

# Maintenance of Filipino Languages in Queensland

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## Introduction

During anthropological fieldwork, from 1999 to 2001, on the Filipino communities of two Queensland regional cities, Maryborough and Hervey Bay on the Fraser Coast, it was found that Tagalog, Visayan and other Filipino languages were regularly spoken by the approximately 250 women in those communities when talking to each other. However, almost none of their children had any competency in any Filipino language. Since there are only a few Filipino men in the region, making these communities virtually single gender, it has been somewhat difficult for the women to pass certain elements of their culture, including language, on to the children.

The focus of the Fraser Coast study was the retention of Filipino cultural traits among the women. Particular emphasis was placed on language, food, religion, music and dance. Only a small part of the fieldwork concerned the children but it was dismaying to learn how few of them spoke Tagalog. Consequently, in the resulting thesis, Chan (2001), a recommendation for further study was that a sample of children from families with two Filipino parents be interviewed to determine whether certain aspects of Filipino culture are being more successfully maintained in a larger community that includes more males.

## Fraser Coast Background

There are various reasons for the lack of Filipino language skills among the second generation, including objections on the part of non-Filipino husbands and ill-informed advice from school teachers and others. A few Fraser Coast husbands were asked for their views on the children learning a Filipino language and, while some were supportive and even knew a few Tagalog words themselves, most objected. Their reasons were not clearly stated but comments such as "this is an English-speaking country" were made. Obviously, if the mother and children spoke a language that left the father out of the conversation, this might be seen by some of the men as a problem. Mothers, in explaining why they had not taught a Filipino language to the children, usually gave one of two explanations: (1) it would have been damaging to their English education or (2) they didn't have time. They sometimes quoted their husbands with regard to the supposed educational handicap it would have created if children learned Tagalog as their first language. Some women stated that it would be too hard to teach the children another language by themselves, looking at it as a "foreign language instruction task" rather than just the normal activity of teaching a baby to talk in any language.

Some mothers quoted Australian primary school teachers who had told them it was unwise to teach the children a Filipino language at home. This sort of advice has often been given by teachers to Australian parents from other

ethnic backgrounds also and, according to current linguistic theory, has no basis in fact. Saunders (n.d.) commented on this type of situation:

Often the attitudes of people in positions of comparative prestige and authority, such as teaching and medical personnel, can have a decisive influence on how children and also their parents view their bilingualism. Parents, who naturally wish to do the best for their children, may be inclined to accept such advice from people they regard as experts. Unfortunately such adverse opinions may be based on personal conjectures or prejudices rather than on any objective evidence.

Since the Filipino women are almost all bilingual, and in many cases speak several Filipino languages in addition to English, it is surprising that so many of them have listened to ill-informed advice with regard to teaching a Filipino language in the home. They should be confident that their children, growing up in Australia and constantly surrounded with English, will not have Filipino accents or difficulties with the English language even if they learn a Filipino language first. If they doubt this, they should talk to those Filipino children who do speak Tagalog and are doing well in school. One Tagalog-speaking Brisbane girl in Year 10 reported winning a high school English competition, which she said seemed to annoy her non-Filipino friends. Unlike migrants from certain other Asian countries, many Filipinos have quite a high level of English, having done much of their schooling through the medium of that language. Khoo (2000) said: "Immigrants from the Philippines are generally quite proficient in English and over 95% can speak good English...38% having higher qualifications such as university degrees or diplomas."

According to Espiritu (1994), many Filipinos in America also have a negative view about teaching children a Filipino language at home: "The majority of professional immigrants do not teach their children any of the Filipino languages...most others did not teach their children Tagalog because they did not want to retard their children's academic progress." Current literature on language learning overwhelmingly expresses the view that such a concept is considered to be incorrect and that, in fact, bilingual children are more likely to have an academic advantage over those who speak English only.

## **Situation in Australia**

For whatever reasons many Filipino children in Australia are failing to learn a Filipino language in the home before starting school, the statistics indicate that it is an alarmingly high number in a country where multiculturalism and bilingualism are among the stated goals of various governments and educators.

According to the Bureau of Immigration and Population Research (1994), in the 1991 census 75.8% of all persons born in Australia with one or both parents born in the Philippines reported that they spoke English only at home. The Queensland figure for English only among second generation Filipinos was even higher than the national average, at 84.5%. This higher than national average can probably be explained by the fact that there are a large number of families in Queensland, particularly in regional areas, where only the mother is Filipino. The earlier research on the Fraser Coast and the Brisbane research as described herein, verified the assumption that, in general, the children raised in Australia were more likely to speak a Filipino language if both parents were Filipino, although in the Brisbane interviews this did not always turn out to be the case. Other factors influenced the Filipino language competence of some of the children.

By comparison with 1991 data, Khoo (2000) indicated that the 1996 census found that second generation Filipino figures for English-only speakers in Queensland had reached 86.5% (5,622 persons) as compared with a national average of 75.4%. In 1996, of those second generation Filipinos in Queensland reporting a language other than English spoken at home, only 404 persons said they spoke Tagalog.

## **Brisbane Fieldwork**

In 2003 I was able to do this comparative study in Brisbane where, unlike the single-gender Filipino communities of regional Queensland, there are many Filipino males. While a few questions were asked about Filipino culture in general, including foods, dance and other aspects of their traditional heritage, the main focus of this follow-up study was Tagalog-speaking skills to determine whether skills were generally of a higher level for children with two Filipino parents than for those with non-Filipino fathers.

It seemed reasonable to predict that there would be a larger percentage of children with Filipino language skills where both parents could speak that language, although some negative attitudes towards bilingualism because of the supposed handicapping aspects were still expected to be present. Given the census figures, and the view held by many Filipinos that teaching the children a Filipino language at home before they learn English would likely be detrimental to their progress in English-language schools in Australia, it was expected that the sample of youth surveyed in the Brisbane area might also have fairly low levels of Filipino language competency; although it was anticipated that levels would be higher than in Maryborough and Hervey Bay.

The Brisbane fieldwork took place in May and June of 2003. The original plan was to limit interviews to those between the ages of 15 and 25, however it was difficult to locate enough children, with two Filipino parents, in that age range who were born in Australia, so two of age 9 were ultimately included, although most interviewees were teenagers. There were 20 individuals interviewed in the Brisbane area, with questions additionally asked with regard to siblings in some cases. Everyone in the survey sample had either lived in or visited the Philippines one or more times. Many stated they wanted to speak Tagalog so they could communicate during these visits.

In addition to the Brisbane children and youth with two Filipino parents, five with a Filipino mother and non-Filipino father were also interviewed to determine whether the data would be similar to that of the Fraser Coast sample. Only two of these five fathers were Australian-born. One was Finnish, one was Croatian and one was Iranian, who had lived in the Philippines for a number of years and speaks Tagalog.

Results turned out somewhat different from those on the Fraser Coast, although as in the earlier study, the two with Australian fathers could not speak Tagalog and only understood a little; while the girl with the Finnish father and the one with the Croatian father both said they understood quite well but could not speak much. The boy with the Iranian father is fluent in Tagalog because he did not migrate to Australia until he was 12. Powson (2001) stated in her thesis that only four of the Brisbane area couples (all with one non-Filipino partner) she interviewed had attempted to "maintain aspects of the Filipino language in the home". From her descriptions it appears that none of the children of these families had any fluency in Tagalog but could understand a bit. Her data was somewhat contradictory to the

Fraser Coast results in that some non-Filipino parents told her they would have preferred for the Filipino partner to teach the children more Tagalog.

While some who were born in the Philippines and migrated at an early age were also included in the survey, it was felt that if they were over about age 5 when leaving the Philippines their Tagalog ability would normally be higher than that of those born in Australia and thus not a fair test of language being passed on to children in Australia. However, in the end, to order to fill out the sample, nine individuals who had migrated between ages 6 and 14 were included with the idea that it examined maintenance efforts in families where both Filipino parents could also speak English well. It was interesting to note that not all of these child migrants were currently able to speak Tagalog, although most were still fluent. In all cases, the spoken English of the child migrants was excellent; one of them was the girl mentioned above who won the English competition. The only one with any Filipino accent was the boy with the Iranian father. All the others speak unaccented Australian English, although one boy who migrated at age 11 has a slight American accent, which is understandable since that is the type of English spoken in the Philippines.

The Brisbane study found that 11 out of the 20 interviewees were considered—by both themselves and sometimes their parents—to be reasonably fluent in a Filipino language (10 in Tagalog, 1 in Visayan). It was necessary to rely on self-assessment as to the degree of fluency; however, most respondents did not hesitate to categorise themselves as “fluent”, “understand but can’t speak”, or “hardly know any”, with minor variations thereof. The number of those who are fluent in the Brisbane sample turned out to be much higher than had been anticipated. Of those classed as fluent, a few volunteered the information that they could read and write in Tagalog. Two who are fluent in Tagalog also understand their grandmother when she speaks Pampangan (also termed Pampango) but they answer her in Tagalog. Four said they could understand everything said in Tagalog but could not speak, finding it difficult to construct sentences and pronounce things correctly.

Although such a small sample cannot be considered statistically valid as compared to a census result, an effort was made to talk to children from various parts of Brisbane, various socio-economic levels, and so forth, and is thus considered to be a reasonably random cross-section. However, many of the informants were referred by others, which may have introduced some bias into the sample. On the other hand, since there are approximately twice as many Philippines-born females as males in Australia, and both studies have shown that in mixed families the number of children who speak Tagalog is very low, this would partially account for the low number of Tagalog-speaking second generation Filipinos in the census figures. All second generation children are classed together in the census as long as at least one parent was born in the Philippines.

Khoo (2000) indicated that in the 1996 census there were 646 second generation persons between the ages of 15 and 24 in Queensland and 5,693 between 0 and 14, showing how predominantly young this segment of the Filipino population is. During the recent research, seven years later, all of those second generation Filipinos interviewed would have been in the latter category at the time of the census except for one boy born in New Zealand. While there is a concentration of Filipinos in the Brisbane area, it needs to be remembered that there is still a wide-spread population, particularly of those

married to non-Filipinos, in the various regional areas. The census figures for Philippines-born in Queensland in 1996 were: 197 between the ages of 0 and 4; 1,481 between 5 and 14; and 1,914 between 15 and 24. Those interviewed seven years later, who were born in the Philippines, would generally have been in the "between 5 and 14" category at the time of the census.

Powson (2001) mentions that census data for 1991 showed that 66.3% of families had one partner not born in the Philippines, thus only 33.7% of the families were made up of two Philippines-born partners. She was making the point that the Filipinos in Australia have a high out-marriage rate among the first generation. In her thesis she mentions difficulties obtaining respondents due to a split in the Filipino community between Filipinos married to other Filipinos and those Filipinos married to Australians. To a certain extent this had some effect on the referrals for this youth language survey because those from Filipino-Filipino families tended to provide names from the same type of families and, in some cases, this meant that the children were actually migrants themselves. This had an impact on their language skills, particularly if they had attended school in the Philippines prior to migration.

In some cases the Brisbane Tagalog-speaking informants stated that their comprehension was nearly 100% but their speaking ability was somewhat lower. A few indicated they could read Tagalog, one girl regularly reading magazines from the Philippines. This same girl, a Year 12 student, also watches Filipino television programs via cable on a routine basis. They are relayed from Sydney and include news, sports and movies. A brother and sister (ages 22 and 17) said they regularly watch Filipino videos borrowed from an Asian shop. Many who have good Tagalog skills said they speak "Taglish" to family and friends, which is the common term among Filipinos for code-switching, the phenomenon where bilinguals talk to other bilinguals and intersperse the two languages.

However, even some of the families with two Filipino parents who have taught their children a Filipino language at home, expressed some concern about making sure their children were fully competent in English before starting school and during the early years of primary school. One mother, herself very fluent in English, said that while she and her husband had taught their son a Filipino language (Visayan) before English and he was totally fluent to the age of six, they then pushed him to speak English in his early school years. However, an Italian man told her husband that this was a mistake and so they subsequently switched back to speaking mostly Visayan with the boy at home. He is now in Year 10 and again fluent in Visayan. According to the mother, his six-year-old sister is 75% fluent in Visayan and 100% in English because the family now speaks primarily Visayan at home. This was the only family in the survey where the children spoke a Filipino language other than Tagalog. The mother, a university graduate, stated her Tagalog was poor even though she had been forced to learn a certain amount in the Philippines. The boy said that he picks up some Tagalog from Filipino friends and would like to study it formally if possible.

Some Filipino men in Brisbane expressed the view (or it was relayed by wife or children) that they did not believe learning Tagalog was detrimental to the children's English. As on the Fraser Coast, one Brisbane Filipina expressed the opposite view, quoting her non-Filipino husband. Although several women married to non-Filipinos, who brought their children to a Saturday Tagalog class I visited, stated in a general discussion after the class that they believed

learning Tagalog would not be harmful to them in any way. They also said that at first their husbands were not very supportive of the language classes but once the men saw their children performing at multicultural festivals—with the Filipino songs and dances they learned at the Tagalog classes (which also have a cultural component)—they became enthusiastic about the program.

While at the time of writing there were various Tagalog language classes (estimated at five in the Greater Brisbane area) being offered, mostly by Filipino women who had been teachers in the Philippines, they have not been systematically successful in obtaining community language grants to establish regular programs. There are grants available for ethnic schools language instruction as well as multicultural grants for ethnic community projects in which language may be a component, however the requirements are somewhat stringent and require a long-term commitment. The Department of Education also offers venues for classes, curriculum advice and lends library materials.

In 2003 there was one long-running Tagalog program in the suburb of Inala that is jointly funded by the federal and state governments under the Ethnic Schools program of the State of Queensland. The Filipino coordinator of this Saturday Tagalog school is also employed by the Queensland Department of Education as a primary school teacher, having upgraded her Philippines qualifications by attending university in Queensland. She has two other teachers assisting her in the two-hour language classes for 30 students, ranging from primary through high school age. There are three levels: beginners, intermediate and advanced Tagalog, along with an additional hour of culture each Saturday.

The former teacher who offers the informal Sunday afternoon class held at a primary school in the northern suburb of Taigum stated that irregular attendance makes it hard to provide adequate instruction to the children in her class. I observed this class in June 2003 when seven primary school children attended, along with one university student. All had Filipino mothers, non-Filipino fathers and do not get much opportunity to speak Tagalog at home. This teacher has been running classes for few years but is unlikely to be granted any funding due to the irregular attendance of the students and the Department of Education professional development and paperwork requirements which are somewhat daunting for the retired teacher offering the instruction. Parents sometimes make small donations and assist with the classes. Two Filipino youth arrived with a guitar to help with the cultural component but only a few of the students seemed to be sincerely interested in the language lessons. Their spoken replies were not very confident but the written work they produced in class was surprisingly good. The class performed at the city-wide Filipino Barrio Fiesta earlier in the month and were preparing dances for a northside multicultural festival in September.

The Australian-Filipino Teachers Association of Queensland, Inc., to which the teachers of both the Inala and Taigum classes belong, offers encouragement and guidance to those running Tagalog classes but are not able to be of any significant assistance in such a wide-spread city as Brisbane. While all their members were qualified teachers in the Philippines, this does not enable them to teach in Queensland state schools without a couple of years of further tertiary training. However, with their professional backgrounds and experience in teaching Tagalog in primary schools in the Philippines, many are better equipped to teach in Brisbane weekend language schools than the

non-professionals from some of the other ethnic groups who are running community language schools. Since many Filipino children arrive in primary schools in the Philippines speaking only a regional language and not the national language "Filipino/Pilipino" (Tagalog), most of these former teachers are skilled in introducing Tagalog to children.

Gatt-Rutter (1992), in discussing the teaching of community languages as school subjects, said such a program:

...makes no appreciable difference to language shift. All it does is turn community languages into foreign languages...it is not language maintenance, which requires that a language be a means of normal communication for a population of speakers. So called 'ethnic schools', which teach the community language and culture as a school subject or out of hours likewise cannot affect societal language shift.

So, despite good intentions of many Filipino teachers and the desire of a number of parents to have their children study Tagalog, the opportunities are currently somewhat limited even in the Brisbane area. With a lack of funded, easily accessible classes—combined with little or no home instruction of a Filipino language in many families, particularly for those children with one non-Filipino parent—the outlook for the maintenance of Filipino languages by the second generation, and beyond, does not look too hopeful, especially in the more remote areas of Queensland. Census figures from Western Australia, the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory show a similar situation, with Tasmanian figures indicating even more second generation children who cannot speak Filipino than in Queensland.

### **Tagalog Skills of Fraser Coast Youth**

During the earlier study, the research identified only two Australian-born teenagers in Maryborough, with non-Filipino fathers, who could speak Tagalog with any degree of fluency. Due to the small size of the Filipino community, estimated at 84 at the time, it is probable that there are no other young people in that community who can speak the language, with the exception of the children of one family of relatively recent immigrants with two Filipino parents.

A majority of the teenagers interviewed in Maryborough had decided by the time they were in high school that they really wished they had learned the language as young children. Several of them expressed the feeling that they had been somehow cheated out of part of their heritage. Nearly all of them said they would be willing to study Tagalog if there were an opportunity, which there is not in their area. The Filipino-Australian Teachers Association of the Fraser Coast has been working on plans to offer classes in Maryborough but so far this had not happened. There is general agreement in the community, although the majority of the women are native speakers of Visayan, that Tagalog is the language the children should learn, if anything, since it is the official language of the Philippines, and since the women generally speak Tagalog (Filipino/Pilipino) to one another, when not speaking English or Visayan.

The two Maryborough teenagers who do speak Tagalog well happen to have mothers who come from Tagalog-speaking areas in the Philippines and both of the children were born in Australia. Also, both learned to speak the language from grandparents who were living in their respective homes when

the children were quite young. However, in both cases the fathers are Australian and the mothers continue to speak Tagalog to the children to keep up their language skills. Both of the young people have visited the Philippines and been able to communicate well when there. Children, parents and the one set of grandparents I spoke to, all are proud of the ability of the young people to speak Tagalog. Some of the other Filipino teenagers in the community expressed envy of these two who can speak Tagalog. Young people interviewed both on the Fraser Coast and Brisbane indicated that their main reason for wanting to know Tagalog was to use on their trips to the Philippines.

While there are also a few teenagers in Hervey Bay who claim to have some knowledge of Tagalog, there was only one boy interviewed who apparently could be considered reasonably fluent and his mother confirmed this. She is a native speaker of Ilocano who lived for many years in Manila and the boy, who had a Filipino father, was born there. He migrated to Australia at age six. He now has an Australian stepfather and a younger half-brother who does not speak any Filipino. He and his mother frequently speak Tagalog to each other.

### **Other Cultural Aspects**

A few of those interviewed in Brisbane reported experiencing discrimination from mainstream Australians at school, although one girl with a non-Filipino father said the Filipinos at her school who spoke Tagalog, which she does not, discriminated against her. Several of the respondents reported that their best friends were Filipino, although many had close friends who were non-Filipino. Some reported speaking Tagalog to friends at school. A number of them indicated their friends came from various ethnic backgrounds such as Samoan, Indian and Vietnamese.

While those with one non-Filipino parent seemed to be as familiar as the others are with Filipino foods, dances and the culture in general, and most reported being Roman Catholic, it was in the arena of language where they differed the most from those with two Filipino parents. Most of them indicated that they enjoy Filipino community activities and believe it is important to maintain some elements of Filipino culture in Australia. Every interviewee had some knowledge of Filipino culture, particularly the food and respect for elders. The boy with the Iranian father was observed grasping the hand of a Filipino lady for a traditional blessing, which is perhaps understandable since he was age 12 when he left the Philippines.

However, since language carries cultural content, the question arises as to whether certain elements of Filipino culture are being lost to those of the second generation in Australia who cannot speak a Filipino language. For example: some of those teenagers who said they spoke Tagalog well stated that they also knew Filipino jokes, traditional stories or songs; while those who do not speak the language, or speak it poorly, sometimes stated they knew Filipino folk tales in English, particularly scary ones, but not jokes or songs. The boy in Maryborough who spoke Tagalog well said that he and his grandfather often joked in Filipino and his grandfather mentioned the same thing in a separate interview.

### **Factors in Fluency**

From the Brisbane area study it was found that individual circumstances and parental attitude seem to be the over-riding factors in whether a young Filipino will learn and/or maintain fluency in a Filipino language. While the general trend is that if one parent is non-Filipino the child is not likely to speak much Tagalog, there are individual exceptions. A Brisbane girl, who has completed a year of university, had a father from Finland (now deceased) who was fluent in several European languages and spoke a little Tagalog himself. Because of his own background, he encouraged his daughter to speak Tagalog, as well as Finnish, and she also did well in German and Japanese at high school. Today this girl is still reasonably fluent in Tagalog.

The survey also discovered some differences based on a particular child's aptitude and interest in languages. In a few of the interview situations younger siblings were present and were asked how well they could speak Tagalog. In most families the Filipino language skills of the older children were stated to be better than those of the younger ones, although in one family the oldest boy (age 22) does not speak as well as his sister who is a year younger. A middle son, in Year 9, in a Tagalog-speaking family, understands quite well but speaks very poorly, while his brother who is two years younger is able to speak Tagalog at a higher level. It was observed that the younger brother was much more extroverted and talkative in general.

There also seemed to be a limiting factor when there was a regional dialect other than Tagalog spoken in the home, even if Tagalog was also spoken. In two families, one Visayan-speaking and one where the mother and grandmother were speakers of Pampangan and Tagalog, some difficulties caused by this were mentioned in the interviews. The Year 10 Visayan-speaking boy, mentioned above, expressed a desire to speak Tagalog. Since Tagalog has more prestige, both in the Philippines and in Australia, it is possible his Tagalog-speaking friends may give him that impression. Powson (2001) mentioned one family where the mother taught the children some Cebuano (Visayan), although she also speaks Tagalog well. This confused the children and was partly responsible for them not being fluent in either Cebuano or Tagalog.

The pattern in Brisbane families where both parents are Filipino, did not reflect the attitude mentioned by Espiritu for Filipinos in America and that of the Filipino mothers, with non-Filipino husbands, on the Fraser Coast—that Filipino as a first language would be harmful to their English education. Powson's data indicated a positive attitude toward Tagalog in the home on the part of the non-Filipino parent. This was also found in the Brisbane survey on the part of the Finnish father, a Croatian father and the Iranian father, as well one Australian father. There was some indication that one non-Filipino father had some objection but this was not clearly expressed.

In families with two Filipino parents, both those in professional positions and those in technical jobs (or professionally/technically trained in the Philippines and working in factory jobs in Australia), did not express any concern that teaching the children a Filipino language from a young age would be harmful. However, one father (a civil engineer) and his wife (a registered nurse) did not begin to teach their New Zealand-born child Tagalog until he was four. Despite this, the father insisted that they did not believe teaching the children Tagalog at home (they also have a five-year-old girl with the same Tagalog level) was in any way harmful to their English or schooling. At age nine the boy understands a little but has almost no speaking skills in Tagalog and answers in English. The indications are that he will not grow up fluent in

Tagalog, since they allow him to answer in English and do not seem to be consistently talking to him in Tagalog.

As was found on the Fraser Coast, grandparents living in Brisbane Filipino homes, or nearby, also tend to reinforce the use of a Filipino language. In the families where this has resulted in a high level of fluency for the children, this creates no problem. However, one Year 9 boy whose Tagalog speaking ability is poor, stated that sometimes he has to get another family member to explain to the grandmother what he is trying to say. If they are alone he has a struggle to use what Tagalog he knows—and the little English she knows—to get his message across. Yet, as Powson (2001) points out, and the census results mentioned earlier verify, the overall level of English language competency among Filipino migrants is quite high. Thus many grandparents also speak English quite well and are able to communicate with the children in that language if preferred.

Powson (2001), in discussing mixed marriages and language use said:

The assumption also follows that even with their arrival, the children will not acquire facility in the Filipino language. There are other factors that influence Filipino language use in the home such as: the language, the frequency of visits to the Philippines, the presence and frequency of interaction with Filipino relatives, the extent of involvement in Filipino community activities, whether the Filipino partner is the wife or husband and if both partners perceive a cultural need or desirability to maintain Filipino language usage on a day-to-day basis.

She also said that since Filipinos are bilingual it is generally assumed that they will speak English at home, since their non-Filipino partners are unlikely to speak much Filipino.

## **The Future**

Almost every Filipino of any age, on the Fraser Coast or in Brisbane, with whom language was discussed between 1999 and 2003, expressed the view that it was important for children of Filipino background to have an opportunity to learn Tagalog. With the exception of those homes with two Tagalog-speaking parents who are determined to teach the children from infancy, and who trust they will learn English in due course (as linguistic evidence has shown they will), there continues to be a somewhat bleak outlook for Filipino or part-Filipino children becoming fluent in Tagalog unless there is a change in attitude on the part of a large number of parents.

Much more concerted and cooperative efforts will have to be made on a long-term basis by the various Filipino communities and organisations if part-time Filipino language schools are to become more successful, wide-spread and permanent. There are many Filipino former teachers no doubt capable of teaching Tagalog but the geographic distribution of the families in places like Brisbane make getting children to language classes difficult. Such language classes can only ever be a "top up" for those children who learn basic Tagalog at home, since it is not possible to learn a language fluently on the limited basis such classes might be offered and there does not appear to be any current move to add Tagalog to the regular Languages Other Than English (LOTE) programs in Queensland state schools.

If Filipino mothers in Australia, with or without Filipino husbands, would simply decide to speak Tagalog only to their babies from infancy, there would

be a second generation of Tagalog speakers who learned that language with relative ease, as many bilingual children in various parts of the world have always done. Advice on strategies for raising a bilingual child can be found in various sources such as *Raising Children Bilingually* in Australia published by Monash University's Language and Society Centre. This work describes a "one person-one language" method which is perfectly suited to a home in which only one parent speaks a Filipino language. Janssen and Pauwels (1993), in that Monash publication, point out: "Studies carried out since the early 1960s have consistently shown that bilingualism can have a positive impact on intellectual development." Romaine (1995) in her exhaustive study of bilingualism stated: "Another myth is that bilingualism in and of itself is the cause of poor achievement at school." She examined other problems faced by children of minority backgrounds that might affect their academic performance. Harding & Riley (1986) advised, "...there is no evidence that bilingualism does any intellectual harm (if anything the reverse is true) and bilingualism can be of great social benefit."

In the Australian context, a study done in 1985 by the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs (1986) brings up a lot of interesting questions and some conclusions on the maintenance of German and Macedonian in New South Wales. It was found that the maintenance level of the German language among second generation Germans was considerably less than the level of Macedonian language for that group of children. Variables included length of time in Australia, geographical disbursement, inter-ethnic marriage rate and socio-economic levels.

Many of the results of this study could no doubt be examined with the Filipino-Australian situations in mind. According to Khoo (2000), the 92,902 Philippines-born in Australia were the eighth largest overseas birthplace group as determined by the 1996 census, making up 0.5% of the total Australian population. By comparison with the census figures on language above, for Tagalog speakers, it is noteworthy that 86% of the Macedonian children claimed to speak that language well. Only 32% of the German children said they could speak German well, making their language skills closer to that of the second generation Filipinos. While one of the findings of the study, Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs (1986), was that for both the Germans and Macedonians, their English skills were below those of the control group, the researchers stated: "We do not think that these results point to the bilingual experience as being the cause of under-achievement at school".

## **Conclusion**

If Filipino community leaders and those who are involved in teaching Tagalog would familiarise themselves with the literature on bilingualism and make a concerted effort to inform Filipino parents of the pros and cons of bilingualism and biliteracy, as well as methodologies, it might increase the number of bilingual Filipino children growing up in Australia. This would be seen as desirable by many such as Gatt-Rutter (1992) who says: "What I am arguing for, then, in connection with transgenerational language maintenance is...a 'robust' pluralism: a resourceful openness that could carry Australia well equipped into the third millennium as a nation equipped to talk to the rest of the world in many tongues."

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