

# THE FILIPINO LANGUAGE IN THE MALAYSIAN LINGUISTIC SPACE<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This paper deals with the Filipino language as it is seen in the Malaysian perspective. It aims to present the status of the Filipino language in the linguistic space of Malaysia. Filipino, often called Tagalog by the Malaysians, share some linguistic commonalities with the Malay language being sisters in the Austronesian language family. The Filipino language appears in the mass media and at the academia of Malaysia. This paper further deals with the teaching of Filipino in Malaysia. This presents also the issues, problems, and challenges in teaching the language among the Malaysian students particularly at the premier university of Malaysia - the University of Malaya.

*Keywords: Tagalog, language family, linguistic commonalities, University of Malaya, and challenges*

## Introduction

The country which is known now as Malaysia, has a varied geography encompassing the Bornean states of Sarawak and Sabah and the Malay Peninsula. Its final formation was in 1965 when Singapore exited from the Federation of Sabah, Sarawak, and Malaya. This country has its historical share of European colonization starting with the Portuguese in Malacca, followed by the occupation of the Dutch, and finally by the British rule. It was with the British rule that various subjects of the British Empire were brought to the country. What remains nowadays is that of the colorful mosaic of diverse people, languages, and cultures which make up Malaysia. Malaysia can be described as a multicultural and multilingual society. As a multilingual society, various languages belonging to widely dispersed language families found their way to Malaysia and are currently spoken by large communities of speakers. Among the legacies of Britain is the English language which is widely used in the country. The indigenous population speaks languages belonging to the Austronesian family of languages. Majority of the Malaysians are Malays who speak the Malay language and practice Islam. It is their language, Bahasa Melayu, which is the basis of the national language called Bahasa Malaysia.<sup>2</sup>

Other language families are those of Sino-Tibetan language family spoken by the various Chinese ethnicities. These languages include Hokkien, Mandarin, Cantonese, Hakka, Teochiu, and Hainanese to name a few. Of these Chinese languages, Hokkien is the most widely spoken among Chinese Malaysians. Majority of the Chinese speakers are concentrated in the cities or state capitals and other places where the Chinese had settled even before the arrival of Western powers starting with the Portuguese in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

The Indo-Aryan and Dravidian language families are spoken by the members of various Indian communities. There are also languages which originated from other parts of the subcontinent of India particularly those of the Indo-European language family. These members of the Indian communities are the descendants of the Indians who were brought in by the British colonial government to serve in the British administration and other capacities. Among the Indian languages, the Tamil language is the most predominant language, owing to the fact that the number of speakers is greater than the other Indian languages. The existence of the Tamils cannot be tied only to that of the British colonial government since there were already Tamils before the arrival of the Western powers. The Indianization of Malaysia and Southeast Asia as a whole is largely carried out by the southern Indians particularly the Tamils of which Hinduism and Buddhism are the living artifacts and proofs. Other Indian languages spoken in Malaysia are Malayalam, Telugu, Gujarati, Punjabi, Sindhi, and Urdu to name a few.

Among the Austronesian languages spoken in Malaysia are those of the greater Malayo-Polynesian stock. The Iban and the Kadazan languages form the largest among these languages which are concentrated mainly on the island of Borneo where the states of Sarawak and Sabah are geographically located. Other Bornean languages include Bidayu, Kayan, Melanau, Kelabit, Bisaya, Dusun, and other languages which are also shared by the Indonesian Borneo. Of the Indonesian origin, the languages include Javanese and Buginese which are spoken by Malaysian who are of Indonesian ancestry.

There are also languages spoken in Malaysia which are originally from the Philippines. The presence of Philippine languages in Malaysia started in Sabah during the emergence of the sultanates in the 15th century. The most dominant Philippine language in Sabah is the Bahasa Suluk or Tausug. The speakers are concentrated heavily in Sandakan, Semporna, and Kota Kinabalu. Bahasa Sama-Bajau is the second largest Philippine language in Sabah. Other languages include Chavacano, Iranun, Molboganon, Jama Mapun, Sama, Yakan, Cebuano, and Ilocano. One of the currently used languages is "TÚgalog" or "Tagáwug" among the Muslim Filipinos. This variety is officially known in the Philippines as Filipino confining Tagalog to the niche of being a regional language in the Tagalog region.<sup>3</sup>

Currently, the Filipino language in Malaysia has its prominent use primarily among Filipinos. Owing to the fact that there are more than 175 languages spoken in the Philippines, Filipino also functions as the lingua franca in the Filipino community in Malaysia. Foremost, the language is used in personal and social communication among them. The majority of the Filipino workers in Malaysia are doing household service. Most of these household service workers are high school graduates. This educational attainment marks the fact of high school level of English but advanced fluency in Filipino language. This usage of Filipino caters to the non-fluent speakers of English with English being confined among those whose education attainment is beyond the high school diploma.

The Filipino language is also employed in the religious services among Protestant and Catholic Filipinos themselves. Although there are mainstream Protestant Churches in Malaysia, majority of the non-affiliated Filipino Protestants are holding their church services primarily in the residences. The atmosphere permits the use of the Filipino language in these household services. In the case of the Filipino Catholics, the various congregations in Peninsular Malaysia allow the use of Filipino in the Catholic masses. This is the usual case and the frequency of

celebrating the mass in Filipino is augmented when there is availability of a Filipino Catholic priest, a more sizable Catholic Filipino community, and on special occasions in relation to the Philippine official holidays and holidays of religious obligations.

In the mass media in Malaysia, the Filipino language is used in the films imported from the Philippines. These films are shown in the Malaysian TV programs and have sizable following. Among these films are those which are starred by the tandem of Jericho Rosales and Kristine Hermosa. It is in this avenue that Filipino language has contact with the greater Malaysian audience. On the academic aspect of Filipino, the Labor Department of the Philippine Embassy in Kuala Lumpur offers Filipino language courses for those Filipinos who do not possess language proficiency as well as foreign students who are interested in learning the language. Among these students of Filipino are those who are children of Filipinos working here in Malaysia and those Filipinos who are Malaysian by citizenship.

In the academia, the Filipino language is taught at the University of Malaya. It is the only educational institution which offers Filipino language in pure academic setting. There are two faculties which offer Filipino courses – the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics and the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Because the Filipino language has its own niche occupied in the academia in relation to the Malaysian linguistic space, it is this academic setting that this paper is to delve into in the next sections.

### **The Filipino Language: From Language Policy to Language Teaching**

The Filipino language is a product of linguistic evolution caused by various forces. It sprang out of the fusion of Tagalog language and the source languages such as Spanish and English. Before the arrival of the western powers, Tagalog itself had also language contact with Sanskrit, Chinese and Arabic. These linguistic influences are much visible in the lexicon. However, Filipino is still an Austronesian language which exhibits a verb-initial typology and complex verb morphology.

At the initial stage, the birth of Filipino is tied with the language policy of the colonial masters in the Philippines, namely, Spain and America, which imposed the use of Spanish and English as the official languages and media of instruction. The political primacy of Manila in the Tagalog Region accords the Tagalog language the upper hand over the other Philippine languages. Tagalog, the language in Manila and the nearby regions, was mandated to be the basis of the common language by the then President Manuel L. Quezon, the President of the Commonwealth of the Philippines in 1935. It was explicitly stated in the 1935 Constitution that there shall be a common language for the Commonwealth of the Philippine Islands. From 1901 till 1946, the medium of instruction is still English. This is maintained until 1973 when the quest for a national language was given impetus alongside the rise of nationalism. It was back in 1950's that Tagalog was given priority over any Philippine languages. However, the use of regional dialects in teaching the primary years was also encouraged. The status of the Tagalog language as the basis of the national language was diminished when the 1973 Constitution rescinded Tagalog and named the national language as Pilipino with the initial letter "P". The [p] sound instead of [f] is common among Tagalog speakers



a	b	c	d	e	f	g
h	i	j	k	l	m	n
ñ	ng	o	p	q	r	s
t	u	v	w	x	y	z

Generally the letters c, f, j, q, v, ñ, z, x are used in the spelling of words mostly originating from Spanish and English. Among the Spanish words are Corazon, Davao del Norte, Negros Occidental, Fernando, Jose Rizal, Iñigo, Quezon, Villanueva, Zaldivar, to name a few which are all proper names and are still currently used. In the case of common Spanish nouns, these nouns underwent Filipinization. Majority of the spellings are changed to follow the pedagogical description “**Anong bigkas siyang baybay**” which means that the spelling must be constrained by the phonological principles and processes of the first language which in this case is Filipino. Simply put, the word must be spelled according to its sound. Examples of the Filipinized Spanish words are presented below.

**Table I. Examples of Filipinized Spanish Nouns**

No.	Spanish	Filipino	Gloss
1	angeles	angheles	angels
2	cinturón	sinturon	belt
3	ciudad	siudad	city
4	civilización	sibilisasyon	civilization
5	cuaderno	kwaderno	notebook
6	cuchara	kutsara	spoon
7	dios	Diyos	God
8	educación	edukasyon	education
9	estatua	istatwa	statue
10	gobierno	gobyerno	government
11	iglesia	iglesia	church
12	libro	libro	book
13	mesa	mesa	table
14	monumento	monumento	monument
15	santo	santo	saint

Table I presents the Spanish-based nominal lexical category. Note that some of the nouns are spelled according to Spanish orthography. It is so when there is a corresponding sound or orthographic representation in Filipino. The religious mindset and orientation of the Filipinos are reflected by some of these words which are categorically belonging to the spheres of religion particularly Roman Catholicism as introduced by Spain. Normally, all Hispanic words are commonly used and are in most cases competing with the native words or most currently the English words.

Aside from the nouns, Filipino makes use of Spanish adjectives, verbs and prepositions too. All of these categories undergo lexical and orthographic processes as the nominal category does. To exemplify, the Filipino language has the adjectives

**gwapa** and **gwapo** which correspond to the Spanish words **guapa** and **guapo** ‘**beautiful**’ of the feminine and masculine genders respectively. Observe more examples on Table II below.

**Table II. Examples of Filipinized Spanish Adjectives**

No.	Spanish	Filipino	Gloss
1	Aburrido	aburido	‘boring’
2	antipatica, antipatico	antipatika, antipatiko	‘mean’
3	Claro	klaro	‘clear’
4	Decente	desente	‘decent’
5	Dominante	dominante	‘dominant’
6	Educado	edukado	‘educated’
7	Elegante	elegante	‘elegant’
8	estricta, estricto	istrikta, istrikto	‘strict’
9	Falsificar	palsipika	‘to forge’
10	maldita, maldito	maldita, maldito	‘bad’ (character)
11	Pobre	pobre	‘poor’
12	Puro	puro	‘pure’
13	santa, santo	santa, santo	‘holy’
14	Solo	solo	‘alone’

Table II presents the examples of Spanish adjectives which are entered into the Filipino lexicon. The feminine and masculine inflected forms are also absorbed and used according to the inflectional properties of the Spanish gender. It observes the syntax of the adjective phrase in Spanish which means that masculine nouns are used with masculine adjectives and feminine nouns are used with feminine adjectives. Although some of these adjectives underwent semantic shift like **aburido** ‘**boring**’ which I would say that it means ‘**irritable due to so many problems**’, in most cases the original meaning is retained.

In the case of Filipinized Spanish verbs, the same undergo the change of spelling and retention or change of meaning. The main difference of Filipino verbs from its Spanish counterparts is the use of the inflected form instead of observing the correct inflection of the Spanish verbs. Observe the examples of Filipinized Spanish verbs on Table III below.

Table III. Examples of Filipinized Spanish Verbs

No.	Spanish	Filipino	Gloss
1	apelar	apela	'to appeal'
2	ayudar	ayuda	'to help'
3	castigar	kastigo	'to castigate'
4	cerrar	sara	'to close'
5	comparar	kumpara	'to compare'
6	confesar	kumpisal	'to confess'
7	confirmar	kumpirma	'to confirm'
8	consentir	kunsente	'to allow'
9	consultar	kunsulta	'to consult'
10	contar	kwenta	'to count'
11	copiar	kopya	'to copy'
12	declarar	deklara	'to declare'
13	descubrir	diskubre	'to discover'
14	empezar	umpisa	'to start'
15	entender	intindi	'to understand'
16	explicar	isplika	'to explain'
17	gastar	gasta	'to spend'
18	investigar	imbestiga	'to investigate'
19	juzgar	husga	'to judge'
20	rezar	dasal	'to pray'

Except for the verbs **kumpisal** 'to confess', **kastigo** 'to castigate', **dasal** 'to pray', generally the Filipinized Spanish verbs are verbs inflected in the simple present 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular according to the Spanish verb system. It is characteristic among language varieties undergoing language contact. All of these Filipinized Spanish can be affixed with any verbal affixes as any native Tagalog verbs do. Therefore, the Filipinized Spanish verbs in Column 3 of Table III are considered root words and assumed their fully inflected forms when they undergo computation in the syntactic structures. To conclude by exemplification, the Filipinized Spanish verb **umpisa** 'to start' is inflected as **mag-umpisa** 'to start', **nag-umpisa** 'started', **nag-uumpisa** 'starting', **mag-uumpisa** 'will start', **umpisahan** 'to be started', **inumpisahan** 'was started', **inuumpisahan** 'is being started', **uumpisahan** 'will be started'. There is a vast array of verbal affixes (applicatives, middles, unaccusatives, unergatives, causatives, etc) which can be used in inflecting and deriving verbs in Filipino.

Regarding Spanish prepositions, there is only one which enters freely into the computation and the Filipino lexicon. It is the preposition **para** 'in order to, for'. It spelled in the same way as it is in Spanish but its use has few deviations. Normally in Spanish, **para** 'for' is used with the infinitive like, **para empezar** 'in order to investigate'. However in Filipino it assumes the function of the two prepositions **para** 'in order to' and **por** 'for'. Observe the examples below.

1. Pumunta si Pedro sa simbahan **para magkumpisal** ng kanyang kasalanan.  
went the Pedro to church for confess the his sin  
*'Pedro went to the church in order to confess his sins.'*

2. **Para** sa kaibigan ko ang regalo.  
 for to friend my the gift  
*'The gift is for my friend.'*

Generally speaking, most of the Filipinos have no cognizance of the Spanish words in the lexicon of Filipino and other Philippine languages. The loanwords are just assumed as originally Philippine. Unless one is knowledgeable of the Spanish language, one can identify the Spanish origin of the word. In 1987, the teaching of Spanish as a compulsory subject was abolished. It can be considered as (1) a loss of rich and indispensable cultural heritage and (2) closure of an extensive avenue of learning.

As provided by the constitution, English, in conjunction with the Filipino language, is the official language of the Republic of the Philippines. Its influence is so pervasive that it could be seen, heard, and felt everywhere in the Philippines. All the major signboards, street names, and building names are written in English. Majority of the broadsheets are written in English and are having wide circulation. There are regular broadcasts and film shows in English. English is still widely used as the medium of instruction in all levels of education. The government affairs are officially conducted in English. The Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines is in English and the English version is the basis for interpretation. In the churches, there are provided time slots for religious services and masses to be conducted in English. To make the story short, English is everywhere in the Philippine society and encroached every aspect of the Filipino community.

Regarding orthography, English words are in the process of Filipinization. Various sections are still debating on the standardization of spelling. There are others who are hesitant in adopting Filipinized re-spelling of English loanwords. Others make use of the invented words which are Tagalog-based like **kaguruan** 'faculty' instead of **fakulti** 'faculty'. At the Linguistics Department of the University of the Philippines, the re-spelling of English loanwords is accepted and quite liberal. Observe some of the English-based words as presented in Table IV below.

**Table IV. Filipinized English loanwords**

No.	Filipinized English loanwords	Competing Words	Gloss
1	department	departamento, kagawaran	'department'
2	linggwist	dalubwika	linguist
3	ekspert	eksperto, dalubhasa	'expert'
4	fakulti	kaguruan	'faculty'
5	government	gubyrno, pamahalaan	'government'
6	memorandum	opisyal na sulat	'memorandum'
7	organiseysyon	organisasyon, lipunan	'organization'
8	profesional	propesyonal	'professional'
9	representativ	kinatawan, representatibo	'representative'
10	revyu	rebyu, pagbabalik-aral	'review'

Table IV presents only a sample of English loanwords. Just like the Spanish loanwords, English loanwords are re-spelled according to the Filipino orthography.



Original spelling if the Filipino orthographic system permits. Furthermore, the sample of Conversations 1 and 2 in the preceding pages testify the pervasiveness of English in daily speech. In various written texts like in newspapers, magazines, and books, the English words are readily spelled according to English orthography.

### The Teaching of Filipino among Malaysian Students

The Filipino courses are normally taught at the Department of Southeast Asian Studies (DSAS) at the Faculty of the Arts and Social Sciences (FASS) of the University of Malaya (UM). Aside from Filipino, there are other three Asian languages taught at DSAS, namely, Burmese, Thai, and Vietnamese.

The following Table V presents the number of students enrolled in the Filipino courses from 2001 until 2008 at the DSAS at the Faculty of the Arts and Social Sciences of the University of Malaya. It also presents the course codes and the descriptive titles of the courses in Filipino. These courses are designed for students pursuing the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Southeast Asian Studies at UM. Each of these courses is taught four hours a week and carries the weight of 3-credit hours.

**Table V. Enrollment of Students in Filipino Courses**

Academic Year	First Semester			Second Semester			Total
	ATEA1319 (Bahasa Filipino I-A)	ATEA2419 (Bahasa Filipino II-A)	ATEA3419 (Bahasa Filipino III-A)	ATEA1419 (Bahasa Filipino I-B)	ATEA2424 (Bahasa Filipino II-B)	ATEA3424 (Bahasa Filipino III-B)	Number of Students
2001/02	12	4	2	19	6	2	45
2002/03	15	4	8	18	4	7	56
2003/04	17	7	5	16	8	3	56
2004/05	29	6	8	29	4	8	84
2005/06	30	26	5	26	26	4	117
2006/07	33	17	26	33	16	26	151
2007/08	40	14	17	40	12	17	140

The table above also shows that there is a very substantial increase in the number of students taking up Filipino language courses. The increase is from 45 students in 2001 up to 140 students in the academic year 2007/2008 which presents a 311% increase. The student population taking Filipino is made up mostly of Malaysian citizens. In the years 2005 till 2008, there were also students coming from Brunei. These foreign students are Malays and are fluent speakers of the Malay language, another Austronesian language. Among Malaysian students, the Malays constituted a very strong majority among Filipino language students.

Asked why the students opted to study Filipino, various answers came up ranging from the influence of mass media to academic and personal learning. Majority answered affirmatively because of the Filipino films which are shown on Malaysian TV. Among the films shown in Malaysia are *Sana'y Wala ng Wakas*, *Ngayong Nandito Ka*, *Mula sa Pusong Anak*, *All of My Life*, *Crying Ladies*, *Forevermore*, and the like, whose stars are of Hispanic or American phenotypes

like Jericho Rosales, Kristine Hermosa, Rico Yan, and Claudine Barretto among others. These Filipino actors and actresses captivated the Malaysian audience including those who took Filipino courses. These films are presented either with Malay subtitles or are dubbed in Malay. These films serve as a very positive motivating factor among these Filipino language learners. In all of the Filipino courses, the use of these Filipino films is implemented for pedagogical purposes.

The first year courses ATEA1319 and ATEA1419 are considered as either elective or required courses among BA students at FASS-UM. As the students are choosing their majors after the first year of studies, those who are taking BA in Southeast Asian Studies at DSAS are required to take the remaining four semesters of Filipino courses of ATEA2419, ATEA2424, ATEA3419 and ATEA3424. In relation to the course content, these courses are taught inclusive of language, culture, and Philippine institutions. Various types of texts are employed to ensure the acquisition of the four macroskills - listening, reading, writing, and speaking. The first year courses are taught focusing on the rudiments of basic grammar such as sentence types, agentive verbs **-um** and **mag-**, NP markers, and the basic question patterns. These topics are complemented with the teaching of everyday greetings, self-introduction, asking for direction, following directions, biographical sketches and the Philippine geography and tourism. The students need to write simple biographical sketches of themselves and of their friends. They are also required to present dialogues, group discussions, and do individual oral presentation choosing their own titles. The second year courses ATEA2419 and ATEA2424 are set for the learning the intermediate level. The sentential structures include the use of compound and complex sentences necessary for intermediate paragraph writing. The complexity of the verb system is gradually introduced particularly the verbal affixes **-in**, **-an**, and **i-**. The students are further introduced to Philippine Literature focusing on the fables, folklore, poetry, and the narrative. The texts from Philippine History include the pre-Islamic Filipinos, the Islamization of the Philippines, and the Hispanization of the Philippines. Activities are done which enhance the four macroskills of the students.

The third year course ATEA3419 and ATE3424 are aimed to enhance the students' knowledge of the Filipino language and Philippine Institutions. These courses provide the students the learning of the causative verbs and the number inflectional category in verbs. They are further immersed into the Philippine Institutions by using the texts based on the novels of Dr Jose Rizal, namely, *Noli Me Tangere* and *El Filibusterismo*. The texts from American colonialism and the contemporary Philippines are also used in the teaching of these courses. Advanced level of activities is done for the enhancement of the acquired level of proficiency and skills among students.

Calculating the grades is fixed as follows: course work 30%, oral 20%, and final examination 50%. To get an A grade, the student needs to obtain the 76% mark carrying the weight of 4.0. The conditional passing mark is set at 36% carrying the weight of 1.0.

### **Issues in Teaching Filipino Language**

There are three major issues that I would like to address here, namely, (1) the use of English as the medium of instruction, (2) non-availability of localized teaching

materials, such Filipino-Malay or Malay- Filipino dictionaries and textbooks, and (3) the close affinity of Tagalog and Malay languages.

Generally speaking, the Filipino language students speak Bahasa Malaysia, a variety of Malay which is the official language of Malaysia. As a foreign lecturer, I use English as the medium of instruction and gradually increase the usage of Filipino as the student progresses to higher levels of the language. The use of English as the medium of instruction does not help at all due to lack of proficiency in English. English is considered as a language of interference in the learning process of the students taking Filipino language. Aside from these, some students personally feel that English is a foreign language with religious connotation and therefore contrary to their religious beliefs. Others signify their contempt by calling English as a colonial language and labeled it derogatorily. The outright statement among students is that English is a difficult language to learn. Whatever reasons the students have, English is used in teaching Filipino courses alongside the Filipino language itself. Owing to the fact that there are so many English words in the Filipino lexicon, reading and understanding texts could be facilitated if the students are proficient in English.

To date, there is only one available textbook (*Learn Filipino*) for the teaching of ATEA1319 which is authored by Dr Alicia Vega Atilio and published by the University of Malaya Press in 2001. Among the reference materials, the students make use also of the books (1) *Filipino for Everyone* authored by Paquito Badayos and published by Pelanduk Publications in 2000, (2) *Language Phrases* by Dr Atilio. For the remaining seven courses, the teaching materials are currently written and are in polishing stage for compiling and eventual publishing. Among the dictionaries used are those authored by English (1986) and Constantino (1999).

Currently, there is the research group which is headed by Associate Professor Dr Asha Doshi and Associate Professor Dr Zubaidah Ibrahim-Bell of the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics of the University of Malaya and with the collaboration of the author of this paper and Assistant Professor Maria Khristina S. Manuelli of the Department of Linguistics of the University of the Philippines. This research group aimed to write and publish the bilingual Malay-Filipino dictionary.

When it comes to the close affinity between Malay and Filipino, the classroom scenario may have this picture. Consider the words **salamat** 'thank you', **dalamhati** 'emotional pain', **langit** 'paradise, heaven', **lupa**, 'land', **bukid** 'mountain, farm', **harapan** 'front, façade', **sakit** 'pain', and **guru** 'teacher' among others. Since these words are either homophonous or homologous with the Malay equivalents, these words are taken by face value and translated as is in Malay. The translation produces semantically anomalous sentences or outright ridiculous and even hilarious statements. Observe the sample translation below:

6. Filipino: Nag**dalamhati** ang nanay ko.  
Act-Focus-pain the mother my  
'My mother is in pain.'  
Bahasa : 'Ibu saya menderit.'

- 7 Students' translation to Malay: Nenek ada dalam hatinya. 'Granny is in her heart'

8. Other Anomalous constructions:

8a Niluto            ng manok si nanay.  
Obj-foc-cook by chicken the mother  
'The chicken cooked mother'

8b Kinain           ng isda si nanay.  
Obj-foc-eat by fish the mother  
'The fish ate mother.'

In the classroom setting for introductory Filipino courses, the oral aspect of learning and its output are given less correction but not the writing aspect. In times when the students' grammatical errors are corrected, this typical reply comes in a template manner: "Boleh lah. Sama saja lah!"

## **Conclusion**

The Filipino language in Malaysia is confined among the Filipinos working and residing in Malaysia. It is also spoken by some of the Malaysian citizens in Sabah who are of Filipino ancestry. In the popular media, the Philippine films serve as the vehicle of the Filipino language. This language occupies its academic space at the University of Malaya where it is taught among students of the Faculty of the Arts and Social Sciences and of Languages and Linguistics as well. Teaching Filipino among Malaysian students is challenging and fun. The lack of the proficiency in English language among students does not mean that the students are hindered from learning the language. However, it is a blunt fact that the proficiency in English language would help in facilitating learning. Although Filipino teaching materials are not readily available, the same can be compensated by pursuing steps in writing and producing instructional materials and collaborating with some researchers. The close typological affinities of the Austronesian languages – Filipino and Malay – can either be a blessing or a curse in the teaching and learning processes. There are also some interpersonal factors that can affect the learning of the language which both the teachers and the students are cognizant. The openness towards socio-cultural differences among students and teachers is elemental in teaching and learning a foreign language.

## **Endnotes**

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was presented at the First International Conference on "Filipino as a Global Language" at the University of Hawaii-Manoa, Honolulu, Hawaii, USA on March 17 – 19, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> L.M. Baskaran, *A Malaysian English Primer: Aspects of Malaysian English Features* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 2005).

<sup>3</sup> C. Paz, *Ang Wikang Filipino: Atin Ito* (Quezon City: University of the Philippines System, 1995).