
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Por Que Es Importante Español: Narratives on the Value of Spanish Foreign Language to the Cebuano Learners, Their Native Language, And Culture

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| ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the importance of the Spanish language to Cebuanos. It reveals that Spanish is significant to the Cebuano learners, their native language, and their culture. Using the reflexive thematic analysis, the researcher analyzed the gathered data, which was collected through one-on-one interviews with the participants via google meet. Results show that participants garnered skills and an edge over others in studying a foreign language. It also shows that it enriches the native language by studying a foreign language. Participants appreciate the Cebuano language even more. It also shows participants understand other cultures and the cultural influence of the Cebuano language by studying Spanish. Learning Spanish could have an impact on the lives of the Cebuanos.

| KEYWORDS

Spanish language, importance, Cebuano language, Cebuano learners, Cebuano culture

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

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1. Introduction

The medium of communication is language. It allows us to express our emotions and thoughts and to share opinions with others (Johnson, 2009). With more than eight major languages spoken and a complex language policy influenced by its colonialism, the Philippines is a varied cultural environment (Abastillas, 2015). One of which is the Spanish language which remains in modern Filipino society with more than 300 years of occupation in the country (Vibar & Lacuata, 2013). Cebuano language contains many words of Spanish origin (Ager, 2011). However, according to Vibar & Lacuata (2013), Spanish is a rare language and not even a "thing" for Filipinos. This study aims to reveal the importance of Spanish Foreign Language to the Cebuano learners, language, and culture and why it is incorporated into our educational curriculum.

The Philippines, one of the world's most linguistically diverse countries with 170 languages, has a surprising history despite the rise of English as a second language of choice (Gulf News, 2018). Cebuano is an under-explored Austronesian language (Tanangkingsing, 2009). According to Ybanez et al. (2014), Spanish and Arab languages greatly influenced Cebuano. Cebuano, commonly known as Binisaya (or Visayan in English), is a language spoken mostly in the Central Visayas region of the Philippines. It is spoken as a first language in Central Visayas, Eastern Visayas, and Mindanao (Endriga, 2010). Within the Bisayan subgroup, it is the most extensively used language. Despite not being formally taught in schools, it possesses the Philippines' largest native language-speaking population.

On November 6, 2008, former Philippine Education Secretary Jesil Lapus said Spanish would return to the state education system. Spanish was one of three official languages up until the 1987 ratification of the current Constitution, along with English and Filipino. One national language, Filipino (based on Tagalog), two official languages, English and Filipino, regional dialects as auxiliary languages, and ties between the two for voluntary promotion, Spanish and Arabic, are all established under this

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Constitution. Maxilom (2008) noted ten percent of Filipinos speak Spanish due to the long colonization that affected the the Philippines' culture and language.

In the Philippines, English holds power in the country's educational, economic, and national development (Coleman, 2010). And because English is the language of prestige in the country, many Filipino children are taught English as their mother tongue. As a result, the propensity of many Filipinos to communicate well in English convinced other countries to invest here in the Philippines (Cabrera, 2015), resulting in job opportunities for countless Filipinos.

However, according to Coleman (2020), English holds power in the educational, economic, and national development of the Philippines. In fact, because of this, many Filipino children are taught English as their mother tongue. Many countries were convinced to invest in the country because most Filipinos can communicate well in English (Cabrera, 2015). The first language a person learns is their mother tongue. It is a person's first language (Olowookere, 1991). Real et al. (2014) revealed that learners and teachers view English as an important language.

One of the assets that every Filipino could be proud of is their language versatility (MP, 2019). Many pieces of literature are already discussing their opinions on how the Spanish language is important (Vibar & Lacuata, 2013; Rodriguez- Ponga, 2009). However, there is no study yet on the narratives of the Cebuano learners who had Spanish classes and how it affected them professionally. According to scholar Francois Grin, the benefits of multilingualism have four main categories: private market and non-market value and social market and non-market value.

With this, the researcher would like to study this gap of knowledge about the multilingualism of Filipinos, particularly Cebuano learners, and how it affects the culture and native language.

2. Objectives of the study

This study aims to investigate the importance of the Spanish foreign language to Cebuano learners and how it could enrich the Cebuano native language and the Cebuano culture as a whole.

Further, the study answers the following questions:

- Why is studying Spanish foreign language important to Cebuano learners?
- What are the contributions of studying Spanish foreign language to our rich Cebuano language, learners, and culture?
- How could studying Spanish foreign language affect the personal growth of Cebuano learners?

3. Review of Related Literature

Multilingualism is a gateway to a significant increase in pay and wider job opportunities. Filipinos are also noted to study Spanish to keep their minds active and be better able to study history (Vibar & Lacuata, 2013).

It is crucial to note that no one ever attempted to replace the native Philippine tongues with Spanish. The Filipinos never stopped using their native tongues. Despite being an official language in the Philippines from 1565 to 1987, Spanish never threatened the country's linguistic diversity. Instead, it increased its breadth through both its presence and the emergence of Creole languages collectively referred to as Chavacano.

Because Spanish has been stigmatized as archaic, colonial, pointless, challenging, or elite, so it has been losing ground for decades. The transition that is currently occurring is very significant: Spanish is beginning to be recognized as a practical, global, and open language. Today, a lot of Filipinos lament not learning it sooner and better.

To improve trade links with Latin America and Spain, international development consultants advise the government to encourage Filipinos to study Spanish, much like Japanese or Koreans (and the EU). As a result, they have informed the National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA) that development includes Spanish. They also advised Zamboanga's mayor to emphasize Hispanic aspects because research shows that more culturally authentic cities tend to be more prosperous. Today, Asia's Latin City is another name for Zamboanga, often known as "the Pride of Mindanao."

At-home bilingualism is feasible, but trilingualism is far more challenging. There are many languages, and everyone speaks several of them (Rodriguez- Ponga, 2009). After their mother tongue, Filipino, and English, Spanish would be the fourth language spoken by three-quarters of the population in the Philippines. In light of the Philippines' extremely diversified linguistic landscape, the position for Spanish is thus quite challenging.

Several universities offer Spanish classes to Filipino students. atthe atthe The state-run University of the Philippines offers a wide range of degrees, including a Bachelor of Arts in Spanish, a Master of Arts in Spanish: Language, Literature, Rizal Studies,

Translation, and a Doctor of Philosophy (Hispanic Literature; Spanish American Literature; Spanish Filipino Literature; Peninsular Literature). It is offered within the Department of Language and Literature in University of San Carlos, Cebu, undergraduate and graduate studies of Bachelor of Arts in Communication and Mass Communication in Cebu Normal University and University of San Jose-Recoletos, Department of Modern Languages in Ateneo de Manila University.

Spanish is still very helpful in various degree programs, including history and law, not to mention comprehending the original Philippine papers. Since Spanish is the second language in the US and will, therefore, improve their work prospects, medicine and nursing students are now studying the language to increase their chances of being able to immigrate there. Call center employees that can provide bilingual services earn significantly higher compensation. The Philippines is the perfect location to bridge the gap created by time zones because of its location halfway between Europe and America. Caregivers (of youngsters or the elderly) who immigrated to Spain have discovered that learning the language has given them new opportunities.

For these reasons, the National Language Skills Institute (LSI), which provides Spanish training specifically aimed at getting work permits, was established by the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA). As a result, with 400 million speakers and as the second language in the US, Spanish is increasingly regarded as a means of communication. It has evolved into a pathway to new opportunities and a means of moving up the corporate ladder.

3. Methodology

This research study used a qualitative research design using a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology is a research method that studies the lived experiences of people to understand and discover a certain phenomenon or thing in our society. According to Van Manen (1990), the phenomenological study provides perceptions of reality and should not develop a theory.

The researcher used face-to-face interviews using online platforms such as zoom meetings or google meet for data collection. The interview is recorded so it is easy to write the transcript of the data. The researcher identified six participants using triangulation. The participants are composed of two Cebuano professionals who took up Spanish language in their undergraduate studies, two Cebuano professionals who took up Spanish language in their master's studies, and two Cebuano professionals who took up Spanish language in their doctoral studies.

The study used reflexive thematic analysis as a method of data analysis in descriptive phenomenological research. It enabled new ideas to be revealed and provided insights into the participants' personal experiences and thoughts about a certain phenomenon. This method ensures the credibility and reliability of the results in a clear, detailed, and logical process of analyzing and forming the results. It also identifies patterns of meaning across a dataset that provide an answer to the research question being addressed. Patterns are identified through a rigorous process of data familiarization, data coding, and theme development and revision.

One of the advantages of reflexive thematic analysis is theoretically flexible. This statement can be used within different frameworks to answer research questions (Clarke, V., Braun, V., Terry, G & Hayfield, N., 2019).

According to the University of Auckland, there are six phases in doing reflexive thematic analysis, and these are the following:

1. **Familiarization with the data.** Reading the information repeatedly will help you become thoroughly acquainted with it throughout this period.
2. **Coding.** It entails coding the full dataset and gathering all the codes and pertinent data extracts for further analysis. During this stage, it is necessary to create brief labels (codes!) highlighting significant aspects of the data that might be pertinent to addressing the research issue.
3. **Generating initial themes.** In this stage, the codes and collected data are examined to find significant, more general patterns of meaning (potential themes). It then entails gathering information pertinent to each prospective theme so that you may use the information to analyze each candidate theme's potential.
4. **Reviewing themes.** In this stage, the dataset is compared to the potential themes to see if they accurately represent the data and provide a solution to the research question. Themes are frequently split, mixed, or eliminated during this phase, when they are refined. Our TA approach describes themes as a pattern of shared meaning supported by a primary notion or idea.
5. **Defining and naming themes.** This phase entails thoroughly examining each subject, figuring out its scope and concentration, and figuring out its individual "narrative." Additionally, each subject must have a descriptive name chosen.
6. **Writing up.** In this final stage, the analytical narrative and data extracts are combined, and the analysis is contextualized in light of the body of literature already in existence.

4. Results and Discussions

The researcher determined four (4) emergent themes in ten (10) themes in this study. Six (6) themes discussed the contribution of the Spanish language to the Cebuano learners based on the participants' experiences. Three themes (3) deliberated the importance of studying the Spanish language to the Cebuano native language. And lastly, only one (1) theme emerged that conferred the role of the Spanish language to the Cebuano culture.

The following are the themes, to wit:

I. Cebuano Learners: Added Skills and Knowledge

1. Added Skill;
2. Improve Socially;
3. Self- Fulfillment;
4. Understand the Words;
5. Edge to Others.

II. Cebuano Language: Enrichment of the Language

1. Deeper Understanding of Words;
2. Appreciation of Language;
3. Preservation of Language.

III. Cebuano Culture: Understand Historical Influences

I. Cebuano Learners: Added Skills and Knowledge. The following themes of this emergent theme are the following:

1. Added Skill. The participants noted that learning the Spanish language is an added skill for them. Participant 6 emphasized that she uses her Spanish language skills in her work as a teacher. She further explained that it made her teaching experience in Araling Panlipunan *"more relatable and interesting."*

"I can use /construct a few sentences as an example when we study Spanish period in Araling Panlipunan for Grade 5" (Participant 6)

"Some words learned in the class are up for practical usage." (Participant 6)

Moreover, the participants agreed that learning cultures such as Spanish improved their ability to integrate into society.

". . .knowing and be able to speak Spanish helps me being flexible in life. ." (Participant 1)

"I would delight myself if I encounter materials in Spanish and being able to understand them." (Participant 3)

And although it is not fully applied to most of their work, the participants are positive that they could use this skill in their future endeavors.

"Unless my job requires that I use Spanish on a regular basis, that's only when I can say that Spanish will have an impact on my career. For now, it is more of an added skill." (Participant 3)

"Not at this moment, but happy to apply Spanish soon." (Participant 4)

According to the pieces of literature, Filipinos study the foreign language to understand the original Philippine documents (Rodriguez- Ponga, 2009). Filipinos are also noted to study Spanish to keep their minds active and be better able to study history (Vibar & Lacuata, 2013).

2. Improve Socially. For the participants, learning the Spanish language can improve their social skills, especially in speaking with foreigners. According to the 2018 annual report of Instituto Cervantes, a Spanish Language Institute, Spanish is considered the world's second most widely spoken language.

"It helps me communicate well and understand the person in my life right now." (Participant 1)

"Spanish is a romantic language. Sounds cool, and it connects you with the Spanish people" (Participant 4)

3. Self-Fulfillment. The participants revealed that learning the Spanish language could bring them happiness and satisfaction.

"I am honestly thankful that I study Spanish and be able to speak." (Participant 1)

"It made me try something new and difficult but at the same time interesting and fun to learn." (Participant 2)

Meanwhile, Participant 5 felt "prouder" of himself as it is an investment in molding himself and working abroad.

"I am thankful that I could have the opportunity to work abroad, particularly in Spanish-speaking countries, but I opted not to go. I encountered other Filipinos who speak the Spanish language as part of their job, and I was able to interact with them." (Participant 5)

"You become prouder of yourself. . ." (Participant 5)

4. Understand the Words. Of course, learning Spanish is also learning to understand the etymology of the words and could gain you more vocabulary. Participants attested to this learning process.

"For now, no. It just adds to my general knowledge by providing a glimpse of the etymology of some Cebuano and Filipino words." (Participant 3)

". . .new vocabularies, etymology of words. . ." (Participant 2)

"It contributed to my general knowledge by allowing me to understand a particular word and how it is used in context." (Participant 3)

Moreover, some participants made them feel cautious about the proper pronunciation and intonation of the words. Learning the language also gave them cautiousness about the duality of Cebuano and Spanish words.

"It contributed to my general knowledge by allowing me to understand a particular word and how it is used in context." (Participant 3)

"Yes. Saying words with the correct intonation." (Participant 6)

5. Edge to Others. Learning a foreign language could garner knowledge that could give me an edge over others. Understanding Spanish words, the other culture, and our native language are some of the perks that the participants enjoy after learning Spanish.

"I can speak and understand a little about the language which some people can't." (Participant 5)

"It gives me an edge over other people. Sometimes, they envy me because I got to study Spanish." (Participant 5)

"Better understanding of cultures in different Spanish-speaking countries" (Participant 4)

"Yes. Because most of the words are used in our daily communication with others." (Participant 6)

However, the most notable advantage has more career opportunities. Participant 5 attested to this claim.

"Spanish language gives me the edge over other people when it comes to career opportunities and to the language itself" (Participant 5)

Other pieces of literature also supported this great benefit. Rodriguez- Ponga (2009) noted that better employment opportunities would be enjoyed for those graduates who know how to speak Spanish. The study also gives an example that call centers could gain a lot higher salaries if offered a bilingual service or learn other foreign languages besides English.

6. Adoptive. As learners, participants attested that they were being adopted and could easily understand Spanish words because some of the words from their native language has incorporated into it. Cebuanos are fast learners of the foreign language because it became a "base language" of the Cebuano native language.

"The Cebuano language has incorporated a lot of Spanish words, so it's very easy for me to understand." (Participant 1)

"Spanish became a base language for some words in Cebuano and Filipino." (Participant 3)

"The value of being resilient and adaptive." (Participant 6)

II. Cebuano Language: Enrichment of the Language. Results show that participants noted that learning Spanish could enrich the Cebuano native language. These are the following themes in this emergent theme:

1. Deep understanding of words. Participants revealed that learning Spanish could foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of Cebuano words.

"It fostered a deeper understanding and appreciation of the etymology of some words Cebuano words." (Participant 3)

"Most of the Visayan words are derived from Spanish words. It's acquired and used (knowingly and unknowingly)" (Participant 2)

"I get to understand and know the etymology of different Cebuano words borrowed/adopted from Spanish" (Participant 4)

"Yes, by learning Spanish, you become aware of how specific words, which Cebuanos are still using nowadays, is being pronounced in Spanish." (Participant 5)

2. Appreciation of Language. Participants appreciate their native Cebuano language by studying the Spanish language.

"It made me more appreciative of the beauty of my language. Appreciating the beauty of my language through studying another" (Participant 2)

"To better appreciate the current language and culture, we should try to study other languages, particularly Spanish. The study of a language allows us to appreciate the current language better." (Participant 3)

3. Preservation of Language. Participants 4 and 5 noted that learning the Spanish preserved the culture of the Filipinos as it greatly impacted the adoption of the language.

"To preserve the language as part of our culture and for a brighter career in the future. Yes. Spanish language, like English, shaped our culture as Filipinos. This scenario is evident with the Spanish words we use up until now." (Participant 5)

"Spanish has made a great impact in the Filipino culture as the Filipinos adopted its culture, language, etc. as well." (Participant 4)

III. Cebuano Culture: Understand Historical Influences. The Spanish language helps the learner understand the historical influences of their culture and other cultures. Participants noted that it gave them opportunities to know the culture that was greatly influenced by Spanish colonization.

". . . help us understand the historical influences that still affect the culture today." (Participant 1)

"opportunities to know the culture of the person and create a lifelong friendship." (Participant 1)

". . .to understand its relation and influence on my language. . ." (Participant 2)

"To understand other cultures, particularly the Philippines, was greatly influenced under Spanish colonization." (Participant 6)

"It provides a glimpse of how of other cultures, specifically how particular Spanish is with gender and verb conjugations." (Participant 3)

5. Conclusion

The Spanish language contributes to the growth of every Cebuano learner, their native language, and their culture. Cebuano professionals gained some knowledge and skills they could use to their advantage in future endeavors. Learning the language could also make the learners appreciate their native language even more by knowing where the other words came from. The appreciation of their culture also opens opportunities to appreciate others. And lastly, learning Spanish could also help them understand the historical influences of their culture. Learning the Spanish language is not just a compliance for their degree program but a learning that every Cebuano learner could treasure.

The researcher would like to recommend more research on the Spanish language. This study also recommends that every degree program have foreign languages in their curriculum for advancement, perks, and skills they could garner in this class. It may not directly impact the Cebuano learners, but surely made an impact in their lives that gave them an edge over others in their future endeavors.

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