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INTERGENERATIONAL LANGUAGE PREFERENCE SHIFT AMONG CEBUANOS ON THE CEBUANO, FILIPINO, AND ENGLISH LANGUAGES

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Abstract
The historical linguistic conflict of the Cebuano people against the Tagalog-based Philippine national language has been evident in the literature written by Cebuano academics. However, there is no published empirical evidence that presents the on-ground language attitudes of the Cebuanos on the Cebuano, Filipino, and English languages. Employing mixed methods research, the researchers found that both generations predominantly use the Cebuano language for everyday communication. A significant difference was observed in the use of Filipino and English languages as the younger generation spoke it more than the elder counterparts. A language shift was also seen from Cebuano to English on the language used formal communication between the generations. Attitudes on everyday communication revealed that Cebuanos prefer to maintain their mother tongue as the language to be used in speaking with family, friends, relatives, and close people seeing that the younger generation has limited vocabulary on the Cebuano language. Respondents mostly favored English to be the language used for formal communication due to its stature as an international language and its association to high socioeconomic standing. A collective majority from both generations would also like to maintain Tagalog-based Filipino to be the Philippine national language.

Keywords: language use; language attitudes; Cebuano; Filipino; English

Introduction
The Philippines is a linguistically-diverse country with 183 individual languages that continued to be spoken by its population. Constitutionally, the country's official languages are Filipino and English, and the regional languages mandated as auxiliary languages in the regions they are spoken (Official Gazette, n.d.). Cebuano linguistic identity is embedded in Cebuano culture itself. The Cebuano language is spoken by 15,900,000 people in the Philippines, with most of the speakers living in the areas of Central Visayas, Southern Leyte, and Northern and Southern Mindanao (Eberhard, Simons & Fennig, 2019). In the census done by the Philippine Statistics Authority (2016), 9,125,637 people consider themselves as ethnically Cebuano, with the Cebuano language as their mother tongue.

Table 1. Ten Most Spoken Languages in the Philippines

Philippine Languages	Population of Speakers in the Philippines (Eberhard, Simons, & Fennig, 2019)
Tagalog	20,000,000
Cebuano	15,900,000
Ilocano	6,370,000
Hiligaynon	6,240,000
Bikol	3,799,900
Waray	2,610,000
Kapampangan	2,040,000
Pangasinan	1,240,000
Maguindanaon	1,100,000
Tausug	784,000

The Tagalog-Cebuano Conflict

The Cebuanos' historical conflict with the Filipino language emerged during the consultations that studied on what should be the basis for the national language in 1936. In the same year, the National Language Act was passed, and it established the Institute of National Language. Norberto Romualdez, a Visayan-Waray legislator, set the criteria for the languages studied for the basis of the proposed national language plan (Gonzalez, 1980). For him, the language that should be used as a basis for the national language should have rich and extensive literature, a large population of speakers, has a significant influence in its society, and a sound morphological structure. During the Institute's consultation with the influential Cebuanos, linguist, and Tagalog language commissioner Cecilio Lopez explained that the Tagalog language fit the criteria set by the National Language Act. Senator Filemon Sotto accepted the proposition with reservations and resigned from the Institute of the National Language later on for personal reasons. Adding the political influence of Manuel Luiz Quezon, a Tagalog of the Tayabas province, his preference Tagalog propelled the language as the primary basis of the national language (Gonzalez, 1991).

This conflict is political in nature as the Cebuanos marked in their history the decision of the Spanish colonial government to transfer the capital of the Spanish East Indies from Cebu to Manila in 1595. Cebu was initially designated as the colony's capital when the Spanish conquistadores first arrived in the territory of what we know now as the Philippines. Since then, Spanish friars utilized the use of Philippine local languages, and primarily Tagalog, in teaching the gospel of the Roman Catholic Church. Alburo (2011) said that Manila-centric policies implemented across the country have a hegemonic tune in the cultural aspect of Filipino society due to the so-called 'imposition' of the Tagalog language – the language of the capital city. Mojares (1990) earlier pointed out that the present existing power relations and struggles between Philippine languages affect its stature in Philippine society. He mentioned that,

> *Cebuano has historically been relegated to a position subordinate to Spanish, English, and Tagalog. The concentration of state power and media resources in a Tagalog-speaking primate region*

> *and the promotion of Tagalog as 'base' for the national language, or as the national language itself, have marginalized regional languages like Cebuano (1990: 79).*

As a language family, Visayan is composed of the Cebuano, Hiligaynon, Masbateño, Romblomanon, Surigaonon, Bul-anon (Boholanon), Waray, and other languages. Figure 1 shows the actual distribution of Cebuano speakers in the Philippines, as shown in black (dominant language) and dark grey (25%-49% of the population speak the language). Tagalog, meanwhile, has several dialects in the island of Luzon, but those are only variations of one single language. Visayans, in general, argue that there are more speakers of the Visayan 'language' compared to Tagalog. This argument was primarily heard by the primary author's Filipino professor when he studied at the University of San Carlos (USC), the primary center of Cebuano Studies in the country. This may be a valid argument if we consider the Visayan as a language family, according to its linguistic classification (Hammarström, Forkel, & Haspelmath, 2018). Furthermore, Cebuanos and their language had a relatively close connection, both linguistically and geographically, to areas in the Visayas and Mindanao compared to the Tagalogs. Cebuano's ecology may, intrinsically, made them have more speakers and influence in the early 20th century. Yet, at present, the institutionalization of the Tagalog-based national language and the reach of Manila-based media organizations contributed to the momentous influence of the Tagalog people in the Philippine public sphere. Fr. Joseph Baumgartner SVD (1989), then the administrator of USC, recorded the contemporary conflicts of the Cebuanos against the Tagalog-based national language during the Marcos regime. The Cebu provincial government and its council, spearheaded by Lito Osmeña, passed and implemented an ordinance prohibiting the use of Tagalog as a medium of instruction in the province's schools, and threatened the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Sports of backlash if they continued to use Tagalog.

Aurora Batnag (2015), in her capacity as the head of the National Committee on Language and Translation of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts, did a national consultation from 1995 to 1997 among educators, students, public servants, and other organizations on their opinions and points of view on the status of Filipino and their local languages. She found that among the six cities (Cebu, Davao, Bacolod, Tuguegarao, Puerto Princesa, and Zamboanga) she visited during the consultation, only Cebu and Bacolod expressed negative opinions about Filipino as the national language.

Espiritu (as cited by Tupas, 2014) mentioned that Cebuanos accept the Filipino language as a lingua franca, but not as the language that unites their culture to the Filipino identity. Godin (2008), meanwhile, criticized the so-called Filipinization of the local languages in the Philippines. According to him, since Visayan languages are treated as having 'no class,' speakers were not already able to learn the right grammatical structures of the said languages as students are mainly focused on studying the languages with 'class,' such as English and Filipino.

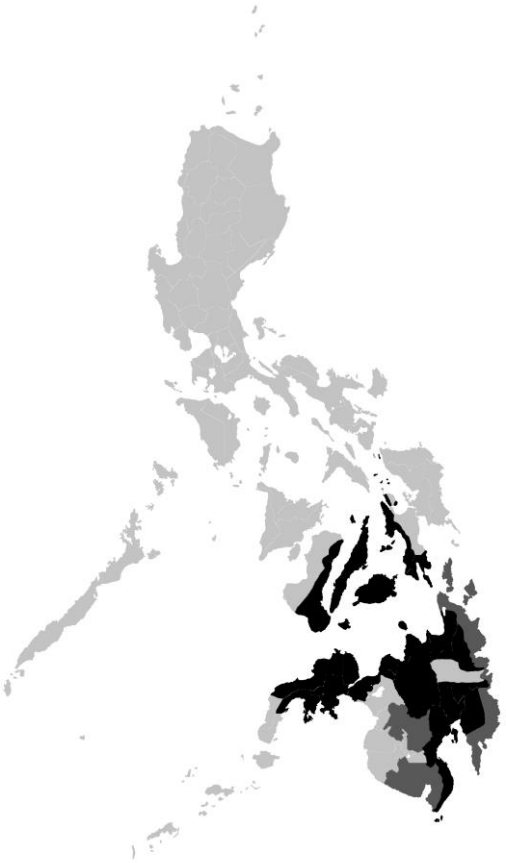


Figure 1: Distribution of Cebuano Speakers in Central and Southern Philippines (Adapted from Sunita, 2006)

English as an Official Language

The 1987 Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines declared Filipino and English as the official languages of the country. Gonzalez (1998) clarified that the linguistic situation of most of the Filipinos is multilingual in character. Philippine local languages are spoken at home and in the neighborhood. Filipino is seen as the national language that symbolizes the unity of the people. English is used as the medium of instruction, business, science, and diplomacy. Ninety years of direct contact within Philippine soil resulted in the emergence of a variety of English that is continued to be spoken by Filipinos in contemporary society. Gonzalez (as cited by Bresnahan, 1979) referred to this variety as Philippine English – a kind of English that is not "a victim of linguistic imperialism but a case of linguistic appropriation by convenience" (p. 70).

In a historical tracing of language policies and practices of the Philippines, Demeterio (2012) presented the consistent and unchanging use of the English language in the public sphere since it was first implemented by the American colonial government in the early 1900s. As such, English as the Philippines' official language already has a 120-year history. The chronological map of Philippine language planning (as shown in Figure 1) shows that English remained consistent in the language situation of the country, whereas Filipino (then referred

to as Tagalog and Pilipino) only became part of the system in the 1930s, and was part of the bilingual and multilingual language plans of the past and current governments. Bilingual language policies involve the use and teaching of both Filipino and English. Multilingual policies involved the use of regional languages as medium of instruction in the early years of education. Demeterio and Liwanag (2014) found that English is the preferred language for the following domains of the Philippine public sphere: national government, courts, military, education, entertainment, press/literature, local government, and business and offices. Regional languages are generally preferred secondary, and Filipino only tertiary.

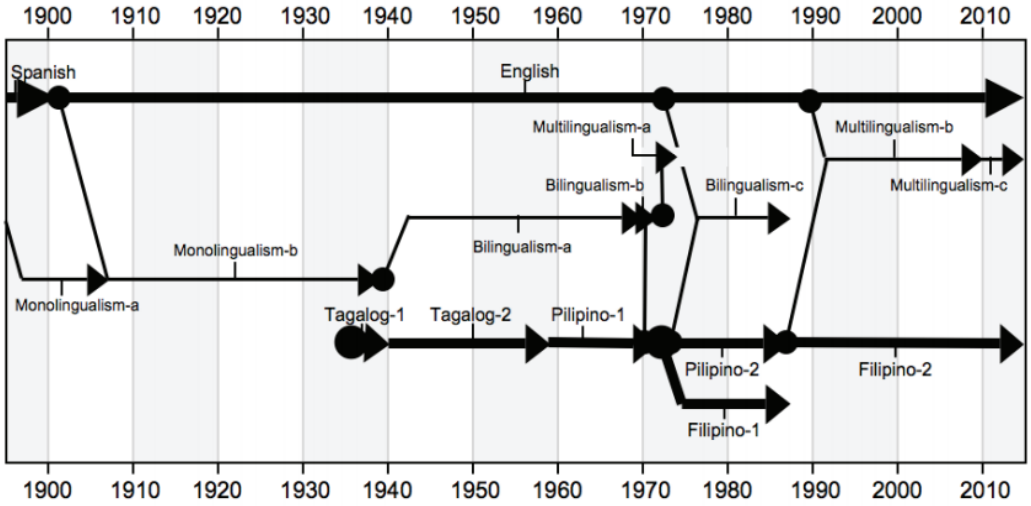


Figure 2. Chronological Map of Philippine Language Planning (Demeterio and Liwanag, 2014)

As of this writing, there is no published empirical study on the language use, attitudes, and preferences of Cebuanos in research journals. Ceniza (as cited by Abastillas, 2015) implicated that "Cebuanos might prefer English than Tagalog as a way to communicate to non-Cebuanos." The ability of Cebuanos to mimic standard American English and its accent made Cebu City a preferred location for English as a second language (ESL) learners from East Asia (Dagooc, 2018). It also made the city a hub for business process outsourcing (BPO) companies (Lorenciana, 2019), with more than 100,000 Cebuanos working in the industry (Pepito, 2017).

While there is a considerable number of literature that recently studied the situations of Filipino and English in Philippine society, there is a clear lack in the literature of the contemporary situation of the Cebuano language. The last analysis of the Cebuano language with regards to its interaction with the Filipino and English languages was done by Fr. Baumgartner in 1989. As such, this study is the latest comprehensive exploration of the language use, attitudes, and preferences of the Cebuano people.

Research Methods

Research Design

The researchers employed mixed methods research in gathering data and analyzing the language use, attitudes, and preferences of the Cebuano people on

the Cebuano, Filipino, and English languages. Qualitative (QUAL) and quantitative (QUAN) data gathering were done concurrently through a survey questionnaire and a focus group discussion (FGD) with the research instruments developed specifically for this study. As established by Hashemi (2012), the researchers also utilized a concurrent triangulation design in the parallel interpretation of the QUAL QUAN data results. This particular mixed research design is the most common method used in applied linguistics studies that applied mixed research methods in journals such as *Applied Linguistics, English for Specific Purposes, Language Learning, Language Testing, The Modern Language Journal, TESOL Quarterly, and Language Teaching Research* (Hashemi & Babaii, 2013). Riazi (2016) characterized a 'mixed research methodology' as an innovative approach that bridges "the cognitive and the social paradigms of applied linguistics research." Mixed methods research is relevant to this study as we are investigating both the psychological and social factors that affect the language use and attitudes of Cebuanos on the languages that are being tackled.

As this study targeted specific generational demographics, the researchers employed the stratified random sampling method in gathering data from respondents by asking their year of birth to identify if they qualify within the age range. Stratified random sampling ensured the researchers of obtaining the necessary number of respondents so that there will no underrepresentation from each generation (Elfil & Negida, 2017). The researchers gathered quantitative and qualitative data on June 15-16, 2018 in Cebu City, the Philippines.

Research Instruments

The survey questionnaire collected the respondents' demographic profile (age, gender, place of residence, number of years of residency, type of school attended, educational attainment, income bracket, and languages spoken). It was then followed with their fluency in the Cebuano, Filipino, and English languages, and their language uses. Fluency and situational language use were measured through a five-point Likert scale. A *t*-test was performed on the numerical data provided for the said variables to identify the generational differences. As this pilot study operated on a small scale, the survey questionnaire was developed by the researchers to contain straightforward variables that can be easily understandable to the respondents. The instrument initially developed were pilot tested to 20 Cebuanos from both generations X and Z to review the understandability of the questionnaire's items before proceeding to the actual data gathering. Following the review of a psychometrician, the researchers were able to validate its understandability and establish the statistical properties of the scale used for this study. The overall results of the test have the following interpretations: 4.50-above – Strongly Agree; 3.5-4.49 – Agree; 2.50-3.49 – Neutral; 1.50-2.49 – Disagree; and, 1.00-1.49 – Strongly Disagree. The third part of the instrument investigated their language attitudes on everyday and formal communication and on their choice for the Philippine national language by choosing among the languages studied for this research. To assess the nominal data provided by the latter part of the survey, the researchers ran a Chi-square test. The test technique allowed the researchers to discern whether the language

attitudes of the respondents accepted the following null and alternative hypotheses:

H_0: There are no generational differences on the language attitudes of the Cebuanos.

H_1: There are generational differences on the language attitudes of the Cebuanos.

The focus group discussion employed a 26-question structured interview that explored their language use and attitudes on the Cebuano, Filipino, and English languages. Their perspectives on the Philippine national language were also asked as the final question. The questions generated for the focus group followed the same pilot testing and validation procedure as the survey questionnaire. The interviews were digitally-recorded using the voice recorder application in the primary author's smartphone. The responses were analyzed using the *rapid identification of themes from audio recordings* (RITA) method, a relatively new process of qualitative analysis the verbal and nonverbal information that can only be scrutinized by hearing the actual discussions (Neal, Neal, VanDyke, & Kornbluh, 2015). This method expedites the identification of specific themes that are relevant to the investigation of the researchers on the language use and attitudes of the Cebuano respondents.

Table 2. Focus Group Discussion Interview Guide

Focus Group Discussion Interview Guide	
Topics	**Example Questions**
Perspectives on the Cebuano, Filipino, and English Languages	How often do you use the Cebuano/Filipino/English language when talking to family, relatives, and friends? Would you like to your community to continue speaking the Cebuano/Filipino/English language?
Perspectives on Language Use and Entertainment	How often do you read newspapers in the Cebuano/Filipino/English language? Do you listen to songs in the Cebuano/Filipino/English language?
Perspectives on Language Use and Education	Should the Cebuano/Filipino/English language be used as the medium of instruction in the primary level of education? Should the Cebuano/Filipino/English language be used as the medium of instruction in all levels of the Philippine education system? Should there be more teaching materials published in the Cebuano/Filipino/English language?
Perspectives on the Philippine National Language	What language should be considered as the Philippine national language?

Research Respondents

This study focused on the language use and attitudes of Cebuanos belonging to the Generations X and Z. Berkup (2014) defined Generation X as being born in the years 1965-1979. Meanwhile, those belonging to Generation Z were born in the years 1995 to 2012. To run this study ethically, the researchers only took data from the youth who were born in the years 1995 to 2000 as they were already of legal age.

Table 3. Demographic Profile of the Survey Respondents

	Birth Year (Age)	Frequency	Type of Educational Institution Attended	Frequency
X	1965 (53)	**3**	Public	**62**
	1966 (52)	**5**	Private	**38**
	1967 (51)	**3**	**Educational Attainment**	**Frequency**
	1968 (50)	**4**	Elementary	**2**
	1969 (49)	**6**	High School	**13**
	1970 (48)	**18**	College Undergraduate	**18**
	1971 (47)	**7**	College Graduate	**66**
	1972 (46)	**6**	Master's degree	**1**
	1973 (45)	**4**	**Income Bracket (in Philippine Pesos)**	**Frequency**
	1974 (44)	**6**	0 - 250,000	**70**
	1975 (43)	**5**	250,000 - 400,000	**21**
	1976 (42)	**8**	400,000 - 800,000	**7**
	1977 (41)	**12**	800,000 - 2,000,000	**2**
	1978 (40)	**8**	More than 2,000,000	**0**
	1979 (39)	**5**		
	Mean of Age	**45.37**	**Mean of Years of Residency in Cebu**	**36.48**
	Birth Year (Age)	**Frequency**	**Type of Educational Institution Attended**	**Frequency**
Z	1995 (23)	**24**	Public	**43**
	1996 (22)	**22**	Private	**57**
	1997 (21)	**19**	**Educational Attainment**	**Frequency**
	1998 (20)	**16**	College Undergraduate	**36**
	1999 (19)	**19**	College Graduate	**64**
	Mean of Age	**21.18**	**Income Bracket (in Philippine Pesos)**	**Frequency**
			0 - 250,000	**69**
			250,000 - 400,000	**19**
			400,000 - 800,000	**8**
			800,000 - 2,000,000	**2**
			More than 2,000,000	**2**
			Mean of Years of Residency in Cebu	**14.47**

The quantitative aspect of this study involved 100 respondents from each generation. Table 1 contains the demographic profile of the Cebuano participants. The mean age of the respondents belonging to Generation X is 45.37. The number of years of residence in the city had a mean of 36.48. Most of them took their studies in a public school and are college graduates. Seventy respondents are earning PHP 0 up to 250,000 annually, which is approximately equivalent to USD 4,800.

On the other hand, a majority of the respondents coming from Generation Z are college graduates as well. The mean of their ages is 21.18, with 14.47 years as the mean of the years of residency in the area. More than half (n = 57) of them have or are currently studying in private schools. Most of them also have the same income bracket as the elder generation.

All the respondents spoke the Cebuano language. This is seen as a given considering that the study was done in the heartland of Cebuano culture. English

was the language that the second-highest number of speakers. Filipino, the national language, was third. A small number of respondents spoke a variety of Philippine regional and foreign languages.

From the 100 respondents each generation had, four from each took part in the focus group discussion to complete the qualitative aspect of this study. The FGD had an equal number of male and female respondents at four each. Both women from Generation X were housewives, and the males were both overseas Filipino workers. Being Cebuanos, they all spoke the Cebuano language. All of them are high school graduates, albeit coming equally from both public and private institutions. The mean of their ages is 49. Meanwhile, the mean of their years of residency in the area is 24.75. Two of the respondents are relatively well-off by Philippine standards, each earning PHP 250,000 – 400,000 (USD 4,800 – 7,700) and PHP 400,000 – 800,000 (USD 7,700 – 15,400), respectively. The two other respondents belong to the 70% percent who are earning a maximum of USD 4,8000 annually.

Table 4. Breakdown of Languages Spoken by Both Generations

Cebu X (n=100)		**Cebu Z (n=100)**	
Languages Spoken	**Frequency**	**Languages Spoken**	**Frequency**
Cebuano	**100**	Cebuano	**100**
Filipino	**77**	Filipino	**88**
English	**98**	English	**89**
Other Languages (Hiligaynon, Masbateno, Waray, Arabic, Latin, Greek, Korean)	**10**	Other Languages (Bicolano, Chavacano, Hiligaynon, Waray, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, French)	**18**

Respondents from Generation Z had a mean age of 20, with a mean of their years of residency in Cebu at 15.75 years. Just like the elder respondents, all from Generation Z spoke the Cebuano language and are Cebuanos as well. One already finished his bachelor's degree. Two were still doing their college studies. Lastly, one just graduated from senior high school. Most of them studied at a state university.

Table 5. Demographic Profile of the Focus Group Discussion Respondents

Generation	Respondent (Birth Year)	Sex	Years of Residency in Cebu	Highest Educational Attainment	Income Bracket (in USD)	Languages Spoken
Cebu X	**Cebu X1 (1969)**	Female	15	Public High School Graduate	0 – 4,800	Cebuano
	Cebu X2 (1976)	Female	5	Public High School Graduate	7,700 – 15,400	Cebuano, Filipino
	Cebu X3 (1967)	Male	32	Private High School Graduate	0 – 4,800	Cebuano, Filipino, & English
	Cebu X4 (1965)	Male	47	Private High School Graduate	4,800 – 7,700	Cebuano, Filipino, & English
Cebu Z	**Cebu Z1 (1996)**	Male	21	Public University Graduate	0 – 4,800	Cebuano, Filipino, & English
	Cebu Z2 (1999)	Male	19	Private High School Graduate	4,800 – 7,700	Cebuano, English
	Cebu Z3 (1999)	Female	3	Public University Undergraduate	0 – 4,800	Cebuano
	Cebu Z4 (1998)	Female	20	Public University Undergraduate	None Answered.	Cebuano, Filipino, & English

Findings and Discussion

For the data triangulation of this study, the researchers concurrently present and discuss both the quantitative and qualitative results of the language use and attitudes of the Cebuano people on the Cebuano, Filipino, and English languages. While the researchers allowed answers to be spoken in any or a mix of the three languages, the original responses of the respondents in the focus group discussion were predominantly spoken in the Cebuano language. Because of this, the researchers translated their responses to the English for the international readership of the paper.

Fluency on the Cebuano, Filipino, and English Languages

This study first investigated the fluency of the respondents on the languages studied through a five-point Likert self-assessment scale. As seen in Table 4, there is no difference in the fluency of both generations on the Filipino and English languages. They are neutral on the former and agree that they are fluent in the latter. A significant difference on the fluency of the generations in the Cebuano language was found in this study as there is a 0.91-point difference in their means.

Table 6. Fluency of the Cebuanos on the Cebuano, Filipino, and English Languages

HOW FLUENT ARE YOU IN THE FOLLOWING LANGUAGES?						
Generations	**Cebuano**		**Filipino**		**English**	
	Mean	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**
Cebu X	4.77	0.566	3.37	1.37	4.22	1.05
Cebu Z	3.86	1.05	3.37	1.03	4.1	0.96
t-test	0.00*		1		0.39	

*Result is significant at $t < 0.05$.

In the focus group discussion, respondents from Generation X emphasized the importance for their children to learn their mother tongue, which is the Cebuano language. However, having the opportunity to learn other languages, most especially English, is also a crucial part of their parenting styles. Cebu X3 explained that the necessity to be able to speak the English language would allow their family to accommodate foreign visitors in their community. Discussions by Generation Z agrees to the importance of both the Cebuano and English languages. It was during the childhood of the younger generation when their parents started speaking at them in English. Intrinsically, this normalized the speaking of English in their generation. Cebu Z3 mentioned that she only speaks Cebuano minimally and in a casual manner. In matters where a long discussion was needed, she uses English as she can express herself better in it. Cebu Z2 raised a point on the language policy decisions of the community that all respondents from Generation Z agreed on:

> *I view languages in a more utilitarian aspect. So, if the community deems it fit that they could communicate properly if they speak Cebuano, then it can remain. But if the community feels the need to change it, then we must change it. It depends, really, in the community on what the language they want to use or on what is comfortable to them.*

The younger generation, especially Cebu Z2 who was part of the first batch of the recently implement 12-year basic education program (locally known as K-12 program in the Philippines), emphasized that they had a lot of Filipino subjects in school. The prominent speaking of the English language in home settings and the teaching of Filipino in the formative learning years of Generation Z may be attributed to their lessening fluency in the Cebuano language. Children's lessening fluency on their parents' mother tongue due to the latter's persistence of learning English is common and observable among immigrant families in English-speaking countries and places where English is an institutionalized language (Wu, 2005; Anderson, 2012; Li, Tan, & Goh, 2016).

Language Use for Everyday Communication

This section explored the languages that respondents use in everyday and casual situations such as talking to the family, friends, relatives, and close people. Table 5 shows that significant differences were found in the everyday language use of Cebuano and Filipino languages. With regards to Filipino specifically, despite both generations disagreeing that they do not use the language for the said communicative situation, there is enough difference that says that the younger

generation speaks Filipino more than the elder ones. There is no significant difference found in the use of the English language in everyday communication. It can still be noted that despite the Generation Z speaking predominantly in the Cebuano language, they also speak Filipino and English more than the elder ones. The increased use in the use of Filipino and English languages is consistent with the results of the study of Pontillas and Parpa (2017) on the language attitudes of Generation Z students based in the northern Mindanao region of the Philippines. Specifically, there had been an increase in the use of the said languages in home settings.

Table 7. Everyday Language Use of the Cebuanos

HOW OFTEN DO YOU USE THE FOLLOWING LANGUAGES FOR EVERYDAY COMMUNICATION?						
Generations	**Cebuano**		**Filipino**		**English**	
	Mean	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**
Cebu X	4.73	0.71	2	1.31	3.27	1.52
Cebu Z	4.31	0.97	2.42	1.19	3.38	1.16
t-test	0.0005*		0.02*		0.56	

*Result is significant at t < 0.05.

The differences in the language use of the Cebuano and Filipino language in this part were also found in the qualitative data. Respondents from the elder generation all spoke Cebuano for everyday communication, particularly when talking to family members, relatives, and friends from their same age bracket. Most of those from Generation Z also spoke Cebuano for everyday communication, except for Cebu Z3 who almost exclusively speaks English. Moreover, with the younger respondents studying in the country's national university, they are also exposed to fellow students from various parts of the country. This created the need for them to speak the Filipino language frequently within their campus.

Cebu's homogenous cultural environment allows the maintenance of the dominancy of the Cebuano language in home settings. The researchers discount the possibility of a major language shift despite the empirical evidence in the increasing usage of Filipino and English in the area. Rather, an increase in the usage of Cebuano in everyday communication is expected as the use of the language as the medium of instruction was already fully-implemented in 2012 as part of the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) program for the first four years of the Philippine basic education system (The Freeman, 2012).

Language Use for Formal Communication

Quantitative data shows that there are significant differences in the language use of the respondents for formal communication or talking to teachers, supervisors, administrators, and clients. As seen in Table 6, the elder generation uses the Cebuano language in this context more than any other language. On the other hand, the younger ones use the English language more often. The significant difference in the use of Filipino language reaffirms the result in the past section that the younger generation speaks Filipino more than Generation X.

Table 8. Formal Language Use of the Cebuanos

HOW OFTEN DO YOU USE THE FOLLOWING LANGUAGES FOR FORMAL COMMUNICATION?						
Generations	**Cebuano**		**Filipino**		**English**	
	Mean	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**	**Mean**	**SD**
Cebu X	4.1	1.35	2.09	1.43	3.57	1.48
Cebu Z	3.28	1.23	2.55	1.2	4.2	1
t-test	0.00001*		0.01*		0.0005*	

*Result is significant at t < 0.05.

All respondents in the focus group pointed out that learning and the use of English are essential in the globalized world. The elder generation echoed the opinion of Cebu X4, an overseas Filipino worker, that with English being considered as an international language, using it both as a medium of instruction and transaction at present will help their children in "seeking greener pastures abroad." The majority of the younger generation's discussions on the use of English for formal communication revolved around the concept of "global competitiveness." Albeit critical on the status of English in Philippine society, Cebu Z3 said, "we need to face the fact that in the system that we are in if we are not involved in English, we will have a hard time to earn." The continued perpetuation of this notion on the importance of the youth using English is being reaffirmed both by the Philippine government, the educational system, and mass media (Valdez, 2011; Hernandez, 2015). For that reason, Filipino youth belonging to Generation Z are commonly required to speak English in formal settings.

On the other hand, the elder generation recognizes English as a lingua franca and the primary medium of written correspondences. However, there is no actual language policy that requires them to speak English to administrators and clients. As mentioned above, the homogenous cultural environment of Cebu may maintain the continuing practice of the elders in speaking the Cebuano language in various communicative situations.

The use of the English language in formal situations, most specifically in classroom settings, is common in the Philippines. Empirical studies on the language use of Filipino students show that English remains to be the dominant medium of instruction in the country and this is commonly practiced through code-switching between English and Filipino (Borlongan, 2009; Borlongan, Lim, & Roxas, 2012; Sicam & Lucas, 2016).

Language Attitudes on Everyday Communication

This section begins the examination of this study on the language attitudes of the Cebuanos on the Cebuano, Filipino, and English languages. Data presented in Table 7 agrees with the null hypothesis that generational differences do not affect the attitudes of the respondents on the languages studied. It can be seen in the actual counts of the responses that they are not far from the expected count that confirms the null hypothesis. Overall, the Cebuano respondents (n = 168) chose Cebuano as the language that should be used when talking to family, relatives, friends, and close people. For Ilocano-speaking students, they strongly agreed that

they made friends using the Ilocano and Filipino languages more than English (Esteron, 2020). When talking to family, friends, and neighbors, the youth of northern Mindanao prefer to use their variety of Bisaya and Filipino (Pontillas & Parpa, 2017, p. 35).

Table 9. Language Attitudes of the Cebuanos on Everyday Communication

			Generations		Total
			Cebu X	**Cebu Z**	
What Language Should be Used for Everyday Communciation?	Cebuano	Count	85	83	168
		Expected Count	84	84	168
	Filipino	Count	3	8	11
		Expected Count	5.5	5.5	11
	English	Count	12	9	21
		Expected Count	10.5	10.5	21
	Total	Count	100	100	200
		Expected Count	100	100	200
				$\chi 2$	0.256

*Result is significant at $p < 0.05$.

Focus group discussions found that both generations unanimously said that they would like to maintain the Cebuano language to be spoken within their communities. They are also both aware of the decreasing fluency of the younger generation in the said language. Cebu X3 personally witnessed his daughter, who is studying in an English-speaking private school, asking his wife about the meaning of a particular statement written in Cebuano. Generation Z respondents themselves realized that they have limited vocabulary in the said language when their professors asked them to translate the English flora and fauna names into Cebuano. The youth also found the language to be useful in interacting with people at the grassroots level, specifically with the people who belong to low socioeconomic backgrounds as all of them are community organizers.

Language Attitudes on Formal Communication

The respondents' attitudes on formal communication also confirm the null hypothesis of this study. Similar to the past section, the actual counts of the responses are not far from the expected count that confirms the null hypothesis. It can be seen in Table 8 that a great majority (n = 173) of the respondents chose English as the language that should be used for formal communication. This empirical evidence, along with the actual language use of Generation Z on formal communication, proves the study of Demeterio and Liwanag (2014) that in formal contexts (e.g. national government, courts, businesses), English remains to be the dominant language preferred, followed by the regional language, and Filipino only is third.

Table 10. Language Attitudes of the Cebuanos on Formal Communication

			Generations		Total
			Cebu X	**Cebu Z**	
What Language Should be Used for Formal Communication?	Cebuano	Count	13	8	21
		Expected Count	10.5	10.5	21
	Filipino	Count	3	3	6
		Expected Count	3	3	6
	English	Count	84	89	173
		Expected Count	86.5	86.5	173
	Total	Count	100	100	200
		Expected Count	100	100	200
				$\chi 2$	0.513

*Result is significant at $p < 0.05$.

Preference for English in formal communication was tied by the qualitative respondents on its ability to connect Filipinos in the international scene and it is tagged as the language used by people of high socioeconomic standing. Having experience working abroad, Cebu X3 and X4 sent their children to English-speaking private schools to be able to communicate in an international workplace if they choose to work overseas as well. To explain the preference of the youth on the English language, respondents from Generation Z said that Cebuano "already has the attention" in the Philippine educational system, and it is "already being used to control our culture." Cebu Z3 added that, at present, utilizing English as the medium of instruction and transaction is convenient as it is the primary language that is being used by institutions. However, the respondent emphasized that language policies are dynamic and if future policies would focus on the use of local languages in contexts of formal communication, then language preferences of the future generations may change as well. As mentioned in the section on the language used for everyday communication, students' mother tongue is already being utilized as the medium of instruction in the first four years of their education. If implemented successfully, then the new multilingual nature of the Philippine education system may affect the language preferences and perspectives of the current primary school children in the future.

The intergenerational preference on English as the language for formal communication is consistent with the empirical studies on the language attitudes of university administrators, educators, and students (Borlongan, 2009; Borlongan, Lim, & Roxas, 2012; Cunanan, 2013; Sican & Lucas, 2016; Pontillas & Parpa, 2017). As with the elder respondents of this study, teachers in western Mindanao city of Zamboanga expressed their negative attitudes towards the use of the Chavacano language as the medium of instruction due to the inadequate availability of teaching materials in their mother tongue. Following the continued difficulty in teaching, they preferred to shift back to English until adequate materials, training, and preparation will be provided to them (Anudin, 2018).

Language Attitudes on the Philippine National Language

Differences in the preference of each generation on the Philippine national language can be seen in Table 9. Generation X (n = 44) wishes the Cebuano language to be the primary of the national language. On the other hand, Generation Z (n = 48) would like to maintain the Tagalog-based Filipino as the national language. As such, this study partly dispels the claim of Alburo (2011) that Cebuanos have a psychological resistance against the Manila-based Filipino because the respondents of this study collectively prefer it to be the national language. In spite of these disparities, the actual counts of the responses are not significantly far from the expected count that confirms the null hypothesis. As such, this study cannot discount the data that says that generational differences do not play a role in the national language attitudes of the respondents.

Table 11. National Language Attitudes of the Cebuanos

			Generations		Total
			Cebu X	**Cebu Z**	
What Language Should be the National Language of the Philippines?	Cebuano	Count	44	29	73
		Expected Count	36.5	36.5	73
	Filipino	Count	35	48	83
		Expected Count	41.5	41.5	83
	English	Count	21	22	43
		Expected Count	21.5	21.5	43
	Other Languages	Count	0	1	1
		Expected Count	0.5	0.5	1
	Total	Count	100	100	200
		Expected Count	100	100	200
				$\chi 2$	0.105

*Result is significant at $p < 0.05$.

The majority of the focus group respondents from both generations would like to maintain Filipino as the national language as well. They believe that despite the linguistic differences between their native language and the Tagalog-based Filipino, it is the language that "binds and unites the country." At least one respondent from each generation narrated their experience about traveling to a different island in the Visayas island group, wherein Cebu is situated at. They mentioned that when traveling to Tacloban in East Visayas and Boracay, a popular tourist destination in Western Visayas, Filipino was the language they spoke to understand each other despite being collectively Visayan. Cebu X4 also narrated that overseas Filipino workers in the Middle East speak the Filipino language altogether, most especially when they come from different regions in the Philippines.

Conclusion

This study presented the language use, attitudes, and preferences of the contemporary Cebuano people from Generations X and Z, a topic that has not been empirically studied and published for the past thirty years. The researchers employed mixed research methods in both data gathering and analysis, with the results triangulated to have a holistic view of the linguistic perspectives of the respondents.

Triangulated data revealed that the elder generation is significantly more fluent in the Cebuano language as respondents from Generation Z grew up speaking in English and being exposed to the Filipino language. Despite predominantly speaking Cebuano for everyday communication, a language shift towards Filipino and English was seen in the younger generation, thus making a significant difference with Generation X. This is due to the home and institutional language policies wherein English became the preferred language of communication when they were brought up. Being exposed to an educational system that teaches the Filipino language and to fellow students that come from different parts of the country created an environment that made them speak the language more frequently than Generation X. Significant differences on the language used for formal communication were found in all languages as well, with a noticeable language shift from the dominant use of the Cebuano language of Generation X to Generation Z speaking mainly in English. The younger generation utilizes Filipino more than the elders in the said communicative situation. Discourses on English as the language for formal communication revolved around it being an international language that could give an advantage to the youth if they choose to work overseas. Moreover, a respondent pointed out that in the present societal system, being able to speak English is a necessary factor to reach people's personal goals. On the other hand, Generation X remained using the Cebuano language for formal communication as there are no language policies that require them to use other languages when talking to administrators and clients. English, however, remains to be the medium of formal correspondence.

A majority of the respondents in both the quantitative and qualitative parts of the study want to maintain Cebuano as the language for everyday communication. Being aware of the lessening fluency and limited vocabulary of the youth on the language were the primary reasons for the respondents desiring to maintain the language. In addition, respondents from Generation Z, who concurrently volunteered as community organizers during the course of this research, found that it was easier for them to make connections with the grassroots sectors if they used the Cebuano language. Meanwhile, most of the respondents preferred English to be the language for formal communication. Focus group respondents tied this preference to thinking that it would help them connect with the international scene and that it is also the language of the financially-fortunate people. Respondents from Generation Z were critical on the status of English in Philippine society, declaring that it has the primary focus of the educational system that controls Philippine culture. Yet, they were of the dynamism of language policies, believing that the recently-implemented multilingual-based

basic education program could change the language uses and preferences of the future generations.

Lastly, a collective majority of the respondents are in favor of maintaining Tagalog-based Filipino as the Philippine national language. There was also a preference shift on the national language between the generations as the elder ones mainly chose Cebuano and the young ones primarily chose Filipino. Qualitative respondents narrated that even within varying Visayan societies, the Cebuano, Hiligaynon, and Waray, among others, collectively speak Filipino when talking to each other due to the evident linguistic differences in their mother tongues. Most agreed that Filipino remains to be the common language that unites the Filipino people, a population that is composed of societies speaking 185 individual languages (Eberhard, Simons, & Fennig, 2019). Cebuano came in a close second as some respondents believed that the high population of Visayan speakers is enough a reason for the national language to be based in their language.

The researchers posit that Cebuano language use and preference would still change as the current generation of primary school students is already exposed to an educational system that made their mother tongue the primary medium of instruction. Therefore, the relatively low fluency and limited vocabulary of Generation Z is only a manifestation of the societal structure that emphasized their contact on the English and Filipino languages. Consequently, future researchers are encouraged to assess the language use and attitudes of the generation following Generation Z as they will be the first batch who will then have undergone the full curriculum of the multilingual K-12 program by 2024.

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