the persistent challenge of English dominance in formal settings, reflecting its perceived prestige as linguistic capital. Participants frequently reported code-switching to English in professional and academic environments, viewing it as more "professional" or as the "default" when aiming to be taken seriously. This finding aligns with previous research highlighting English's dominance in higher education, government communication, and professional domains and the perception of Filipino as informal or secondary in these contexts. The internal conflict between comfort in Filipino and the perceived need to conform to English in formal settings directly reflects the linguistic inequality discussed by Tupas (2015) and David et al. (2023).

The influence of media and upbringing also emerged as significant factors in language preference, particularly among younger generations. This corroborates Salazar (2018) observation that younger generations in metropolitan areas increasingly prefer English in academic and digital communication, potentially weakening intergenerational transmission of Filipino. The default to English due to exposure rather than outright preference underscores the challenges outlined by UNESCO (2021) regarding languages lacking active use in digital spaces.

The study strongly emphasizes the pivotal roles of educational institutions, media, and government in shaping language vitality. Participants viewed schools as foundational for learning the formal rules and depth of Filipino, suggesting that consistent valuation of Filipino on par with English is crucial for its long-term preservation. This aligns with the intent behind the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) policy, although Nolasco (2020) note inconsistencies in its application. The difficulties in teaching Filipino to English-dominant students, as highlighted by Magno et al. (2024), and the perception of Filipino as less practical by Gen Z students, as noted by

Lamorinas et al. (2025), underscore the need for effective pedagogical approaches that showcase the language's richness and relevance.

Media, both traditional and digital, were recognized as having a "huge influence" in making Filipino feel "relevant and cool". The role of popular artists and influencers in normalizing Filipino in mainstream content directly supports de la Cruz and Manlapig's (2025) findings on how local entertainment and social media contribute to its use among younger audiences. This highlights a contemporary avenue for language preservation, leveraging popular culture to maintain its visibility and appeal. Finally, the government's role in setting the tone through consistent use of Filipino in public speeches, documents, and campaigns was deemed crucial for reinforcing its legitimacy as a language of leadership and national importance. This aligns with Ethnolinguistic Vitality Theory, where official recognition and institutional support are key determinants of a language's survival.

In sum, while the Filipino language remains deeply intertwined with cultural identity and serves as a vital tool for unity and emotional expression, its continued vitality is challenged by the pervasive influence of English in formal domains and contemporary media consumption. The findings underscore the critical need for integrated, multi-sectoral strategies involving families, educational institutions, media, and government to ensure Filipino not only survives but thrives as a dynamic and relevant language for future generations.

CONCLUSION

This study highlighted the enduring cultural significance of the Filipino language as both a medium of communication and a vessel of national identity. Findings revealed that for many Filipinos, speaking the language fosters a deep sense of belonging and pride, while also serving as a link to history, values, and shared experiences. However, despite its symbolic importance, the Filipino language faces challenges from the increasing prestige of English, particularly in professional and academic domains, as well as from shifting generational preferences and the dominance of English-language media.

The results emphasize that preservation of the Filipino language requires intentional, multi-sectoral action. Families must actively transmit Filipino to younger generations, schools must embed it in diverse subject areas beyond language classes, media organizations should produce high-quality Filipino-language content that competes with global English material, and policymakers must ensure substantive—not just symbolic—implementation of language policies.

Grounded in Fishman's theory of Reversing Language Shift, this study affirms that the vitality of Filipino depends not only on legislation or sentiment, but on its daily use in homes, communities, institutions, and the public sphere. By strengthening both the emotional and functional domains of Filipino, the nation can ensure that the language not only survives but thrives for future generations.

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