

## ENGLISH AS A LANGUAGE: REVISITING FILIPINO STUDENTS' ENGLISH-SPEAKING SKILLS

*by:*

**Kim Adlyn V. Marcos**

*Teacher II, Mariveles National High School – Poblacion*

English, often regarded as the international language, plays a crucial role in the Philippines, which is said to be its second language. Mastery of English has been a longstanding educational goal, but it has also been a source of concern, particularly in the development of speaking skills among Filipino students.

First, it is important to recognize the historical and cultural significance of English in the Philippines. The country's colonial history, started way back in 1521 when the Spaniards colonized us. Then, 300 years later it was the Americans who bought us, not to mention the Japanese invasion and World War II comes after. This left a profound impact on its linguistic landscape. English, introduced by American colonizers in the early 20th century, became a language of governance, education, and prestige. As a result, English proficiency has long been associated with social and economic mobility in the Philippines. However, the use of English in the Philippines is not without its difficulties. While English is widely taught in schools and used in government and business, it coexists with Filipino, the national language. This bilingual context has led to a unique linguistic phenomenon known as "Taglish" – a blend of Tagalog dialect (the basis of Filipino) and English. Taglish is often used in casual conversations and is indicative of the adaptive nature of us Filipinos.

Despite the Philippines' historical connection to English, many Filipino students face difficulties in developing their English-speaking skills. One primary problem is the lack of exposure to native speakers and authentic English environments. Many students primarily learn English in classroom settings, where the emphasis is often placed on

reading and writing, leaving little room for conversational practice. Without consistent practice and exposure to natural language use, students will have difficulties speaking English fluently and confidently. Another challenge is the fear of making mistakes, which can hinder students' willingness to engage in English conversations. This fear stems from a traditional educational approach that prioritizes correctness over communication. Students are often corrected for minor grammatical errors, discouraging them from taking risks and experimenting with the language. This fear of making mistakes can affect the development of fluency and natural expression in English.

Despite these challenges, there are also promising opportunities for Filipino students to enhance their English-speaking skills. The digital age has brought a wealth of online resources and platforms that offer interactive language learning experiences. These platforms enable students to practice English in a more relaxed and natural setting, connecting with speakers from around the world. Additionally, English language immersion programs and cultural exchanges can provide students with valuable opportunities to enhance their speaking skills in authentic contexts. Moreover, the Philippines' growing outsourcing and call center industry has created a demand for English-speaking professionals. This industry has not only provided employment opportunities for many Filipinos but has also catalyzed the development of English-speaking skills. Many call center employees undergo intensive English training, which can significantly improve their speaking proficiency.

English is undeniably a vital language in the Philippines, reflecting its historical ties and contemporary relevance. Filipino students face challenges in developing their English-speaking skills, including limited exposure to native speakers and the fear of making mistakes. However, opportunities abound through digital language resources, immersion programs, and the country's thriving outsourcing industry. To ensure that Filipino students can harness the power of English as a global language, educators and policymakers must prioritize the development of speaking skills, as a tool for

communication which will foster an environment that encourages experimentation, confidence, and fluency.

*References:*

Pursuing English language proficiency among Filipino students. (2012, June 11).

Exegesis. <https://bsuexegesis.wordpress.com/authors/language-education/pursuing-english-language-proficiency-among-filipino-students/>

<https://www.termpaperwarehouse.com/essay-on/Why-Filipinos-Students-Have-A-Hard/245578>