

47 Tagalog

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1 Historical Background

Tagalog is a member of the Hesperonesian (West Indonesian) branch of the Austronesian language family. Native to the southern part of the island of Luzon in the Philippines, it has in recent years spread as a second language over virtually the entire Philippine archipelago. Thus, while only about a quarter of the population of the Philippines were Tagalog-speaking in 1940, by 1970 over half were (approximately 20 million out of 35 million), and it has been estimated that by the year 2000 over 98 per cent of all Filipinos will speak Tagalog as either a first or a second language.

The remarkable recent diffusion of Tagalog reflects its selection in 1937 as the Philippine national language. Under the name of Pilipino (or Filipino), Tagalog — with a lexicon enriched by borrowings from other Philippine languages — is now taught in schools throughout the Philippines. The spread of the language has also been favoured by urbanisation — Tagalog is native to the largest city of the Philippines, Manila, and it is used as a *lingua franca* in many cities with mixed populations — as well as by its prominence in the mass media.

The dialect of Tagalog which is considered standard and which underlies Pilipino is the educated dialect of Manila. Other important regional dialects are those of Bataan, Batangas, Bulacan, Tanay-Paete and Tayabas. The lexicon of educated Manila Tagalog contains many borrowings from Spanish and English, the former reflecting over three centuries of colonial domination of the Philippines by Spain, the latter reflecting the period of American hegemony (1898–1946), as well as the current status of English as both the language of higher education in the Philippines and a *lingua franca* second in importance only to Pilipino itself. Spanish and English have also had some impact on the phonology of Tagalog (see section 2, below), but little if any on the syntax and morphology. (See section 4, however, for some instances of borrowed Spanish gender distinctions.)

THE WORLD'S
MAJOR
LANGUAGES

EDITED BY
BERNARD COMRIE

New York Oxford
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
1990

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Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
The World's major languages.
Includes index.
1. Language and languages. I. Comrie, Bernard, 1947-
P311 W6 1987 I40P 36-2795
ISBN 0-19-506211-9
ISBN 0-19-506211-9 (pbk.)