

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Potential effects of Filipino subject removal in senior high school: Analysis on language usability and relatability

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ABSTRACT

The removal of the Filipino subject from the Philippine curriculum has sparked significant debate due to its implications for national identity, language preservation, and cultural heritage. This policy change stems from the shift in educational priorities driven by globalization and the integration of international standards, which emphasize proficiency in globally dominant languages like English. This paper explored the perceptions of Filipino teachers about the removal of the Filipino subject from senior high school (SHS) curriculum. A total of 76 secondary-level Filipino teachers were purposively selected based on the results of a preliminary open-ended survey. This paper analyzed responses from one-on-one interviews, identifying themes that highlight the impact of the removal of the subject on language usability and relatability. The findings revealed that the proposed removal of the Filipino subject from the Philippine curriculum raised significant concerns about its implications for cultural identity, language preservation, and education. Filipino teachers expressed apprehension that the exclusion of the subject could lead to language shift, wherein students increasingly prioritized English as a marker of success and global competitiveness, relegating Filipino to informal and limited contexts. Teachers highlighted that Filipino language and literature were essential for preserving the nation's heritage, encouraging cultural pride, and maintaining linguistic diversity. Also, the removal of the subject could have accelerated language attrition, where students lost proficiency in Filipino, particularly in formal settings, further marginalizing its use. To address these challenges, it was essential for educators and administrators to implement strategies that promoted the use of the Filipino language across various academic contexts, ensured an effective integration of English proficiency and Filipino language preservation within the curriculum, and provided ongoing professional development for teachers. Such measures were vital to safeguarding the Filipino language and its role in shaping the nation's cultural and linguistic identity

Keywords: cultural identity; Filipino language; Filipino subject removal; language shift

1. Introduction

An estimated 50% to 90% of the world's languages are currently experiencing conditions known as "shift ecologies," where linguistic stability is undermined by bi- or multilingual contexts^[1]. In these scenarios, speakers, particularly younger generations, increasingly adopt the dominant language in place of their

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ancestral one^[2]. The phenomenon of language shift can occur either incrementally across multiple generations or rapidly within a single generational span. Such conditions are especially prevalent among immigrant communities, where the widespread use of the majority language often accelerates the decline of minority languages, leading to language endangerment^[3].

This paper analyzed the implications of removing the Filipino subject in senior high school (SHS), especially in the context of language usability and relatability, following the growing debate about removing the subject in college level^[4]. There is growing concern over plans to reduce or completely remove the Filipino subject from the SHS curriculum in the Philippines. According to a Facebook post by Alyansa ng mga Tagapagtanggol ng Wikang Filipino (Tanggol Wika) on October 14, the Department of Education (DepEd) is allegedly finalizing a new SHS curriculum. In one draft, the mandatory Filipino subjects would be reduced from three to one, while some groups are even pushing for the complete removal of Filipino subjects in SHS^[5].

This paper believed that the removal of the Filipino subject in SHS curriculum could pose significant threat to the native language itself. In an online petition published in Change^[6], Professor Patrocinio Villafuerte argues that “Removing Filipino as a subject in the General Education Curriculum is not just a local issue. It is a moral issue that goes against the integrity of our race.” The problem can be traced back to the strong emphasis on promoting English language learning. For example, in Nepal, proficiency in English is not only a symbol of academic achievement but also a crucial requirement for securing employment, both domestically and internationally^[7-8]. Similarly, Filipino parents recognize the importance of learning the English language at a young age, which leads them to prioritize teaching their children English^[9]. The demand for English proficiency has led to its widespread adoption among students, who, whether voluntarily or out of necessity, view it to enhance their prospects for success^[10]. Although this does not necessarily pose a threat to the Filipino language, its widespread normalization could shift public perceptions, leading people to believe that the language itself is less important.

Language shift is a sociolinguistic phenomenon where one language gradually replaces another within a community, often due to various social, political, or economic pressures^[11]. This shift typically occurs in at least one domain of life, such as education, media, or family interactions, and is marked by the displacement of a community’s native language in favor of a more widely spoken or dominant language^[12]. This process is particularly pronounced in bilingual or multilingual societies, where a dominant language overpowers the minority language^[13]. This phenomenon is a significant concern for cultural preservation, as language shift often threatens the vitality of languages that are less widely spoken^[12]. In Russia, Grenoble and Osipov^[1] highlighted that language choices, preferences, and proficiency levels are dynamic, leading to various forms of linguistic variation in endangered language communities. The study emphasized factors like regional, generational, and proficiency-based variations can complicate the understanding of language shift and change.

Abtahian^[14] underscored that younger generations are typically more inclined to adopt the dominant language, such as English, while older generations tend to preserve the native language. This generational divide results in the erosion not only of vocabulary but also of cultural practices, as the transmission of the language becomes increasingly strained. However, language shift in the Philippine context has been less explored. This paper argued that the campaign to remove the Filipino subject from both SHS and college levels could exacerbate this shift. It analyzed Filipino teachers’ perceptions regarding the removal of the Filipino subject and examined how this change could impact the Filipino identity and language proficiency of students.

2. Literature review

Tong^[15] published an opinion article in *Inquirer Net* which discussed the decline in Filipino language proficiency among the younger generation in the Philippines, despite being born and raised in the country. It expressed concern over the Supreme Court's decision to uphold the removal of mandatory Filipino subjects from the college curriculum, arguing that this could contribute to the erosion of the language and even lead to "cultural genocide." The article calls for the reinstatement of mandatory Filipino subjects to prevent the further decline of the language and its cultural significance.

De Mesa et al.^[16] conducted a study with Grade 12 students from St. Mary's College Quezon City to assess their perceptions on the removal of the Filipino subject. Most respondents disagreed with the memorandum, expressing concerns about the potential loss of Filipino language appreciation and national identity. While some acknowledged the benefits, such as reduced workload for students, most students felt that the removal of the subject would negatively affect their education. The study suggests that if the memorandum is implemented, schools should find alternative ways to strengthen students' skills in the Filipino language, and further research is recommended to explore the broader effects of this change.

Given the potential threat posed by the removal of the Filipino subject from the SHS and college curriculum, this paper explored its possible impact within the context of language shift. The removal of the subject could contribute to the gradual erosion of Filipino language proficiency, particularly among younger generations, who may not have sufficient exposure to the language in formal education settings. Language shift reflects a disruption in the intergenerational transmission of a language, often leading to its decline or extinction^[17].

One pattern of language shift results from the friction caused by language dominance. In Iran, for instance, the Persian language has become dominant over the languages of other ethnic minorities, contributing to the extinction of these minority languages^[18]. Similarly, studies in Arab communities indicated that language shift occurs because of socio-political dynamics, where the dominant group's language imposes itself on minority groups, leading to a decline in the use of minority languages^[19]. In the United States, this phenomenon was also observed among immigrant Spanish-speaking groups, as well as other language-minority communities, causing individuals to shift toward English monolingualism across generations^[20].

Mackey^[21] highlighted that the speed and nature of language change depend on the interactions between contact languages and their communities. Wendel and Heinrich^[22] introduced a typology of shifts using the concept of language ecology, categorizing shifts into stable (e.g., emergent or multilingual ecologies) and competitive types (e.g., replacement or exploitation ecologies)^[22]. Ostler^[23] provided a historical overview of language shifts, detailing how shifts emerge and their impact on linguistic vitality. Conscious language planning, natural demographic changes, and geopolitical shifts were identified as significant drivers of language shift. Despite identifying numerous factors contributing to language shift, predicting shifts remains challenging due to the relation of sociolinguistic, political, and environmental variables. This complexity necessitates examining specific triggers, such as changes in communication domains, to understand their interrelationship and impact on language sustainability^[24].

There is a growing emphasis on how do globalization mediate language shift. Globalization has significantly impacted the vitality of indigenous languages, introducing profound challenges to their preservation and usage in multilingual societies^[25]. Matthews^[26] emphasized that bilingual education significantly influences language maintenance or shift within a community, as schools tend to reflect and conform to societal linguistic norms rather than actively shaping or leading them. In the context of

globalization, the prioritization of globally dominant languages, such as English, often leads to the marginalization of local or indigenous languages in formal education. Removing a subject like Filipino—a language that is both a national symbol and a medium of communication for many—undermines its perceived value and relevance. This exclusion can diminish the opportunities for young learners to acquire and use the language in structured settings, eroding its functionality and status over time.

3. Methods

3.1. Research design

This research utilized a qualitative exploratory approach to investigate the potential outcomes of removing the Filipino language subject from the Senior High School curriculum. This approach is effective for uncovering the complexities and nuances of the issue, especially aspects related to the participants' personal experiences and perspectives, which are not easily quantified^[27]. As Turner et al.^[28] suggest, this type of research allows for a richer understanding of the lived experiences and perceptions of individuals. In this case, the researchers analyzed the narratives of the teachers to explore their views on the role of Filipino in education and how its removal might influence students' learning experiences. Through these detailed accounts, the study reveals how the removal of the language could affect its usability and its relationship to the learners' cultural identity and day-to-day lives^[29].

3.2. Population and sampling

In exploratory research, participant sampling is guided by the goal of obtaining rich, meaningful insights rather than ensuring generalizability^[30]. Purposive sampling is a widely used strategy, as it focuses on selecting individuals with specific characteristics, expertise, or experiences that align with the research objectives^[31, 29, 32]. This approach facilitates in-depth exploration of the phenomenon under study by ensuring that participants can provide data that directly addresses the research questions^[33]. The size of the sample in exploratory research is typically small, ranging from one to 20 participants, depending on the qualitative design employed^[34-35]. Phenomenological studies, case studies, and narrative inquiries often favor such small, purposively selected samples because they prioritize depth of understanding over breadth^[36]. In selecting the participants, online purposive sampling^[37] with preliminary open-ended questions disseminated using Google Forms. Three major characteristics were considered in selecting the participants: (1) experience as Filipino teacher (>5 years), (2) formal training (equivalent of 25 hours training experience), and (3) must be a secondary level school teacher (either junior or senior level). Out of 76 who responded in the online form, only 17 were selected to be interviewed.

3.3. Instrumentation

Interviews are a widely used qualitative method that enables researchers to gather in-depth insights into participants' personal experiences, opinions, concerns, and aspirations by asking open-ended questions^[38]. This method is particularly effective because it allows for a deeper exploration of specific topics, giving participants the space to express their thoughts and share relevant experiences^[39]. In this study, a structured question guide was developed to facilitate one-on-one interviews with the participants. The questions were designed to be unstructured, offering flexibility in how the conversations unfolded, as explained by George^[40], who highlights that this approach provides the flexibility needed to elicit detailed and meaningful insights on the subject. This unstructured format allowed the interviews to be more fluid, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the participants' views. **Table 1** presents the final interview questions developed to elicit the responses of participants.

Table 1. Interview guide questions.

Objectives	Interview question
Evaluate the potential impact of removing Filipino as a subject in SHS, focusing on its usability.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is your general thought of the plan to remove the Filipino subject in Senior High School? Elaborate further. 2. Can you describe the usability of the Filipino language when it is a part of the Senior High School curriculum and when it is no longer part of the curriculum? Explain further. 3. What would the eventual effects of removing the Filipino language in the Senior High School? Explain each effect.
Evaluate the potential impact of removing Filipino as a subject in SHS, focusing on its relatability.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is the current state of the Filipino language in terms of its relatability to Filipino learners? Elaborate further. 2. What effects can the removal of the Filipino language in Senior High School in terms of relatability to the Filipino learners? Explain each effect in a situation. 3. What are the potential harms to the Filipino language when learners cannot relate to the Filipino language? Explain the harms in specific scenario.

3.4. Data gathering procedure

Semi-structured interviews provided a robust mechanism to explore the personal narratives and subjective experiences of the participants^[41]. In this investigation, the interview methodology was structured to uphold thematic coherence while allowing adaptive exploration of emergent patterns during dialogue^[42]. The process for conducting interviews started with the deliberate establishment of rapport, achieved through transparent communication regarding the study’s objectives, ethical safeguards, and stringent confidentiality protocols^[29]. Participants were thoroughly informed of their rights, emphasizing that their participation was entirely voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time without facing any consequences. Open-ended questions, supplemented by strategically developed follow-up probes, guided the discourse, enabling participants to provide comprehensive and reflective responses while ensuring alignment with the study’s thematic objectives^[43, 42]. The semi-structured approach preserved conversational flexibility, allowing interviewers to pursue emerging themes without compromising the overall focus^[44]. Throughout the process, active listening and reflexive engagement were emphasized to encourage natural narrative development while minimizing interruptions^[45]. To mitigate potential linguistic barriers, participants were encouraged to articulate their perspectives in their preferred language or dialect, which promoted inclusivity and ensured the authenticity of their responses^[46]. This culturally sensitive approach was fundamental in encouraging an environment of trust and minimizing apprehension^[47]. To ensure accuracy and accountability in data collection, all interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' explicit consent. In addition, detailed notes were taken to capture key points and provide supplementary context for subsequent analysis^[43]. The data collection phase, conducted over a one-month period from September to October 2024, allowed ample time for thorough engagement with participants and for refining the process based on emerging insights.

3.5. Data analysis

In this study, narrative thematic analysis was used as the primary method for data analysis. The analysis process involved several key stages: preparing and organizing the data, identifying overarching patterns, coding the information, developing themes or categories, and interpreting the results^[48]. This widely-used technique is designed to detect recurring themes, which helps to uncover deeper meanings and interpretations within the data^[49]. Applying this method, the study ensured that the analysis was systematic, transparent, and valuable, offering clear insights into the participants’ experiences^[50]. Narrative data refers to qualitative information that captures individuals’ personal stories, experiences, or descriptive accounts^[51]. This type of data is particularly useful in qualitative research because it allows for a deeper exploration of the meanings and interpretations that participants attach to their experiences.

4. Results

Objective 1: Evaluate the potential impact of removing Filipino as a subject in Senior High School, focusing on its usability.

The study investigated the potential implications of removing Filipino as a subject in Senior High School, with a particular emphasis on its usability. The findings illuminated several critical perspectives, which were synthesized into three overarching themes: the erosion of formal linguistic skills, the challenges posed by linguistic inflexibility, and a declining perception of the value of studying the Filipino language.

Theme 1: Lack of Formal Skills

While Filipino remains a dominant medium for informal and everyday communication, its application in academic and professional settings was observed to be increasingly limited. Participants expressed apprehension that the exclusion of Filipino from the curriculum could deprive students of crucial opportunities to cultivate critical thinking and effectively articulate complex ideas in their native language. This issue was further compounded by the perception that traditional pedagogical approaches, which emphasize archaic and disconnected literary works, have alienated students from the more formal registers of the language.

Filipino teachers believed that while Filipino continued to be a prevalent medium for informal communication, its utility in more structured and professional settings had become increasingly marginalized. This shift was viewed as problematic, as it restricted students' opportunities to develop essential cognitive abilities, such as critical thinking, and impeded their capacity to express complex ideas in a manner consistent with academic conventions in their native language. The exclusion of Filipino from the curriculum, therefore, was seen as a significant loss in terms of students' ability to engage meaningfully in these intellectual practices.

“Many students today use Filipino mostly in casual, day-to-day conversations, but they struggle with more formal contexts like writing essays or delivering speeches in Filipino.”

“In my experience, the younger generation has a dwindling connection to Filipino, especially when it comes to formal registers of the language.”

“Filipino is not just a subject; it's an avenue for critical thinking and expression. If students are no longer required to learn Filipino in SHS, they will lose the chance to hone their ability to articulate their thoughts in a structured, formal way in their native language.”

Furthermore, the statements emphasized that the current pedagogical emphasis on traditional literature, which many students perceived as outdated and disconnected from their lived experiences, exacerbated this issue. The curriculum's focus on literary works that were no longer relevant to students' daily lives led to a disconnection from the formal, intellectual applications of the language.

“I find that the language curriculum still places too much emphasis on traditional literature, which feels outdated and disconnected from their everyday experiences.”

“While students can understand Filipino in basic conversations, they find it less relevant when it's used in academic discussions. This makes it harder for them to appreciate the richness of the language.”

Consequently, students may have failed to fully appreciate the depth and potential of Filipino as a medium for academic discourse, thus limiting their ability to engage with the language in a manner that aligned with both its formal structures and its broader intellectual capacities.

Theme 2: Linguistic Inflexibility

Participants observed that students frequently encountered difficulties in maintaining linguistic boundaries between the two languages, even in formal academic tasks. This phenomenon reflects the dynamic and fluid linguistic practices of contemporary youth. While this adaptability demonstrates Filipino's resilience, respondents expressed concerns that, in the absence of systematic instruction, students might lose the capacity to deploy Filipino effectively in specific formal or professional contexts. Teachers highlighted the importance of fostering linguistic flexibility, including the strategic use of code-switching, as a vital competency in both academic and occupational domains.

There are evolving challenges associated with the use and adaptation of the Filipino language in contemporary educational settings. One participant acknowledged the reality of students' increasing reliance on TagLish, a hybrid of Filipino and English, recognizing the difficulty of encouraging students to navigate these linguistic boundaries effectively. The participant attempted to accommodate this linguistic fluidity by allowing students to express their ideas more freely but simultaneously emphasized the importance of discerning when to appropriately switch between languages in formal settings.

“I try to work with this sad reality, allowing them to express their thoughts more freely, but also stressing the importance of knowing when to switch between languages.”

Furthermore, concerns were raised regarding the stagnation of Filipino as a language of creative expression. The participant expressed apprehension that students' inability to relate to Filipino, particularly in formal and academic contexts, discouraged them from experimenting with the language in innovative ways. This stagnation contrasted sharply with the natural flexibility exhibited by languages students felt more comfortable with.

“Another aspect I worry about is the stagnation of the Filipino language. When students cannot relate to it, they aren't likely to experiment with it in creative ways, like they would with a language they are comfortable with.”

The dominance of TagLish within the classroom was noted as a reflection of the contemporary linguistic reality among students. The participants observed that this hybrid language, characterized by the seamless integration of English and Filipino, had become the predominant mode of communication among students, even in formal tasks. The rise of TagLish was interpreted as an indication of the dynamic, fluid nature of Filipino, adapting to real-life communication practices that resonate with the youth. This linguistic shift highlighted Filipino's potential for evolution, emphasizing that it no longer solely adhered to the traditional grammatical rules and vocabulary traditionally taught in schools.

“I've observed that TagLish is the most common form of communication in my classroom. It's almost impossible for students to avoid mixing English and Filipino, even in formal tasks.”

“Filipino is an evolving language. It's no longer just about the traditional grammar and vocabulary taught in school. The rise of 'TagLish,' a hybrid of Filipino and English has become dominant in everyday conversations among students. I

think the flexibility of Filipino is something that makes it more relatable today, as it reflects the real-life, fluid linguistic practices of the youth.”

As a central idea, removing the Filipino subject in high school could delimit students to use the Filipino language in exchange for more global English language. This would affect how do students interact with flexible forms of language (TagLish) forcing them to retreat to their ineffective self.

Theme 3: Lack of Perceived Value

Participants reported that students often overlooked the importance of advancing Filipino language skills, particularly in fields such as technology, where English dominates the lexicon and discourse. This perception was echoed by proponents of removing Filipino from the SHS curriculum, who emphasized the primacy of English as a global lingua franca and a critical tool for academic and career success. Conversely, some cautioned that such a stance risk s marginalizing Filipino, potentially accelerating its obsolescence in an increasingly globalized society.

One participant noted that students, particularly those with a keen interest in technology, displayed little initiative to enrich Filipino with new vocabulary or expressions. For instance, a student expressed a lack of motivation to develop Filipino terms for technological concepts, as they did not perceive any inherent value in doing so. This sentiment revealed a broader disconnection between students and Filipino, as they failed to recognize the language’s potential to evolve and meet the demands of contemporary discourse, thus impeding its usability in emerging fields.

“I’ve noticed that some students don’t try to make Filipino more relevant to their lives by introducing new words or expressions. For example, a student of mine, who loved technology, commented that they never thought of developing Filipino tech-related terms or expressions because they didn’t see the value in it.”

In addition, some revealed that teachers, particularly those in favor of removing Filipino from the curriculum, emphasized the priority of global competence, asserting that proficiency in English—widely regarded as the global lingua franca—was paramount for academic success and career advancement. These educators contended that English, being the dominant language in international communication, academic research, and higher education, was essential for students’ integration into the global academic and professional spheres.

“Some educators who advocate for removing Filipino argue that global competence is more important in today’s academic world. English, being the language of international communication, is used in most academic research, journals, and higher education programs worldwide.”

“Some educators who support the removal of Filipino from the SHS curriculum emphasize the importance of English as a global lingua franca and as a key tool for academic success and career advancement.”

Participants argued that proficiency in Filipino was no longer relevant, as they perceived that career opportunities and academic prospects would require fluency in English. This perception presented a critical challenge to the usability of Filipino, as it led students to undervalue its importance in both their personal and professional development.

“One specific harm I see is the risk of Filipino being perceived as obsolete in modern society.”

“In class, I’ve had students argue that learning Filipino is no longer relevant in an increasingly globalized world, especially when they think that all important career prospects will demand proficiency in English.”

These negative perceptions undermined its usability, especially in professional settings where English proficiency was prioritized. Therefore, the exclusion of Filipino from the curriculum not only reflected but potentially reinforced the diminished value assigned to the language, further detaching students from its practical applications and significance in contemporary academic and societal contexts.

Objective 2: Evaluate the potential impact of removing Filipino as a subject in Senior High School, focusing on its relatability.

The findings of this study illuminated several critical concerns regarding the potential impact of removing Filipino as a subject in SHS, particularly with regard to its relevance and usability in shaping students’ cultural understanding and national identity. These concerns were captured through three significant themes: weakening students’ connection to their national identity, eroding cultural unity, and limiting their access to Filipino literature and cultural understanding.

Theme 1: Loss of Filipino Identity

Filipino teachers suggested that Filipino, as the national language, serves not only as a medium of communication but as a critical vessel of national consciousness and pride. Its removal from the curriculum was seen as a severance from the very fabric of the nation’s historical struggles and cultural narratives. The shift toward prioritizing English, particularly in academic and professional settings, was interpreted as a tacit devaluation of Filipino’s role in shaping national identity. This led to a perception that students might increasingly distance themselves from their heritage, reinforcing the notion that success and intellectual development are contingent upon mastery of English rather than an appreciation for the cultural depth embedded in Filipino.

Some teachers believed on the detrimental effects in removing of Filipino from the SHS curriculum would have on the students’ connection to their cultural and national identity. It was argued that without the grounding provided by Filipino literature, students would face considerable challenges in comprehending the historical, social, and cultural struggles that have shaped the nation. As the national language, Filipino was recognized as a critical medium through which the country’s values, traditions, and history were communicated.

“They argue that without the context of Filipino literature, students may find it difficult to form a deeper understanding of the country’s historical struggles, cultural diversity, and social movements.”

“Filipino, being our national language, really carries all of our country’s history, traditions, and values.”

It was contended that the exclusion of Filipino from the academic sphere would exacerbate students’ disconnection from their cultural roots and national identity. The statements emphasized that students increasingly associated academic and professional success with proficiency in English, thus diminishing the perceived value of Filipino. This shift not only undermined Filipino as a tool for self-expression but also posed a threat to the cultural cohesion that the language symbolized.

“If Filipino were removed from the SHS curriculum, I think students would become even more disconnected from their own culture and identity.”

“Many students equate success with being proficient in English, and they forget that Filipino has an essential role in national identity and national competitiveness.”

The erosion of national pride was highlighted as a subtle yet significant consequence of this disconnection, with language being a pivotal element of cultural identity. Therefore, the removal of Filipino was viewed not only as an academic issue but also as a potential catalyst for the weakening of the nation’s collective consciousness.

“One of the subtlest yet damaging consequences is the erosion of national pride. Language is a major pillar of national identity, and when students cannot relate to Filipino, it reflects a larger disconnect with their roots.”

“One of the strongest reasons for keeping the Filipino subject in the curriculum is how important it is for preserving our culture and national identity.”

Theme 2: Lost of Cultural Relation

Filipino teachers emphasized the risks of cultural fragmentation that could arise from the marginalization of Filipino. Filipino was framed as a unifying force, bridging the diverse linguistic and cultural communities within the Philippines. This cultural disconnect was seen not merely as an individual preference but as indicative of a broader societal trend where Filipino's role in the nation’s cultural fabric is being eroded, replaced by an increasing globalized orientation toward English. The concerns pointed to the potential for Filipino to lose its relevance among younger generations, ultimately weakening the cohesive force it once represented.

The teachers highlighted the significant role of the Filipino language in preserving national culture and fostering a sense of unity among diverse linguistic communities. It was argued that Filipino functioned as a crucial instrument for connecting the country’s more than 170 regional languages, providing a common ground for communication across geographical and cultural divides. The ability to bridge local dialects, such as Ilocano, Waray, and Hiligaynon, with a national language allowed for greater social cohesion, particularly in contexts where regional dialects might not be widely understood.

“Filipino is seen as a unifying force in a country with more than 170 regional languages.”

“Students usually speak local dialects like Ilocano, Waray, or Hiligaynon, which aren’t always understood in cities or by people from other provinces. But by learning Filipino, they can communicate better with people.”

For students, despite being exposed to the rich historical and cultural relevance of Filipino, exhibited a preference for English. This preference was indicative of a broader disconnection from the cultural and national significance that Filipino represented. The students’ sentiments, especially their lack of understanding regarding the language’s role in the country’s independence movement and its function as a unifying force, demonstrated an erosion of cultural relatability.

“I had a class full of senior high school students in a more urbanized area, and during a discussion on Filipino nationalism, several of them expressed that they felt more 'at home' speaking English and didn’t understand why Filipino was pushed so hard in school.”

“This attitude was disheartening, especially when we discussed the role of the language in the independence movement or how Filipino unites the diverse peoples of the country.”

The removal of Filipino from the curriculum would, therefore, likely deepen this disconnection, undermining the language’s potential to nurture cultural understanding and national unity, while reinforcing the perceived dominance of English in educational and social contexts.

Theme 3: Less Accessibility

The Filipino teachers brought attention to the intellectual ramifications of removing Filipino from the curriculum. Filipino literature, often viewed as integral to understanding the nation’s socio-cultural landscape, would become increasingly inaccessible to students without the necessary linguistic foundation. The loss of this accessibility was framed as more than an academic issue; it was seen as a weakening of students’ capacity to fully engage with and appreciate their own cultural and literary heritage.

The removal of the Filipino subject was seen as directly limiting students’ ability to engage with literary works in their original linguistic form, which hinders their capacity to fully comprehend and appreciate the thematic depth and cultural significance embedded within these texts.

“Filipino subject would make it more difficult for students to access literatures in its original language and fully appreciate its themes and cultural significance.”

The exclusion of the Filipino language from the curriculum was seen as depriving students of essential exposure to the rich Filipino literary tradition, an exposure fundamental to cultivating cultural understanding. This removal was not perceived solely as an academic deficiency, but rather as a significant loss of a broader intellectual opportunity—the opportunity to develop appreciation for the depth and intricacy of the nation’s literature.

“I feel that when we remove the Filipino subject in high school, we also deprive our study access to Filipino literature.”

“I feel bad about how most students will no longer be engaged in Filipino literature. We would definitely remove their opportunity to build their appreciation to the beauty of our own literature.”

As such, this restricted access to Filipino literary works was expected to hinder the development of a cultural and intellectual connection to one’s own literary heritage. Consequently, the absence of Filipino as a subject would compromise its relatability, diminishing its role as a vehicle for meaningful engagement with the country’s historical and cultural narratives.

5. Discussion

In the Philippine education system, there is a growing debate regarding the potential removal of the Filipino subject from the curriculum. One key rationale for this proposal centers on the perceived redundancy of these subjects, as students are already exposed to similar content during their General Education years^[52]. With the introduction of the K-12 educational system, the Filipino language and literature subjects are extensively covered during the General Education phase, leading the CHED to argue that these subjects are unnecessarily repeated. Consequently, CHED proposed relegating Filipino and Panitikan to the SHS level to streamline and rationalize the K-12 curriculum^[4]. This shift, according to CHED, would allow students to allocate their academic focus to specialized courses aligned with their chosen fields of study, thereby promoting interdisciplinary learning.

This paper was inspired by Tong^[15] opinion article from *Inquirer*, which emphasizes the profound connection between language and the identity of a community, arguing that “Our language embodies our ideals and aspirations.” Tong suggests that language is more than just a tool for communication—it encapsulates the values, beliefs, and ambitions of a society. Through language, individuals express not only their thoughts and emotions but also their cultural and societal visions. In this context, the preservation and promotion of a national language are seen as vital for maintaining the integrity and continuity of a nation’s identity and collective ideals. Hence, using systematic qualitative process, this paper critically examined how language served as a reflection of both personal and national aspirations, reflecting on its central role in shaping and preserving cultural identity. This paper observed that the removal of the Filipino subject in the curriculum could impact the language usability and relatability.

Filipino teachers emphasized that, due to the growing preference for English over Filipino in academic and professional settings^[53], students increasingly view proficiency in English as a marker of success and global competitiveness^[54, 27]. The emergence of language shift within the Philippine education system became evident as the curriculum increasingly prioritized the use of English over Filipino. Theoretically, language shift occurs when a community gradually moves from using one language to another, typically due to political, economic, and social changes^[55-56]. In non-migrant communities, language shift can be triggered when two languages come into contact. This is especially common when one language is perceived as more powerful or prestigious than the other^[57]. With the growing emphasis on English as “the language of international communication,” it fueled the language shift within Philippine education system from Filipino to English language use. The widespread belief that English is essential for academic success, economic advancement, and global integration has perpetuated this shift^[58]. Consequently, Filipino has increasingly been marginalized in educational spaces, contributing to its diminished role in both formal and informal communication, further reinforcing the dominance of English in the academic and professional domains.

This paper argued that the Filipino language serves as a crucial form of cultural identity. However, the removal of the Filipino subject from the curriculum would likely exacerbate students’ disconnection from their cultural roots and sense of identity. Early studies^[12, 59] supported this explaining that language contributes significantly to the formation of a nationalist identity, providing a sense of unity and cohesion among its speakers. Language serves as a key marker of group identity, with specific languages linked to distinct cultures and identities^[55]. In this view, the preservation of language is essential to maintaining cultural identity, as language encapsulates various elements like group lifestyle, values, and knowledge^[60]. When a community loses its language, it risks losing its cultural heritage, pointing out that language is inextricably tied to culture, involving everything from greetings to wisdom, and even spirituality. One teacher explained that “One of the strongest reasons for keeping the Filipino subject in the curriculum is how important it is for preserving our culture and national identity.” Most Filipino teachers expressed concern over the potential loss of Filipino identity if the Filipino subject were removed from the curriculum. They feared that such a change could lead to a disconnection from the nation’s cultural heritage, as the language and literature taught in the subject are deeply tied to the preservation and promotion of Filipino identity.

There was also the potential of language loss (sometimes attrition) when the Filipino subject is removed in the curriculum. Language loss, as defined by Fase, Jaspaert, and Kroon^[61], occurs when a member of a minority group is no longer able to perform the same communicative functions with their native language, leading to a gradual decline in proficiency. The Filipino teachers believed that shifting the learning emphasis to English caused students to “...use Filipino mostly in casual, day-to-day conversations, but they struggle with more formal contexts like writing essays or delivering speeches in Filipino.” This phenomenon, often referred to as communal language shift, entails the substitution of a community’s native language with a

dominant language over an extended period^[20]. The process of language shift typically unfolds across generations, with a gradual erosion of language skills, although in some cases, it may occur more rapidly, leading to a massive shift from first to second language dominance^[12]. This is noteworthy as Filipino parents expressed a highly positive view towards the use of English, emphasizing strong support for English proficiency and its role in academic success and global competitiveness^[62-64].

Further, the issue of language loss is especially pronounced among immigrant communities who, due to various factors such as war, economic hardship, or political unrest, relocate to foreign countries. Al-Jumaily^[19] argues that in these new environments, the loss or shift of the mother tongue is a significant challenge, often accompanied by broader shifts in cultural and social behaviors. As children in these communities become increasingly fluent in the dominant language, the use of their native language declines. Similarly, Kouritzin^[65] observes that with each succeeding generation, there is a diminishing proficiency in the minority language, even as the majority language becomes more entrenched. This study believed that with the strong emphasis on the use of English language considering its social and career value^[66, 9], students “find it less relevant when it's used in academic discussions” which in turn, “makes it harder for them to appreciate the richness of the [Filipino] language.” Crawford^[67] further highlights that despite efforts such as bilingual education programs, the shift towards dominant languages, like English, continues to accelerate in many communities. This suggests that even with educational initiatives aimed at maintaining the mother tongue, the broader societal forces driving language shift are often too powerful to be counteracted effectively. As children grow up in environments where the dominant language is constantly reinforced through media, social interactions, and education, they begin to perceive the native language as less useful or even outdated. Over time, this shift is internalized, leading to a natural preference for the dominant language in both casual and formal contexts. This phenomenon is often exacerbated by the lack of opportunities to use the mother tongue in practical settings, resulting in its diminishing value and utility within the family and community. Without active reinforcement and support for the native language, its decline becomes inevitable, leaving a generation disconnected from its linguistic heritage.

The challenges of removing the Filipino subject from the curriculum are profound, requiring both teachers and administrators to take proactive measures to mitigate the potential negative impact on students' cultural identity and language proficiency. Teachers must actively integrate the use of Filipino in different academic contexts, providing students with opportunities to engage with the language in both informal and formal settings^[68-69], such as essay writing, public speaking, and discussions, to maintain its relevance. It is crucial that teachers employ strategies that highlight the importance of the Filipino language in encouraging cultural pride and a deeper connection to national identity. Administrators should advocate for curriculum reforms that carefully balance the promotion of English proficiency with the preservation of the Filipino language. They should prioritize the development of professional development programs for teachers^[70], equipping them with innovative pedagogical approaches to effectively teach the Filipino language. Through concerted and collaborative efforts^[71], teachers and administrators can safeguard the integrity of the Filipino language, preventing its marginalization while cultivating an educational environment that upholds the value of linguistic and cultural diversity.

6. Conclusion

This study evaluated the potential impact of removing Filipino as a subject in SHS, focusing on its usability and relatability. The findings revealed profound implications for students' linguistic skills, cultural identity, and academic development. Filipino teachers expressed that the removal of Filipino from the curriculum risked depriving students of opportunities to develop critical thinking and articulate ideas in their

native language. The perception that English was more valuable for career and academic success further diminished Filipino's usability, as students increasingly undervalued its role in their personal and professional growth. The teachers emphasized that Filipino, as the national language, served as a vessel for national consciousness and pride. Its exclusion from the curriculum risked weakening students' connection to their heritage and fostering the perception that intellectual and professional achievement hinged solely on English proficiency. This shift not only threatened cultural cohesion but also diminished students' appreciation of Filipino literature, further estranging them from the cultural and historical struggles that define the nation.

There are critical implications for educational policy and practice, particularly concerning the removal of Filipino as a subject in SHS. Educational policymakers should revisit the removal of Filipino from the SHS curriculum and instead focus on modernizing its content to ensure relevance and engagement. Incorporating contemporary literature, practical applications, and interdisciplinary approaches can align formal Filipino instruction with students' lived experiences. Moreover, strategies such as code-switching practices and modular approach can promote linguistic adaptability while preserving both languages' integrity. Schools should actively promote cultural awareness by organizing programs that emphasize the role of Filipino in strengthening national identity and cultural unity. Initiatives like cultural festivals, language workshops, and collaborations with local authors and artists can rekindle students' connection to Filipino. Encouraging the creation of original works in Filipino, such as essays, poetry, and multimedia projects, can also inspire students to explore the language's creative and practical dimensions. Teacher training programs must prioritize innovative pedagogical methods to enhance Filipino instruction. Integrating technology, interactive approaches, and real-world applications can make the language more accessible and engaging.

While this study offered valuable insights into the implications of removing Filipino as a subject in SHS, certain limitations must be acknowledged. Addressing these limitations in future research will provide a more comprehensive understanding of the issue. Expanding the sample to include a broader and more diverse population would improve the generalizability of the findings. The reliance on qualitative data, while rich in detail, lacks the breadth required for broader generalizations. Future research should incorporate quantitative methods, such as surveys and statistical analyses, to complement qualitative insights and provide a more holistic perspective. Employing mixed method approaches in future research could yield a more nuanced understanding of curricular changes. Comparative studies involving countries facing similar linguistic and educational challenges could offer valuable insights. Finally, longitudinal research is essential to evaluate the long-term effects of removing Filipino from the SHS curriculum on students' linguistic, cultural, and academic development.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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