

Language Documentation and Description in the Philippines: Patterns and Dynamics in the Past 100 Years (1922-2022)

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Abstract

This paper presents a historiographic account of language documentation and description (LDD) in the Philippines from 1922 to 2022. Adopting a linguistic historiographic framework that integrates chronological and thematic analysis, the study traces major research trends, theoretical shifts, and institutional developments in Philippine linguistics from the early twentieth century to the present.

While acknowledging the fluidity of historical boundaries, the discussion is organized into three phases: the American occupation period, the post-independence

Philippine period, and the contemporary period. Each phase is examined in relation to its sociopolitical context, institutional configurations (including universities, missionary organizations, and government agencies), and prevailing theoretical orientations. Particular attention is given to the transition from exo-grammatical traditions and early survey-based studies toward theoretically informed and community-engaged approaches in recent decades, alongside the growing participation of Filipino scholars in LDD.

The paper further identifies several enduring challenges in the documentation of Philippine languages, including uneven language coverage, a predominance of research on Tagalog, limited institutional coordination, underfunding, and insufficient public research infrastructure. It argues for the urgent need to strengthen state support, expand community-based approaches, and invest in sustainable archiving, capacity building, and ethical technological integration. It concludes by outlining directions for strengthening LDD initiatives in the country, including capacity building, community collaboration, accessible archiving, and the responsible use of emerging technologies. By situating LDD within its historical and institutional contexts, this study aims to contribute to ongoing discussions on the development and coordination of language documentation efforts in the Philippines.

Keywords: language documentation and description, Philippine linguistics, linguistic historiography, institutional history of linguistics, Philippine languages

1 Introduction

This paper attempts to describe the general trends of linguistic research that fall under what we refer to as “language documentation and description” (henceforth, LDD) in the Philippines from 1922 to 2022.¹ We intend to encompass both the traditional view of language documentation that intertwines acquisition of primary data and products of linguistic description (reference grammars, dictionaries with grammar notes, among others) and the more recent “inclusive and atheoretic” notion of language documentation (see Furbee, 2010). LDD, in our view, also aptly represents the trajectory of linguistic studies that emerged during the early 20th century and continued to prevail up to the present.

In LDD, the relationship between documentation and description is reflexive: linguistic fieldwork, often the initial stage of language documentation, provides the primary data necessary for linguistic description, while the outputs of description—such as reference grammars and lexicons—contribute to the creation of a “lasting, multipurpose record of a language,” which is the central goal of language documentation as an emerging subfield of linguistics (Himmelman, 2006).

¹As the manuscript’s processing extended beyond 2022, several works published in 2023 and 2024 were incorporated into the references during revision.

This study makes use of the key components of linguistic historiography in describing the development of LDD in the Philippines in the past 100 years. In particular, we use as anchoring points of our analysis both the discrete entities, i.e., authors, texts, and users, and the continua, i.e., networks, institutions, schools, circles, societies (Swiggers, 2010) and the like that could have shaped the course of LDD in the country during each phase.

While this study sets its timeline from 1922, the year when the Department of Linguistics was established at the University of the Philippines (UP), the epihistoriographic account around this period involves agents and linguistic products that emerged during the first two decades of the 20th century. The chronological boundaries of each phase are malleable but we considered key socio-historical periods in coming up with the three phases—(a) the first phase is roughly equivalent to the American Period in the earlier historiographies (Asuncion-Landé, 1970; Constantino, 1971) except that the starting year is set to 1922 when the UP Department of Linguistics was established; (b) the second phase starts in 1953, a few years after the Philippines proclaimed independence from its American colonizers and it also coincides with the establishment of the Summer Institute of Linguistics in the Philippines; and (c) the third phase starts in 1994, a few years after the ratification of the 1987 Constitution, and three years before the establishment of the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) in 1997 (NCIP, 2022). The third phase also features the “theoretical era” of linguistic description in the Philippines with the growing number of works applying specific grammatical theories, and renewed interest in the more functional

approaches toward linguistic analysis that first gained traction in the late 1970s.

Even though Spanish missionaries already conducted linguistic fieldwork in the Philippines as early as the 16th century, both their acquisition of data and the type of linguistic work that they would produce were bound to the primary goals of their missionary work—to help the new missionaries become proficient in Philippine languages in order to proselytize the local communities in their own languages. Hence, the two most dominant genres of linguistic work during the entire Spanish colonial period—*artes y reglas* (arts and rules) and *vocabularios y calepinos* (vocabularies and dictionaries) were both implemented through exo-grammatization (García-Medall, 2007, p. 2), i.e., applying the dominant Latin model (Zwartjes, 2012, p. 104). Such a unidirectional approach of linguistic description is comparable to the deductive application of a specific linguistic theory or theoretical assumptions to a particular language(s) in contemporary times.

Nevertheless, a study of the documentary and descriptive linguistic works in the country in the past one hundred years from 1922 until 2022 needs to be grounded in a sufficient knowledge of the linguistic contributions made from the onset of the Spanish colonial period until the first two decades of the twentieth century. Fortunately, a number of references are available on the latter topic, including Salazar (2012) on studies written by Europeans (excluding those by Spanish authors), Vibar (2010) on studies made by Spanish missionaries on the major Philippine languages, and Phelan (1955) on linguistics studies in the Philippines undertaken by Spanish missionaries during the first half of the Spanish colonial period (1565-1700). Similar works have also been

produced by Spanish scholars in Spanish, with Sueiro Justel (2003), Ridruejo (2001), and García-Medall (2007) being three of the most notable ones. Through these works, we are made aware of the general motivations and characteristics of the linguistic works in the Philippines during the Spanish colonial period, particularly of the works that fall under the genre of *artes y reglas*, as well as the nature and types of works that were written by non-Spanish European scholars during the same period.

Ridruejo (2001, as re-stated by García-Medall, 2007, pp. 4–5) established the “technical characteristics” specific to *artes y reglas*. The main characteristic of grammars that were written by the Spanish friars is their employment of Nebrija’s Greek-Latin model, following the same grammatical nomenclature in most works except for a few attempts to introduce novel terms. For instance, Ridruejo referred to Benavente’s (1699) “articles of the proper names” in Pampango and the “causative verbs” in the Tagalog grammar of San José (1610) as examples (cited by García-Medall, 2007, p. 4). Other characteristics that were noted by Ridruejo appear to be a consequence of employing the Latin model, including the distinction between the active and the passive voice. For example, San José (1610, as discussed by Quilis, 1982) identified the Tagalog “active voice” to be those verbs affixed with *-um-* or *mag-*, while verbs in “passive voice” were classified into three depending on the non-actor affix that it takes—*y* (equivalent to *i-*), *yn* (equivalent to *-in*), or *-an*. Other notable results of this exo-grammatical description of Philippine languages include the use of the Latin case system, as well as the labeling of morphological items that do not correspond to those in Latin grammar (e.g., prepositions, particles, articles). However, it is

important to note that there are studies, like that of Winkler (2007), that dispute the claim that the grammars were blind copies of the Latin grammatical model. To support this, Winkler argued that early grammars written by Spanish missionaries contained “pragmalinguistic notions” and utilized a “predominantly pragmatic approach” to explain the features of non-Indo-European languages like Tagalog.

Despite these problems in the early grammars written by Spanish friars, no significant paradigm shift happened in the remaining centuries of the Spanish colonial rule, and the overall nature of *artes y reglas* that were later produced remained the same. However, the rise of historical comparative linguistics influenced the state of Philippine linguistics during the late 18th century, when foreign scholars, particularly Humboldt, started to recognize the important position of Tagalog in the Malayan language family.² The rise of comparative historical linguistics in Europe, alongside the intensified contacts with the Philippines of European scholars served as important precursors to the shift towards a more comparative, and later on, a more descriptivist trend in Philippine linguistics during the first decades of the 20th century.

A major policy shift happened after the Spaniards surrendered the Philippines to the Americans in 1898. The English language took center stage in the Philippine educational system and surveys of languages and dialects started to be undertaken. During the first decade of American occupation, there were a few survey articles (e.g., MacKinlay in 1901 & 1904) and books (a Tagalog handbook & grammar by MacKinlay in 1905, a grammar of Ilokano by Swift

²See Salazar (2012) for an extensive discussion of Humboldt’s work on Tagalog.

in 1909, and a primer on Maguindanao by Porter in 1903) written by what Constantino (1971, pp. 119–120) referred to as the “Army Linguists,” precisely because they were commissioned to study the Philippine languages by the American military government.

2 The First Phase: From Early 1920s until Late 1940s

Philippine linguistics during the American colonial period has also been the subject of a number of linguistic historiographies, including that of Asuncion-Landé (1970), Constantino (1971), and more recently, Flores (1996) and Javier and Or (2022). All of them referred to this period, albeit phrased differently, as the “American period,” highlighting the introduction of American linguistics tradition to the Philippines, and the emergence of local scholars who were trained in field methods and “scientific” linguistic analysis.

The epihistoriographic legacies of this period are quite apparent, since there were a few who really stood out in terms of their accomplishments in Philippine linguistics. Constantino (1971) identified seven individuals as the “Chief Linguists,” while Asuncion-Landé (1970) cited “three important scientific grammars” that “were to influence the Philippine language activity” during this period. The following linguists were in Constantino’s list: Cecilio Lopez, Otto Johns Scheerer, Hermann Costenoble, Morice Vanoverbergh, Carlos Everett Conant, Frank Blake, and Leonard Bloomfield. The three works that Asuncion-Landé (1970) cited as the “most important scientific grammars” include Bloomfield’s (1917) *Tagalog Texts with Grammatical*

Analysis, Blake's (1925) *A Grammar of the Tagalog Language*, and Cecilio Lopez's (1940) *A Manual of the Philippine National Language*.

In terms of the documentation and descriptive approaches, works during this period, particularly those written by the linguists mentioned above, could be generally divided into (a) comparative philology and (b) descriptive grammars that include the three works cited by Asuncion-Landé (1970) above. Examples of comparative philological works include Costenoble's (1937) comparative historical phonology of Tagalog, Pampango, Bikol, Bisaya, Iloko, and Pangasinan (as described by Salazar, 2009, p. 24), Conant's best known articles, *The RGH Law in Philippine Languages* (1911) and *The Pepet Law in Philippine Languages* (1912), and Scheerer's study (1921) on the *remarkable L-representative in the dialect of Aklan on the Island Panay (Philippines)* (Constantino, 1971, p. 121).

Interestingly, two of the most impactful grammars during this period were written by two Americans who were the only ones who did not come and do fieldwork in the Philippines among the “chief linguists” identified by Constantino—Leonard Bloomfield and Frank Blake. Bloomfield used novel nomenclature in his description of the Tagalog grammar—for instance, the use of “static” and “transient” in place of “nouns” and “verbs” (Javier & Or, 2022)—but also acknowledged the applicability of some Latin-based categories (e.g., case). As a matter of fact, Bloomfield's four transient (=verb) classes that include active, direct passive, instrumental passive, and local passive are reminiscent of the Spanish grammarians' “active & three passive voices” classification of verbs in *artes y reglas*. On the other hand, Blake employed the same Latin model that was utilized by

Spanish missionary grammarians, and employed novel practices only “if they proved to be superior to already existing ones,” an approach that Asuncion-Landé (1970) described as a “reflection of the neo-classical tradition of American linguistics” (p. 214).

It is important to note that the epihistoriographic legacies of this period were also largely influenced by two significant institutions established during this period—the Department of Linguistics at the University of the Philippines in 1922 (alternately henceforth, UP Lingg³) and the Institute of National Language (INL) in 1936:

UP Lingg was established on 28 August 1922 accordingly due to what was referred to as *nasyunalistikong kilusan* (nationalist movement) (Constantino, 1992, pp. 1–2). This movement clamored for the study and teaching of Philippine languages at the University of the Philippines. An advisory committee was formed by the University President⁴ which included Trinidad H. Pardo de Tavera, Epifanio de los Santos, and Otto Scheerer (Constantino, 1992, p. 3). UP Lingg offered the first courses on linguistics in the country—Philippine Linguistics 101 [*History and Methodology of the Comparative Study of Languages*] and Philippine Linguistics 102 [*History of the Exploration of Oceanic Languages*]. Both courses were taught by Otto Scheerer, the first professor emeritus of Philippine Linguistics. Scheerer also spearheaded the establishment of the Department’s official publication, *The Archive*, in the early 1920s (Lopez, 1970). The Archive served as the repository of linguistic works

³UP Lingg had undergone several name changes since its establishment. See Badiola (2022) for more information on these name changes and the motivations behind them.

⁴The President of the University of the Philippines during this period based on available public records was Guy Potter Wharton Benton.

produced by the faculty and students of the program. Cecilio Lopez, who is now recognized as the first professional linguist of Filipino descent, was one of Scheerer's seven students in the two courses mentioned above. He was sent to the University of Hamburg in 1926 for doctoral studies, as he was the one expected to replace Scheerer who was nearing retirement at that time. Lopez returned in 1930 and assumed the chairmanship of UP Lingg (Constantino, 1992, p. 5). The teaching of Linguistics in UP stalled after Lopez was appointed to the Institute of National Language in 1936. Lopez came back to teach again in 1945 after the war (Salazar, 2023).⁵

Based on a general provision in the 1935 Constitution on “the development and adoption of a common national language,” the national assembly passed Commonwealth Act No. 184 (1936), creating the Institute of National Language (INL) to study which among the native languages could be developed and adopted as the national language of the Philippines. Furthermore, Act No. 184 also ordered INL to produce a grammar and a dictionary of the national language two years after the latter's proclamation, and instructed the Department of Public Instruction (the equivalent of Department of Education today) to implement the use and the teaching of the national language in all public and private schools in the Philippines. Executive Order No. 134 was then passed in 1937 proclaiming Tagalog as the basis of the national language, thus a grammar based on Tagalog had to be written in order to fulfill the mandate and develop the country's national language.

⁵Please see Salazar's (2024) published keynote speech in this volume.

At the helm of the initiative to come up with a grammar and dictionary of the Tagalog-based national language are select Filipino scholars who were trained in linguistics and/or language education. Cecilio Lopez and Lope K. Santos (a politician, poet, and novelist, who was initially appointed to the UP Lengg to teach Tagalog) formed part of the sub-committee that was assigned to the project, alongside Julian Cruz Balmaceda. There are varying accounts on the dynamics of this sub-committee, but it was clear that both Lopez and Santos were actively involved in the development of an official grammar of Tagalog, while Balmaceda focused on the development of the Tagalog dictionary. Zafra (in L. K. Santos, 1939/2019), in his introduction to the reprinted copy of Santos' *Balarila ng Wikang Pambansa* (originally published in 1939), revealed that it was apparent that "time" was a crucial factor as the committee was only given two years to deliver the task. Lopez, who arguably had the most fitting credentials to write a reference grammar of Tagalog, explicitly expressed that he would need more time to complete a grammar of Tagalog. This partly explains why it was Lope K. Santos' (1939/2019) *Balarila* that became the official grammar of the Tagalog-based national language and not Lopez's (1940) *A Manual of the Philippine National Language*, which was released a year after the 1939 deadline.

Lope K. Santos' (1939/2019) *Balarila* employed Nebrija's Greek-Latin model of grammatical description and patterns with the grammars written by the Spanish missionaries, except for the fact that Santos introduced new Tagalog terms that correspond to concepts and categories of the Latin-based framework. In the prologue of the *Balarila*, then Director Jaime C. de Veyra of INL described Santos'

grammar as “not really new” but meaningfully married the features of the Tagalog language and the framework commonly used in Spanish grammars (L. K. Santos, 1939/2019, pp. 3–7). Understandably, Santos’ *Balarila* was met with criticisms from various scholars, primarily because it contained terms that were never used before and was nothing more than an application of the Greek-Latin model to Tagalog (see Gonzalez, 1998).

In contrast, Lopez’s (1940) *A Manual of the Philippine National Language*—is often cited as the first scientific grammar written by a Filipino; and the first definitive grammar of the national language (Asuncion-Landé, 1970, p. 215). A revised, condensed version of this manual, which was published later in the special issue of *The Archive* in 1980, reflects a highly scientific approach to language description and covers the essential topics in the phonology, morphology, and syntax of the Tagalog language. The work seems to be influenced in part by the earlier analyses of Tagalog made by Bloomfield (1917) and by Blake (1925). Lopez (1980), however, made clear that many of the terms used in his description are “convenient concessions to traditional terminology only” (p.50). The outline of syntactic description, in particular, follows Bloomfield’s descriptive model, with emphasis on the following “relations,” namely, predication, attribution, and serial relation.

The proclamation of Tagalog as the basis of the national language, which was later named “Filipino,” and the ensuing policies that mainly sought to propagate its use and its teaching around the country largely influenced the path of language and linguistic research in the Philippines in the mid-20th century. After the Japanese occupation, nationalist

sentiments sparked interest to intensify the instruction of Tagalog in Philippine schools. Executive Order No. 10 issued, by then President Jose P. Laurel in 1943, mandated the teaching of the national language to all elementary schools and the training of teachers from all over the country through a Tagalog institute. This propelled the publication of various Tagalog grammar books and dictionaries (Amerila et al., n.d.)

3 The Second Phase: 1950s to 1980s

Modern linguistics became more firmly established in the Philippines starting in the 1950s with the rise of a new generation of formally-trained Filipino linguists following Cecilio Lopez. Among these were Bonifacio Sibayan, Teodoro Llamzon, Cesar Hidalgo, Araceli Hidalgo, Ernesto Constantino, Fe T. Otañes, Consuelo J. Paz, Emy Pascasio, Ernesto Cubar, Fe Aldave Yap and Andrew B. Gonzalez. This period saw an exponential increase in the number of local scholars interested in the study of languages in the Philippines, many of whom branched into various linguistic sub-disciplines, such as sociolinguistics and applied linguistics—disciplines which were also just starting to take shape in other parts of the world during this time. This increase was driven in part by the continuing debates around the national language, its standardization, and use in education. It could also be argued that the surge in school participation rate and the expansion of the education system in the Philippines after the Second World War (McHale, 1961; Orbeta, 2002; Ramirez Yee, 2024) led to more Filipinos being able to attend college, where some were able to discover a path towards linguistics research.

The 1950s and 60s saw the establishment of three institutions that continue to promote linguistics research and the documentation of indigenous languages in the Philippines: UP Lingg, the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), and the Linguistic Society of the Philippines (LSP).

While UP Lingg, as mentioned in the previous section, was established in 1922, it was not until 1952 that its first degree program—the master’s in linguistics—was instituted. The program’s curriculum largely followed the American Structuralist tradition, coupled with training in diachronic and comparative linguistics. Ernesto Constantino also introduced the generative grammar framework upon his return to UP Lingg after going through graduate studies at Cornell University and Indiana University in the US in the late 50s (De Leon, 2020). The first graduate of the MA program completed a thesis describing Kapampangan syntax in 1955 (Castrillo, 1955). Subsequently, UP Lingg established its PhD program in Philippine Linguistics in 1970 and its bachelor’s program in 1975. The Department has continued to guide its students in producing studies on Philippine indigenous languages, with the view of not only promoting the maintenance of these languages, but also contributing to broader theoretical understanding of the nature of language and language change. As of this writing, the Department has produced over a hundred graduate theses and dissertations, among which are grammar sketches of understudied Philippine languages and in-depth analyses of specific linguistic features in various Philippine languages.⁶

⁶See Badiola (2022) for a study of the trends in subject matters, theoretical frameworks, and methodologies that had been applied in the graduate theses and dissertations produced at UP Lingg from 1955 to 2019.

Other Philippine universities during this period had a more applied linguistics orientation and were more concerned with improving language education and investigating the impact of language policies in education (Asuncion-Landé, 1970). There was an increase of interest in language teaching and learning (particularly of English), and the improvement of such by conducting research that employed linguistic approaches and contrastive analyses to investigate how features of the learners' first language could affect their acquisition of English as a second language (Casel et al., 1978; Constantino, 1963). Some examples of these are Esperanza Catedral's (1975) comparative analysis of English and Hiligaynon sentence structures, Bulabog's (1968) contrastive study of English and Cebuano phonological systems, and Pablo Alpas's (1958) contrastive analysis of English and Maguindanao verbs.

Formal discussions about language loss and maintenance in the West have been fairly recent and can be traced back to the fire sparked by discussions at the symposium on endangered languages at the 1991 Annual Meeting of the Linguistic Society of America (Hale et al., 1992).⁷ Linguists at the time also drew inspiration from the growing global movement that was starting to push for the protection of biodiversity and for Indigenous rights, and relating these to the importance of linguistic diversity and the maintenance of minoritized indigenous languages around the world (Perlin, 2024). In the Philippines, however, Lopez had already highlighted the importance of the "linguistic rescue work to be undertaken in the Philippines" in 1961 (Wurm, 1962, p. 9). By

⁷Seifart et al. (2018) also point out that several scholars had attempted to call attention to language loss prior to this conference. These include Dressler and Wodak-Leodolter (1977), Dow (1987), and Robins and Uhlenbeck (1991).

1965, UP Lingg was already pushing for the establishment of a Research Center for Philippine languages, which would safeguard recordings of endangered languages for future generations, and facilitate language maintenance and revitalization programs in the Philippines. Thus, from the 1960s until his retirement in 1993, Constantino, Lopez's successor, led UP Lingg in a number of research projects that had the objective of amassing a huge collection of linguistic data from over a hundred Philippine languages in the form of audio recordings of narratives and songs, as well as transcribed word lists and sentence lists. Some of the languages that they were able to record are now considered endangered like Yogad, Manide and Bolinao. These legacy language materials are currently being digitized for potential secondary use and repatriation (Or & Estrellado, 2023). A similar language archive was established by Jack Wigfield in 1967 at the Philippine Normal University (PNU) with funds obtained from the Ford Foundation. This archive was composed of data gathered through field work conducted in various parts of the Philippine and was used to create a workbook that contained a set of exercises for training students in phonological, morphological, and syntactic analysis (Otanes, 1989). It is unclear, however, what became of this PNU language archive.

Another institution relevant to the development of Philippine LDD that was established during this period is the SIL Philippines. SIL Philippines was established in 1953 and has since been actively collaborating with indigenous communities as well as academic and civic institutions across the archipelago in various language-related projects. With their roots as an evangelical Christian nonprofit organization, their primary directive is to provide aid in “language-based

development through research, translation, and literacy” (Quakenbush, 2003, p. 3). According to its website, SIL Philippines has produced over 2000 pieces of work on various Philippine languages, including grammar sketches, reference grammars, vocabularies, folk narratives, and theoretical analyses. Constantino (1963, p. 24) wrote that SIL was directly responsible in steering Philippine linguistics towards an “American orientation” by bringing to the Philippines “techniques in descriptive linguistics that were developed in the United States before, during, and after the Second World War.”

The first two directors of SIL, Richard Pittman and Howard McKaughan, have been influential in how the distinctive voice system of Philippine-type languages has been described and analyzed since the latter half of the 20th century. Pittman is said to have coined the term *focus* during a discussion with Alan Healey and Wilf Douglas at the SIL summer school in Australia in 1954 (Brichoux, 1973/1974; Quakenbush, 2003). Meanwhile, Phyllis Healey’s (1960) description of Agta grammar is the first published use of this term (Brichoux, 1973/1974; Blust, 2002). The term *focus* has been widely used in Philippine linguistics to refer to the syntactic relationship between the verbal predicate head and the surface subject of a clause (Naylor, 1975). On the other hand, McKaughan’s use of the term *topic* rather than *subject* in his early works on Maranao syntax (McKaughan, 1958, 1973) to highlight how different the voice system of Philippine languages are compared to European languages (McKaughan, 1973) launched many discussions about subjecthood in Philippine-type languages and how best to characterize the voice alternation system in these languages. His

influence can be seen in subsequent descriptions of Tagalog grammar, including Wolfenden (1961) and Schachter and Otnes (1972).⁸

Many of the language descriptions that SIL linguists produced in the late 50s to 70s also employed the Tagmemic Grammar framework, which was developed by SIL linguist Kenneth Pike as a functionalist offshoot of Bloomfieldian Structuralism. Some examples include Wolfenden's (1975) description of Hiligaynon syntax, McLachlin and Blackburn's (1968) analysis of verbal clauses in Sarangani Blaan, and Forster's (1964) study of Dibabawon.

Over the years, SIL has also partnered with local academic institutions and government agencies to provide training to Filipino linguists, language educators, and other cultural stakeholders. Both Pittman and McKaughan taught at UP Lingg in 1954 and 1955. Several SIL linguists also taught at the linguistics consortium of Ateneo de Manila University and Philippine Normal College. Among the graduates of the PhD program of this consortium, which was established in 1971, are Casilda Luzares (1979), who employed Case Grammar in analyzing the morphology of Cebuano verbs, Gloria Chan-Yap (1980), who identified and described Hokkien Chinese loanwords in Tagalog, and Ma. Lourdes Bautista, who has written extensively about Tagalog-English code-switching and about various sociolinguistic issues in the Philippines.

In July 1969, the LSP was formally established as a professional organization for researchers working on Philippine languages (Bautista, 1989). It has since become the country's largest association for linguists

⁸See Blust (2002), Kroeger (2010), and Ross (2002) for a more extensive discussion on McKaughan's influence.

working on Philippine languages. The LSP regularly hosts conferences and seminars and continues to publish the *Philippine Journal of Linguistics* (PJL), its international, peer-reviewed journal. Aside from the PJL, LSP also published monographs and co-produced the *Studies in Philippine Languages and Culture* series with SIL from 1977 to 2008. Dumoran (2022), in a survey of PJL articles published during the society's first five decades, observed that despite a downward trend in the number of descriptive and theoretical studies published in the journal starting from 1981, there has been a "healthy proportion" of such studies alongside work in applied linguistics. This reflects the LSP's commitment to being "at the vanguard of groups that are trying to clarify positions and chart directions in the formulation of language policy" that are based on Filipino-led research studies (Bautista, 1989, p. 48).

Around the same time as the establishment of the LSP, Constantino spearheaded the formation of the Diliman Linguistics Circle, which later came to be known as the Philippine Linguistics Circle (V. C. Santiago, 2022). Composed of linguists at the University of the Philippines Diliman, the group revived *The Archive*, which was originally founded by Otto Scheerer in the 1920s. Between 1970 to 1998, members of the Circle published descriptive studies, diachronic and comparative research, lexicographic works, dialectological studies, as well as proceedings from the Philippine Linguistics Congress (PLC), which UP Lingg has continued to organize every few years since 1978 to provide a platform for researchers working on Philippine languages to share their recent studies. The Philippine Linguistics Circle eventually became defunct and *The Archive Journal* went on hiatus until UP Lingg

revived it once again in 2018 as a peer-reviewed journal that mainly focuses on theoretical, descriptive, typological, comparative, diachronic, ethnolinguistic, and anthropological linguistic studies on Philippine languages and dialects.

Outside the Philippines, interest in Philippine studies continued in the US post-World War II. According to Aquino (2000), as an aftermath of the war, US policy-makers saw the need for area and language programs in order to carry out political and military objectives in the region. Several Philippine Studies and Southeast Asian Studies programs were established in American universities, including Cornell University, where a Southeast Asia program was established in 1950. Tagalog language courses started being offered in Cornell in 1964 upon the recommendation of John Wolff (Cororaton, 2021), who also created pedagogical materials for Cebuano and Tagalog and compiled a dictionary of Cebuano which was published in 1972.

The Philippine Studies Program at the University of Chicago, which was established in 1953, mainly focused on anthropology and was discontinued upon the retirement of its director, anthropologist Fred Eggan, in 1977 (University of Chicago Library, 2009). Among his works are studies on rituals, culture contact and change among communities in the Mountain Province of the Philippines. Notable alumni of Chicago's Philippine Studies Program include anthropologists Robert B. Fox, E. Arsenio Manuel, and F. Landa Jocano, who all did extensive ethnographic field studies in different ethnolinguistic communities in the Philippines. An anthropologist who had a more direct contribution to Philippine linguistics was Harold Conklin. Like Fox, Conklin was a serviceman stationed in the Philippines during WWII. After the war,

he did extensive fieldwork in Mindoro and Palawan, and wrote about the linguistic and cultural landscape of the Hanunoo Mangyans in Mindoro and the Tagbanwa in central Palawan (Conklin, 1998).

Perhaps no other American university produced more documentations of Philippine languages than the University of Hawai'i with its Department of Linguistics, which was founded in 1963, with Howard McKaughan, as its first chairperson. According to Blust (2002, p. 178), the establishment of this department, along with the creation of the *Oceanic Linguistics* journal in 1962, were direct products of the two main resolutions undertaken by scholars who attended the Tenth Pacific Science Congress in 1961 at the University of Hawai'i: (a) that the scale of research on Pacific languages should be expanded, and (b) that encouragement and assistance should be provided to institutions of then newly independent Southeast Asian nations that are interested in making linguistic surveys of their people. In line with this, the University of Hawai'i Pacific and Asian Linguistics Institute (PALI) was also established in 1965 and it published dictionaries and grammar books on Tagalog, Ilokano, Pangasinan, Kapampangan, Cebuano, Bikol and Hiligaynon. Some of the authors of these works, like Michael Forman, who did extensive work on Kapampangan, had served in the Philippines as Peace Corps volunteers in the 1960s (Aquino, 2000).

Ramos (2010) referred to the 1960s and 70s as the “golden age of Philippine languages at the University of Hawai'i” because many notable dissertations were published during this period under the tutelage of McKaughan. Some of their notable alumni from this period include Lawrence A. Reid, who was also an SIL linguist and completed his dissertation on Ivatan syntax in 1966; Richard Elkins, whose dissertation

in 1967 was a reference grammar of Bukidnon Manobo; Leatrice Taeko Mirikitani, who wrote about Kapampangan syntax in 1971; as well as Joseph Francis Kess (1967), Teresita Ramos (1974), and Videa De Guzman (1978b), who all wrote about the syntactic features of Tagalog verbs.

Given the close relationship that the US and the Philippines maintained over the years, it is unsurprising that outside the Philippines, most of the linguists who worked on Philippine languages during this period were American. However, there were also small pockets of interest in various parts of the world.

In Japan, the Research Institute for Languages and Culture of Asia and Africa was founded in 1964 as the first inter-university institution in Japan that mainly focuses on linguistic, anthropological, and historical research on Asia and Africa. Among its affiliated researchers during this period were Shigeru Tsuchida, Yukihiro Yamada, and Tsunekazu Moriguchi, who worked with Ernesto Constantino in collecting lexical and sentence data from Batanic languages (Tsuchida et al., 1987; Tsuchida et al., 1989). Yamada (1972a) also published a Buhi Bikol word list in 1972, but then mainly focused on Itbayaten (Yamada, 1967; Yamada, 1972b; Yamada, 1972c), completing an Itbayat-English dictionary in 2002.

In Russia, Vladimir Makarenko, Linda Shkarba, and Gennady Rachkov wrote extensively on Tagalog morphosyntactic issues from the 1960s onwards (Zabolotnaya, 2006). Meanwhile, in other parts of Europe, there is the French linguist and anthropologist, Nicole Revel-Macdonald, who did extensive fieldwork in Palawan in the 1970s, which culminated in her book *Le Palawan (Philippines): Phonologie*,

Categories, Morphologie, published in 1979. She also led the creation of the Multimedia Collection of Philippine Epics and Ballads, housed by the Ateneo de Manila University. German linguist, Nikolaus Himmelmann, also began his career by writing about Tagalog grammar (Himmelmann, 1983; Himmelmann, 1986; Himmelmann, 1987). Dutch missionary Antoon Postma, on the other hand, was stationed in Mindoro in 1958 and then spent the rest of his life documenting and promoting the Hanunoo Mangyan language, their native writing system, folklore, and traditions.

In Australia, the Australian National University began publishing the Pacific Linguistics series of monographs in 1963. Studies that were published deal with language descriptions, grammatical analyses, typological studies, linguistic theory, and the reconstruction of linguistic change and culture history. Among the notable papers published in this series that deal with Philippine languages are Ramos' (1974) description of the Tagalog case system, R. David Zorc's (1977) *The Bisayan Dialects of the Philippines*, and Andrew Gonzales' (1981) *Pampangan: Towards a Meaning-based Description*.

The second phase in the history of language documentation and description in the Philippines is characterized by the explosive growth in the number, depth, and range of studies on Philippine languages. The second half of the 20th century is known as the *Age of Syntax or Syntactic Theory* (Graffi, 2001) and Philippine languages also served as experimental subjects for the testing of various theoretical models.⁹ This

⁹See Ramos' (1974) and De Guzman's (1978b) application of case grammar on Tagalog; Reid's (1966) and Wolfenden's (1975) application of tagmemic analysis on Ivatan and Hiligaynon respectively; Constantino's (1965, 1970) use of generative grammar in analyzing the sentence structures of selected Philippine languages; Bell's

has led Constantino in 1971 to describe the Philippines as “an overseas field station and laboratory” for many, particularly American, linguists.

4 The Third Phase: 1990s to early 2020s

This section focuses on the dominant theoretical orientations that emerged in the second phase and continued to be developed and applied in the third phase of Philippine LDD. The expansive growth of LDD as practiced in the Philippines and by Filipino scholars continue during this period, therefore, in the interest of space, most of the discussion particularly in Section 4.2, which explore the application of various theoretical orientations in LDD outputs, will focus on work that came out of UP Lingg to illustrate this specific institution’s response to the changes in the field over this period of time. However, the evolution of fieldwork methods, the relationship between educational policies and focus areas of LDD in the Philippines, as well as the role of institutions in addressing language endangerment are also covered in this section.

4.1 Theoretical Linguistics

Building on the theoretical advancements of the second period, works in this period examined and described Philippine languages using different theoretical lenses. Of particular interest to both Filipino and foreign linguists are the issues of grammatical alignment and transitivity.

(1976) and Gerdts’ (1988) use of relational grammar on Cebuano and Ilokano respectively, and Walton’s (1986) application of role and reference grammatical analysis on the Sama in Mindanao.

Chomsky's generativism was used as a framework for many studies, with other theoretical approaches also gaining ground.

4.1.1 Grammatical Alignment

Stemming from the strong interest in Philippine languages locally and internationally during the second phase, observations were made on the nature of the languages, with particular interest on the focus system.

Various viewpoints were summarized by French (1988) wherein *focus* is defined in several ways by different proponents, such as Blake (1906) and Bloomfield (1917) who saw it as the equivalent of voice and case; McKaughan (1958) and Wolfenden (1961), who both saw *focus* as marking the grammatical relationships within a sentence; and there are also Miller (1964), Kerr (1965) and Llamzon (1966), who identified it as a means of marking underlying case relationships. French (1988) also discussed how different scholars defined the function of *focus*. Bowen (1965) and Griño (1969), for instance, described that function of focus as assigning emphasis. Thomas (1958), Forster (1964), and Hidalgo (1970), on the other hand, described its function of highlighting nouns. Meanwhile, Naylor (1975), Hohulin and Hale (1977), and Bell (1976) characterize focus as a signal of old and new information. French (1988) also noted how Fillmore (1968), Schachter and Otanes (1972), Ballard (1974), Wiens (1979), West (1973), Ramos (1974), and T. C. Rafael (1978) described *focus* as being determined by semantic considerations. French (1988) also identifies McKaughan (1958), Kerr (1965), and Llamzon (1966) as among the first to use focus affixes as a basis for verb classification in Philippine languages.

In relation to what is often termed as the “focused argument,” more recent survey was conducted by R. P. Rafael (2016), who looked at how the terms *subject* and *topic* have been used in the existing literature. Meanwhile, Garcia and Kidd (2020) summarizes which factors affect the choice of voice or focus: definiteness (Himmelmann, 2005; Reid & Liao, 2004), specificity (Rackowski & Richards, 2005), discourse topicality (Carrier-Duncan, 1985), and telicity (Saclot, 2011). With nouns having the capacity to be raised into the subject/topic/pivot/privileged syntactic argument (PSA), spirited discussions on the languages’ grammatical alignment continue to this day.

The traditional approach categorized Philippine languages as nominative-accusative (NOM-ACC) languages. This is due to the influence of works done by the missionary grammarians. Despite their recognition of the differences between the languages in the Philippines and the Indo-European ones, their training in Greek, Latin, and Spanish had largely influenced their categorization of Philippine languages as NOM-ACC languages wherein subjects of intransitive and transitive verbs are marked in the same way (*si/nina, ang/lang mga*), while the objects are marked differently (*ng/ng mga*). Actor-focus constructions are classified as active sentences and non-actor focus sentence are passive. This had been the standard alignment in works such as those of Paglinawan (1910), Ignacio (1921), Serrano Laktaw (1928), L. K. Santos (1939/2019), Lopez (1940), as well as in the second half of the 20th century, e.g., A. Santiago and Tiangco (1991) and Cubar and Cubar (1994)).

Further studies on the grammatical system of Philippine-type languages reveal different behaviors of the previously identified *passives*

(the *tres pasivas* in missionary grammars, marked by *-in-*, *-an*, and *i-*), which make it difficult to reconcile the patient voice/focus of Philippine-type languages with the passive voice constructions of languages such as English. According to Shibatani (1988), goal-topic constructions in Philippine languages do not behave in the prototypical manner expected of passives, as detailed in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Differences in Passivization

Prototypical Passivization	PL “Passivization”
Expected loss of the Agent in the construction	“... actor is not normally deleted in Philippine non-actor topic construction” (Shibatani, 1988, p. 93)
Passives occur less frequently	There is no significant difference in the occurrence of texts, i.e., “The Philippine goal-topic construction is not a marked construction in terms of its text frequency” (Shibatani, 1988, p. 96)
Stativization wherein the passive has a more stative sense than the active	According to Nolasco (2006, 25-27 January), the acts denoted as passives are more intentional, i.e., “ <i>higit na sadya ang aksyong nakasaad sa naturingang ‘pasiba’ doon sa ‘aktiba’</i> ” (p. 3), like in examples <i>humalik</i> vs. <i>hinalikan</i> (p. 5) and <i>nagpakain</i> vs <i>pinakain</i> (p. 2)

Born out of the question on passives, scholars forwarded that Philippine-type languages may instead have an ergative-absolutive (ERG-ABS) alignment. In a nutshell, the differences between NOM-ACC and ERG-ABS are presented in Table 2 below:

Table 2. Nominative-Accusative vs. Ergative-Absolutive Case Alignment Systems

NOMINATIVE-ACCUSATIVE	ERGATIVE-ABSOLUTIVE
<i>Same marking for NOM:</i> Subject/Agent of IV (S) Subject/Agent of TV (A)	<i>Same marking for ABS:</i> Subject/Agent of IV (S) Object/Patient of TV (O)
<i>Different marking for ACC:</i> Object/Patient of TV (O)	<i>Different marking for ERG:</i> Agent of TV (A)

The term ergative was first used in 1902 by Wilhelm Schmidt and consistently by Adolf Dirr in his study of Caucasian languages (Seely, 1977). The availability, documentation, and description of languages aside from Greek and Latin beginning from the Renaissance allowed for the examination of language data which revealed distinct patterns from prevailing scholarship. In 1979, Dixon published his research on ergativity based on Dyirbal, an Australian aboriginal language. Interest in these types of languages grew in the 1980s onwards. This piqued the interest of scholars studying Philippine languages, including Payne (1982) and De Guzman (1978a) on Tagalog, Gerdts (1988) on Ilocano, Mithun (1994) on Kapampangan, Bradley and Bradley (2002/2013) on Karao, and Gault (1999) on Sama Bangingi.

Related to the question of grammatical alignment is the determination of what is a transitive construction. Influenced by Hopper and Thompson (1980), Nolasco (2003) defines transitivity as having a distinctive A (agent) and O (patient), a particular action, an action done, immediate, directed outwards, with effort, volitional, directed towards a directly and fully affected O (patient). In summary, those affixed by *-in-*, *-an*, and *?i-*, considered to be the passives in the

traditional approach, are the absolutive or transitive constructions in this analysis. Several works on ergativity and transitivity were done by Nolasco (2003) on Tagalog and Cebuano, Adeva (2003) on Cebuano, Liao (2004) on Central Cagayan Agta and Dibabawon Manobo, and Aldridge (2012) on Tagalog.

Other scholars posit that Philippine languages are neither NOM-ACC nor ERG-ABS such as McLachlan (1996) and Shibatani (1988). McLachlan characterized Philippine languages as a hybrid of two basic transitive sentences wherein sentences such as *Nagluluto ang lalaki ng adobo* ‘The man is cooking adobo’ and *Lulutuin ng lalaki ang adobo* ‘The man will cook adobo; Lit. The adobo will be cooked by the man’ are both transitive.

Himmelman (1991), in “The Philippine Challenge to Universal Grammar,” wrote about his position on the debate: that the system is determined in terms of orientation. There are four orientations: one towards the ACTOR, marked by *-um-* or *mag-*, which denotes not only actors that control an action but also participants involved in a process, as well as natural events; and three kinds of UNDERGOER (UG) orientation, marked by *-in-* as a directly affected undergoer, *-an* for location towards which an action is orientated or where an action takes place, and *qi-* which indicates a UG that is moved.

Another proposition by Foley (1998, June 30-July 8) is that Philippine languages follow a symmetrical alignment wherein there is no marked preference as to which NP should function as the “pivot” (i.e., *ang*-marked NPs). Most of the NPs could be raised as the pivot and no one type of NP is preferred for pivot choice. Regardless of which choice is made, all are signaled by some overt verbal voice

morpheme (*-um-*, *-in*, *-an*, *i-*, etc.). Some applications of this theory were done on Western Subanon by Estioca (2020) and O’Grady (2019), and Garcia and Kidd (2020) on Tagalog.

4.1.2 Theoretical Orientations

The second phase saw the application of Transformational Generative Grammar as the dominant theoretical orientation—a “revolution” which showed a shift from empiricism, positivism, behaviorism, and structuralism to mentalism, nativism, rationalism, and generativism. This is carried over into the third phase, with many syntax-centered studies.¹⁰

However, there is more openness in the academe towards other theories and not just those centered on Universal Grammar. J.F.C. Hernandez of UP Lingg, as quoted in Badiola (2022, p. 13), said that “during this time period, many students and their advisers were enthusiastic in testing Western linguistic theories on Philippine languages upon learning of them as it was, to put it simply, something different and exciting.” The same was echoed by Viveca Hernandez, from the same department, that for theses and dissertations, “the endeavor was a collaborative effort between the adviser, who would prompt their advisees to explore new theories, and the student, who felt the motivation from the equally psyched up adviser who challenged them to their limits” (Badiola, 2022, p. 13).

¹⁰Seifart et al. (2018, p. 355) have noted that “the semantic side of language documentation has been relatively neglected” in the field of LDD. In the Philippines, Malicsi (2008) also noted that research on the semantics of Philippine languages has been scarce. For a survey of semantics research done on Philippine languages from 1990 to 2023, see Escudero (2023).

Many works that were produced by the graduate students of UP Lingg over the years applied generativist theories, including grammar sketches of the following languages: Kalinga (Caliwanagan, 1995), Casiguran Dumagat (Savella, 1997), Kinaray-a (Manueli, 2001), Tagebulos (Antonio, 2007), Surigaonon (Liwanag, 2015), and Ayta Mag-antsi (Benosa et al., 2018).

Several theses and dissertations also attempted to apply the Government and Binding theory and its modules in the description of different types of constructions in various languages. These include Hernandez's (1998) analysis of causative constructions in Ilokano, Tabada's (2003) study of verb-initial sentences in Viracnon, A. Villareal's (2020) description of compound and complex sentences in Surigaonon, and Rosario's (2013) analysis of c-selection in Pangasinan verbs. There are also theses that explored the application of theta-theory in the study of verbs in various languages including Isamal (Jubilado, 2002), Bikol (Moran, 2006), and Tagalog (Endriga, 2014). Meanwhile, Enriquez (2004) applied the Optimality Theory in her theses comparing the phonology of three Philippine languages, and the Minimalist Program was tested by Rubrico (2006) in her analysis of Cebuano verbal clauses and by Lee (2007) in his thesis on non-verbal sentences in Cuyonon.

Various functionalist theories were also applied. In a nutshell, Haspelmath (2002, p. 1) defined functionalist linguistics as "usage-based explanations of language structure" with an aim to answer the fundamental question of "why is language structure the way it is" and not "how can language be acquired despite the poverty of stimulus?" Several theses and dissertations that came out of UP Lingg during this period that make use of functionalist approaches include Javier's (2013,

2023) explorations of Tagalog grammar using Cognitive Grammar, and V. Villareal's (2019) application of Croft's Construction Grammar in his grammatical sketch of Bolinao. Adeva (2003) conducted an examination of transitivity and ergativity in Cebuano.

Another approach which gained prominence during this period is typology-based studies, such as the work of Klimenko (2012) using Leonard Talmy's typological verb classification. In particular, many works were written using the Basic Linguistic Theory (BLT) by Dixon (2009). Touted to be "theory neutral," it does not claim that every language possesses the same specific features. Rather, it offers a set of linguistic elements and parameters that can be drawn upon as needed in constructing the grammatical framework of a language. He emphasized that the primary work of a linguist is to describe and analyze natural languages and that fieldwork has to be involved in the collection of data. Several grammar sketches and reference grammars using BLT have been written such as on Ninorte Samarnon (Balanquit, 2017), Iraya (Or, 2018, 2020), Inati (Manzano, 2019), Kolibugan (Abingosa, 2021), and Butuanon (Molina, 2021).

4.2 Documentation Considerations

Grammatical descriptions, as previously mentioned, cannot be written without data from language documentation. At this point, language documentation had become established as a subfield of linguistic inquiry and a practice in its own right (Austin, 2010), concerned with the methods, tools, and theoretical underpinnings for compiling a representative and lasting multipurpose record of a natural language or one of its varieties (Himmelmann, 2006). Data

gathered through documentation, especially via fieldwork, not only provide the foundation for language description and analysis but also bolster the empirical basis for various linguistic subfields and related disciplines, including linguistic typology, ethnolinguistics, psycholinguistics, cognitive anthropology, and others. All these are encapsulated in Himmelfmann's (2006) *Essentials of Language Documentation*. Dr. Consuelo Paz (2005), deriving from her experience in conducting numerous fieldwork also wrote *Gabay sa Fildwurk* [Guide to Fieldwork].

While language documentation is not new, the following features are given more importance and emphasis in contemporary fieldwork and documentation practices:

1. focus on primary data,
2. explicit concern for accountability,
3. concern for long-term storage and preservation of primary data,
4. working in interdisciplinary teams, and
5. close cooperation with and direct involvement of members of the speech community (Himmelfmann, 2006, p. 15).

Now, more than ever, much emphasis is placed on community involvement in language documentation. "Fieldwork methodology has in the last decades progressed from a typically non-cooperative model (research on a community) to a cooperative model which in its strongest form explicitly empowers speech communities (research on, for, and with a community)" (Cameron et al., 1992, pp. 22–24 as cited in Dwyer, 2006, p. 32). Cruz and Gonzales (2015) emphasized the importance of collaborating with speech communities in language documentation, such as in the SIL documentation of Klata, Isinai, and Guinaang Kalinga.

Based on their field experience, collaboration helped with initiating and implementing language documentation projects. By identifying and respecting the needs and aspirations of the community, carefully explaining the goals of the project, and gaining official endorsement of the community as well as drawing plans of action with them, more members of the community get involved, which lead to the creation of a broader sample or a wider array of corpus. Relationship-building leads to more credibility and trust, which in turn also helps in increasing the community's awareness and advocacy on language issues. Community-led language documentation projects also have the potential of inspiring more people to identify and work towards what they want to do with and in their language.

Ethical considerations are at the forefront of the field of language documentation. These include discussions on issues such as participant relations, rights, and responsibilities in fieldwork in the context of ethical decision-making, legal rights, and issues of data ownership and data access (Dwyer, 2006). Current fieldwork projects require informed consent from consultants, as well as coordination with the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) for studies on indigenous peoples' languages in the Philippines. Formed in 1997 via the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act of 1997, the NCIP is tasked to "protect and promote the interest and well-being of the Indigenous Cultural Communities/Indigenous Peoples with due regard to their beliefs, customs, traditions, and institutions" (NCIP, 2022). Beginning 2022, research proposals under the College of Social Sciences and Philosophy of the University of the Philippines Diliman, including

those from UP Lingg, need to undergo evaluation and clearance by the Ethics Review Board (ERB).

Field research is a crucial part of the UP Lingg curriculum. Fieldwork has been conducted since the 1950s in the graduate classes and since 1968 in the undergraduate classes and is done yearly. Various field sites include: Porac, Pampanga (Ayta Mag-antsi), Batanes (Batanic languages), Baguio (Cordilleran languages), Palawan (Tagbanua), Nueva Vizcaya (Bugkalot), Romblon (Asi, Bantoanon), and Mindoro (Buhid, Iraya). In 2020-2022, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, UP Lingg shifted to digital documentation due to mobility restrictions and health considerations for the community.

Part of the ethical considerations in research is archiving and disseminating data and results within the bounds of informed consent (Principle 5 in Dwyer, 2006, p. 40). The long-term storage and preservation of primary data is overlooked and needs improvement. Efforts are being undertaken by UP Lingg to digitize and properly archive the Ernesto Constantino Collection, which contain linguistic data from over a hundred Philippine languages. Other databases are the Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino's Repository ng mga Wika ng Pilipinas and SIL Philippine's Language and Culture Resources. Once collected, proper annotation of data is also necessary.

4.3 Educational Policy

In the previous two phases, language policies are bilingual with Tagalog/Pilipino/Filipino and English as media of instruction. In the third phase, a landmark decision was made to use local languages in education. First filed by Rep. Magtanggol Gunigundo as House

Bill No. 3719 or Multilingual Education Bill in 2008, this led to DepEd Order No. 74 or “Institutionalizing Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE)” in 2009. In 2012, MTB-MLE became a component of the K-12 program and in 2013, Senate Bill 3286 officialized its implementation in the whole country. Later on, it was made into law via Republic Act 10533 or the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013. Section 4 of the law states that “Basic education shall be delivered in languages understood by the learners as the language plays a strategic role in shaping the formative years of learners.” It encouraged using the language(s) that children speak at home as a learning resource within the classroom which will be more effective in learning as evidenced by various studies such as: the Iloilo Experiment in Education through the Vernacular or First Iloilo Experiment (1948-1954) conducted in twelve Philippine public schools in Iloilo (Jardenil, 1962); the Cebu Experiment (pre-1960s); the Antique Experiment (1952); the First Rizal Experiment (1953-1959); another Rizal experiment (1960-1966); the First Language Component Bridging Program (FLC-BP) Pilot Project in Ifugao (1986-1993); the Lubuagan Multilingual Education Program (1998), the Lingua Franca Project (1999-2001), the Culture-Responsive Curriculum for Indigenous People–Third Elementary Education 9 Project (2003-2007), and the Double Exposure in Mathematics Initiative of Region IV-B (2004- 2007) (McEachern, 2013).

Out of approximately 175 languages in the country, from an initial list of 12, 19 languages have official State support as media of instruction: Tagalog, Kapampangan, Pangasinan, Ilokano, Bikolano, Ybanag, Cebuano, Hiligaynon, Waray, Bahasa Sug (Tausug), Maguindanaon,

Maranao, Chavacano, Ivatan, Sambal, Akeanon, Kinaray-a, Yakan, and Surigaonon.

Given the highly multilingual setting, the implementation of MTB-MLE encountered challenges such as logistics, teacher training, creation of materials, and its application in multilingual communities. To ensure a successful execution of the directive, four activities need to be carried out according to Monje et al. (2019):

1. writing big books on language, literature, and culture;
2. standardization of the orthography;
3. documentation of grammar; and
4. the creation of a dictionary of the language.

LDD is vital in the implementation of language policies as they serve as the basis for crafting educational materials. Various language documentation projects were undertaken to address the problem of lack of materials. SIL provided training for the creation of big books using the Bloom software. There were efforts to standardize orthography such as the *MIMAROPA Orthographies Project*, a collaboration of the Indigenous Peoples Education Program of the Region IV-B (MIMAROPA) Division of the Department of Education and UP Lingg (led by Jesus Federico Hernandez and Ria Rafael), together with teachers, community elders, and other stakeholders from the MIMAROPA region. The collaborative project resulted in nine proposals for the standard orthography of Alangan, Asi, Buhid, Hanunuo, Ini, Iraya, Onhan, Tagbanua, and Tawbuid (UP Department of Linguistics, 2022). UP Lingg also collaborated with members of the Buhid community in Oriental Mindoro to produce a Buhid trilingual glossary which could aid in education (Bacolod et al., 2022). Grammar

sketches and reference grammars written during this period aimed to be used as resources in the creation of pedagogical materials.

Despite the positives of the MTB-MLE curriculum, it was brought to a halt by administration due to implementation problems. In 2022, the mother tongue as a subject was scrapped, but will remain as a medium of instruction in Grades 1-3 (Panti, 2022). The passage of RA 12027 in 2024 formally scrapped MTB-MLE, stating that “the medium of instruction shall revert to Filipino and until otherwise provided by law, English” (Section 1) while providing for its optional implementation in monolingual classes. Even so, MTB-MLE raised awareness that our own languages can be used as mediums of instruction and reiterated that linguistic rights are part of our human rights.

4.4 Language endangerment, preservation, revitalization, and the role of institutions

LDD is of interest to all areas of linguistics and other subdisciplines and related disciplines that need language data. However, it is also closely tied with the issue of language endangerment. The troubling matter of language endangerment, which had been brought to wider attention in the second phase, has ramped up in the past two decades. Some works that emphasized this are Nettle and Romaine’s (2000) *Vanishing Voices* and the Catalogue of Endangered Languages (2011-2016) by the University of Hawai’i at Manoa and Eastern Michigan University (<https://www.endangeredlanguages.com/>). This led to the idea of collecting multipurpose documentations due to an increasing number of languages being threatened by extinction (cf. Grenoble & Whaley, 2005/2009; Hagège, 2009; Crystal, 2000; Bradley & Bradley, 2002/2013;

as cited in Himmelmann, 2006, p. 5). Multipurpose documentations aim to record not just one aspect of language, e.g., grammar, but to gather the widest and most varied range of records possible, capturing every aspect of language, such as “all registers and varieties...language as a social practice...and cognitive faculty...specimens of spoken and written languages...” etc. (Himmelmann, 2006, p. 2). The data can then be used across different disciplines and for varied purposes.

LDD has been vital in the development of linguistic theories and in the field of education. This period emphasized a new purpose: that LDD is a resource for supporting language maintenance and revitalization. Through the recommendation of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in 2019, the United Nations General Assembly has proclaimed 2022-2032 as the International Decade of Indigenous Languages. It is imperative that the preservation, revitalization, and promotion of indigenous languages be put to the fore especially in light of “optimistic” estimates that at least 50% of today’s spoken languages will be critically endangered or dormant by 2100. According to Ethnologue (Eberhard et al., 2022), of the 175 indigenous languages of the Philippines, thirty-five are considered endangered (thirty-one threatened and four are labelled as “shifting”); eleven are on the brink of extinction (five moribund, five nearly extinct, and one classified as dormant), and two are already extinct. These statistics further emphasize the need to document more languages, and institutions have a large role to play.

UP Lingg has been engaged in LDD since 1922. This is specifically included in its mandate to focus on the scientific study, preservation, and promotion of Philippine languages and dialects through teaching, archiving, research, and publication. It also houses the *Katig*

Collective, a “repository of information about Philippine languages that are endangered, threatened, and moribund” (UP Department of Linguistics website).

The De La Salle University, focusing mainly on applied linguistics, had widened its scope and produced language descriptions that are also based on data collected from field work. These include Dita (2007) on Ibanag, M. Santos (2012) on Hiligaynon, Borres (2017) on Binukid, Madeja (2017) on Waray, Fortes (2019) on Southern Bisakol, Mabuan (2021) on Masbatenyo, Ayunon (2021) on Itawit, among others. The Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino (2016) had published the *Atlas ng mga Wika sa Pilipinas* and in 2018, awarded grants to researchers whose works were included in the KWF’s *Lingguwistikong Etnograpiya ng Pilipinas*, which is comprised of linguistic and cultural components. SIL remains a major contributor to this endeavor with their continuing update of the Ethnologue. SIL has also published 133 works from 2001 to 2017, 81 of which are grammar-focused. The SIL continues to provide capacity-building assistance to the Department of Education (DepEd), Commission on Higher Education (CHED), and other stakeholders (Gonzales & Diapar, 2018).

More schools and institutions have embarked on conducting linguistic studies such as the Philippine Normal University, Mariano Marcos State University, Southern Luzon State University, Mindanao State University in Marawi and General Santos, etc. While many of them are in applied linguistics or are usually bundled as languages, linguistics, and literature departments, there is optimism that these institutions will also branch out or conduct more LDD research on Philippine languages. Several study centers have been established that

bolster documentation work such as the Cordillera Studies Center (University of the Philippines Baguio), Center for Kapampangan Studies (Holy Angel University), Cebuano Studies Center (University of San Carlos), Center for Tarlaqueño Studies (Tarlac State University), Center for Language Studies (Mindanao State University–Iligan Institute of Technology), and non-academe affiliated centers such as the Mangyan Heritage Center, Surigaonon Studies Center, Asi Studies Center for Culture and the Arts (ASCCA Romblon), among others. Study programs also boost support and research projects on languages such as the Indigenous Studies of UP Baguio and continued offering of Philippine Studies and related courses in international institutions such as the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) University of London, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Osaka University, Humboldt University, Moscow State University, Cornell University, University of Michigan, University of Hawai'i, etc.

On the publication front, much is to be done. Liao (2009) noted the need for more studies done by Filipinos. Dumoran's (2022, p. 14) historiography, however, optimistically revealed that there is an upward trend in Filipino authorship in PJJL articles and includes authors outside NCR, creating a diversity in the languages studied, and an inclusiveness for other Philippine languages.

In this digital age, several online groups and pages, such as the Visayan Languages group on Facebook, and Save the Butuanon Language, serve as informal pockets where LDD activities are shared and discussed. While activities in these groups have largely been unsystematic and are not in-depth, formal studies, there is clear voluntary participation of speakers who contribute to the creation of a

corpus of language data that has potential uses in other studies. Digital documentation also offers possibilities for new approaches to language documentation, especially when conducting fieldwork is not possible. These also raise awareness on the existence and vitality of languages and varieties.

The third phase marks a significant period of growth in the documentation and description of Philippine languages, accompanied by its challenges. LDD works done during this period not only enrich our understanding of the diversity and complexity of Philippine languages but also establish a solid foundation for sustained linguistic inquiry and emphasize the importance of such works in education, language maintenance and revitalization, as well as in encouraging deeper explorations of these languages for future generations.

5 Concluding Remarks

This study saw some significant patterns and dynamics in language documentation and description in the Philippines in a century that covers the period from 1922 until 2022. The first phase that covers the period from the early 1920s until the late 1940s, despite the lingering influence of the Greek-Latin model of grammatical description, saw the publication of works that featured the American Structuralist tradition, particularly those of Bloomfield and Blake. While this was the period when linguistics as a discipline took root in the Philippine academe, the country's colonial history became a necessary overture to a long and tedious process of developing a national language, elevating the status of Tagalog as the sole basis and sidelining language

documentation and description efforts in other Philippine languages. The second phase—from 1950s to 1980s—was an explosive period in language documentation and description in the country. There was a massive growth in the number, depth, and range of studies on Philippine languages during this phase. The developments in linguistic theorizing, particularly in the United States, also paved the way for many Philippine languages serving as “experimental subjects” of various theoretical models for many, particularly American, linguists (Constantino, 1971). The third phase—from 1990s until the early 2020s—saw a tremendous growth in the involvement of Filipino scholars in LDD in the Philippines. This phase saw paradigm shifts and the flourishing of linguistic inquiry in the Philippines, and by Filipinos.

Across all three phases, this paper presented both the discrete entities, including authors and important personalities, as well as the elements of the continua that include institutions, socio-political milieu of each phase, and significant theoretical directions. Now, moving forward, a list of recommendations are presented below, that could possibly guide scholars and institutions to pursue a more inclusive and responsive language documentation and description in the Philippines in the next 100 years:

1. LDD in the Philippines needs to catch up with the actual situation in the field. The current dynamics in local communities in the Philippines are contributing to unimaginably faster language shift;
2. In line with (1) above, LDD needs to be more holistic—it thus needs to account for extralinguistic/supralinguistic factors and the very complex multilingual and contact situation in the area.

The work of Gallego (2020) on the contact situation in Babuyan Claro is a good example of a relevant attempt to do this. Lee's (2022) ongoing work on Island Linguistics that explores ways to make documentation and description account for the significant relationship between linguistic facts (words and expressions) and the natural environment where the language emerged or developed, is another initiative that supports diversity linguistics and sustainable LDD;

3. Both (1) & (2) above underscore the role of linguistic communities in the documentation and description of their languages. The MTB-MLE law discussed in Section 4.4 above, spurred the communities' participation in different aspects of language documentation and description, including but not limited to orthography development, grammatical description, and creation of diverse materials for MTB-MLE. Some recent research projects at the SIL Philippines and the UP Lingg, while already out of the temporal scope of this work, were active collaborations with linguistic communities, e.g., UP Lingg's Bugkalot/Egongot Project with the Bugkalot community in Nueva Vizcaya (Gallego & Barcelo, 2024), the Buhid Dictionary Project (Bacolod et al., 2022) and SIL's Botolan Sambal Project with the Polytechnic College of Botolan in Zambales (Ryn Jean Fe Gonzales, personal communication, September 27, 2025). The continuing participation of linguistic communities, either as initiator or co-collaborator, is crucial in expanding and accelerating efforts on language documentation and description in the country in the next decades.¹¹

4. There is also a need to consolidate the works and initiatives of institutions, particularly those that have established networks and/or mandate, e.g., SIL and the KWF;
5. Digitization and archiving efforts have to be sustained and a publicly accessible repository must be created;
6. New technologies (ChatGPT, AI) and the necessary ethical considerations in light of these developments have to be considered in framing LDD programs in the future; and
7. More cross-linguistic data for generalizations regarding the grammar of Philippine languages are needed. So far—empirical evidence that has fed various theoretical assumptions that constitute what literature often cite as “well-established facts” have come mainly from Tagalog. As Seifart et al. (2018) suggests, perhaps standard instruments for data collection could be developed and used in order to support systematic cross-linguistic comparisons, the construction of phylogenies, identify implicational universals, and so on.

Realistically speaking, a comprehensive and strategic language documentation and description plan for the Philippines remains far-fetched. While interest in LDD and awareness of language endangerment have grown over the past century, Reid’s statement in his 1981 state of the art still rings today— that conducting linguistic research for native linguists is seemingly a “luxury” that a developing nation cannot afford. There is an urgent need for state funding to support the creation of additional research positions, the conduct of long-term and sustainable LDD research and language revitalization

¹¹We thank the anonymous reviewer for pointing this one out.

projects, and the establishment and maintenance of language archives. At present, linguists working in the academe continue to face the persistent challenge of “low priority for research [and a] heavy workload for faculty” (Dayag & Dita, 2012).

The future of language documentation and description in the Philippines ultimately hinges on whether linguistic research is recognized—by both academia and government—as essential to the nation’s cultural and intellectual development, rather than as a peripheral pursuit reserved for moments of opportunity. Only through sustained institutional support and a national commitment to linguistic research can the Philippines transform language documentation and description from an academic luxury into a collective act of linguistic and cultural preservation.

Every language lost is a worldview silenced. Empowering Filipino linguists to document and describe their native languages is not merely an academic goal—it is an essential step toward enabling linguistic diversity to flourish and ensuring that smaller and minoritized languages can survive, thrive, and serve as valuable resources alongside larger and more dominant languages in the pursuit of inclusive and sustainable national development.

6 References

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