

Tagalog / Pilipino / Filipino: Do they differ?

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http://www.emanila.com/pilipino/various/ntu_tagalog.htm

What would you call the language that you use, Tagalog? Pilipino? Filipino? Why do foreigners and Pilipinos in other countries call the Philippines national language Tagalog? Here at home, why is the national language still gets called Tagalog after the change in name 17 years ago? Is Tagalog different from Pilipino? From Filipino? Let's look at these differences based on concept and appearance.

Tagalog is the language in Bulacan, Batangas, Rizal, Laguna, Quezon, Cavite, Mindoro, Marinduque, some parts of Nueva Ecija, Puerto Princesa and also Metro Manila. This then is a natural language, with its own native speakers. It is one particular language that is spoken by one of the ethnolinguistic groups in the country, the Tagalogs. Even on the arrival of Miguel Lopez de Legaspi in 1565 to Manila, they noticed that many Pilipinos were speaking it (Tagalog).

Tagalog got involved in the national arena when President Manuel Quezon declared a national language based on Tagalog on 30 December 1937 (Executive Order No. 134). Starting in 1940, it (the Tagalog-based national language) was taught in all public and private schools.

Pilipino is based on Tagalog

Meantime, the language Pilipino was the Filipino National Language (in 1943) that was based on Tagalog beginning in 1959, when Department Order No. 7 was passed by then Secretary Jose Romero of the Department of Education. This same name (Pilipino) was also used for the official language, the language for teaching and subject in national language starting 1959. This stopped only when Filipino was approved as the national language. Filipino was (the name) used to call the national language in the 1987 Constitution (1973 although the official language was still Pilipino).

It was apparent that Pilipino was also Tagalog in concept and structure and there was no Pilipino language before 1959. Also, there was no Filipino language before 1973. Pilipino is different from Filipino even though both became national languages because these are different concepts --- one was based on only one language and the other on many languages in the Philippines, including English and Spanish.

Because it was based on Tagalog and usage by the Tagalogs, the non-Tagalogs were not given the opportunity to become part of the enrichment and development of Pilipino. And in the schools, (the word) aklat is more correct (to use) than libro; takdang-aralin than asaynment; pamantasan than kolehiyo/unibersidad; mag-aaral than estudyante. It was quite a long period that Tagalog prevailed and "swayed". In applying for a job, for example, teacher and translator in Pilipino, the Tagalog (native speaker) would get hired before the non-Tagalog. What only turned out to be the problem then was which (variety of) Tagalog is "more beautiful, better, appropriate" that was disputed among the Tagalogs from Bulacan, Laguna and Batangas. Occurrences such as these were labelled by Professor Leopoldo Yabes then as "Tagalog Imperialism". People were so conditioned to Tagalog that inspite of the change on how to call the national language (Pilipino, Filipino), Tagalog was still used by Pilipinos and foreigners when referring to it.

This conditioning also brought about the negative reaction from the non-Tagalogs.

Languages that are widely used like Cebuano, Hiligaynon and Ilokano were put aside. This in turn became

the reason for changing the national language from Pilipino (Tagalog) to Filipino in the Constitution of 1973 and 1987.

Additions to the Filipino alphabet

The term Filipino for the national language did not come from the English word Filipino for the citizens of the country. The F here also did not come from English. These are misconceptions. It (Filipino) derived from the revised concept of (a) national language on the basis of all languages in the Philippines, including English and Spanish. There is an F sound in several languages in the Philippines as in afuy (apoy/fire), kofun (kaibigan/friend) of the Ibanag, afyu flafus (magandang umaga/good morning) of the Bilaan, fidu (peste/pestilence) of the S. Cotabato Manobo, etc. The use of F signified that Tagalog is no longer the only basis of the national language because there is no such sound in Tagalog. P replaces any f sound in Tagalog as in pamilya (familya/familia) and reperensya (referencia/reference). There were also additions to the Filipino Alphabet. From 20 letters in Tagalog, the letters became 28 in Filipino. Added were the 8 letters c, ch, f, j, rr, v, x, z to accommodate the sounds from the languages in the Philippines, English and Spanish.

The essence of the concept of Filipino as based on the languages of the Philippines is its being the national lingua franca. In the communication of each Pilipino with one another especially in the cities, they are using a language that fellow Pilipinos know even if they have a native language like Cebuano, Ilokano, Pampango, Tausug, Kalinga, etc. This language is serving as the second language and lingua franca. Filipino is the primary lingua franca in the country. As a result, it should not be expected that aklat will be used but libro or buk (book), not silid-aralan but klasrum, not pahayagan but diyaryo/peryodiko, not manananggol but abugado/lawyer. It is likewise hard to argue 'why borrow when we have our own'? Who the 'we' there should be defined, the Tagalogs only or the majority of the Pilipinos?

Cebuano variety of Filipino

Because it is indeed the lingua franca and second language, varieties of these are being formed as a result of interference or mixing of the first languages of the speakers. So if a Cebuano will use Filipino, (something like) this could not be avoided: Nagbasa ako ng libro (bumasa ako ng libro). Before 1973, the said sentence is wrong because Tagalog indeed was the basis. But now this is considered as the Cebuano variety of Filipino.

The change in attitude towards Filipino and calling it Tagalog will not simply disappear.

But the time will come especially when those non-Tagalogs themselves lose the inhibitions to use Filipino so that they will contribute words that will become part of the national language.

If this happens, perhaps, calling the national language of the Philippines as Tagalog will then be forgotten.

NTUNote: This translation from the Filipino version is by Antonio Senga, Filipino Language Studies coordinator, NT University, Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia, 22 August 2000.

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