

Students' Acceptability of Using Filipino Language as a Medium of Instruction in Teaching Rizal General Education Course

Maria Teresa V. Septimo¹

¹College of Arts and Sciences, Camarines Sur Polytechnic Colleges

HOW TO CITE:

Maria Teresa V. Septimo (2026).
Students' Acceptability of Using
Filipino Language as a Medium of
Instruction in Teaching Rizal General
Education Course.
International Journal of Special
Education, 41(16s), 242-249

COPYRIGHT STATEMENT:

Copyright: © 2026 Authors.
Open access publication under the
terms and conditions
of the Creative Commons Attribution
(CC BY)
license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

ABSTRACT:

This study examines the use of Filipino as the primary medium of instruction in teaching 'The Life and Works of Rizal' in Philippine college classrooms. Employing a mixed-methods design through interviews and questionnaires at Camarines Sur Polytechnic Colleges, the study explored students' perceptions of language use in the subject. Findings revealed strong support for teaching in Filipino, as students reported better comprehension, deeper cultural connection, and greater classroom participation when lessons were delivered in the national language. These positive responses were particularly salient given the subject's role in fostering national identity. However, concerns were raised by multilingual learners, underscoring the need for inclusive pedagogical strategies and contextually appropriate materials. Results also showed that age, gender, and socio-economic background influenced attitudes toward Filipino as a medium of instruction. Drawing from Language Attitude Theory, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, and the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, the study recommends integrating Filipino regularly in Rizal courses while complementing it with multimodal resources to strengthen identity and learning outcomes.

Keywords: Filipino Language, Rizal, Language Acceptability, Medium of Instruction.

1. Introduction

The medium of instruction is not just a tool of imparting knowledge but a very important element which determines the process of learning of students and their performance. In the Philippine context, English serves as medium of instruction, communication, and professional advancement (Castro et al, 2023). The language of instruction acquires special significance in the case of teaching 'The Life and Works of Rizal', a General Education (GE) course that is aimed at enhancing the knowledge students have on the history, culture, and identity of the Philippines. By teaching in Filipino as the main language of instruction, learning is placed in the cultural

background of the students, which adds depth to the understanding in addition to reinforcing the linguistic competence. The use of Filipino is more than a pedagogical decision, it is an opportunity to experience an authentic cultural experience, one where students are able to read the works of Rizal and the history of the Philippines in a language that reflects the Filipino worldview.

The importance of using Filipino in Rizal classes is illustrated by this double role of both cultural immersion and linguistic improvement. Learners do not only acquire the national language; they also acquire communicative competence that has a cultural context. In such a way, the GE Rizal

course turns into a place of cultural confirmation and language development. It is on this background that this study explores the perception and the acceptance of the Filipino as a medium of instruction amongst the students and place the discussion in theories that relate language to thought to social interaction. In order to frame the study, three theoretical perspectives were used. To start with, the Language Attitude Theory (Melandar, 2003) focuses on the influence of the feeling of the learners towards the language including fluency, accent, and situation on the identity, mood, and linguistic behaviour. The lens enables the research to uncover the influence of the acceptance of Filipino by students on the larger sociolinguistic processes and cultural orientations. Second, the Sociocultural Theory presented by Vygotsky highlights the importance of social interaction, scaffolding, and Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) in the learning process. As applied to this context, it underscores the role played by teaching in Filipino in building collaborative learning experiences in which students can feel more comfortable to participate and share ideas and understanding with one another. Lastly, the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis places language as a cognitive-cultural influence that defines thought and perception. Through the works of Rizal being studied in Filipino, not only are they being taught about history, but they are also being given a chance to experience history in the conceptual categories of their own language, which enhances the creation of cultural understanding and identity building.

Although the role of language choice in education has been acknowledged, the actual body of empirical studies on the use of Filipino as the medium of instructions in college-level GE subject, especially teaching Rizal, is small. A lot of the literature on medium of instruction in the Philippines has concentrated on either mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) in primary education or English hegemony in higher education. There is a dearth of literature on the issue of how Filipino as the national language can be used as an educational resource on the tertiary level and the perceptions of

students about the educational and cultural relevance of this language. This disparity highlights the importance of exploring the overlapping of language attitudes, cultural identity, and teaching experience in higher learning and therefore, add to the current discourse of language policy, curriculum making, and nation-building in the form of education. This study aims to determine the level of acceptability of Filipino Language as a medium of instruction in teaching Rizal as a General Education Course, specifically by examining the profiles of the respondents in terms of age, sex, and socio-economic status, assessing the overall level of acceptability of Filipino language use in teaching Rizal, and determining whether a significant relationship exists between these respondent profiles and their level of acceptability toward Filipino as a medium of instruction.

2. Methodology

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative strategies to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research questions. Specifically, Narrative Inquiry was used to capture students lived experiences and perspectives on the use of Filipino as the medium of instruction in the Life and Works of Rizal course. This approach highlighted how students made sense of their learning and allowed the researcher to examine the cultural and pedagogical dimensions of language use. At the same time, a quantitative component, through survey questionnaires, was included to measure the level of acceptability of Filipino as a medium of instruction among students.

The respondents were students currently enrolled in Rizal as a General Education course at Camarines Sur Polytechnic Colleges. Using purposive sampling, ten students were selected to participate. Data were collected through two main instruments: a researcher-made questionnaire, validated by experts, and structured interviews. The questionnaire provided measurable data on students' acceptance of Filipino in instruction, while the

interviews offered richer insights into their experiences, challenges, and suggestions.

For data gathering, participants were first asked to complete the questionnaire and then participated in recorded interviews after providing informed consent. The interviews focused on students' perceptions of the effectiveness of Filipino in teaching Rizal and its impact on their learning. Responses were transcribed and analysed thematically, while survey results were used to support and

triangulate the qualitative findings. The combined results served as the basis for recommendations aimed at enhancing teaching strategies, instructional materials, and institutional policies on language use in General Education courses

3. Results

Profile of the respondents

Based from the gathered data of the respondent, results surfaced as the respondents of the study it found these substantial data.

Table 1 Respondents Age

AGE	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
18	14	28%
19	13	26%
20	23	46%
TOTAL	50	100%

Based on the gathered data by the researcher, majority of the respondents who voluntarily participated in the research were 20 years old with a frequency of 23 and a 46% of the total number

of respondents. Age 18 and 19 followed respectively with their respective frequencies of 14 and 13 and their percentages of 28% and 26%.

Table 2 Respondents Sex

SEX	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
MALE	25	50%
FEMALE	25	50%
TOTAL	50	100%

Meanwhile, on the distribution of sex, it has reflected on the table 2 that the respondents are equally divided as both sexes got 25 frequencies

and 50% of the total number of respondents who voluntarily participated in the data gathering of the study.

Table 3 Respondents Economic Status

SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE (%)
UPPER-CLASS	17	34%
MIDDLE-CLASS	18	36%
LOWER-CLASS	15	30%
TOTAL	50	100%

Lastly on the table 3, the socio-economic status majority of the respondents who participated in the study are students who belonged to the Middle Class with a frequency of 18 and garnering a 36% of the total number of

respondents. While followed by the Upper Class with 34% or a frequency of 17 and last on the rank is the Lower Class with a total of 15 frequencies and has a 30% of the respondents belong to.

Table 4 The Level of Acceptability of Filipino Language

	Statement	Mean Rating
Q1	Using Filipino as an instructional medium is acceptable	4.44
Q2	Enhances students' understanding of Rizal's works	4.16
Q3	Important for preserving Filipino culture and heritage	4.12
Q4	Comfortable with teaching Rizal solely in Filipino	4
Q5	Helps foster national identity	3.52
Q6	Benefits students from diverse linguistic backgrounds	3.68
Q7	Hinders comprehension for non-native Filipino speakers	4.12
Q8	Limits international recognition of Rizal's contributions	3.96
Q9	Positively influences academic performance	4.32
Q10	Encourages student engagement	4.64
Q11	Leads to better appreciation of Rizal's literary works	4.04
Q12	Makes subject more accessible across socioeconomic groups	3.88
Q13	Conveys nuances of Rizal's ideas and writings	4.16
Q14	Aligns with promoting multilingualism	4.12
Q15	Contributes to academic discourse on Rizal studies	3.84
Q16	Fosters deeper emotional connection to Rizal's ideals	4.68
Q17	Enhances cultural relevance of the subject matter	4.48
Q18	Facilitates a more inclusive learning environment	4.68
Q19	Promotes understanding of Philippine history and society	4
Q20	Supports Filipino in teaching Rizal as a General Education course	4
Total Mean		4.14

Table 4 presents the level of acceptability of the Filipino language as a medium of instruction in

teaching the Rizal course, with statements rated on a scale where the total mean of 4.14 indicates

a generally high level of acceptance among the respondents. The highest-rated statements, including fostering a deeper emotional connection to Rizal's ideals (4.68) and facilitating a more inclusive learning environment (4.68), suggest that students strongly value the cultural and affective benefits of using Filipino.

Conversely, the slightly lower ratings for statements concerning the hindrance to non-native speakers (4.12) and fostering national identity (3.52) imply that while acceptability is overall positive, certain challenges and nuanced perceptions remain.

Table 5 The Significant Relationship between the profiles of the respondents and the level of acceptability of Filipino Language as Medium of Instruction

Variables	w	χ^2	P Value	Decision	Inference
Age	0.8338	47.53	0.0003	Reject Ho	Significant
Sex	0.9930	37.74	0.0064	Reject Ho	Significant
Socio-Economic Status	0.9233	52.63	0.0001	Reject Ho	Significant

Table 5 presents the findings of the study that Age, sex, and socio-economic status of students significantly influence the students' acceptance on the Filipino language as a medium of instruction.

4. Discussion

The demographic profile of the respondents reveals important patterns that contextualize the acceptability of Filipino as a medium of instruction in teaching the Rizal course. The data showed that the most number of respondents are the older ones, which is due to the reason that most of the students taking the Rizal course are on their 2nd or 3rd year in college as there are variations within the programs' General Education offerings. Cebu (2023) determined that these demographics reflected in the table are true as on his study these same demographics appear as well, and he asserted that demographic factors relate to students' confidence in their academic abilities, which can influence their engagement with courses like the Rizal subject. Furthermore, the data suggests that there is a balanced distribution on the sexes of the respondents as it further expounds that taking the Rizal course offers an equal opportunity to all sexes and allows everyone to understand Rizal more. This balance is significant as it implies that the course and its language policy affect male and female students in relatively comparable ways.

Additionally, the data affirms that through the implementation of the Free-Tuition Act, there is an equal opportunity given to different socio-economic backgrounds of the students that are admitted within the institution. Sagario et al. (2023) further expounds that middle-class students do contribute a substantial number to the total population of students within an institution, suggesting that the socio-economic diversity of learners must be considered when evaluating the effectiveness and acceptability of instructional language policies.

The overall mean rating of 4.14 indicates a high level of acceptability of Filipino as a medium of instruction, with the highest-rated statements underscoring the cultural and affective benefits of using the national language. The results underscore that students are able to connect in a deeper emotional state when Filipino Language is used, which further argues that it fosters an inclusive classroom environment—factors that are critical in meaningful education. As the students highlighted: *"When Filipino is used in teaching, I don't just understand the information — I also grasp the emotions and perspectives of Rizal. His stories feel more real and closer to me because our own language is being used."* This reflection affirms that languages used inside the classroom play a crucial role in delivering the lessons, providing instructions, and guiding the students, but it also evokes national

identity and personal resonance, especially when a suitable language is used for a historic and emotionally embedded course like *The Life and Works of Rizal*. Meanwhile, questions 1, 10, and 17 garnered average weighted means of 4.44, 4.64, and 4.48 respectively. These results provide context that the Filipino Language as a medium of instruction enhances engagement, cultural understanding, and instructional effectiveness, aligning with the educational goal of providing holistic and contextualized instruction that reflects the learner's lived experience. One student described their classroom atmosphere as engaging and participatory: *"Class discussions become livelier when Filipino is used. Everyone gets to share insights, even the quiet ones. It feels more natural, and it's easier for us to express our thoughts."* This reflects that utilizing a language familiar to students allows them to express, engage, and share their insights in the most comfortable manner as they feel and see that they are included within the discussion. These findings strongly support the Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky), which emphasizes the importance of social interaction and scaffolding in the learning process, as the use of Filipino facilitates collaborative learning experiences where students feel more comfortable participating.

Furthermore, questions 2, 9, and 13, with mean averages of 4.16, 4.32, and 4.16, suggest that Filipino learners find it easier to navigate complex concepts in various Rizal texts, directly affecting the pedagogical validity that teachers utilize in their approaches to teaching the course content. According to one participant: *"I understand Rizal's ideologies more clearly when Filipino is used. It's also easier to analyze his writings because you don't have to go through translation first."* This sentiment aligns with the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis, which places language as a cognitive-cultural influence that defines thought and perception. Through the works of Rizal being studied in Filipino, students are not only being taught about history but are also being given a chance to experience history in the conceptual categories of their own language, enhancing cultural understanding and identity building. However, the lowest means were Questions 5 and 6, with garnered means of 3.52

and 3.68 respectively. These results note that students have certain reservations about the utilization of the Filipino language in its capacity to foster national identity or its adaptability and accessibility to a linguistically diverse set of learners. While these questions got a relatively lower mean, students still "agree," which suggests that there is a mild acceptance but not a critical opposition to its utilization, as specific reservations do resurface. As one of the respondents highlighted the need for localized context to have a better experience: *"Filipino is effective, but I hope there's also effort to include local languages or at least provide contextual examples so it can be more inclusive."*

The theoretical and practical implications of these findings are significant for language policy, curriculum development, and pedagogical practice in Philippine higher education. The high acceptability of Filipino aligns with the Language Attitude Theory (Melander, 2003), which focuses on the influence of learners' feelings towards language on identity, mood, and linguistic behavior. However, the reservations expressed regarding inclusivity for non-native Filipino speakers and the need for localized materials point to important limitations that must be addressed. Questions 8 and 7, with overall means of 3.96 and 4.12, highlight issues that need to be addressed, such as the need to provide supplementary materials, mitigation, and support for bilingual learners. One of the respondents stated that localized materials can be made as well to provide and expound localized contexts of the lessons: *"Sometimes the reading materials or references in Tagalog are lacking. I hope more resources become available so the topics can be made clearer."* In its totality, the data puts forth that students have high acceptability of Filipino Language as a medium of instruction in teaching *The Life and Works of Rizal* within an institution. These preferences are deeply rooted and tied to cultural, emotional, and national identity dimensions that are essential in teaching a subject like Rizal, whose life and work are vital concepts within Filipino history and values. Tupas and Metila (2023) believed that such reservation raises concerns about the effectiveness of the language

and the marginalization of students with different linguistic backgrounds affects the use of Filipino as a medium of instruction in teaching and learning The Life and Works of Rizal course.

It must be acknowledged, however, that this study is not without its limitations. The demographic analysis suggests that students of a certain age demographic may have a deeper appreciation for the language as they were able to develop their cultural and pedagogical appreciation within the academic setting, while gender-based learning style and linguistic confidence are sex factors that shape students' perceptions towards language, and socio-economic status affects preferences of students on the use of English or Filipino as a language of medium of instruction within the academe. These insights provide an avenue to create context-sensitive, inclusive approaches, and language policies in education that inculcate student profiles as a major factor in crafting policies or modules. Nevertheless, the findings are limited to a single institutional context, and further research across multiple universities and regions would enhance the generalizability of these results. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported perceptions may not fully capture the complexities of actual classroom experiences and learning outcomes. Future studies should consider mixed-method approaches that combine quantitative surveys with classroom observations, linguistic analysis, and longitudinal tracking of academic performance to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how Filipino as a medium of instruction affects student learning and engagement in GE courses. Despite these limitations, the study contributes valuable empirical evidence to the discourse on language policy in Philippine higher education, emphasizing the need for a balanced approach that maximizes the cultural and pedagogical benefits of Filipino while addressing the legitimate concerns of linguistic inclusivity and accessibility.

5. Conclusion

The findings of this study demonstrate that Filipino language as a medium of instruction in

teaching The Life and Works of Rizal as a General Education course enjoys a high level of acceptability among students, with an overall mean rating of 4.14. This high acceptability is deeply rooted in the cultural, emotional, and pedagogical benefits that students associate with learning in their national language, as evidenced by the highest-rated statements concerning emotional connection (4.68), inclusive learning environment (4.68), and enhanced engagement (4.64). These results affirm the theoretical frameworks underpinning this study—the Language Attitude Theory, Sociocultural Theory, and Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis—which collectively emphasize that language shape's identity, facilitates social interaction and collaborative learning, and influences cognitive perception of historical and cultural content. The interview excerpts further illuminate these findings, as students articulated that Filipino allows them to grasp Rizal's emotions and perspectives more deeply, participate more actively in class discussions, and analyze his writings without the barrier of translation. However, the study also revealed important reservations, particularly regarding the capacity of Filipino to foster national identity (3.52) and its adaptability to linguistically diverse learners (3.68), as well as concerns about the availability of localized materials and the potential marginalization of non-native Filipino speakers. These nuanced perceptions suggest that while acceptability is overwhelmingly positive, there remains a need for intentional policy interventions that address these limitations and ensure that the use of Filipino in the Rizal course is both effective and inclusive.

In response to these findings, the proposed policy on the use of Filipino Language as a Medium of Instruction in Teaching Rizal has been crafted to operationalize the study's implications for educational practice, institutional governance, and language policy in Philippine higher education. The policy is grounded in the rationale that the Rizal Law (RA 1425) mandates the teaching of Rizal's life and works, yet the prevalent use of English in delivering this subject has alienated many students, particularly those

from linguistically diverse regions, thereby undermining the very purpose of fostering national consciousness and identity. By requiring Filipino as the primary medium of instruction, mandating the development of localized and contextualized modules, ensuring instructional flexibility for multilingual classrooms, providing faculty development programs, and establishing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, this policy directly addresses the study's findings and limitations. The policy also acknowledges the demographic variations among students—age, sex, and socio-economic status—that influence language perceptions and learning preferences, thereby promoting a context-sensitive approach to curriculum delivery. Ultimately, this study and the resulting policy contribute to the broader

discourse on language policy, curriculum making, and nation-building through education, emphasizing that teaching Rizal in Filipino is not merely a pedagogical choice but a cultural and political act that affirms the Filipino identity, honors Rizal's legacy, and advances the vision of a truly inclusive and nationally-responsive educational system. As higher education institutions implement this policy, it is recommended that future research examine its long-term impact on student learning outcomes, conduct comparative studies across different regions and institutional types, and explore the integration of other Philippine languages to further enhance linguistic inclusivity and cultural relevance in the teaching of Philippine history and literature.

6. References

- Castro, Mary Nerissa & Codiñera, Airis Kim & Toquero, Elvie. (2023). English Varieties: A Case Study on the Exploration of Filipino Students' Perceptions. *International Journal of English Language Studies*. 5. 12-20. 10.32996/ijels.2023.5.2.3.
- Cebu, Jayvee Cuervo (2023). Self-efficacy of Filipino College Students as Correlates to Demographics. *United International Journal for Research & Technology*, 4(3), 62-66.
- Melander, L. 2003 Language Attitudes Evaluation Reactions to Spoken Language <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:518098/fulltext01.pdf>
- Sagario, A., Quinto, J. D., & Antonio, R. (2023). Socio-economic status and academic performance of pupils in public elementary schools in santa ana district. *International Journal of Arts, Sciences and Education*, 4(4), 45–61. Retrieved from <https://ijase.org/index.php/ijase/article/view/300>
- Tupas, Ruanni & Metila, Romylyn. (2023). Language, class, and coloniality in medium of instruction projects in the Philippines. 10.4324/9781003173120-14.

7. Acknowledgements

- The author wishes to acknowledge the Camarines Sur Polytechnic Colleges who allowed and supported the author during the conduct of this study.

8. Author Declaration

The author declares that this is an original work and there is no conflict of interest.