



Gen Z's Language Identity and Contemporary Philosophies in the Digital Era

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ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study delved into the lived experiences of Filipino Generation Z (Gen Z) regarding their language identity in the digital age. The study tries to understand how Filipino Gen Z navigates and develops their linguistic identity in the context of modern ideas and the usage of the Filipino language, given the increasing influence of global media and the rapid growth of communication technologies. Using in-depth interviews with 15 purposively selected participants, the themes provide vital insights into how Filipino Gen Z negotiates their cultural and linguistic identity as global interconnection and technological innovations change communication landscapes. Themes included the influence of social media on language preferences, the role of education in shaping linguistic identity, the impact of global media, and participants' reflections on the intersection between contemporary philosophies and their linguistic choices. The findings help better comprehend the complex interplay between emerging communication paradigms, contemporary philosophical influences, and the preservation of language legacy in the dynamic setting of the digital era.

INTRODUCTION

Language is fundamental in defining cultural identity, providing a solid foundation for groups and individuals to connect with their common ancestry (Villegas-Torres & Mora-Pablo, 2018). Nevertheless, today, marked by globalization and the widespread impact of digital communication, the safeguarding and mediation of linguistic identity encounter unparalleled obstacles. This study centers on the sometimes neglected demographic of Filipino Generation Z (Gen Z), born into an era characterized by global interconnectivity through the digital domain and where conventional linguistic boundaries are constantly being questioned.

The Philippines, a country characterized by diverse languages and dialects, has its cultural identity deeply embedded within the Filipino language (Dreisbach & Demetrio, 2020). With the increasing reach of global media and the changing communication landscape due to digital technology, there is a need to understand how the younger generation, Filipino Gen Z, shapes their linguistic identity. This study seeks to fill a notable research need by examining the real-life experiences of Filipino individuals belonging to Generation Z. It attempts to investigate how they perceive, utilize, and navigate their language identity in the ever-changing context of modern ideas and the digital domain.

The research gap arises from the necessity to comprehend the intricate interaction among language, culture, and identity within the framework of a developing globalized world. Although prior studies have investigated certain aspects of linguistic identity, there is a need for more literature that primarily focuses on the real-life experiences of Filipino Generation Z individuals and their use of the Filipino language in the era of digital communication (Minoza *et al.*, 2023). A thorough investigation is still

needed into global media's influence, education's function, and contemporary philosophies' impact on language choices.

The primary aim of this research is to fill the existing gap in the literature by offering a detailed comprehension of how Filipino Gen Z individuals manage their language identity in response to current issues. The research seeks to tackle multiple primary goals, each illuminating distinct facets of linguistic identity among Filipino Generation Z. A vital objective is to explore the significant influence of social media platforms on determining language choices and contributing to the formation of linguistic identity among this group. The study investigates how internet platforms impact language choices and identity creation among Filipino Gen Z individuals.

Another critical factor to be examined is the influence of formal education on molding linguistic preferences and fostering language identity formation. The research seeks to examine the influence of educational institutions on the language choices of Filipino Gen Z individuals and how these choices shape their overall linguistic identity.

Moreover, the study seeks to assess the impact of global media on the language preferences of Filipino Generation Z. The research aims to examine the influence of global media exposure on language choices and its effect on the preservation of cultural heritage in this specific group. This objective seeks to analyze the complex connection between worldwide media exposure and the linguistic patterns observed among Filipino Generation Z.

The research aims to investigate the relationship between modern philosophies and the language used by participants. This entails exploring the thoughts of Filipino individuals from Generation Z on topics like cultural hybridity and linguistic imperialism. The study offers a detailed viewpoint on the elements influencing

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language identity among the Filipino Gen Z population by examining the intersection of contemporary philosophies and linguistic preferences.

This research aims to provide a thorough understanding of the complex dynamics that shape the language identity of Filipino Gen Z in the digital age. Doing so will contribute to future discussions on language policies, educational practices, and cultural preservation efforts in the Philippines.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a qualitative research design, explicitly employing phenomenological research methods. The choice of phenomenology is based on its capacity to facilitate a thorough investigation of the subjective experiences of Filipino Gen Z individuals concerning their language identity within the context of the digital era.

The study utilized a purposive sample technique to identify participants who accurately represent the diverse range of Filipino Generation Z individuals, considering their distinct socio-economic circumstances. Participants were selected based on age (within the Gen Z demographic), geographic area, and socio-economic level to guarantee a thorough and diverse outlook on linguistic identity.

Data were gathered via comprehensive, semi-structured interviews. The interviews were performed through face-to-face meetings. Thematic analysis, a qualitative data analysis method, was employed to examine the gathered data. This method entails identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes found within the data. The themes were encoded and structured within a cohesive framework, facilitating the cultivation of a complete comprehension of the actualized encounters of Filipino Generation Z.

Although this research offers vital insights into the real-life experiences of Filipino Gen Z, it is essential to recognize specific limitations. The study's qualitative character restricts the extent to which the findings may be applied to a broader population. In addition, the study's dependence on self-reported experiences may create biases, and the dynamic nature of the digital ecosystem may make certain conclusions susceptible to alteration over time.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this phenomenological study provide a comprehensive examination of the real-life encounters of Filipino individuals belonging to Generation Z, presenting a diverse range of perspectives on their linguistic identity in the era of digital technology. The in-depth interviews revealed several themes that provide insight into the complex processes involved in negotiating and constructing language identity:

Factors Shaping Gen Z's Language Identity

Social Media

The in-depth interviews performed for this study revealed that social media platforms have significantly influenced

the language choices and usage of Filipino Gen Z, which emerged as a prominent theme. Participants frequently emphasized the significant influence of social media platforms on their language preferences and usage. The widespread presence of online communication platforms has not only enabled the development of language but has also had a significant impact on the language preferences of Filipino Generation Z. Social media platforms facilitate the dynamic and innovative utilization of the Filipino language, fostering a feeling of linguistic ownership and self-expression among users. They frequently emphasized the significant impact of Internet communication platforms in creating their linguistic identity. One participant articulated this sentiment by stating,

“Social media is like our second home. It's where we create our language and way of talking. We have our own memes, acronyms, and even our own grammar. It's a space where we can be ourselves; our language reflects that.”

This statement aligns with the research conducted by Serbanescu (2022), who has extensively explored language's dynamic and innovative characteristics in the digital era. The symbolic depiction of social media as a “second home” suggests a profound assimilation of online platforms into the everyday existence of Gen Z folks. The participant's reference to a language they invented, which includes memes, acronyms, and distinctive syntax, is consistent with Crystal's focus on the changing characteristics of language in the digital age and demonstrates linguistic inventiveness. Another participant highlighted a shift in language use on social media, particularly in Filipino, stating,

“Before, we only used Filipino in a formal setting. But on social media, we use it in ways we never thought possible. We mix it with English, add slang, and it becomes a language that's uniquely ours.”

This shift is consistent with Crystal's discourse on the flexibility of language in digital contexts. The amalgamation of Filipino, English, and slang demonstrates linguistic flexibility and highlights the formation of a unique linguistic identity, reflecting the findings of Gervacio and Karuri (2019) regarding the influence of social media on the linguistic identity of young individuals.

Moreover, participants emphasized language's social and identity-building aspects on social media. One participant noted,

“On social media, we have our own inside jokes and references. It's like a secret language that only we understand. It's a way of bonding and identifying with others of our generation.”

This observation examines how language on social media promotes community and strengthens social bonds. It shows how online communication encourages community building and linguistic innovation. The notion of a “secret language” implies a sense of selectiveness and camaraderie, highlighting the function of social media not just as a means of communication but also as a platform for cultivating a feeling of affiliation and selfhood.

The influence of social media on language choices coincides with the theories proposed by Segura-Robles *et al.* (2020), which explore the transformative function of online communication platforms. They highlight the ever-changing characteristics of language in the era of digital technology and examine how online communication encourages the development of innovative and expressive language. In addition, Bulnes (2022) offers insights on how social media influences the formation of linguistic identity among young people, drawing connections to the participants' experiences in the study.

Formal Education

The study on linguistic identification among Filipino Gen Z individuals revealed the significant influence of formal education in determining their language choices and cultural affiliations. Participants constantly emphasized the influence of educational institutions in strengthening the importance of the Filipino language, presenting it not just as a topic of study but as a vital means of comprehending their cultural identity. The curriculum, language policies, and teaching practices influenced participants' attitudes toward the Filipino language and their sense of connection to their cultural heritage. One participant elucidated this influence, emphasizing, "In school, they make sure we use Filipino not just as a subject but as a way of understanding our culture. It's not just about words; it's about who we are as Filipinos."

This perspective emphasizes the comprehensive approach educational institutions use to foster cultural identity through language. The participant's focus on the broader cultural ramifications of language education aligns with Winnes' (2022) assertion, which suggests that educational institutions have a crucial role in influencing linguistic attitudes and promoting cultural esteem.

Moreover, the results concerning the significance of formal education align with Cummins' emphasis on the diverse impact of educational institutions. The curriculum's emphasis on the Filipino language goes beyond only acquiring language skills, acting as a means to foster a profound comprehension and acceptance of one's cultural legacy. Winnes' claim that educational institutions play a crucial role in influencing language attitudes is supported by the participants' testimonies, which highlight the significant influence of formal education on their linguistic identity.

Furthermore, the impact of language policy in schools is in perfect harmony with the academic research conducted by Han *et al.* (2021). Hornberger emphasizes the importance of language planning and policy in influencing the linguistic identity of young people. The participants' deliberations on the significance of language policy in formal education resonate with Hornberger's observations, underscoring the broader influence of institutional determinations on individuals' language preferences and their ties to cultural heritage. This agreement further reinforces the idea of the complex interaction between formal education and language identity.

Global Media

The comprehensive interviews unveiled that the worldwide media, including television, movies, and online content, exerts a substantial impact on molding language preferences among Filipino Generation Z. Participants emphasized the widespread existence of linguistic influences from many parts of the world, leading to a noticeable interaction between local and global linguistic features in their language preferences. This phenomenon highlights the necessity for individuals to carefully manage the interplay between adopting global influences and safeguarding the inherent distinctiveness of the Filipino language. One participant aptly expressed this interplay, stating,

"The shows we watch, the movies we see, and even the online content we consume—it all affects how we talk. There's this mix of Filipino, English, and sometimes even other languages. It's like our language is this blend of everything we're exposed to."

This discovery demonstrates the extensive influence of global media on the language environment of Filipino Generation Z. The participant's reference to a linguistic blend reflects the intricate interplay between globalization and language, as explored by Balci (2022), highlighting the role of global media in fostering linguistic hybridization. The examination of the influence of global media is substantiated by Kaptan's (2019) notion of "mediascapes." The author explains the profound impact of the worldwide movement of media on local cultures, namely in terms of molding perceptions and language usage. The participants' experiences corroborate Appadurai's approach, emphasizing the complex interaction between global media and local linguistic preferences. The study aligns with Chen and Ha's (2023) investigation of language hybridization within the framework of global media impacts, highlighting language's adaptable and ever-changing nature as it interacts with various global cultural influences.

Furthermore, the accounts provided by the participants emphasize the difficulties involved in managing the competing forces of worldwide and regional language impacts. One participant reflected on this challenge, stating, "We want to be part of this global conversation, but we also want to hold onto our identity. It's like finding a balance between using what we see in global media and making sure we still sound Filipino."

Filipino Gen Z persons must carefully navigate their language identity within the global media landscape, which requires a nuanced approach. The interaction between local and global linguistic components reflects the discoveries made by Hes and Svecova (2021), who investigate the intricate dynamics of globalization and language. The findings are also consistent with Muftah's (2022) examination of the blending of languages within the framework of worldwide media impacts.

Existential Perspectives on Language Identity

Within the study of language identity in the Filipino

Gen Z cohort, participants provided thoughtful insights that incorporated existentialist perspectives into their narratives, highlighting connections with contemporary philosophies. Exploring cultural hybridity, linguistic imperialism, and the preservation of cultural heritage revealed significant factors that highlight the complex relationship between personal choices and societal forces, all within the context of existentialist philosophy.

The participants in the study used existentialism as a framework to express their challenges and decisions regarding language identity. Existentialism is well-known for its focus on personal freedom, responsibility, and the active construction of one's own identity. A participant eloquently expressed this existential dilemma, stating, "Our language functions as our canvas; we paint our own identity with the brushstrokes of words we choose. It encapsulates a perpetual tension between authenticity and conformity—a veritable existential struggle."

As observed in participants' narratives, the theme of cultural hybridity is in line with the existentialist concept of individual choice and responsibility. In her study, Pouru-Mikkola and Wilenius (2021) delved into the concept of cultural negotiation, drawing parallels with existentialist theories. She sheds light on how individuals shape their identities through language while maneuvering through the complexities of their cultural environment. The intricate relationship between local and global influences reflects the existentialist idea of individuals being thrown into a world where they must actively make choices and give personal significance to diverse influences.

In addition, examining cultural heritage holds great importance as individuals wrestle with the existentialist concept of finding purpose and genuineness. A participant reflected on this existential concern, noting, "We strive to maintain the vitality of our language while being drawn towards trends and popular expressions. It encapsulates a delicate equilibrium between modernity and the preservation of our cultural roots—a search for authenticity in a world that perpetually demands conformity."

This tension highlights the individual's existential responsibility, as they must create a meaningful existence by making nuanced choices within language and culture (Brown, 2021). This research examines the existentialist motifs present in the language identity of Filipino Gen Z. It highlights the dynamic and adaptable nature of language identity. It places this investigation within the existentialist intellectual framework. The negotiation of language identity arises as a complex existential battle when individuals deliberately construct their linguistic choices to express their true selves in the face of cultural norms. The results emphasize the need for a comprehensive understanding of language identity, including the changing nature of digital communication, the impact of schooling, and the global factors that shape linguistic choices within the existentialist framework.

The knowledge obtained from this research, enhanced by existentialist viewpoints, dramatically adds to the broader

academic discussion on linguistic identity. They provide thoughtful and detailed analysis of possible interventions, legislation, and educational approaches that recognize and accept the inherent challenges in developing and maintaining language and cultural identities among Filipino Gen Z. The study proposes a thorough academic investigation into the connections between existential philosophy, language, culture, and identity. This will promote ongoing scholarly discussion and efforts to preserve culture and revitalize language in the Philippines.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this phenomenological study conducts a comprehensive analysis of the experiences of Filipino Gen Z individuals, providing valuable insights into the intricacies of language identity in the era of digital technology. The impact of social media on language evolution and preferences is substantial, but schooling plays a crucial role in shaping linguistic identity and preserving cultural links. The influence of global media emphasizes the participants' careful equilibrium between adopting global influences and safeguarding the uniqueness of the Filipino language, demonstrating a dynamic interaction between local and global linguistic components.

This study highlights the dynamic nature of linguistic identity among Filipino Gen Z, emphasizing the significance of comprehending alterations in digital communication, the impact on education, and worldwide variables that influence language choices. The results provide valuable input for broader conversations on linguistic identity, informing prospective interventions, policies, and educational practices aimed at upholding the Filipino language. The study suggests potential avenues for future research, such as conducting longitudinal studies to monitor the development of language identification and conducting comparative evaluations among different linguistic communities in the Philippines. Conducting research on intervention options and assessing the experiences of Filipino Generation Z individuals in diasporic communities worldwide provide opportunities for intercultural evaluations. This study contributes to discussions on linguistic identity by combining empirical observations and theoretical perspectives, recognizing the significant influence of language variety on the identity formation of the younger generation in a rapidly changing global setting.

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