

The Filipino Language Use of Japanese Students of Filipino Descent

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Abstract

The Filipino language is taught and studied as a second or foreign language in and outside the Philippines. It is also taught in Japan, however, compared to the students of the Filipino language in America and Europe who are mostly "heritage language learners (HLLs)", the students in Japan are Japanese students who study the Filipino language because of some socio-political and socio-economic reasons (Laranjo, 2020). From time to time there are also some Japanese students whose mother or father is a Filipino (Nagaya, 2022). It has been argued that the curriculum for HLLs should be different (Kagan, 2012) from second and foreign language learners. The purpose of this study is to determine the difference between HLLs and other students of the Filipino language and the importance of considering them in the teaching of the Filipino language in Japan. To do this, semi-structured interviews were conducted on two categories of Japanese students of Filipino descent at one of the top state universities in Japan offering the Filipino language as a major - (1) three students who took or are taking Filipino as a major and (2) three students who did not take Filipino language as a major. Their answers were analyzed through thematic analysis and the two questions of this study were (1) How did the target students' background influence their decision in choosing the language they studied or are studying? (2) What do the target students know about the Filipino language and Filipino culture that non-Filipino students do not know? It was found that the students' language major choices were influenced by their proficiency in Filipino, shaped more by home exposure than residence in the language's country. Heritage learners excel in familiar sounds, everyday vocabulary and certain cultural concepts, but struggle in speaking, writing, and reading Filipino. *Keywords:* Filipino language, Filipino subject, Japanese student, heritage language learner, choice of language

1. Introduction

The Filipino language is taught and studied as a second or foreign language in and outside the Philippines. In Japan, it is taught at several universities starting with Osaka University of Foreign Studies (now Osaka University) in 1983 followed by Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (TUFS) in 1992. These two universities have the most number of Filipino subjects taught as core subjects. However, compared to the students of the Filipino language in America and Europe who are mostly "heritage language learners (HLLs)", the students in Japan are Japanese students who study the Filipino language because of some socio-political and socio-economic reasons (Laranjo, 2020). From time to time there are also some Japanese students whose mother or father is a Filipino (Nagaya, 2022). The author has also observed this in the university where she is teaching the Filipino language. Interestingly, she found that some students with Filipino descent took or are taking Filipino language classes, while some of them did not take Filipino language classes. The author assumed that since they have Filipino background, it would be easier for them to take the Filipino language courses. Contrary to this, according to Polinsky and Kagan (2007) there is a variation in "heritage learners" and "heritage speakers".

Polinsky and Kagan define "heritage learners" as "heritage speakers" who wish to recover, maintain or improve their home language by learning it inside the classroom. They defined the "heritage speaker" based on Valdes' study in 2000, as a speaker who has learned a first language other than the dominant language of the area where he/she lives now, but who has not fully learned the first language due to shifting to the dominant language and that the proficiency in this first language varies greatly among "heritage speakers" (2007, pp. 3-4). Taking this into account, it doesn't necessarily mean that a Filipino "heritage learner" or "heritage speaker" can do well in a Filipino language classroom.

The purpose of this study is to determine the difference between Filipino HLLs and other students of the Filipino language and the significance of considering them in the teaching of the Filipino language in Japan. To accomplish this goal, the following research questions were established.

RQ1: How did the target students' background influence their decision in choosing the language they studied or are studying?

RQ2: What do the target students know about the Filipino language and Filipino culture that non-Filipino students do not know?

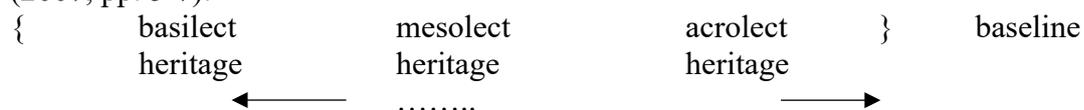
The target students being referred to in this study are the "heritage language learners (HLLs)" and the "heritage speakers" of the Filipino language who were former students, current students and students whom the author got acquainted with at the university where she teaches the Filipino language, starting from the year 2017 to the year 2022. The author requested and obtained the verbal permission of the students to interview them and to use the results of the interview for studies on "heritage language learners (HLLs)" and "heritage speakers" of Japan. This study presents a description of the students' experiences and knowledge, through a qualitative analysis of the students' evaluation of their own ability in the Filipino language and their knowledge of the Filipino culture to answer the established research questions.

2. Filipino Language Education in Japan and Related Studies

There have been studies written about the teaching of the Filipino language in Japan such as describing the challenges faced (Oue, 1997), effective methods in teaching (Antonio, 1997), curriculum and syllabus (Laranjo, 2020) and reasons for choosing the Filipino language and the prospects for teaching the language (Nagaya, 2022). There are also researches about students' production errors (Takano, 2010; Yamoto, 2018), evaluation of materials for learning Filipino (Yamoto, 2022) and development of teaching materials (Yamoto, 2018) as well as innovations in the teaching of the Filipino language (Yamoto, 2020; Figueroa, et al., 2022). However, compared to studies in other languages, these are about all the available studies written on Filipino language education in Japan. Except for the studies conducted by Yamoto (2018) on development of materials for teaching the Filipino language for youth of Filipino descent and the interaction between the students of Filipino descent in a senior high school and Japanese students who majored in Filipino language at the University of Osaka (Yamoto, 2022), the focus of the other aforementioned researches on teaching and learning the Filipino language above were all on Japanese students. These studies by Yamoto (2018 & 2022) are also unique studies that discuss considerations for the education of Japanese youth of Filipino descent regarding their linguistic and cultural heritage from the Philippines. There are other studies about Japanese youth of Filipino descent in Japan, but most of them are about their challenges in learning the Japanese language and challenges in adapting to Japanese society (Jabar, 2011; Nukata, 2015; Yamoto 2013 & 2018); also, about other challenges and problems faced (Suzuki, 2010 & 2015; Ogaya, 2020). Japanese youth of Filipino descent, like others of foreign descent are called "ha-fu (half)" and Japanese youth of Filipino descent are better known as Japanese Filipino Children or JFC (Jabar, 2011; Nukata, 2015). The image of these children in Japan is not good. Aside from being able to contribute to the very few studies about this type of Filipino

language learners or the HLLs of the Filipino language in Japan, this study is important in investigating why children who are looked down upon for being “ha-fu” are choosing to learn the Filipino language and what should be taken into consideration in teaching them. It is expected that with the continued growth of the Filipino community in Japan due to various programs of the Japanese government (Sasaki & Ogawa, 2019), the number of HLLs will also increase. But currently, there is a lack of support for HLLs of the Filipino language (Nagaya, 2022).

As mentioned above, according to Polinsky and Kagan (2007), there are those called "heritage learners" and there are those called "heritage speakers". What they refer to as "heritage learners" are those who wish to recover, maintain or improve their home language by learning it in the classroom. What they refer to as "heritage speakers" as derived from Valdes' study in 2000 are the speakers who learned the native language of one of their parents at home, so they are also called speakers "in the wild". The learned first language of the "heritage speaker" other than the dominant language of the area where he/she lives now is not fully learned due to the transition to the dominant language and the proficiency in this first language varies greatly among “heritage speakers” (2007, pp. 3-4). Because of this variation, they said that it is difficult to assess the ability of each "heritage speaker". According to them, due to the exposure of "heritage speakers" to their first language at home, "aural comprehension" is their highest ability and determining the ability of "heritage speakers" according to this ability is like a "continuum" from the most fluent speaker on one end and the speaker who can barely speak on the other end. They proposed a “continuum model” that was also used in the study of creoles (2007, pp. 5-7):



The lowest language ability is referred to as the basilect heritage and at the other end of it is the highest language ability, the acrolect heritage. The baseline is the basis for determining the minimum or maximum ability which is why, according to Polinsky and Kagan, the standard language of the first language of a "heritage speaker" should not be defined as the baseline, because what the "heritage speaker" learns is the language at home which is probably not the standard version of their language (2007, p. 9). They provided several ways to determine how close or far a heritage speaker's ability is from the baseline: (1) using speech rate or number of words per minute in a natural speech, (2) determining the known vocabulary, (3) determining the method and length of exposure at baseline and (4) determining the language spoken by the parent, along with his view or attitude toward the language at home and the culture contained in it (2007, pp. 11-15).

In this same study by Polinsky and Kagan, they identified the knowledge and characteristics of basilectal speakers, such as native-sounding speakers as "overhearers" or hearing the first language at home but not responding with it and often not spoken to in this language. They also mentioned what a basilectal "heritage speaker" knows about the morphology and syntax of his/her first language (2007, pp. 16-28).

Just as there is variation in heritage speakers, there is also variation in heritage learners and there is variation in heritage learners in the language studied in the classroom. Therefore, the gap between the ability and needs of the "heritage learner" in the curriculum must be identified. They proposed that there should be an accurate assessment of the ability of the "heritage learner" in order to place him/her in the right course. According to them, it is good to conduct three types of tests - (1) oral test, (2) short essay and (3) biographic questionnaire. They also proposed the development of purposeful curriculum for “heritage learners” (2007, pp. 33 & 35). The same was found in the results of a national survey about the "heritage language" in

the USA. It was found that there are some differences between HLLs and second language learners such as (1) language ability, (2) reason for learning their native language in the classroom and (3) their self-view, it is, therefore, important to take this into consideration in the development of the curriculum for "heritage learners" so as not to hurt and hinder the learning of the "heritage learners", but instead to further encourage their learning (Kagan, 2012).

3. Methodology

In this study, two categories of Japanese students of Filipino descent were investigated - (1) three students who took or are taking Filipino language as a major and (2) three students who did not take the Filipino language as a major. The six interviewees were university students at one of the top state universities in Japan offering the Filipino language as a major under the Philippine Studies Program. The students who were interviewed were the "heritage language learners (HLLs)" and the "heritage speakers" who were former students, current students and students whom the author got acquainted with at the university where she teaches the Filipino language, starting from the year 2017 to the year 2022. Between 2017~ 2022, there were a total of nine "heritage language learners (HLLs)" and "heritage speakers" studying at the said university, but only six were interviewed by the author for this study.

All the students who were interviewed are all female and aged 19, 21, 23, 23, 24, 26 respectively at the time of the interview. Two of the students in the category (1) are still currently taking up Filipino language courses in their university, while the other students are either already working or taking up graduate courses. All of the students have Japanese nationality, but the mothers of the five of them are Filipinos and one of them has a Filipino-Japanese mother, whose father is a Filipino. The mothers and relatives of Students D and E and the grandfather of Student A are from Metro Manila, while the mother and relatives of Student F are from Nueva Ecija, a province 3 hours away from Metro Manila. Both Metro Manila and Nueva Ecija are Tagalog-speaking areas. Student B's mother and relatives are from Butuan City, but Student B and her older sister were born in Metro Manila, and Metro Manila is the place she remembers as the place they lived in in the Philippines. Student C's mother and relatives are from Iloilo, but almost all of their relatives are now in Metro Manila. One of the languages spoken in Butuan City is a dialect of the Cebuano language which is the native language of Student B's mother, while Hiligaynon is the language being spoken in Iloilo City and the native language of Student C's mother and relatives. Table 1 shows the summary of the students' background details related to their maternal side, their Filipino side.

Table 1

Background of the Interviewees (Part 1): Their Mother's Hometown and Native Language

Students	Mother's Hometown (*Grandfather's Hometown)	Mother's Native Language
Student A*	Metro Manila	Tagalog
Student B	Butuan City	Cebuano
Student C	Iloilo City	Hiligaynon
Student D	Metro Manila	Tagalog
Student E	Metro Manila	Tagalog
Student F	Nueva Ecija	Tagalog

Polinsky and Kagan (2007, pp. 33 & 35) proposed conducting three types of tests to get an accurate assessment of the ability of the "heritage learner" in order to place him/her in the right course - (1) oral test, (2) short essay and (3) biographic questionnaire. This study aims to is to determine the difference between Filipino HLLs and other students of the Filipino language who are already currently enrolled in a Philippine Studies Program at one university in Japan in the hope of improving the said program and provide support to HLLs of the Filipino language in Japan.

Using the idea of Polinsky and Kagan's biographic questionnaire, this study conducted a semi-structured interview and the answers were analyzed through thematic analysis to answer the aforementioned two questions of this study - (RQ1) How did the target students' background influence their decision in choosing the language they studied or are studying?; (RQ2) What do the target students know about the Filipino language and Filipino culture that non-Filipino students do not know?

The list of main questions sent to the interviewees was in English, as it was found to be the most neutral language between students and author. Before interviewing the students, the author was not sure of their proficiency in Filipino and Japanese, meanwhile English is a required subject in their university. During the interview, the questions were translated into Japanese and the students were allowed to answer them in the language they were most comfortable with (see Appendix 1 for the list of questions). In the course of the interview, the author added some questions for clarifications and for requests to the students to elaborate on their answers. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. Except for one student, all interviews were conducted and recorded individually on the Zoom platform. One student did not attend the Zoom meeting, but instead sent a written answer.

To answer RQ1, the students' answers to question #3: [Why did you choose or why did you not choose Filipino as your major?] and question #6: [What language did you use or do you use at home?] were analyzed.

In order to answer RQ2, the students' answers to the following six questions were analyzed: #6: [What language did you use or do you use at home? #7: [Did your mother or do you mother speak her native language to you?], #8: [Did you have any language difficulties when you were a kid? For example, did you get confused between using Nihongo and Filipino or maybe you had a hard time learning Kanji, etc...?], #9: [Did you have any difficulty regarding culture when you were a kid?]), #10: [Was it or is it difficult to learn Filipino? What are the difficult parts? What are the easy parts? / Or was it difficult to maintain or keep your Filipino language? Why or why not?] and #11: [Do you have an advantage over your classmates for being a half-Filipino, half-Japanese person?]

4. Findings

Table 2 shows another set of background details of the six interviewees mostly related to their background as a student. The interviewees were divided into two groups. Students A, B, C are the students who took or are taking Filipino language as a major under the Philippine Studies Program. Students D, E, F are the ones who did not take Filipino language as a major. Of the six, only Students A and B are still currently studying at the university where they are taking up Filipino language courses.

According to Table 2, two were born in the Philippines, Students B and E, lived there until the first years of elementary school. Student B, upon reaching five years old, said that their family left the Philippines and lived in Hong Kong with their relatives there for three years. Currently all interviewees live in Tokyo, the capital of Japan.

Table 2
Background of the Interviewees (Part 2): Student Background

	Filipino Language Majors			Non-Filipino Language Majors		
	Student A	Student B	Student C	Student D	Student E	Student F
Gender	F	F	F	F	F	F
Year of Entry to the university	2022	2019	2016	2016	2016	2015
Age during the interview	19	21	23	23	24	26
Major	School of International and Area Studies (Language: Filipino)	School of International and Area Studies (Language: Filipino)	School of Language and Culture Studies (Language: Filipino)	School of Language and Culture Studies (Language: Hindi)	School of Language and Culture Studies (Language: Indonesian)	School of International and Area Studies (Language: Mongolian)
Country of Birth	Japan	Philippines	Japan	Japan	Philippines	Japan
Age at Arrival in Japan	X	8 years old	X	X	9 years old	X
Current Address	Tokyo	Tokyo	Tokyo	Tokyo	Tokyo	Tokyo

The university where the target students have studied or are studying has four institutions, three undergraduate schools (School of Language and Culture Studies, School of International and Area Studies, School of Japan Studies) and one graduate school (Graduate School of Global Studies), and the students are divided according to these schools. Students under the School of Japan Studies study Japanese as their major language. Students under the other two undergraduate institutions choose the language they will take as a major. Currently, the said university is offering 28 languages as majors. Students are required to take more language classes under the School of Language and Culture Studies (28 language units) than the School of International and Area Studies (20 language units). Graduate students do not need to take foreign languages.

3.1 Answer to RQ1: How did the target students' background influenced their decision in choosing the language they studied or are studying?

To answer RQ1, the students' answers to question #3: [Why did you choose or why did you not choose Filipino as your major?] and question #6: [What language did you use or do you use at home?] were analyzed.

According to the answers of the interviewees, there were three themes that appeared regarding the reasons of those who chose to major in Filipino language and two themes regarding the reasons of those who did not choose to major in Filipino language.

Table 3 shows a summary of the interviewees' reasons for choosing a language to major in.

Table 3
Reason for choosing one's language major (summary)

Reasons for choosing one's language major	Students
(1)Have Filipino members in the family	Students A, B, C
(2)Have a desire to communicate and participate in the conversation of Filipino relatives and	Students A, B, C
(3)Have a desire to know the Philippines, the culture of one's mother and the Filipino language	Students A, B, C
(3.a) because they learned about the things mentioned above in high school	Student B
(3.b) because their mother did not teach the language; they found having no knowledge about the language as a handicap	Student C
Already possess sufficient knowledge of Filipino culture and Filipino language	Students D & E
Was forced to learn another language (failed to pass the requirement for the Philippine Studies Program)	Student F

Filipino is the nationality of the mothers of five of the six students - Students B, C, D, E and F. The nationality of Student A's mother is Japanese, but her mother is half-Filipino, half-Japanese because her father who is the grandfather of Student A is Filipino. Student A's mother took on Japanese nationality when she turned 20 years old. For Students A, B, and C, having a Filipino mother or a half-Filipino, half-Japanese mother, and a Filipino grandfather—in short, having a Filipino family member—is an important factor influencing their choice of major. They said that even though they have a Filipino family member, they did not have enough knowledge of the Filipino culture and the Filipino language, therefore they felt it is important to choose Filipino as their major.

As for Student B, the desire to get to know the Philippines and her mother's culture intensified because she studied about social problems in the Philippines in high school and she wants to have more in-depth knowledge about the country.

“When I was in high school, I went to a kind of special school that educated me to look at the social problems around the world, and the closest one that I could relate to was poverty and also like nandarou (translation: what do you call it?), overstaying OFWs, like migration problems of the Philippines. That one was the most relatable for me, that's why I want to study further about it in the university.” -Student B-

In fact, there is a deeper reason why she went to a "special school" in high school and became more interested in her background as a Filipino. She had a bad experience of being "half", a word with a negative connotation in Japan that refers to being "half" or "incomplete", in junior

high school. This pushed her to temporarily abandon her “being a Japanese” and in turn gave her the opportunity to recognize and learn about her “being a Filipino”.

“...that was in junior high, when i started learning more Japanese and at the peak when I was 15, that was 2016, just before we graduated, my friend just said like ha-fu dakara dono kono (translation: because you're half that's why you're like this and that, etc.), she said something that kind of made me upset and after that I felt so bad and I stopped talking to her and I started to think about why Japanese are so racist to foreigners, people with foreign roots, of course she was like my best friend at that time so I was really shocked. So that kind of really influenced me into going into a Canadian international school, because there I can study only in English, of course also in Japanese, but a lot more in English.” (shortened and some fillers removed)

-Student B-

Student C had a desire to learn the Filipino language because her mother did not teach her, so she had no knowledge about it. She mentioned that her lack of ability to speak Filipino is a "handicap". She said that she can only communicate with her relatives in English, while her relatives talk with each other in English, Tagalog and Hiligaynon interchangeably.

“母親の家族はすごい多くて、日本よりもフィリピンのほうがたくさん親戚がいるので、みんな英語できるから、別に英語が話せばいいですけど、でもみんなマニラにほとんどいるので、大体タガログ語とヒリガイノン語を混ぜているんですけど喋っていて、その親戚といとこと話すときとかは、やっぱりどうしても英語しかできないというのは disadvantage となっているという感じなので、。。。まずそもそもハンディーみたいなのという感じだなと思っていました。できないことは。(My mother has a big family. Compared to our relatives in Japan, we have more relatives in the Philippines. Everyone can speak English so it's fine that I can communicate with them in English, but almost all of them are in Manila and they often speak in a mixture of Tagalog and Hiligaynon. When I talk to my relatives, my cousins, I can't do anything, I can only talk to them in my English and it seems like a disadvantage to me. I think that this is a handicap, my inability to speak Filipino.)” (shortened and some fillers removed) -Student C-

For Student D, she already has enough knowledge about the Philippines, so she preferred to take another language to study. Student E also expressed that she thinks she has equal language proficiency in the three languages that she knows, Japanese, Tagalog and English, leading her to explore a language other than Filipino. Despite this, she opted for a language close related to Filipino, namely Indonesian.

Finally, Student F has the most unique answer. She chose the Mongolian language as a major because she failed to pass the Philippine Studies Program the first time she took the entrance exam at the aforementioned university and on the second time she took the exam, her grade was still not good enough to enter the university. According to her, in the two years she applied, the competition to get into the Philippine Studies Program was strong, so she was forced to learn another language. Refer to Appendix 2 for the transcript of the replies of Student F and the other students regarding their reason for choosing the language to major in.

Table 4 shows the students' answers to question #6 about the language they use at home.

Table 4
Language use at home (Question #6)

Students	Language being used at home
Student A	Japanese (main)

Tagalog (support, but only a few times in childhood)	
Student B	English (main) Japanese (support & only with father and sister) Tagalog (support, but only a few times in childhood) & Cebuano (only a few times in childhood)
Student C	Japanese (main) English (support)
Student D	Japanese (main) Tagalog (main) English (support)
Student E	TagalogJapanese (main) Tagalog (main) English (main)
Student F	Japanese (main) Tagalog (support only a few times in childhood, but not sure about it)

Japanese, Tagalog and English are the languages mentioned by the students that they use at home. However, looking at Table 4, except for Student B's family, Japanese is the main language at home for all of the students. The family of Students D also chose Tagalog as one of the main languages at home, while the family of Student E use Tagalog and English interchangeably with Japanese. At home, Students C and D use English when there is a need to or to support other communication needs with family members. Like in the case of Student C's family, English is only used for text communication such as LINE, a Social Networking Service (SNS) in Japan, because her mother does not know how to read and write in Hiragana, Katakana and Kanji, the three Japanese writing systems.

While some students mentioned other Philippine languages, these were primarily used by their mothers during childhood and were seldom or never spoken by the students themselves. Students A, B, C, and F were initially exposed to their mother's native language, yet their families eventually adopted Japanese or English as the primary language at home. Despite being born in the Philippines, Student B, for instance, did not learn her mother's native tongue or Tagalog, as English was chosen as the main language by her parents.

Consequently, the proficiency of Students A, B, C, and F in their heritage language did not develop, leading to a desire to learn their mother's native language. As previously mentioned, Student C found it challenging not being able to communicate in Tagalog and Hiligaynon with her relatives.

In contrast, Student D, born and raised in Japan and who has only been 3 times for only two weeks each time to the Philippines, had parents who chose both Japanese and Tagalog as the primary languages at home. Consequently, her proficiency in Tagalog and Japanese is nearly equal, and she possesses knowledge of both Filipino and Japanese cultures. Similarly, Student E's family continued using Tagalog along with English and Japanese at home, allowing her to maintain proficiency in Tagalog and consider herself equally proficient in all three languages. As noted earlier, Students D and E, already proficient in Tagalog, chose to major in another language.

3.1 Answer to RQ2: What do the target students know about the Filipino language and Filipino culture that non-Filipino students do not know?

In order to answer RQ2, the students' answers to the following six questions were analyzed: #6: [What language did you use or do you use at home? #7: [Did your mother or do you mother speak her native language to you?], #8: [Did you have any language difficulties when you were a kid? For example, did you get confused between using Nihongo and Filipino or maybe you had a hard time learning Kanji, etc...?], #9: [Did you have any difficulty regarding culture when you were a kid?]), #10: [Was it or is it difficult to learn Filipino? What are the difficult parts? What are the easy parts? / Or was it difficult to maintain or keep your Filipino language? Why or why not?] and #11: [Do you have an advantage over your classmates for being a half-Filipino, half-Japanese person?]

As presented in Table 4, with the exception of Student B's family, Japanese serves as the primary language within the students' households. Tagalog and English are employed interchangeably with Japanese to enhance communication among family members. Additionally, Tagalog and other Philippine languages, utilized by the families of Students A, B, C, and F at home, are predominantly spoken by their mothers during communication and are seldom or never used by the students themselves. This indicates that the students' proficiency in these languages is relatively low.

Student A said that she only learned a few words of Tagalog, while Student B said that she might have learned a few words of Tagalog and of the Butuan City dialect of Cebuano, but has already forgotten them. Student A said that she learned counting in Tagalog and simple words such as "kilikili (armpit)" in childhood from her grandfather while he bathed her and her siblings. As siblings, she said that they also learned the word "tange (stupid)" from their mother as she always utters the word whenever she makes a mistake. Currently, she is trying to talk to her mother in Filipino using what she has learned in the university.

Students C and F mentioned that they remember hearing words of their mother's native tongue being used at home in their childhood, however now they do not or no longer use them at home. Hiligaynon is the native language of Student C's mother, while Tagalog is the native language of Student F's mother. According to Table 3, except for Students D and E, the Tagalog language is hardly used or not used at all at home. For Student F, after the third grade in elementary, her family did not return to the Philippines as much as before that and that is where the growth of her Tagalog skills ended. She said that she could still understand some words but could no longer speak it.

For Student B, only when she started studying the Filipino language at the university that she found out that some of the words she learned at home were actually from a dialect of the Cebuano language of her mother's hometown, Butuan City. Student B then realized that all her life her mother was actually talking to her in a mixture of Tagalog and Cebuano.

Table 5 shows the students' answers regarding their ability in the languages and cultures they were exposed to.

Table 5

Other background regarding language ability and cultural knowledge (Questions #7, #8, #9)

Questions	Filipino Language Majors			Non-Filipino Language Majors		
	Student A	Student B	Student C	Student D	Student E	Student F
#7 Did your mother speak to you in her native language?	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes, but only in elementary

# 8 Did you have language difficulties as a child?	Yes, but only a few	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
#9 Did you have any cultural difficulties as a child?	? Yes	? Yes	No	? Yes	Yes	? Yes

As Student C mentioned, her mother never spoke to her in Tagalog or Hiligaynon so, she said that she had no difficulty learning Japanese while growing up. Student F said the same thing. Even though Student C often went home to the Philippines until she was in sixth grade, she said that she did not have a hard time, because her relatives spoke to her in English. But, as she also expressed regret that she could only participate in English conversations compared to her cousins. As for Student F, her relatives do not speak much English, especially her grandparents, so her mother was always by her side to act as her translator.

“確かに英語全然お店とか、移動するときとか全然英語で大丈夫だと思うんですけど、でも私のおばあちゃんとかあまり英語が分からなくて、うちだけなのかもしれないんですけど、そのおじいちゃん、おばあちゃん世代あまり親戚とかも英語が分からなくて、結構タガログ語でみんな話してるんで、おじいちゃん、おばあちゃんと話したいとなったときにお母さんが通訳みたいになってるんで、もっと直接話したいなと思います。だから私はタガログ語もできたほうがいいなと思います。 (*If it's just in the store or in transportation, it's definitely okay to use English. But my grandmother doesn't understand English very well. Maybe it's just my family, but my grandfather, my relatives who are the same age as my grandmother, they almost only talk in Tagalog. So, when I want to talk to my grandmother and grandfather, my mother is my translator. If I wanted to talk to them myself, I thought it would be better if I also knew Tagalog.*)” **(shortened and some fillers removed) -Student C-**

Student D has equal ability in Japanese and Tagalog and did not have difficulty in school nor did she have difficulty communicating with her relatives. Student B and Student E who had the experience of living in the Philippines had difficulty learning some of the languages they were exposed to. Student B, because she was raised in the English language, understands what her mother says to her, but she did not learn how to respond in Tagalog or Cebuano. When it came to the Japanese language, she had some bad experiences while learning it, so it was not easy for her to learn it too. In elementary school she was forced to learn it, so she lost the desire to learn it at all. When she finally learned it, she had a hard time using it in conversation at school, because she felt not being accepted by her classmates, and in junior high school she was hurt by what her friend who said something hurtful about her being "half".

Student E's difficulty was confusion in the three languages she knows, because of the expansion of her knowledge of the Japanese language. She said that she had difficulty talking to her friends in Japanese without using Tagalog or English. She also said that when talking to her Filipino family members, she finds it difficult to talk to them only in Tagalog or English without using the Japanese language. Student A, on the other hand, said that she experienced confusion in elementary school as to whether the words she was using were Japanese or

Tagalog. When she noticed that her classmates didn't seem to understand some of the words she was using, she became careful about using non-Japanese sounding words.

When it comes to culture, Student C said that she did not experience difficulties with the different cultures she knows. She said that she only found out while studying in the university, that the culture in her family's dining room was different from her classmates in high school, such as how she holds her chopsticks and correct manners in using them, as well as the way the food was prepared on the table. Student E, on the other hand, said she learned to speak softly in public, because she noticed that it was very quiet inside the buses and trains in Japan. There is a question mark next to the check about the cultural experience of Students A, B, D and F, because their stories in this part are not purely related to culture, but are mostly about how their existence as "half" and being accepted or not. Student A was teased in elementary school because her skin color was darker than her classmates. Student B heard bad words about her being a "half". Student D was teased due to her foreign-sounding name and Student F experienced exclusion from an outing with her friends in elementary school due to her mother being Filipino. Looking at these experiences from the point of view of Japanese culture, it can be said that they happened, because of the Japanese people's belief in maintaining "和 / wa" or harmony by being consistent with others, in behavior and also in outside appearance (Takehashi, 2020).

Lastly, table no. 6 also contributes to addressing RQ2. Polinsky and Kagan (2007, pp. 33 & 35) proposed conducting three types of tests to get an accurate assessment of the ability of the "heritage learner" in order to place him/her in the right course - (1) oral test, (2) short essay and (3) biographic questionnaire. Since this study investigated HLLs who are already enrolled or have already taken the Filipino language courses, the skills and knowledge of the interviewees in the Filipino language were inferred from their answers to interview questions #6, #7, #8, #9, #10 and #11. Question #10: [Was it or is it difficult to learn Filipino? What are the difficult parts? What are the easy parts? / Or was it difficult to maintain or keep your Filipino language? Why or why not?] and Question #11: [Do you have an advantage over your classmates for being a half-Filipino, half-Japanese person?] were specifically asked to Students A, B and C who took Filipino as a major.

Table 6

Background in skills and knowledge of the Filipino language (Questions #10 and #11)

Difficult and Easy Parts in the Filipino language	Advantages Over Classmates
Difficult parts	awareness of speech sounds
grammar	- more wide range
speaking	- additional sounds to known sounds from Japanese and English
writing	familiarity with certain words and expressions
reading	- words used in everyday conversation
Easy parts	- low anxiety towards new words
(a lot of) familiar vocabulary	knowledge about Filipino culture
listening	- observations from mother; learned from mother
comprehension	availability of learning support
- concepts (e.g., cultural concepts)	- limited, but has someone in the family to ask questions when needed
- overall idea of the things being discussed	

According to Students A, B and C, grammar is the most difficult part of learning the Filipino language, because it is very different from the grammar of Japanese and English. They said that production in the Filipino language is also difficult such as speaking and writing. However, they also mentioned that reading is equally difficult as well. On the other hand, they find listening and understanding overall content relatively easier, even if they don't comprehend everything. Familiar vocabulary and cultural concepts help them guess the overall meaning of what they hear in Filipino classes or from relatives.

When it comes to their advantage in learning the Filipino language over their Japanese classmates who are not of Filipino descent, according to the three Filipino majors, they have almost no advantage because they know almost nothing about the Filipino language and Filipino culture when they joined the program. Student A said, except for a few words and counting from one to ten, she does not know the Filipino language. In fact, she has never even set foot in the Philippines, not even once. Student B, on the other hand, said she understands 60% of the words in the textbook used in her university, but she said that she really struggles in expressing herself. What she sees as an advantage is having a mother that she can ask questions to and practise with compared to her Japanese classmates. However, she said that she does not want it to be an opportunity to be unfair to her classmates so, she does not depend on her mother that much. She also saw that it would be better to find other Filipinos to talk to other than her mother because the topics they can talk about are limited. Lastly, as mentioned above, Student C was not taught the Filipino language by her mother and had no knowledge about it when she joined the Filipino classes. Even when it comes to culture, the Filipino culture was not explained to her while growing up and what she knew was from observations of her mother's behaviors and actions.

5. Analysis and Discussion

The purpose of this study is to determine the difference between HLLs and the other students of the Filipino language as well as to determine the significance of considering the HLLs in the teaching of the Filipino language in Japan. Qualitative analysis of the answers of the interviewed six students was employed to give a description of their linguistic background and an evaluation of their ability in the Filipino language.

Similar to the study by Polinsky and Kagan in 2007, in the development of this study, two categories of speakers were found according to their "heritage language": "heritage speaker" or "in the wild" and "heritage learner". Japanese students of Filipino descent are divided into (1) those who take or are taking Filipino as a major, which can be compared to "heritage learners" and (2) who did not take Filipino as a major.

According to Table 2 and Table 4, it can be seen that there is variation in the background of the interviewees and the language spoken at home or the language learned by the students. Polinsky and Kagan (2007) also reported about this. Table 5 shows that their experience varied regarding their exposure to their parents' languages and in the language chosen by their parents to be used at home. It was clear that the parents' decision in choosing the language to be used at home has a great influence on their proficiency in the languages they are supposed to know. It appears that living in the Philippines has nothing to do with the growth of students' Tagalog language skills, as was the case with Student B, Student D and Student E. Student B lived in the Philippines until she was 5 years old, but because English was the chosen language of her parents to be used at home, she did not learn to speak Tagalog and Cebuano and she was late in learning Japanese. As for Student D, even though born and raised in Japan with limited visits to the Philippines, but had parents who chose both Japanese and Tagalog as the primary languages at home, her evaluation of her language ability in Tagalog is equal to that of Japanese. The language choices made by the parents of Students B, D, and E align with the assertion by

Polinsky and Kagan (2007, p. 15) that "determining the language spoken by the parent, together with his/her view or attitude towards the language at home and the culture contained in it," is a key factor in gauging the proximity or distance of a "heritage speaker's" proficiency from the baseline, as discussed in relevant studies.

Tables 2, 4, and 5 collectively present the comprehensive background of the students, detailing the languages they use and their experiences of awareness and exposure to them. This information serves as the foundation for the students in deciding which language to major in at the university, complementing other reasons they have provided.

From Table 6, it can be seen that because Students A, B, C were exposed to the Tagalog, Cebuano and Hiligaynon languages they had an advantage in identifying sounds and everyday vocabulary, but like their classmates they have difficulty in speaking, writing and reading in the Filipino language. Although they may think that their advantage over their classmates who are Japanese students studying Filipino as a foreign language is not that great, according to Kagan (2012), these HLLs' "reasons for learning their native language in the classroom" and "their self-view" are different, therefore it is important to put them into consideration in the development of the curriculum for "heritage learners", in order for the program to not hurt or hinder the learning of the "heritage learners", but instead encourage their learning (Kagan, 2012).

6. Conclusion

This study reveals variation among "heritage speakers" highlighting the place of birth and residence of students during elementary school does not correlate with their ability in the languages they know. The language chosen by their parents for home use appears to be a main factor. The overall background of the students regarding their experiences and exposure to the languages they know can be said to be the basis for their university major choices and the depth and breadth of their knowledge about the Filipino language and Filipino culture.

The heritage learners investigated in this study claimed that they have an advantage in identifying sounds and everyday vocabulary, but like their classmates, they also struggle with speaking, writing and reading in the Filipino language. They find listening and understanding overall content relatively easier, even if they don't comprehend everything, because familiar vocabulary and cultural concepts help them guess the overall meaning of what they hear in Filipino classes or from relatives. Despite this, Heritage Language Learners (HLLs) believe they don't have a significant advantage over Japanese students learning Filipino as a foreign language. Nevertheless, Kagan (2012) emphasizes the importance of considering "their reason for learning their native language in the classroom" and "their self-view" in curriculum development for heritage learners. This approach aims to support rather than hinder their learning journey.

Currently, only a small number of Filipino Heritage Language Learners (HLLs) are recorded in Japan. However, the Japanese government's immigration programs (Sasaki & Ogawa, 2019) are expected to foster the growth of the Filipino community, leading to an anticipated increase in the population of Filipino HLLs. Consequently, studies on these "heritage learners" are crucial to fill existing gaps and contribute to the support of Filipino language HLLs (Nagaya, 2022). Additionally, these studies contribute to the expanding field of migration and migration linguistics (Borlongan, 2023).

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7. Appendices

Appendix 1

Interview questions

1. Name, age, address
2. Major, university (School of International and Area Studies or School of Language and Culture Studies + language)
3. Why did you choose or why did you not choose Filipino as your major?
4. Where were you born?
5. Tell me about your parents - about their nationality and hometown
6. What language did you use or do you use at home?
7. Did your mother or do you mother speak her native language to you?
8. Did you have any language difficulty when you were a kid? For example, you got confused between using Nihongo and Filipino or maybe you had a hard time learning Kanji, etc...
9. Did you have any difficulty regarding culture when you were a kid?
10. Was it or is it difficult to learn Filipino? What are the difficulties? What are the easy parts? /Or was it difficult to maintain or keep your Filipino language? Why or why not?
11. Do you have an advantage over your classmates for being a half-Filipino, half-Japanese person?
12. Do you think you made the right choice in choosing or not choosing Filipino as your major? Why or why not?
13. What are your plans for the future?
14. Do you think you can still use Filipino in your future endeavors?
15. What advantages or merits do you think your knowledge of the Filipino language and culture will give you or grant you in the future?
16. Do you think half-Filipino, half-Japanese children in Japan should learn Filipino formally in school? Why or why not?
17. What is your message or advice for kids or students like you in terms of learning Filipino and Filipino culture?
18. How do you see yourself? Are you Japanese or are you Filipino or are you both? Please explain your answer.

Appendix 2

Reason for choosing language major (narrative)

3. Why did you choose or why did you not choose Filipino as your major?

Bakit pinili mo o bakit hindi mo pinili ang Filipino bilang major?

Student A (Filipino Major) おじいちゃんがフィリピン人なんですけど、今そのおじいちゃんが日本にいて、そのおじいちゃんが親戚とフィリピン語でビデオ通話をちちやいころから見てて、私もその会話の中に入りたいなと思って、フィリピン語と一緒に話せるようになりたいなと思ったので、フィリピン語選びました。
(My grandfather is Filipino and that grandfather of mine is already here in Japan. When I was young, I used to see my grandfather making a video call with his relative and I used to think that I wanted to join in their conversation. I wanted to talk to them in Filipino so I chose Filipino.)

Student B (Filipino Major) There are several reasons, but when I was in high school, I wanted to know more about my Filipino background, my mother's side, and the only school that provides courses for Filipino in Tokyo was my university. There are other schools that also provide Tagalog courses, but my university is the most intensive, I think. After I joined the open campus and talked with the professors, I felt more passion from them, especially after seeing Ogawa sensei. I was really influenced by him, that's when I decided to go to my university.

When I was in high school, I went to a kind of special school that educated me to look at the social problems around the world, and the closest one that I could relate to was the poverty and also like nandarou, overstaying OFWs, like migration problems of the Philippines. That one was the most relatable for me, that's why I want to study further about it in the university. Before entering I actually wanted to study about poverty, but it was too difficult for me because I was not good in economics or numbers, so I just changed my interest to migration studies.

Mag-aaral C (Filipino Major) 母親がフィリピンの出身なんですけど、母親は私にずっと全然教えてこなかったの、私はもう何も知らなくてフィリピン語について。大学を決めるときに、英語を勉強したいと思ったので、東京外国語大学がいいんじゃないかって、そういうふうに大学を決めたんですけど。英語科に行くぐらいの成績はなかったので、別の言語にしようと思ってたときに、フィリピン語があるんだったら、じゃそこに行こうということで決めました。

(My mother is from the Philippines, but she didn't teach me anything. So, I don't know anything about the Filipino language. When I was shopping for a university to attend, I thought that I wanted to study English so I said why not go to Tokyo University of Foreign Studies. However, my grade for the English program was not up to par. When I was shopping for another language, I found out that there is Filipino, so that's the only one I chose.)

Mag-aaral D (Hindi Major) Originally, I considered taking up Filipino as my major, but I decided to learn Hindi because I am already familiar with Southeast Asian culture, and the Philippines is one of them and Japan is part of East Asia. So, I got interested in learning about other parts of Asia, which is South Asia like India. Because in Japan, I see a lot of things related to India like curry and rice and also Buddhism, Bollywood music. I like watching movies po kasi and Bollywood is known in Japan, so those things are connected and made me want to know about India.

<p>Mag-aaral E (Indonesian Major)</p>	<p>One of the reasons is because I heard that Indonesian is quite similar with Filipino.</p>
<p>Mag-aaral F (Mongolian Major)</p>	<p>本当は選びたかったんですけど、センター試験を受けたときに、結果が悪くて、結構しかも、入試まえに例えばフィリ科とかの倍率が見れるんですけど、たしかフィリ科が高くて、このままだと入りたい大学にも入れないかもしれないと思って。すみませんこんな理由で、で元々結構色々な言葉に興味があって、ロシアとか、あいう文字にも興味があったしと思って、うちは国社なんで、中央アジアで応募して、でモンゴル語になりました。て感じですよ。私浪人してて、浪人するまえの入試ではフィリ科を受けてます。おっちゃったんですけど。(I really want to choose, but my university entrance exam result was not good. Then, before the exam I saw the acceptance rate of the Filipino program and it was so popular that I thought I might not get into the university I want. I'm sorry that this was my reason. But I am also really interested in different languages such as the Russian language and those with a different writing system. Because I was accepted to the School of International and Area Studies, I chose Central Asia, so I chose the Mongolian language. Actually, I'm already a year off and a year late. The first time I took the entrance exam, I chose the Filipino program and I failed.)</p>