



RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE

M.Ed. In TESL Program Language Group Specific Informational Reports

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TAGALOG: AN OFFICIAL LANGUAGE OF THE PHILIPPINES

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HISTORY & BACKGROUND



(<http://sino.net/philippinetourist>, 1994)

- Tagalog is an Austronesian language which serves as the basis for Filipino (Ager, 1998)
- There are roughly 57 million speakers of Tagalog in the Philippines (Ager, 1998)
- Tagalog is primarily spoken in parts of the Luzon island, Manila, Lubang, Marinduque, and parts of Mindoro (Ramos, 2002).
- Tagalog speakers are also found in Canada, Guam, Midway Islands, Saudi Arabia and the UK (Ramos, 2002).

ALPHABET & PHONETICS

Tagalog used to be written in the Baybayin alphabet (which derives from South Indian scripts) (Ager, 1998)



(<http://www.omniglot.com>, 2010)

Tagalog is currently written using a Latin alphabet

A B K D E G H I L M N Ng O P R S T U W Y
a ba ka da e ga ha i la ma na nga o pa ra sa ta u wa ya

Tagalog is a phonetic language; letters and letter combinations essentially have the same pronunciation. (Transparent Language, 1991).

LINGUISTIC FEATURES OF TAGALOG

VOCABULARY

- ◉ Sanskrit, Arabic, Chinese, English and Spanish have influenced the vocabulary of Tagalog (Ager, 1998).
- ◉ There are some vocabulary words that sound very similar in English (sero=zero; bangko=bank; tiket=ticket) (Ramos, 2002).
- ◉ BEWARE! Some vocabulary words mean completely different things in Tagalog than English (at=and; ma=uncle or mister) (Ramos, 2002).
- ◉ <http://www.wonderhowto.com/how-to-say-basic-tagalog-phrases-169672/>

MORPHOLOGY

- Vowels (Mckibbin, 1995).
 - Many Tagalog words end in vowels; very few end in consonants
 - When saying words in English, the final consonant is often deleted
 - There is often reduction of length in vowel pronunciation and/or misemphasis on vowel parts of words
- Many words are monosyllabic (Mckibbin, 1995).
 - Syllable misemphasis errors or syllable deleting
 - i.e. DI-versity (diversity).... Efunt (elephant)
- Epenthesis- adding *-uh* to the beginnings or ends of words (Mckibbin, 1995).
 - i.e. bookuh (book); bulack (black)

SYNTAX

- Sentence structure is completely different (Ager, 1998).
 - Ex. “The bear is big” would translate to “Big the bear.”
- Gender specific pronouns do not exist (i.e. he/she) (Ager, 1998).
- Grammar consists of complex systems of verbal affixes that show a special relationship between the verb and a noun phrase in a sentence (Ramos, 2002).
 - Ex. *To show pluralism, the particle “mga” is used*
 - “the child” is “ang bata”; “the children” would be “ang mga bata”.

SEMANTICS

- ◉ No gender distinction on nouns and pronouns (Mckibbin, 1995).
 - Leads to misuse of pronouns
- ◉ Little emphasis on articles (Ramos, 2002).
 - This leads to over generalizing
 - i.e. He went the home.
- ◉ Incorrect use of comparative adjectives (Mckibbin, 1995).
 - i.e. This book is gooder than that
- ◉ Verb tense can be problematic (Lightbrown & Spada, 2006).
 - Ex. He didn't went by himself
 - I cook dinner yesterday

PRAGMATICS

- In many Philippine schools, children are taught to be respectful & passive. They are supposed to be quiet, not question the teacher, or express freely their thoughts (Mckibbin, 1995).
 - As a result, many native Tagalog speakers are not comfortable taking risks, don't have ease expressing their thoughts (in writing or general) and do not actively participate in discussion
 - Students have great difficulty growing accustomed to the informal language use in school
- The most effective method of error correction is probably to teach rules since Philippine schools are very rule focused (Lightbrown & Spada, 2006).

COMMUNICATION STYLES

- ◉ Native Tagalog speakers have similar communication styles to those of various Asian language speakers (Ager, 2002).
 - Teachers are regarded in the same manner as doctors; they are shown the upmost respect.
 - Eye contact is seen as rudeness, which is why many students avert their eyes when speaking to an adult.
 - Philippine schools DO NOT integrate boys with girls
 - The quiet, passive learning environment in Philippine schools result in native speakers who prefer to not do cooperative group work or read aloud in class.
 - Parents are very uncomfortable with the openness of sex education in American schools; this is not a topic that is freely discussed in Philippine schools or homes.

COMMUNICATION (CONT)

- ◉ Tagalog speakers are not usually animated, nor do they show much emotional expression (Mckibbin, 1995).
- ◉ They usually speak softly and have difficulty being direct with questions and answers (Mckibbin, 1995).
- ◉ Tagalog speakers are very aware of personal space and do not use body language to communicate (Mckibbin, 1995).

IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

- ◉ Using numbers is difficult because many native Tagalog speakers use numbers from Spanish and/or English (Ramos, 2002).
 - Expressing the date is particularly difficult because of the different sentence structure from each language
- ◉ Consonant and vowel digraphs are difficult to master because there is no consonant/vowel distinction (Ager, 1998).
 - Ex. Th, ch, ea, oi, ou
- ◉ Some parents “believe that ESL classes are inferior to classes without these programs...” (McKibbin, 1995)
- ◉ Much learning is done through rote drills and memorization in schools where Tagalog is spoken (McKibbin, 1995).

IMPLICATIONS (CONT)

- ◉ Teachers should ease students into tasks that require opinion expression, judgment forming, or problem solving (Mckibbin, 1995).
- ◉ Parents do not disagree openly or question teachers. (Mckibbin, 1995).
- ◉ Parents say “yes” to show understanding, so it is important to ensure information is being clearly understood (Mckibbin, 1995).
- ◉ It is sometimes considered “a disgrace to the family for parents to openly discuss a child or family related problem...” (Mckibbin, 1995).
- ◉ Families often use gifts in exchange for professional services and feel offended if they are turned down. (Mckibbin, 1995).

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