








## ARTICLE

# A General Perspective on the Factors Influencing the Low Preferences of Gen Z College Students towards the Filipino Language

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## ABSTRACT

The linguistic landscape of the Philippines is characterized by the pervasive dominance of English, reflecting historical, socio-political, and economic influences. Consequently, the prioritization of English contributes to linguistic inequalities, influencing language attitudes and further entrenching the hierarchical status of languages in the country. This paper explored the factors that influence the low preference of Gen Z college students towards the use of Filipino language. College students (n = 20) were purposively selected through online screening. Narratives indicated that the Filipino language was strongly associated with cultural identity, with many students recalling familial experiences and traditional practices tied to its use. The rise of hybrid linguistic forms, blending Filipino and English, was highlighted as a reflection of the language's adaptability to contemporary trends. However, the study also identified factors contributing to the low preference for Filipino, particularly social and educational pressures. Students expressed a preference for English due to its perceived advantages in global communication, career prospects, and its dominance in digital media and educational

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settings. Social media platforms such as YouTube and TikTok were cited as spaces where English was often seen as the more practical and widely accepted medium. Lastly, the educational environment, where English is predominantly used in instructional materials and assessments, further marginalized the use of Filipino. Future studies should explore the evolving dynamics between language preferences and identity, particularly focusing on how the continued prominence of English in educational and digital spaces may affect the preservation of Filipino among younger generations.

**Keywords:** English Dominance; Filipino Language; Globalization; Language Shift

## 1. Introduction

The rapid modernization of societies has placed numerous languages at risk of marginalization or extinction, as they are increasingly overshadowed by globally dominant languages<sup>[1]</sup>. This pressing reality highlights the critical need for deliberate and sustained initiatives to safeguard linguistic diversity. Such efforts not only enable languages to coexist harmoniously but also instill cultural identities and promote inclusivity on a global scale<sup>[2]</sup>. Language preservation transcends cultural protection; it is essential for maintaining unique cultural expressions and empowering diversity<sup>[3]</sup>.

In the Philippines, cultural values such as warmth and a strong sense of community are integral to promoting language preservation, as they cultivate collective pride and reinforce a shared cultural identity<sup>[4]</sup>. However, these values alone are inadequate to ensure the survival of the Filipino language<sup>[3]</sup>. Lindquist<sup>[5]</sup>, for example, notes that generational transitions frequently result in variations in linguistic styles, which can disrupt the continuity of a language. This phenomenon underscores the critical need to bridge linguistic divides across generations to preserve cohesion and maintain a unified linguistic identity.

Several studies on linguistic landscapes in the Philippines identified English as the most prevalent language used in social settings. For example, Luna<sup>[6]</sup> found that out of the 252 signs documented in Baoc, Marinduque, the majority (75.39%) are written in English, whereas only 9.12% incorporate a combination of English and Filipino, and a mere 9.52% are exclusively in Filipino. Similarly, English continues to prevail as the primary language even within Binondo, Manila's Chinatown, a historically significant Chinese enclave<sup>[7]</sup>. While Filipino is present within the linguistic landscape of several cities, its usage lags significantly behind that of English. Consequently, this paper expresses concern regarding the potential shift away from the Filipino language,

as younger generations are increasingly inclined to favor the use of English.

Irawan<sup>[8]</sup> believed that societal divisions based on factors such as education, occupation, and income create social classes, which, in turn, influence linguistic behavior. Building on this idea, sociolinguistic research has long explored the relationship between language and social class. Likewise, Winarti<sup>[9]</sup> examined a similar phenomenon in Indonesia, analyzing the decline of the Javanese heritage language *Krama*. He highlighted the influence of social class in traditional Javanese culture, where conversational style is determined by the relative social status of speakers. In the United Kingdom, Bernstein<sup>[10]</sup> advanced this exploration by emphasizing the role of socialization, asserting that children acquire distinct communication styles based on their interactions in various social domains, such as family, peer groups, and educational settings.

Fundamentally, scholars exploring language shift and preservation have persistently highlighted the deep interconnection between language and culture, stressing their indivisible relationship<sup>[11]</sup>. Fishman<sup>[12]</sup> posits that the disappearance of a community language invariably leads to the diminishment of the cultural attributes intrinsically associated with it. Sociolinguistic research suggests that factors such as globalization, digital media consumption, and educational policies significantly influence language preference and usage patterns, often accelerating shifts toward dominant languages like English. As a result, communities experiencing language shift may also face challenges in maintaining their cultural heritage, as linguistic practices shape the ways in which traditions, values, and worldviews are transmitted. Understanding these dynamics is essential in developing policies and initiatives aimed at preserving linguistic diversity while acknowledging the evolving linguistic needs of younger generations.

Considering the campaign to exclude the Filipino sub-

ject from the Philippine curriculum<sup>[13, 14]</sup>, there is a growing apprehension regarding the potential consequences for the nation's linguistic and cultural identity. This movement has raised concerns that younger generations may lose fluency in their native tongue, leading to a gradual decline in the appreciation and practice of Filipino traditions, values, and heritage. Such a shift could exacerbate the dominance of foreign languages, particularly English, further marginalizing the Filipino language in formal and informal domains. This study aims to examine the factors influencing the shifting linguistic preferences within the Philippine context, particularly in light of recent debates surrounding the exclusion of the Filipino language in the educational system. Specifically, the research seeks to identify the socio-cultural, educational, and policy-driven determinants that contribute to the potential marginalization of the Filipino language.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Linguistic Landscape in the Philippines

Studies on the linguistic landscape in the Philippines have primarily concentrated on the connections of language, identity, and ideology, highlighting the pervasive dominance of English in public signage and the consequent marginalization of local and minority languages. De Los Reyes<sup>[15]</sup>, for instance, demonstrated that English not only emerged as the most prevalent language but also as the preferred medium of communication in signage within major Metro Manila train stations. This dominance can be attributed to the historical influence of American colonialism, which cultivated a favorable association with Western ideals of luxury and sophistication, symbolized using English<sup>[16]</sup>.

This phenomenon of English predominance, alongside the relegation of indigenous languages, has been similarly observed in various locales. The English language is also widely used along the churchscape in Manaoag, Pangasinan<sup>[17]</sup>, in Amadeo, Cavite<sup>[18]</sup>, Manila Central Post Office<sup>[19]</sup> or even in a secondary school in Irosin, Sorsogon<sup>[20]</sup>. Notably, even in Binondo, Manila's Chinatown—a historically Chinese enclave—English remains the dominant language<sup>[7]</sup>. A particularly significant study by Manalastas<sup>[21]</sup> critically examined the signage policies in two national museums in Manila, highlighting how the prioritization of English and Filipino in these spaces caters to both international and

select local audiences. This linguistic preference, however, marginalizes indigenous and other language communities, whose cultural heritage is represented in the museums but excluded from the linguistic visibility in the signage, thus reinforcing unequal language dynamics.

### 2.2. Emergence of Language Shift

The factors driving the decline and eventual extinction of minority languages are varied and often interconnected<sup>[22]</sup>. Giles<sup>[23]</sup> argue that demographic, socio-economic, and institutional factors are fundamental in the shift from a minority language to a more dominant one. Similarly, Edwards<sup>[24]</sup> emphasizes the critical role of demographic patterns, educational frameworks, and socio-economic conditions in facilitating language shift. Elements such as age, gender, and inter-ethnic unions substantially affect the pace and extent of language shift within minority communities<sup>[25, 26]</sup>.

Several studies<sup>[27, 28]</sup> reveal that the shift from a minority language to a dominant one is strongly linked to socio-economic factors, where adopting the majority language is often seen as a strategy to gain better employment, upward mobility, and economic opportunities. For instance, Sinha<sup>[29]</sup> identifies positive social status and greater career prospects as significant factors driving the Bengali language shift in the United Kingdom. Similarly, Afreen<sup>[27]</sup> highlights that superior job opportunities and an improved standard of living are key forces behind the Chakma language shift in Chitragong and Rangamati. Rahman<sup>[30]</sup> found that the Marma community in Bandarban recognizes the utility of Bengali proficiency in securing higher business opportunities and attaining a superior social rank. Holmes<sup>[31]</sup> also observes that when minority groups face limited socio-economic prospects, they often shift to the majority language in an attempt to overcome these challenges and access opportunities in the formal job market.

### 2.3. Consequence of Language Shift

Language contact is an inevitable occurrence, particularly in multilingual nations such as the Philippines<sup>[32]</sup>. It offers an advantage for individuals to become bilingual, or even multilingual; however, this process does not always benefit minority language communities. Due to persistent societal pressure<sup>[33]</sup>, to adopt the language spoken by the

majority, minority groups may eventually embrace this dominant language as a means of social inclusion. Furthermore, instead of passing down their “heritage” language to the next generation, some parents choose not to teach it, believing that proficiency in major languages such as English will provide greater opportunities for their children’s future careers<sup>[34]</sup>. This decision is often viewed as a form of linguistic self-destruction<sup>[35]</sup>.

Consequently, children may develop negative attitudes towards their ancestral language, contributing to its attrition<sup>[36]</sup>. In addition, the proliferation of technology and media has further intensified the dominance of mainstream languages, influencing younger generations to prioritize them over their native tongues<sup>[37, 38]</sup>. In the educational context, the widespread use of Filipino and English as primary languages of instruction<sup>[39]</sup> has led to the adaptation and modification of language use by the youth. As they interact with their peers, they begin to alter their vocabulary and pronunciation patterns, further reinforcing the shift towards the dominant languages<sup>[40]</sup>.

However, there is limited understanding of the extent and factors driving language shift in the Filipino language. This problem is particularly significant, as language shift commonly occurs in bilingual and multilingual contexts, where speakers may transition from using a minority language to adopting a dominant or more socially prestigious language<sup>[41]</sup>. The government mandates the teaching of English and Filipino at all educational levels to promote bilingual competence. Achieving proficiency in both languages is a key objective, and the continued enhancement of their teaching, use as instructional mediums, and clear definition of their roles in education rely primarily on the entire educational system<sup>[42]</sup>. This posed a significant threat to the Filipino language, as some Filipinos preferred using English over Filipino<sup>[43, 44]</sup>.

### 3. Methods

#### 3.1. Research Design

This exploratory paper determined potential factors that could influence the low preference of Gen Z students towards the use of Filipino language. Exploratory research endeavors aim to examine particular concerns or shed light on recent phenomena<sup>[45, 46]</sup>. Exploration in social sciences is an in-

quiry that employs methodical and deliberate approaches to discern essential patterns, enabling the systematic analysis and documentation of social or psychological constructs<sup>[47]</sup>. Through preliminary insights, exploratory research often establishes a foundation for formulating hypotheses that can subsequently be subjected to empirical testing<sup>[48, 49]</sup>. While some critique its purported lack of methodological rigor, contemporary scholarly perspectives highlighted its role on understanding of research issues and facilitating the structured acquisition of essential narrative data<sup>[50, 51]</sup>. Following this, the study was particularly concerned with investigating the sociocultural, educational, and psychological dimensions that may influence Gen Z students’ language preferences. Specifically, it aimed to examine how factors such as cultural exposure, educational systems, peer influence, and digital media consumption shape attitudes towards the Filipino language. The findings of this research are intended to contribute to the development of strategic interventions and policy recommendations towards appreciation for and utilization of the Filipino language among the youth.

#### 3.2. Participants and Sampling

Exploratory research frequently employs a limited sample size to facilitate an in-depth investigation of critical variables and their interrelationships<sup>[52]</sup>. Such studies often concentrate on a specific, particularly defined group to achieve specificity in the analysis of a targeted phenomenon<sup>[53]</sup>. The sample size in exploratory research is generally flexible, dictated by the participants’ potential to contribute meaningfully to the attainment of the research objectives<sup>[45, 54, 55]</sup>. A common technique is purposive sampling<sup>[56]</sup>, a non-probability sampling strategy wherein participants are deliberately selected based on their characteristics or relevance to the research topic<sup>[57]</sup>. This approach enables researchers to identify and engage with individuals whose expertise, attributes, or experiences are particularly essential to the study’s focus<sup>[58, 59]</sup>.

In this study, an online purposive sampling method<sup>[60]</sup> was implemented, utilizing open-ended questions disseminated via Google Forms to collect initial qualitative data from participants. Five major characteristics were used in sampling the participants: (1) must be a Gen Z college student (ages 18–24), (2) currently enrolled in the Academic Year 2024–2025, (3) prior exposure to or experience with

peers with low preference towards Filipino language, (4) must have a working knowledge of both Filipino language, and (5) willingness to participate in one-on-one interview. Based on the sampling criteria, only 20 out of the 165 college students who participated in the online screening were selected for interviews. **Table 1** presents information from the screened participants.

### 3.3. Instrumentation

In qualitative research, the credibility and robustness of findings were significantly influenced by the strategies utilized for data collection<sup>[61]</sup>. Among these strategies, interviews served as a flexible and context-sensitive method, facilitating an in-depth examination of the phenomena under study<sup>[62]</sup>. The individual interviews were meticulously structured to allow adaptability, enabling participants to articulate their perspectives, address their concerns, and guide the flow of discussion as necessary<sup>[63, 64]</sup>. While initial responses often yielded superficial insights<sup>[65]</sup>, the use of probing questions was integral to uncovering participants' values, experiences, and viewpoints<sup>[66, 67]</sup>. To ensure coherence and systematic coverage during the interviews, a semi-structured interview guide was developed<sup>[68]</sup>. The process of designing the interview guide adhered to the systematic framework proposed by Kallio, Pietilä, Johnson, and Kangasniemi<sup>[69]</sup>. This process entailed several key stages: identifying prerequisites, integrating existing knowledge, drafting an initial guide, conducting a pilot test, and refining the instrument based on feedback. The pilot testing of the interview questions was a critical step to evaluate their clarity, relevance, and ability to elicit detailed and meaningful responses<sup>[63]</sup>. Lastly, feedback from expert reviewers developed the guide's validity, ensuring alignment with the research objectives and bolstering the overall quality of the instrument<sup>[70]</sup>. **Table 2** presents the final interview guide questions after expert validation and pilot testing.

### 3.4. Data Collection

The interviews were conducted to interpret participants' personal narratives, providing a structured framework to comprehend their behaviors, experiences, and perspectives<sup>[71]</sup>. Particularly in phenomenological research, interviews served as an essential process for exploring the lived experiences

of individuals<sup>[72]</sup>. This qualitative approach employed semi-structured formats, which facilitated a conversational yet purposeful dialogue, balancing methodological rigor with flexibility<sup>[73]</sup>. Semi-structured interviews were chosen due to their effectiveness in maintaining focus on key themes while allowing for organic exploration of participants' insights<sup>[74]</sup>. The process started with the establishment of clear research objectives and the formulation of thematic questions aligned with the goals, grounded in extensive background research<sup>[63, 75]</sup>. A positive environment was established, wherein accessible language and active listening encouraged participants to share openly and reflectively<sup>[74, 76]</sup>. The interviews followed a systematic protocol, which included clearly explaining the research objectives, obtaining informed consent, describing confidentiality measures, asking thematic and probing questions, and summarizing key points to conclude the session<sup>[75]</sup>. Participants were afforded the option to express themselves in their preferred language to ensure comfort and authenticity in their responses, which could minimize the potential linguistic barriers that could compromise data quality. The entirety of each interview was audio-recorded using secure mobile devices, ensuring accurate data capture and preserving the integrity of participants' narratives for subsequent analysis.

### 3.5. Data Analysis

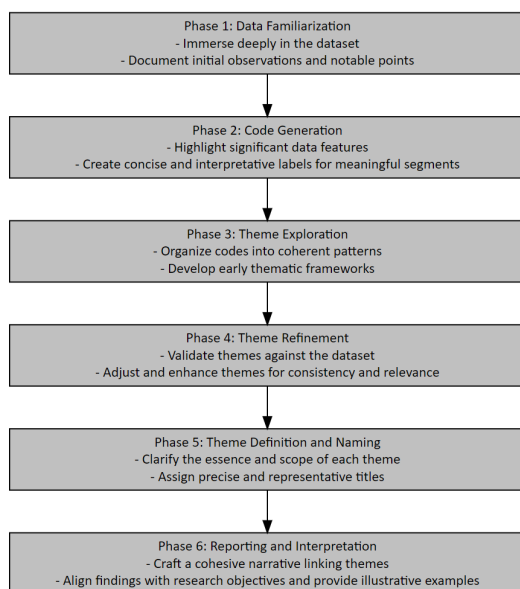
The study utilized thematic analysis to systematically analyze narrative data collected from one-on-one interviews, facilitating an in-depth exploration of patterns and themes emerging from participants' experiences. Thematic analysis, as a qualitative research methodology, is employed to identify, categorize, and interpret patterns within the data, thus offering valuable analysis for collective and individual experiences<sup>[77]</sup>. Its inherent flexibility made it particularly suitable for this exploratory study, allowing themes to naturally emerge from the data without being constrained by pre-existing frameworks or theoretical models<sup>[78]</sup>. The analytical process began with the application of descriptive codes and progressed to the identification of interpretative themes, which helped uncover deeper connections within the data<sup>[79]</sup>.

A reflexive thematic analysis approach was employed, highlighting the active involvement of the researcher with the data while maintaining an awareness of potential biases

**Table 1.** Summary information about the 20 sampled participants.

Name	Sex	Age	Perception towards the Filipino Language
Adrian	Male	19	English is more practical for global opportunities and online interactions.
Bianca	Female	20	Filipino is often seen as outdated compared to the modern appeal of English.
Carlo	Male	22	The prevalence of English in media and education overshadows Filipino usage.
Diane	Female	21	Using English feels more professional and is encouraged in academic settings.
Ethan	Male	24	The younger generation associates English with prestige and success.
Faye	Female	18	Filipino is not prioritized in schools, leading to limited fluency among peers.
Gabriel	Male	23	Social media platforms promote English more than our native language.
Hannah	Female	19	Filipino is perceived as less versatile in scientific and technical contexts.
Ivan	Male	20	English is more dominant in the digital space, influencing our communication habits.
Jasmine	Female	22	There's a misconception that speaking Filipino is less sophisticated.
Kevin	Male	21	Globalization has diminished the need to use Filipino in many social settings.
Lara	Female	23	Many parents prioritize English to prepare children for better opportunities.
Martin	Male	20	Filipino is often underutilized in formal education, affecting our proficiency.
Nicole	Female	18	We're more exposed to English media, which influences our language preferences.
Oliver	Male	24	The decline in Filipino usage stems from its limited integration in professional fields.
Patricia	Female	19	The perception that English is superior to Filipino weakens its everyday use.
Quentin	Male	22	Filipino is rarely emphasized in higher education, contributing to its decline.
Rachel	Female	20	The entertainment industry prioritizes English, which shapes our language habits.
Samuel	Male	21	Filipino lacks modernization in vocabulary, making it less appealing to Gen Z.
Therese	Female	19	Speaking English is often encouraged over Filipino in professional environments.

through reflexivity<sup>[80]</sup>. The process followed Braun and Clarke<sup>[81]</sup> six-phase framework (**Figure 1**), which included: (1) familiarization with the data, (2) generation of initial codes, (3) identification of themes, (4) review of themes, (5) definition and naming of themes, and (6) production of the final report. Each phase ensured a rigorous and flexible engagement with the data, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences<sup>[82]</sup>.

**Figure 1.** Workflow of data analysis process.

An inductive approach was implemented to ensure that codes and themes were derived directly from the data itself, minimizing researcher bias and ensuring that the findings were grounded in the participants' narratives. Inductive thematic analysis allowed for the emergence of broader insights from specific observations, without the imposition of predetermined categories<sup>[83]</sup>. This data-driven approach ensured that the analysis descriptively reflected the participants' perspectives, which also enhances the validity and reliability of the conclusions<sup>[54]</sup>. **Table 3** presents an organized process of analyzing the data using thematic markers, codes, descriptors and themes.

## 4. Results

**Objective 1:** To explore the perceptions of Gen Z toward the Filipino language and its relevance in their daily lives.

The findings revealed significant understanding on the perceptions of Gen Z college students regarding the Filipino language and its relevance in their daily lives, highlighting three key themes: social connection, cultural roots, and adaptability.

The Filipino language emerged as a significant medium for emotional closeness and facilitating interpersonal interactions. Despite its perceived informality, which some partici-

**Table 2.** Final interview guide questions.

Objectives	Interview Questions
To explore the perceptions of Gen Z toward the Filipino language and its relevance in their daily lives.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How do you feel about using the Filipino language in your daily conversations? Do you find it relevant or useful in your personal and academic life?</li> <li>2. What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of speaking Filipino compared to using other languages, such as English, in your day-to-day activities?</li> <li>3. In what situations do you prefer using Filipino, and when do you opt for other languages? Can you explain why?</li> </ol>
To identify factors contributing to the low preference for the Filipino language among Gen Z.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What social factors, such as peer influence or societal norms, affect your preference for using or avoiding the Filipino language?</li> <li>2. How do cultural trends, like music, movies, or social media, influence your interest in using the Filipino language? Can you provide specific examples?</li> <li>3. How has your educational experience shaped your views and preferences regarding the Filipino language? Do you think the way it is taught affects its importance to you?</li> </ol>

**Table 3.** Sample thematic analysis using thematic markers and codes.

Theme	Statement	Code	Thematic Marker	Interpretation
Preference for English	“I find it easier to express myself in English, especially in academic and professional settings.”	English as more comfortable	“Easier to express myself in English”	English is perceived as more convenient and effective for academic and professional communication.
Digital Influence	“Most of the content I consume online—like YouTube videos, podcasts, and even social media posts—is in English, so I’ve become more used to it.”	Online content shaping language use	“Content I consume online is in English”	The prevalence of English in digital media significantly influences students’ language preferences and usage.
Institutional Influence	“In school, we are encouraged to use English in essays, reports, and presentations, so I rarely use Filipino in formal settings.”	Schools reinforcing English usage	“Encouraged to use English in school”	Educational institutions prioritize English, reinforcing its use in formal and academic settings over Filipino.

pants noted as less appropriate for professional or technical settings, the language was consistently celebrated for its profound capacity to unite individuals around social causes and articulate collective advocacies.

Participants also expressed a deep sense of connection to their ancestry through the language, often recounting formative experiences such as familial conversations, traditional storytelling, and engagement with folk songs. These interactions positioned the Filipino language as a cornerstone of national identity, embodying shared values, historical continuity, and collective belonging.

Lastly, they noted the widespread emergence of hybrid linguistic forms, characterized by the creative integration of Filipino and English. This phenomenon, driven by online trends and popular media, was described as an innovative

expression of identity and group solidarity. Such linguistic adaptations were perceived as evidence of the language’s resilience and its ability to remain relevant in rapidly changing sociocultural landscapes.

#### Theme 1: Social Connection

The college students believed that the Filipino language helps in empowering emotional connections and facilitating casual interactions among participants. Its informal nature, while occasionally perceived as less appropriate for formal or technical contexts, was highly valued for its ability to create a sense of ease and approachability in interpersonal communication. This dynamic highlighted the language’s adaptability to the cultural and social realities of its speakers.

“Filipino language encourages emotional close-

ness and ease in casual interactions, its casual nature can sometimes be perceived as less suited for formal or technical settings.” [Adrian]

“Many Gen Z individuals, especially those who grew up in families where Filipino was spoken regularly, feel a strong emotional connection to the language through their personal experiences.” [Jasmine]

Participants frequently identified the Filipino language as a catalyst for uniting individuals around shared social causes and articulating advocacies within the national context. It has its role in nation-building by empowering individuals to engage actively with societal issues. The use of the language in expressing collective struggles and encouraging connections to the nation’s historical narrative emerged as a recurring theme, reflecting its significance in shaping cultural and political identity.

“The language is instrumental in mobilizing us for social causes, enabling us to articulate our advocacies effectively within the national context. It empowers us to participate actively in societal issues, reinforcing our role in nation-building.” [Hannah]

“I realized that language is a powerful tool in connecting with our roots and expressing our nation’s struggles.” [Bianca]

“Over time, though, many come to realize the importance of the Filipino language as a way to express emotions, tell stories, and strengthen connections with the country’s past and struggles.” [Carlo]

The influence of contemporary Filipino artists and content creators also emerged as a significant factor in shaping perceptions of the language. Participants noted how music, skits, and other forms of creative expression elevated the Filipino language’s prominence both locally and internationally.

“I’ve noticed that a lot of Filipino artists, like SB19 or Moira Dela Torre, have become popular not just here in the Philippines but also

abroad. Their music, especially the lyrics in Filipino, really made me proud of our language.” [Faye]

“...when people do funny skits in Filipino or use Filipino slang, it connects to a wider audience, especially those who are living abroad but still want to stay connected to our language.” [Adrian]

## Theme 2: Cultural Sense

Participants frequently associated the language with familial and cultural experiences, emphasizing its role in preserving and transmitting traditions. This connection was particularly evident in narratives where individuals recounted memories of grandparents using the language to share folk stories, sing traditional songs, or engage in meaningful conversations.

“For me, learning Filipino was always about connecting with my heritage. My grandparents often spoke it at home, so when I started school, I felt like I already had a deep connection to the language.” [Bianca]

“They recall listening to their grandparents tell folk stories, singing along to old Filipino songs, or simply conversing in a language that connects them to their roots.” [Ethan]

The participants also viewed the language as a symbol of national pride and identity. It was described as a means to express shared cultural values and traditions, which reinforced a collective sense of belonging to the Filipino community. This sentiment was particularly pronounced among individuals who considered the language an integral part of their identity and a tool for strengthening national unity.

“It allows me to connect with my cultural heritage and express national pride. It serves as a way to convey shared values and traditions, reinforcing a sense of belonging to the Filipino community.” [Gabriel]

“I usually express pride in using Filipino, viewing it as a vital part of their identity and a means to strengthen national unity.” [Patricia]



### Theme 3: Adaptive

The findings suggested that the Filipino language, particularly among Gen Z, exhibited a dynamic and evolving nature, reflective of the linguistic adaptability of its users. Participants described the emergence and widespread use of unique slang that combine Filipino and English, demonstrating the development of a hybrid linguistic identity. This phenomenon underscored the flexibility of the language in accommodating the cultural and technological influences of the digital era.

“As a part of Filipino Gen-Z we create unique slangs in which they mix English and Filipino words which shows that the students right now are all part of a hybrid linguistic identity.” [Samuel]

“The rise of digital platforms has led to the creation and widespread use of unique slang terms among Filipino Gen Z.” [Carlo]

Participants highlighted that these terms often originated from popular media, online trends, and shared social experiences, functioning as linguistic shortcuts to express complex ideas and emotions. This adaptability not only allowed for efficient communication but also reinforced a sense of group identity and belonging among Filipino Gen Z.

“This new set of slang words serves as a form of their expression and group identity.” [Diane]  
 “These terms often originate from popular media, online trends, and shared experiences, serving as linguistic shortcuts that convey ideas.” [Oliver]

Objective 2: To identify the factors contributing to the low preference for the Filipino language among Gen Z.

The study sought to identify the factors contributing to the low preference for the Filipino language among Gen Z college students wherein two primary themes were identified—Social Pressure and Educational Pressure.

Participants expressed a tendency to favor English due to its perceived utility in global communication, career advancement, and social media engagement. This sentiment was particularly pronounced in digital spaces such

as YouTube and TikTok, where English predominated as the preferred medium for content creation and interaction. Participants also noted a sense of societal expectation to use English, especially when engaging with international audiences or navigating professional contexts.

The dominance of English in instructional materials, classroom settings, and assessments often positioned it as a marker of academic competence and success. Participants noted that speaking Filipino in academic environments could be perceived as less serious or unprepared, further marginalizing its use in educational contexts. Consequently, the reliance on English in educational systems contributed to a disconnect between the language spoken at home and that used in school, creating a linguistic divide for students.

### Theme 1: Social Pressure

Participants revealed that English was perceived as a more advantageous medium, particularly in global communication and career prospects. This perception was reinforced by the predominance of English on social media platforms such as YouTube and TikTok, where participants felt compelled to align with global linguistic norms to ensure wider appeal and comprehension.

“Others lean towards English for its perceived utility in global communication and career prospects.” [Lara]

“Studies indicate a shift among younger generations toward using English and Filipino over local dialects such as Cebuano. This trend is attributed to the perception of English as advantageous for global opportunities.” [Martin]

For example, content creators may feel pressured to use English to enhance the appeal and accessibility of their material to a wider, potentially international audience. This highlights a belief that the Filipino language might limit reach and engagement due to its regional specificity, thus reinforcing the notion of English as a more universally understood and socially accepted medium in online spaces

“On platforms like YouTube or TikTok, everyone uses English, and sometimes I feel like using Filipino would make my content less appealing or harder to understand.” [Diane]  
 “...when I’m on social media or talking to inter-

national people, it feels like everyone expects me to speak in English.” [Jasmine]

Despite expressing pride in the Filipino language as a representation of their national identity, participants frequently encountered societal attitudes that portrayed Filipino as less modern or “uncool” in comparison to English or other globally dominant languages. This sentiment was further intensified in digital interactions and international engagements, where the use of English was often seen as a default expectation.

“I’m proud to use Filipino because it represents who I am as a Filipino. But sometimes, I feel like people see it as ‘uncool’ when compared to speaking English or other languages that are more global.” [Ethan]

“I can’t lie, sometimes I feel like speaking Filipino makes me seem behind the times, especially in the online world.” [Rachel]

“Everyone’s using English, and sometimes I wonder if I’ll ever be seen as ‘cool’ if I keep speaking Filipino.” [Quentin]

#### Theme 2: Educational Pressure

Participants expressed the influence of the dominance of English in both digital media and educational settings, noting that proficiency in English is often viewed as crucial for accessing global opportunities and achieving academic success. This perception has led to the widespread use of English in educational materials and formal instruction, further marginalizing the role of Filipino in academic contexts.

“The dominance of English in digital media and educational settings reinforces this preference, as proficiency in English is often associated with better opportunities in the global area.” [Faye]

“Due to this gap, English becomes the default for many educational materials, making Filipino less commonly used in formal instruction.” [Kevin]

This dominance of English has created a disconnect between the language used at home and that used in school.

Such divide encouraged the perception that the English language is superior to the Filipino language.

“The shift in education can create a disconnect between home and school language use, particularly for young learners like them.” [Nicole]

Participants also conveyed concerns about judgment and perceived academic competence, with many expressing that speaking English was a means of avoiding social stigmas and ensuring that they were taken seriously in educational settings. In contrast, using Filipino, especially during formal academic interactions, was sometimes seen as a sign of lack of preparedness or seriousness.

“I speak English because I don’t want to be judged or seem like I’m not doing well in school.” [Ivan]

“Speaking Filipino during class recitations can sometimes feel like you’re not as serious or that you’re not prepared enough.” [Carlo]

## 5. Discussion

Language shift refers to the gradual substitution of one language by another within a particular domain of human system<sup>[84]</sup>. Likewise, Sevinc<sup>[85]</sup> described the shift as the progressive displacement of one language by another within the lives of the community members. Hoffman<sup>[86]</sup> believes that shifting occurs when a community abandons its native language, gradually adopting a different language in its stead.

Alyami<sup>[87]</sup> provided a comprehensive explanation, asserting that the shift transpires when a group of speakers diminishes or ceases the use of their mother tongue, typically a minority language, in favor of a more widely spoken language. This adopted language ultimately supplants the functions and domains of the original language, resulting in an increasing reliance on one language at the expense of the other. Alyami<sup>[87]</sup> emphasizes that such a shift is particularly common in bilingual or multilingual societies, where a dominant language supersedes a minority language. This paper examined the phenomenon of language shift and its role in the declining use of the Filipino language among Gen Z college students. The study focused on the socio-cultural and educational factors that contribute to the gradual dis-

placement of Filipino in favor of more globally dominant languages, particularly English.

This paper highlighted how the pervasive influence of English in global communication, as well as the prestige associated with English proficiency in academic and professional settings, has led to the erosion of the Filipino language among younger generations. Abtahian<sup>[88]</sup> emphasizes that language shift is a critical component of language change, with younger generations exhibiting a marked preference for English over older generations. Uwen and Okafor<sup>[89]</sup> also argue that speakers possess fluency in their native language; however, they observe that the subsequent generation is increasingly disengaged from this linguistic heritage, presenting a tangible risk of language loss. Similar phenomenon was observed among Gen Z college students. For example, language disengagement can be observed in the behavior of content creators on platforms like YouTube and TikTok. These creators, to expand their reach and appeal to a broader, often international audience, may consciously choose to use English over Filipino. This decision is driven by the belief that English is a more universally understood language, allowing their content to transcend regional boundaries and ensuring it resonates with a global audience.

Furthermore, Alyami<sup>[87]</sup> contends that the consequences of language shift extend beyond the mere loss of vocabulary, such as terms for objects and concepts; it also jeopardizes fundamental cultural practices, particularly the intimate forms of communication that are embedded within the language. Similarly, participants in this study noted that while Filipino remains a key component of their identity, they often feel that speaking it, particularly in online spaces, makes them seem “uncool” or “behind the times.” This sentiment is becoming prominent considering the dominance of English on social media platforms, where users, including Gen Z college students, gravitate toward English to enhance their social appeal and professional prospects.

Recent studies on the linguistic landscape in the Philippines highlight the dominance of English, often marginalizing local languages in various public spaces. English is favored in urban signage, driven by its association with global sophistication and economic power, overshadowing Filipino and regional languages. In addition, language policies like the Bilingual Education Program and Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education have reinforced this dominance, cre-

ating unequal visibility between English, Filipino, and minority languages in public spaces across the country<sup>[21]</sup>. The dominance of the English language in the Philippines significantly influences Gen Z college students, compelling them to adapt to societal pressures that prioritize English proficiency over national identity. This pressure is not only reinforced in social media, professional environments, and public spaces but is also deeply embedded in the education system. English, as the primary medium of instruction in many education institutions, further reinforces its perceived importance for academic success and future career prospects. Consequently, students are increasingly inclined to prioritize English, often at the expense of their native languages, as they associate it with better opportunities and social acceptance in both local and global contexts. Even the perceived value of the Filipino language was insufficient to counterbalance the pressure faced by younger generations in social and academic settings.

There is a pressing need to address the growing language shift among younger generations, particularly the decline in the use of the Filipino language. As globalization and the dominance of English continue to influence educational systems, media, and social interactions, younger generations may increasingly prioritize English over their native languages. This shift not only threatens the preservation of cultural identity and heritage but also risks undermining the linguistic diversity that is central to the nation’s social fabric.

## 6. Recommendations

Educational policies should be revisited and strengthened, ensuring a balanced promotion of both Filipino and English, thus encouraging bilingual proficiency without compromising cultural heritage. Social media platforms, as influential venues for communication, could be leveraged to celebrate Filipino language and culture, encouraging young content creators to incorporate Filipino in their digital expressions. Furthermore, the integration of Filipino language courses in higher education curricula, alongside English proficiency training, can help bridge the gap between language skills and preserve linguistic diversity. Efforts across different sectors—education, media, and policy—must be undertaken to reverse the trend of language shift, safeguarding the

Filipino language for future generations.

## 7. Conclusions

The study explored the perceptions of Gen Z college students toward the Filipino language and identified key factors influencing its use. Students viewed Filipino as a tool for emotional connection and social interaction, highlighting its role in family and community ties, national identity, and social advocacy. Despite this, the emergence of hybrid linguistic forms, combining Filipino and English, reflected a shift in language practices among Gen Z, driven by media and online trends. Some Gen Z students favored English due to its perceived global utility, career prospects, and dominance in digital spaces like YouTube and TikTok. The prominence of English in education, along with its association with academic success and global opportunities, further marginalized Filipino, creating a disconnect between the language spoken at home and in school. Consequently, the language shift toward English was seen as a response to societal and educational expectations, often viewed as necessary for social acceptance and academic credibility.

This study has several limitations that may affect its credibility and generalizability. The small sample size may not fully capture the diverse linguistic attitudes of the broader Gen Z population, and the reliance on interviews introduces potential response bias, as participants may have provided socially desirable answers. In addition, the findings are context-specific and may not be applicable to all Gen Z students across different regions and institutions. The study also lacks a longitudinal perspective, offering only an overview of current language preferences without accounting for potential shifts over time. To address these limitations, future research should include a larger and more diverse sample, adopt a mixed-methods approach combining qualitative and quantitative data, and conduct longitudinal studies to track evolving linguistic practices. Further exploration of institutional policies and curriculum design could provide deeper insights into language preferences, while studies on hybrid linguistic forms like Taglish may help understand their impact on cognitive, social, and cultural identity. Other factors, such as family upbringing, peer influence, and globalization, should also be considered in analyzing Gen Z students' language preferences.

## Author Contributions

Conceptualization, D.D.L., L.A.L., M.N.D.L., R.N.S., J.M.M., R.B.D.R. and J.V.C.; methodology, D.D.L., L.A.L., M.N.D.L., R.N.S., J.M.M., R.B.D.R. and J.V.C.; software, D.D.L., L.A.L., M.N.D.L., R.N.S., J.M.M., R.B.D.R. and J.V.C.; validation, D.D.L., L.A.L., M.N.D.L., R.N.S., J.M.M., R.B.D.R. and J.V.C.; formal analysis, D.D.L., L.A.L., M.N.D.L., R.N.S., J.M.M., R.B.D.R. and J.V.C.; investigation, D.D.L., L.A.L., M.N.D.L., R.N.S., J.M.M., R.B.D.R. and J.V.C.; resources, D.D.L., L.A.L., M.N.D.L., R.N.S., J.M.M., R.B.D.R. and J.V.C.; data curation, D.D.L., L.A.L., M.N.D.L., R.N.S., J.M.M., R.B.D.R. and J.V.C.; writing—original draft preparation, D.D.L., L.A.L., M.N.D.L., R.N.S., J.M.M., R.B.D.R. and J.V.C.; writing—review and editing, D.D.L., L.A.L., M.N.D.L., R.N.S., J.M.M., R.B.D.R. and J.V.C.; visualization, D.D.L., L.A.L., M.N.D.L., R.N.S., J.M.M., R.B.D.R. and J.V.C.; supervision, D.D.L., L.A.L., M.N.D.L., R.N.S., J.M.M., R.B.D.R. and J.V.C.; project administration, D.D.L., L.A.L., M.N.D.L., R.N.S., J.M.M., R.B.D.R. and J.V.C.; funding acquisition, D.D.L., L.A.L., M.N.D.L., R.N.S., J.M.M., R.B.D.R. and J.V.C. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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## Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

## Data Availability Statement

Not applicable.

## Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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