

Filipino for Beginners: Teaching Filipino Language to the Japanese Students of Kagoshima University, Japan

Mary Joy Sawa-an, Polytechnic University of the Philippines, Philippines

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Abstract

The discourse on the study of Filipino has crossed into the global space that is being taught in different parts of the world. In 2011, Filipino for Beginners (FFB) began to be taught with the aim of teaching basic Filipino language learning to Japanese college students at Kagoshima University (K.U), Japan. The purpose of the study was to write the narrative of teaching Japanese students the Filipino language in K.U. towards the proposed development of its teaching. Using Fairclough's Textual Analysis, the reference book, presentation used by the teacher in class, the middle and final exams were analyzed along with the researcher's observation in the FFB class itself. From the data obtained, it appears that there are factors that need to be developed for the further development of teaching Filipino language students. One is to develop their ability to speak and communicate in Filipino and to deepen their learning in the rooted culture of the language being studied. On the whole, the teaching of Japanese students in the Filipino language will be further developed if the cultures of the two countries are balanced in the context of learning. Therefore, the identity and culture of the Japanese is preserved while learning a new language and culture that includes the Filipino language.

Keywords: Filipino for Beginners, Kagoshima University, Learning of Filipino Language in Global Space, Philippine Studies, Textual Analysis

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Introduction

Many countries in the whole world have opened their doors in the study of Filipino and Philippines through the organizational development of Philippines Studies despite the insistence to remove it in Philippine college banking on the implementation of CHED Memorandum no. 20 series 2013. In the paper of San Juan (2017), Filipino, Panitikan and Araling Panlipunan are being taught in 46 universities of different countries like the United States, Australia, Switzerland, France, Russia, China, Canada, Malaysia, Brunei and Japan, besides being taught in 40 Philippine School Overseas. It was also stated that Japan is open to having to learn Filipino in some universities. One of the highlighted studies is the program of Philippine Studies (P.S.) of Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (TUFS) which was transformed into a research institution in 1889 from the former government agency that opened five language departments - English, German, French, Russian and Chinese (Zafra, 2012). Year 1949 when it was again reorganized as a university which opened more than 50 researched languages. At present, under the Faculty of Foreign Studies there are 26 languages being learned. Half of this belongs to languages being found in Asian countries and one is Filipino which was opened as a four-year undergraduate course in P.S. which was established in 1993. Although it was only a part of a greater program of studying Filipino in Osaka University of Japan, learning the Filipino language was emphasized under the Graduate School of Language and Culture wherein a student has the ability to choose what language to study (Nagano, 2012).

One of the well-known universities in the whole country of Japan is Kagoshima University which is ranked 38th place according to the ranking of Japan and 692nd place in rank among universities in the world. Kagoshima University opened the study of Filipino language last 2011 for college students who want to learn a foreign language together with English, German, French and Mandarin languages that aim to join students in global competition in learning a foreign language. At present, there are 17 Japanese students who are enrolled in Filipino for Beginners under a Japanese professor Prof. Satoru Nishimura. He married a Filipina. He was an exchange student in the University of the Philippines where he stayed long to do research. Since the start of the program, Prof. Nishimura, with the help of his wife, taught the basic structure and use of Filipino language as the objective.

Many documented studies in the Filipino language have been done in the global space but what is really the importance of the contextualization in the study of the culture as it is related to learning the language? The study will respond to the challenge in the intellectualization of the Filipino language through strengthening the studies on the global space in the center of Filipino culture. It is also strengthened by teaching and learning the Filipino language through internalization. These strengthened the ties that bind the Filipinos and Japanese.

The program Filipino for Beginners in Kagoshima University, Japan aims to write the narrative in teaching the Filipino language and how to improve it.

The following are suggested for the improvement in teaching it based on research:

1. History and importance of the organized program in Filipino for Beginners in Kagoshima University, Japan.
2. Narrative in teaching the program Filipino for Beginners for Japanese students in K.U.

3. Facts in teaching students of Filipino for Beginners program in the formulation and suggestions of its improvements.

Cultivation and Improvement in Teaching Filipino rooted in the Cultural Context

Language and culture cannot be separated in the study of a language which is related in the culture of a language being learned. According to Yanchang (quoted from the study of Sulit, 2018), “learning a second language is also learning its own culture.” In addition, Mangahis (2010) said, “it is not only the language structure that will be studied but also the culture as a whole which is inside the language being learned.”

A concept can be formed wherein it is made clear the relationship between a language learned and its concomitant context of the culture of the second language learned.

According to Byram and Grundy (2003):

‘Context’ is thus as complex a concept as ‘culture’, the latter being notoriously difficult to define. ‘Culture’ in language teaching and learning is usually defined pragmatically as a/the culture associated with the language being learnt.

It is important that understanding its context enables the learner to relate to time, place and person the culture of the people learning their language. It is not familiarity of the student or learner to the person as the basis for formulating communication, but it is the context or content of the language to be used (Heath, 1986).

In the case of the Japanese learning the Filipino language, it is not only the grammar and goal to formulate a basic communication using the second language, but also it is necessary to cultivate a knowledge of the culture of the language being learned towards a more effective learning.

There was also a project formed in 2007 between De La Salle University and SEOME Regional Language Center of Singapore which is called Filipino Language and Cultural Immersion Program for Singaporeans (FLACIPS) wherein the Filipino language was being taught as a second language among Singaporean. Mangahis (2010) illustrated two settings in the teaching of language, (1) the language classroom which teaches a target language as subject only but the language wasn’t used in conversation outside the classroom and; (2) the second-language setting which points out the continued use of the language outside the classroom during the first two weeks if there is not yet enough knowledge of the language being learned. In this situation, the learners gradually learn how to pronounce or say words and short phrases in their expression. In order to reach the level of second-language setting by Singaporeans, the Filipino language was taught together with the culture imbibed in it like teaching the word “*opo*”, the teacher cultivated the concept of respectfulness of the Filipinos. The learners serve as anthropologist in comprehending and appreciating how things were made in consonance with language learning. He also added that it is important for the learner to learn the correct way of conversing with elders, correct way of saying thank you, correct way of requesting, different ways of agreeing and disagreeing, and understanding intonation and tone of listeners.

The learners must understand the second language being used with their own language. The appropriate behavioral trait in relation to the culture of the language being learned.

In the study of Zafra (2016), he stated or appealed that the study of Filipino language is not only concentrated to grammar and communication but also enhance the relationship of language to Filipino culture: (1) in choosing contextual examples in the Filipino language aspects like ideas, beliefs, values and Filipino personality towards grammatical trait of the language in the study of a personal pronoun where the idea of a Filipino about himself and others. Example is the word “*kita*” which correlates or equivalent to “*ko*” and “*ikaw*” which indicates the nearness of 2 persons talking; (2) learning its use according to its fitness in the context of culture. Derived from *communicative competencies* of Hymes, it is not enough for the learner to know the meaning of words and the rules in using different kinds of speech. It also teaches the appropriate use and interpretation of the language to the different societal situations and cultural context.; (3) study of the different symbols of Filipino culture which may be formed by people, place, thing or object concept and other indicators of culture, society and history of the Philippines; (4) study of a culture that embodies the language. In this recourse, Zafra gave four language competencies which can be used in class - first, description, that describes cultural experiences. Second, giving meaning that refers to the language being used giving evidence to views and comparing it to ourselves and to others’ views. Third, a response that responds to a language and plans about cultural experience. Finally, participation that reasons to a language used in connecting people and society, language used to influence, and language used in producing changes in culture.

Methodology

Qualitative research was used to know the importance of teaching Filipino for Beginners at Kagoshima University and some facts in teaching it by means of interviews to key informant using the *Key Informant Interview*. Giving meaning to KII as a method in gathering deep, detailed, and comprehensive knowledge and experience of the key informant about the topic. *Participant Observation* was also used as a direct and personal observation to a phenomenon wherein a researcher invested time and space in making an observation class for Filipino for Beginners at Kagoshima University as teaching and learning narrative for Japanese learners inside the classroom. It used *observer-as-participant* wherein the researcher was part in the process, but it has limitations depending on the community limitation set and thereby informing the members of the community that observed and collected data by the researcher. On the level of participation in the community by the researcher, in the degree of *Active Participation* wherein the researcher is also doing what the class of Filipino for Beginners do besides being a Language Teaching Assistant professor.

The teacher in the class of Filipino for Beginners, Professor Satoru Nishimura acted as Key Informant in the interview one by researcher. He is 56 years old and 25 years as professor at KU. He was chosen as KI in gathering data needed being the founder of the program Filipino for Beginners at KU. The student was not considered as participants in the class being observe because it is a big challenge the difference of language understood by the researcher and students that will affect in gathering data that’s why the teacher didn’t allow a survey or interview be conducted among the students. The reference book was also gathered entitled *Ekusu Puresu Filipino* (Express Filipino) by Mamoru Tsuda; PowerPoints used by the teacher in the presentation; syllabus of the class of Filipino for Beginners and; the midterm and final examination of the class for content evaluation of each student based on Textual Analysis. But the student’s test scores weren’t obtained because the teacher didn’t allow it.

By means of the data gathered, it was evaluated by Textual Analysis by Fairclough that was based on four factors – (1) Occurring (Topic, Activity and Objective); (2) Participants

(Teacher, Students and Language Training Assistant; (3) Relationship (Teacher and Student); and the function/role of Language. The teaching factors that need development was associated with the narrative of teaching Filipino for Beginners by the theory Language and Power by Fairclough that discusses the relationship of use of language and uneven use of power of man. The evaluation on the discussion of learners' achievement of Japanese language particularly the concept of *kokusaika* and *nihonjiron*. Finally, the suggested development of the syllabus for Filipino for Beginners was evaluated and presented based on the theory of Context and Culture in Language Teaching by Kramsch which responds to the necessity of teaching Filipino deeply rooted in its culture.

Results and Discussions

History and Importance of Learning Filipino Language in Kagoshima University

Based on the program Filipino for Beginners at Kagoshima University, this started year 2011 under the leadership of Prof. Satoru Nishimura, a Japanese married to a Filipina that's why he has the ability to speak the Filipino language. The program was designed for college students on their first or second year who wants to learn a foreign language. This has an equivalent of 2 credit units.

Most often, it is the Japanese students who took lessons on Filipino language while there's only one Filipino enrolled or children of Filipino-Japanese couples or Filipino-Japanese youth. There are also selected students from the class of Rural Economics of Southeast Asia who study Filipino as part of their Exchange Knowledge or *Palitan-Dunong* of the University of the Philippines. As a preparation, they study the basic knowledge of Filipino language.

It is a big step of opening the program Filipino for Beginners at Kagoshima University because it is the first university in Southern part of Japan particularly Kyushu Island besides the Tokyo University and Osaka University which also opened for the study of Filipinos who are in the middle Northern part of Japan. It is also an important factor in the opening of Filipino for Beginners the big population of Filipino living there who are Overseas Workers and married Japanese at Kagoshima where most of them are living there and where Kagoshima University is located too. Although there is only one student enrolled whose parent was Filipino-Japanese, the program is open to Filipino-Japanese students who wish to learn the language and culture of the Filipinos.

Learning a second language or other language by the Japanese wasn't the reason for their need to earn a living; rather to enrich themselves on the knowledge of the language and culture of another country. An example are the researchers of the Exchange Student from different universities of the Philippines. This program is of great help for the students who wish to learn the basic culture of the Philippines as a preparation for their living in the country for 6 months to one year.

Teaching of Filipino for Beginners Among Japanese Students

Syllabus and Reference Book

From the syllabus of the program Filipino for Beginners, it is under the General Study Subject means that it is mandatory for college students. Every second semester, the study of Filipino for Beginners is 15 weeks from October to February. Its objective is for students to

learn the Filipino language and culture. There are 15 topics discussed per week in class. A hundred percent of the total grade of the students will come from the midterm and final examinations. Other reference books are open in the class but there is one book used by the teacher. It is *Ekusu Puresu Filipino* translated in English as Express Filipino which was written by Mamoru Tsuda. This is written in Filipino language using the Roman alphabet which has a written Katakana translation so that the Japanese can read.

The students were recommended to enroll under the *Active Program* of Prof. Nishimura, a lesson by having an immersion of the students in any university in the Philippines. Even the students who are members of Department of Economics were recommended to participate in the training program of farming in the Philippines.

The Teacher, Student and Language Training Assistant as Participants in Class

The teacher used the Japanese language in the classroom as pointed out in the observation conducted in the class of Filipino for Beginners. There is a resemblance in the Filipino class in teaching English to schools from elementary to high school wherein the teacher is using the Japanese language in the classroom. This method is effective because the students learned the skills more especially the structure of Filipino language as the meanings of the words and sentences are being translated into Japanese language. In line with the study of Sulit (2018) from the study of Yoneno-Reyes on bilingualism, the cultivation of a second language by students who are in different levels. First language plays an important role wherein the students are better in bilingualism who have enough knowledge in their first language which oftentimes are based on one country. The teacher uses English only in talking to the Language Teaching Assistant in class. In the student's learning process, it is faster for them to realize the way on how to form sentences but couldn't easily get the way on how to pronounce words that are not native in their language like *ang* (the), *mga*, *ng* (of) and words with *r* which they most of the time pronounce it as *l*. In addition, on the interview with Prof. Nishimura, the students are confused on the concept of *may* and *wala* (none) because these words are likened to *oo* (yes) and *hindi* (no). (Nishimura, personal communication, March 6, 2019).

The role of the Language Teaching Assistant (LTA) who is a native of Filipino language is to pronounce the example or sample conversations being discussed in the class to be sure that the correct pronunciation of the words is learned. Since the opening of the program, the spouse of the Filipino teacher acts at the LTA. The LTA doesn't teach, instead, he only guides the teacher pronouncing the words in class. The teacher also uses a strategy the repeated exercise on recitation, wherein the learners imitate the pronunciation of sentences, after the LTA, even during examinations.

Midterm and Final Examinations

The students are being estimated by the midterm and finals examinations which was given by the teacher to the student as a whole percentage in making grades. Midterm examinations is given every December before vacation and on February for the final examinations. In the midterm examinations, the students are given permission to open their notebook as a help in their answering but no longer on the finals.

The midterm exams are divided into 8 parts in the form of pronouncing words or sentences, forming appropriate phrases, correct verb usages, articles, pronouns and prepositions. The

final exams were shortened and has three parts. The first part includes the identification of terms in Filipino, the quantity of numbers, time and money that were written in the Japanese language. The second part and last is translating sentences written in Filipino language into Japanese language and vice versa.

There are 52 items in all in the midterm exams, 40 items in the finals. According to Tomoaki Takeshita, who was a student of Filipino for Beginners and exchange student from Kagoshima University and who translated the test questions. It was easy for the Japanese students in answering the questions because there is a translation and meaning of every question in Japanese language, but they couldn't answer without translation. (Takeshita, personal communication, October 8, 2019).

Factors Enhancing Teaching and Learning of Students in the Program Filipino or Beginners

The focus of teaching Filipino for Beginners are the structures and construction of sentences/or grammar, like the way Japanese learned in English, the students weren't effective on conversing and communicating in Filipino because this last one wasn't cultivated in class. In the observation made, there was no actual conversation between teacher and student or between student to student where the use of conversation in Filipino was not put into use. The students only imitated the teacher and Language Assistants on how they read and pronounce the sample conversation given by the teachers but weren't given the chance to construct their own sentences and topics. Even in the midterm and final examinations, the focus is on the correct structure of the Filipino language.

It was found out that basing on theory of Language and Power of Fairclough that responds to the relation of language, there's unfair use of power of man based on his society. It is presumed that the teaching of Filipino language and English is rooted out of discussion on *kokusaika* which came up on an educational reform of the Japanese. This reform concentrates on nationalism and love of culture and traditions also strengthening the cultivation of the cultural awareness, language, and Japanese society to foster the understanding history, culture, and tradition on the international scene. This paved way for the need to learn foreign language by the Japanese in order to implement the objective which is anchored with the understanding societies of different parts of the world.

Because of the deep ties between the Philippine and Japan, the program Filipino for Beginners was formed for the Japanese students to have a basic knowledge as exchange students of the Philippines. Even researchers and student-teachers majoring in Economics aim to conduct field work in the Philippines. As a culminating activity, the program conducted a *Palitan-Dunong* or Exchange Knowledge from a few selected Japanese students to go to the University of the Philippines to tackle n language, culture, and Japanese-Filipino society.

Only the selected who wish to come to the Philippines get this and even the Filipino-Japanese youth living in Japan don't study Filipino language as they don't see it needed due to discourse of *nihonjiron* as cultural nationalism, which points to the emphasis of self-identity among Japanese while going along with the economy and politics of the western world. Because the Filipino-Japanese youth is immersed at the culture and language of the Japanese, learning the Filipino language only when given a chance or when learning only from his/her mother. Even some Japanese students learn the Filipino language in exchange of their two

credits grade. Because of this, the need to raise the standard/level of the program Filipino for Beginners into a four-year course is not envisioned.

Cultivation and Growth of the Program Filipino for Beginners

From the data gathered in observing the class of Filipino for Beginners, a requirement is presented on some recommendations which can be given by researchers about the advancement of teaching and learning Filipino language among Japanese students at Kagoshima University. As a result, from the syllabus containing topics being discussed in the class Filipino for Beginners, the researcher laid down some recommendations on cultivating and developing the program through suggested activities to choose from that can be discussed in class, anchored within the culture of Filipino language. Language and culture cannot be separated; therefore, it is imperative to relate it to the culture of the language to be learned. According to Mangahis (2010), it is not only the structure of language learned but also the entirety of the culture within the language learned. In the Japanese educational system, it is of help to use the Japanese language in teaching the Filipino language but it shouldn't exclusively be taught on the sentence structure or grammar. Hand in hand, is the conversation or communication among students using the language and culture in it.

There are added topics which a teacher can do in the discussions, one is the system of writing the spelling, an alive culture of the Filipinos specially that it has similarity with the system of writing among Japanese, the Kanji, both of which came from natural way of writing it. The teacher can show videos as motivation or introduction in class like the *Awiting Pambansa* (National Anthem) or folk song to familiarize the students in the pronunciation of words besides doing the skit of the LTA.

Great factor also is a drill or exercise on Picture Test or showing pictures to learners in order to fill in the correct word or sentence with the image shown in the picture. Just be sure that the pictures are in the context of the Filipino language as a way to open a discussion that is rooted in Philippine Culture. For example, a picture shown to the class in lessons Verb 1, 2, and 3, wherein there are children reading, playing *Luksong-Baka* and going to church which Filipinos are known for their religiousness due to the Spanish occupation. Another is to choose or compare the pictures like Intramuros and Quiapo that are found in Manila as tourist attractions and the primary means of transportation are jeepneys and tricycles.

Foremost of the factors that have been mentioned which needs to be developed in the students are the conversation and communication skills using Filipino language, therefore, it was recommended to add more exercises on speaking by giving examples of sentences in Filipino language in the context of things found inside the classroom. There may be interactions among the students to each other or their teacher and also to the LTA if students are given practice exercises in conversation wherein guide questions are given to the students to answer. Another is the Speaking or Conversation Test wherein the two students can form their own sentences and show it in the class.

Finally, as part of the final requirement in class, students may conduct a sharing of person, object, place, food or any material, tradition, belief and culture of the Philippines that they wish or like. The student will get a picture and write five to eight sentences about the picture then share it with the class through speaking and showing the picture. Three skills will be enhanced through language learning - reading, writing and conversation of students in the Filipino language.

Conclusion

The program Filipino for Beginners is open to college students of Kagoshima University who are in the first and second year that need to get an additional two credit units in the study. It aims to teach the basic knowledge of the Filipino language and culture through the Japanese language as a medium of instruction, use of reference book as a source of topics discussed in class, presentation of teacher in the form of PowerPoint Presentation based on the book and conducting of midterm and final tests that estimate the ability of the student in grammar. There is a ready Language Teaching Assistant who is a native speaker of the Filipino language to check the correct pronunciation of words by the Japanese teacher. There is an effect in the teaching and understanding of Filipino language and discourse of concepts *Kokusaika* and *Nihonjinron* that discusses the ideology of Japanese society.

From the data gathered in teaching Filipino at Kagoshima University, it was realized that there are factors needed for improvement towards a more progressive teaching and learning of the Filipino language. One factor is cultivation of the learners' ability to talk and converse using the Filipino language and deepening of learning that is rooted in the culture of language being learned. Based on the study of Kramsch, the discussion on the language using the culture as launching pad should have no discrimination or favoritism between the culture of the student and the culture of the language being learned. The third culture of the language being learned inside the classroom and in ordinary place or space wherein a student's self-creativity and discovery and realization of the targeted culture and language being learned (retrieved from Mangahis, 2010). The teacher should not only focus on the correct and wrong grammar of the language, instead, attention should be given to the meaning, giving interpretation on their silence and actions or attitudes inside the classroom. In this manner, the classroom becomes a space of cross-cultural fieldwork wherein a new culture and language arises from the interactions of the teacher, students and textbook used in discussions. The students are also given chances to participate or involve with cultural education and not only form a relation in the use of a new language.

The teaching and learning of Japanese students in the Filipino language can be more developed if the culture of both countries can be contextually balanced. In this situation, the Japanese identity and culture can be retained and maintained in the consonance of learning a new language and culture in which the Filipino language is contained.

It is important to highlight and develop the gradual weakening situation of the Filipino language in the country. That's why in order to continually develop and cultivate more of it, it is appropriate to continue the objectives and aims in teaching the Filipino language to the next generation in and outside the country.

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Contact email: mjsawaan@pup.edu.ph