



Tagalog Language & Culture

As seen in the translation industry

Introduction

The Philippines are a wonderful and interesting country with colorful festivals and lovely, friendly people. One of the languages in our portfolio is the Tagalog language, which is the other name of Filipino. In this new ebook in the series we've decided to show you the culture, language and some of the traditions of the Filipinos and showcase some of the difficulties in working with their language. Welcome to the Tagalog language & culture ebook and enjoy the walk through the beautiful Philippines!

Gergana Toleva
(Global Marketing Manager)





Language

As the Philippines are easily related to Filipino language, we've decided that our first pages of this book we will be an introduction to it and its other names. The Filipino language is also known as Tagalog or Pilipino and it is the national language in the country. Welcome to the book of Tagalog language & culture and enjoy the walk through the beautiful Philippines!

How to win Filipino clients

Situated in south-east Asia, the Philippines is a magnificently beautiful country, home to over 7,000 islands, some of which have either not yet been explored, or have not yet been placed on the world's maps. It is a country full of happy people, who try to find the positive in every situation, no matter how dire. While there is some social inequality, most of the population falls in the middle to lower-income groups, but despite this fact, Filipinos are well-known for their excellent sense of humor and friendliness. If you're planning on doing business in the Philippines, you'll need to know that the Filipino language, which is often mixed with English because the majority of the population speaks this language, sometimes doesn't have English equivalents, especially for phrases to indicate respect for an older person. These cultural intricacies are critical for developing a business strategy that adjusts itself to Filipino culture.

A mix of cultures

The Philippines has a rich history with influences from both Spain and the US. This cultural "interference" has also shaped the country's culture. Despite over 100 languages being spoken in the country, Filipino and English are the most prominent. These languages shape the country's culture and it's important to take into consideration some cultural influences as well as traditions when considering expanding your business there. For example, family is a central factor for most Filipinos and this is why so many (around 11%) have taken to work overseas (with one of the highest numbers of nurses in the world), sending remittances back home to raise their children and support their family and extended family. The nuclear family is a central point for starting any relationship with a Filipino. However, apart from family, there are other essential elements to Filipino culture you may want





to factor in when considering the Philippines as your next business move. For example, religion also plays a critical part of daily life, with most Filipinos subscribing to the Catholic religion, with a small minority of Islam being practiced in the southern islands.

Culture and its impact on communication

The Filipino culture is an intricate mix of several cultures put together. They enjoy a variety of festivals due to their Spanish influences, laugh a lot (whether to save face, avoid embarrassment or simply to express positivity), and generally try to be good-natured citizens in all their interactions. However, despite their American influences, they have not adopted a culture of punctuality and the western concept of respect for time may be found to be elusive (for more on time and being punctual, see the section below). In this section, we will take a look at some of the factors that can help or hinder communication with Filipinos when doing business.

A matriarchal society

Contrary to the fact that most other Asian countries surrounding the Philippines are patriarchal, the Philippines is a relatively matriarchal society with women taking up prominent leadership, political, and business roles and

positions. In fact, two women were presidents of the Philippines in the past. Therefore, respect for women is high and the mother in a family can be considered as the head of the household.

Time and being punctual

Despite the fact that there's strong US influence in the Philippines, and that this aspect of culture has often been translated in other US territories, the concept of time has not. This means that Filipinos will often be late for meetings and will also sometimes not finish projects on time. This may be due to the high traffic congestion in the capital, Manila, but it is mostly a result of cultural attributes of flexi-time. To meet deadlines, Filipinos will often work late hours and make up for lost time. However, this should not be construed to indicate that they are not hardworking individuals.

Business and personal relationships

It's common for Filipinos to want to get to know you on a personal level and they may ask you rather personal questions such as your age and marital status. This does not mean that they are rude, but rather, that they simply have an interest in you. When it comes to business relationships, it's common to refer to an individual by their title such as Doctor

or Attorney, alternatively “Sir” and “Ma’am” are also common to indicate respect to superiors. Filipinos have a hierarchical business structure that requires that decisions are made by managers and superiors. However, there is a culture of common decision making, which should not be ignored or disregarded.

Saving face

Filipinos are very aware of embarrassment and shame and they will often laugh to avoid these situations. Laughter could mean friendliness or an indication that a situation has become uncomfortable for them, so you should take heed of these non-verbal cues and try to adjust your response accordingly. Another issue of saving face is the concept of saying “no”. Filipinos will often try to help as much as possible, but when a situation is not doable, they will tend to say “maybe” or “if God wills it” to avoid giving an outright negative answer to your face.

Translating for Filipino clients

If you want to win more Filipino clients, you should take note of the abovementioned cultural intricacies related to Filipino culture and make sure you apply them to your interactions with them. Always address your business partner by their title

and hierarchical status, as this shows respect, and educational and professional achievements are significantly valued in this country. Furthermore, don’t expect a Filipino client to be on time and don’t take this as a sign of disrespect or being rude. Never criticise a Filipino person directly – whether an employee or a business partner. If there is a problem, address this using covered and veiled language that will not cause shame or embarrassment, as what is referred to as *hiya*, is often a major no-no in the country. Treasure your business relationships as much as you can and try to get to know the people you’re working with personally. When Filipinos establish business **relationships**, they focus on the individual and if that individual no longer works for the company, you may need to start relationship-building from scratch.





Barong

Originally worn only by men as an upper body garment, nowadays Barong Tagalog is an exquisite and beautiful shirt that can be worn by any gender. Barong is the right attire for occasions like christening, weddings, political events, the Philippine Independence day and even Hollywood events.

The garment commands bravery, elegance and power and one will never be wrong choosing to wear it.



Sinulog festival

Sinulog festival attracts over 1 million visitors every year on the fourth Sunday of January. It is held in Carment, Cebu and it is a beautiful masterpiece of the Philippines culture.

The name of the festival comes from a special Cebuano adverb *sulog*, which refers to the fluid movement of water. It is usually accompanied by the sound of drums.

And that is why we are showing you a picture of the Sinulog festival. So you can imagine the drums beating and the bodies swaying and enjoy this wonderful part of the Philipino culture.

Filipino and localization challenges

The Philippines definitely sounds like an exotic holiday destination, as there's a lot to discover in the archipelago's nature and culture. What about their language practices? There are close to 190 languages and dialects in the Philippines archipelago, depending on the method of classification. Although the famous Tagalog is the language spoken in Manila and some nearby regions, the official languages are actually Filipino and English. Basically, Filipino's foundation is Tagalog, but it also includes words from other Philippine languages, as well as borrowed words from English, Spanish, etc)

The official languages of the Philippines and their users
More than a quarter of the Philippines' population speaks Filipino as their first language, and more than half of the population have it as their first or second one. Filipino is part of the Austronesian language family, and its complex ver-

bal and grammatical systems are a result of it being influenced by languages such as Chinese, English, Spanish and even Arabic. Since the government made Filipino the official language, it's the preferred language in schools, literature, news, and television.

Taglish

As expected, in a country with a lot of different languages and dialects, they often get mixed by the population. Taglish is a language of its own that is a mix between Tagalog (the base, or "matrix" language) and English (the language inserted in the base language sentence). It should be noted that Taglish has its own grammatical rules. This is most apparent when an English word is conjugated using Tagalog affixes.





Example of Taglish:

English

A: *Where do you want to have lunch?*

B: I want to try the food at the new restaurant.

Taglish

A: *Saan mo gustong mag-lunch?*

B: Gusto kong i-try 'yung food sa bagong restaurant.

Is Filipino localization needed in the Philippines?

As we already said, although English is an official language and is commonly used in many instances, Filipinos still use Filipino in their daily lives. Filipinos share that Tagalog (and any other Philippine languages) seem quite unusual to them when used in electronic devices or services. ATM interfaces in the archipelago are in English, and so are all the road signs. Nonetheless, localization is needed. It's a good practice, aimed at preserving the local language and at the part of the population that isn't acquainted with the basics of English. If a market is aimed at as many Filipinos as possible, then it's a good idea for them to localize.

Localization in Tagalog

A lot of translators working with Tagalog say that it's a challenging language. Although it shares some similarities with English, it still has its own way to surprise you.

The Tagalog and English languages share an identical punctuation system and emphasize things in the same way, which makes translation seem like a walk in the park. However, although Tagalog possesses three genders (masculine, feminine and neutral), pronouns are not gender-assigned. The language uses the pronoun "siya" meaning "that person", which completely eliminates the meaning of gender that you might have put in your English sentences. In addition to that, there are also a tremendous amount of Tagalog words that can't be literally translated. For example, the word "kilig" refers to the giddy feeling a person experiences when he/she is happy or excited, usually because of something romantic. It's the perfect description to what you feel when you see the person you like, or when you imagine meeting your favorite celebrity.

Although some words may seem strange, unnatural or not understandable when translated to Filipino, it may sound too informal if too many words are left untranslated, which



would make it sound more like Taglish. As translators, it’s also our role to carefully choose which words should be **translated** or not, to aid the readers’ understanding of the text. This is why, in order to become a translator with English and Tagalog, you’ll need to have in-depth knowledge of both languages, as well as a professional attitude and to have spent long years of practice in the area.

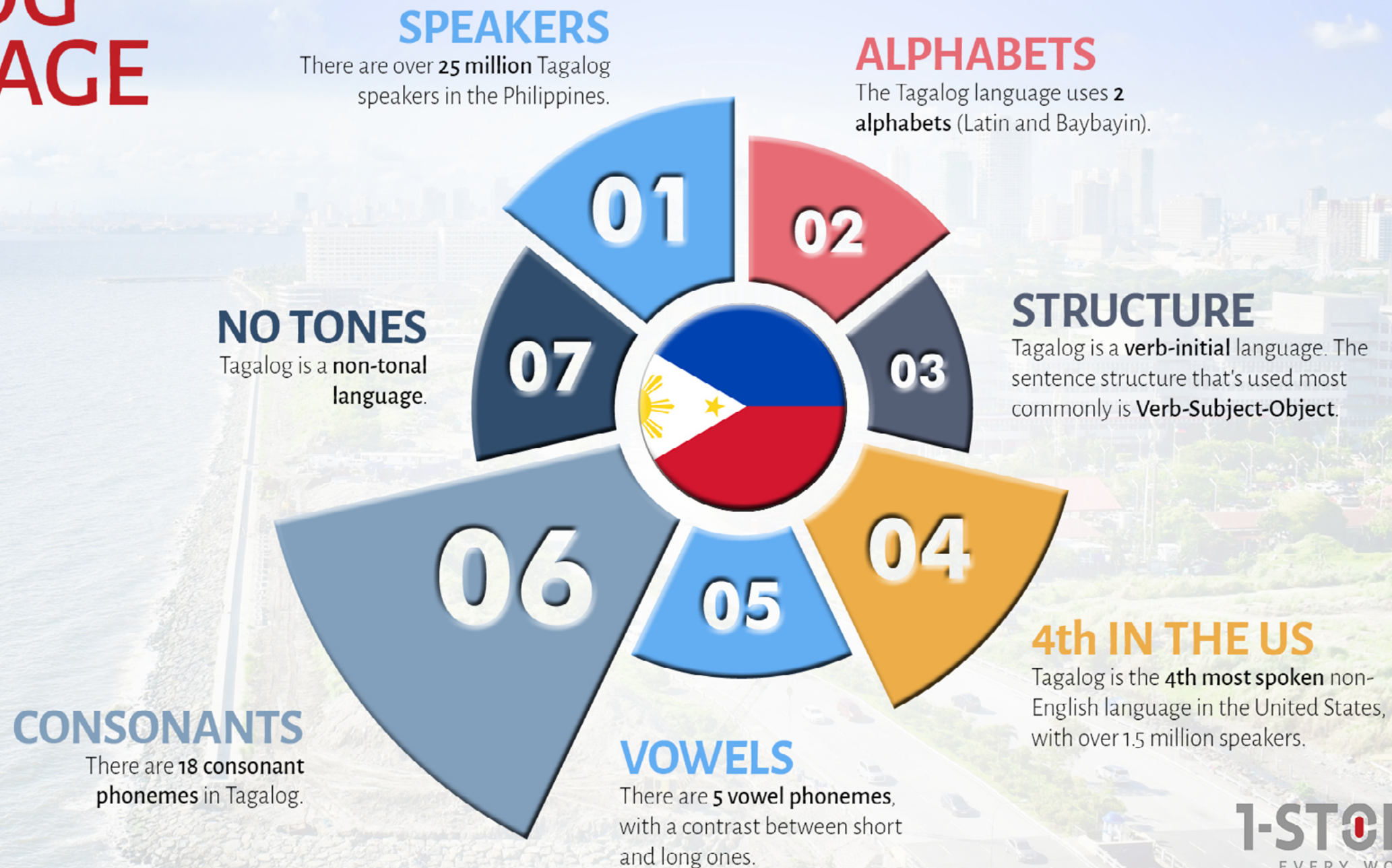
The Baybayin alphabet						
ᜆ	ᜈ	ᜇ				
a	e/i	o/u				
ᜈ᜔	ᜆ᜔	ᜇ᜔	ᜈ᜔	ᜈ᜔	ᜈ᜔	ᜈ᜔
ba	ka	da/ra	ga	ha	la	ma
ᜈ᜔᜔	ᜆ᜔᜔	ᜇ᜔᜔	ᜈ᜔᜔	ᜈ᜔᜔	ᜈ᜔᜔	ᜈ᜔᜔
be/i	ke/i	de/i	ge/i	he/i	le/i	me/i
ᜈ᜔᜔᜔	ᜆ᜔᜔᜔	ᜇ᜔᜔᜔	ᜈ᜔᜔᜔	ᜈ᜔᜔᜔	ᜈ᜔᜔᜔	ᜈ᜔᜔᜔
bo/u	ko/u	do/u	go/u	ho/u	lo/u	mo/u
ᜈ᜔᜔᜔᜔	ᜆ᜔᜔᜔᜔	ᜇ᜔᜔᜔᜔	ᜈ᜔᜔᜔᜔	ᜈ᜔᜔᜔᜔	ᜈ᜔᜔᜔᜔	ᜈ᜔᜔᜔᜔
na	nga	pa	sa	ta	wa	ya
ᜈ᜔᜔᜔᜔᜔	ᜆ᜔᜔᜔᜔᜔	ᜇ᜔᜔᜔᜔᜔	ᜈ᜔᜔᜔᜔᜔	ᜈ᜔᜔᜔᜔᜔	ᜈ᜔᜔᜔᜔᜔	ᜈ᜔᜔᜔᜔᜔
ne/i	nge/i	pe/i	se/i	te/i	we/i	ye/i
ᜈ᜔᜔᜔᜔᜔᜔	ᜆ᜔᜔᜔᜔᜔᜔	ᜇ᜔᜔᜔᜔᜔᜔	ᜈ᜔᜔᜔᜔᜔᜔	ᜈ᜔᜔᜔᜔᜔᜔	ᜈ᜔᜔᜔᜔᜔᜔	ᜈ᜔᜔᜔᜔᜔᜔
no/u	ngo/u	po/u	so/u	to/u	wo/u	yo/u

Modern Tagalog uses Latin script, the Spanish letter ñ, and the digraph ng for its alphabet.

However, we cannot talk about Tagalog without mentioning the interesting Tagalog script prior to adopting the Latin alphabet. It is called the Baybayin alphabet and we are showing it to you below.

Tagalog language: Infographic

TAGALOG LANGUAGE *facts*





Taglish

Taglish is the mixture between English and Tagalog and it is more an urban dialect rather than a standardized language. That is why it is very hard to translate as well. It is used a lot in the educated levels of society, while another variety of Tagalog is the Spanish influenced variety of the language referred to as Chavacano or Chabacano.

We have to note that the mix between English and the native language is observed in many other Asian languages. It is a very specific occurrence and something born exactly as a result of modern technologies and language differences.

An example of Taglish:

T: Pakitawag ang tsuper.

E: Please call the driver.

T+E: Paki-call ang driver.

Contacts:

Production Department: 24@1stopasia.com

Business Development Department: business@1stopasia.com

Marketing Department: marketing@1stopasia.com