

# What are the signs that Philippine languages are declining?

- According to Ethnologue (2016), 13 Philippine languages are **endangered**, 11 are **severely endangered**, and 4 are **extinct**.
- Many Philippine languages score poorly on UNESCO's 9 factors to measure language vitality (UNESCO Language Endangerment Assessment), classified as **"unsafe" or worse**.
- The Philippines is among the **Top 10 "Language Hotspots of the World"**, characterized by: high linguistic diversity, high levels of endangerment, and relatively low levels of documentation (*livingtongues.org*)
- As a percentage of the total population, **even major regional languages have shrunk** since 1937 (when the National Language was declared), except Tagalog (*Censes of Population & Housing*)
- A class divide has arisen in urban centers in Luzon, whereby **parents of private school children speak Taglish**, while parents of public school parents speak the mother tongue. This is observed in Legazpi, Naga, San Fernando, Angeles, Baguio, Santiago, Bayombong, Dagupan, and other cities.
- Most mixed marriages, especially in Manila, **don't pass on their native languages to the children**—only Tagalog or English.
- The national language is now rivaling Bikol as the lingua franca in parts of Bikol region, Akeanon in Aklan, and Hiligaynon in Antique (*Lapid, 2009*)
- **The national language is replacing Maguindanaon and Bisaya** as the main lingua franca of Cotabato City (*Lapid, 2009*)
- **Tagalog and English have become languages of prestige** and adoption by the wealthy in Aklan, Davao, & General Santos
- **Mall and fastfood employees speak in Taglish** even in non-Tagalog areas (*Herrera, 2014; Dagang, 2016*)
- Just a few years ago, the main language of commerce in downtown Zamboanga City was Chavacano; **now it is predominantly Tagalog** (*Herrera, 2014*)
- **A variety of Chavacano used to be spoken** in Cavite and Ermita, but now they are mostly spoken by a few elderly people
- **Virtually all Cuyonon parents now speak Tagalog** to their children. It is the everyday language of Puerto Princesa and all big settlements in Palawan
- **Ilokano is being eroded in traditional Ilokano areas**, with many children speaking in Tagalog in the playground, in malls, and even the home (*Balloguing, 2005*)
- **Ilokano has been replaced by Tagalog in much of northern Nueva Ecija**, such as in San Jose, Muñoz, Carranglan, Gabaldon, San Isidiro, etc. (*Addun, 2006*).
- Returning balikbayans since the 70's have seen a **continual decline in use of Ibanag and Ilokano in Tuguegarao**, Cagayan (*Turla, 2002*)
- Former Senator Sonny Alvarez of Isabela commented that when he talks to youth in Ilokano, they reply in Tagalog (*Faelnar, 2006*)
- **Less than half (47%) of Kankanaeys used their native tongue in the home**, as of 2004 (*Census, 2004*)
- According to a survey, **only 66% of Ilokano parents actually speak Ilokano to their children** in San Fernando, La Union (*Pimentel et al., 2013*)
- It is predicted that **Pangasinan language will be moribund (practically extinct)** in 30 years. (*Manila Times, 2 Sept 2007*)
- The **Romblon languages** of Asi, Romblomanon, and Unham are dying (*Fabicon, 2008*)
- Many youth in Luzon have been inculcated with the belief that their mother tongue is **"too native", "corny", "vulgar", or "low class"** (*Pangilinan, 2009*)
- Youth are increasingly **using Tagalog for courtship** instead of their mother tongues (*Pangilinan, 2009*)
- **Kapampangans used to be the majority** in northeastern Bataan (eg. towns of Dinalupihan and Hermosa) until mid 20th century. (*Lapid, 2009*)
- While Diosdado Macapagal and many of his political associates were celebrated Kapampangan writers and orators, **many political activities and meetings in Pampanga are now conducted in Tagalog**, as politicians do not share the same command of their mother tongue as the previous generation (*Pangilinan, 2009*).
- "Those in urbanized centers like San Fernando and Angeles, particularly the younger generation who are affected by other cultures such as the center, which is Manila, **don't speak the (Kapampangan) language.**" (*De Guzman, 2018*)
- Kapampangan youth's **vocabulary is diminishing**. They tend to borrow massively from Tagalog as they do not know the equivalent Kapampangan terms (*Pangilinan, 2009; Coloma, 2011*)
- **Severe vocabulary deficiency and code-switching** observed in Waray children, especially in the urban center of Tacloban (*Oyzon, 2008*)
- Urban Cebuano has **diminished in grammatical complexity** over the past 50 years (*Wolff, 2012*)

**With the death and disappearance of a language, an irreplaceable unit in our knowledge and understanding of human thought and world-view is lost forever.**

—Stephen Wurm, ed., UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger of Disappearing, 2001

**The Filipino subjects in the new General Education Curriculum should be open to all Philippine languages, or else our mother tongues will continue to decline. Our mother tongues are vital to our society, our cultural fabric, and to the enrichment of the national language.**