

# LANGUAGE POLICIES TOWARDS SPANISH IN TRINIDAD & TOBAGO AND THE PHILIPPINES: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

POLÍTICAS LINGÜÍSTICAS PARA LA PROMOCIÓN DEL ESPAÑOL EN TRINIDAD Y TOBAGO Y LAS FILIPINAS: UN ESTUDIO EXPLORATORIO

POLITIQUES LINGUISTIQUES POUR LA PROMOTION DE L'ESPAGNOL EN TRINITÉ-ET-TOBAGO ET AUX PHILIPPINES : UNE ÉTUDE EXPLORATOIRE

POLÍTICAS LINGÜÍSTICAS PARA O ESPANHOL EM TRINDADE E TOBAGO E NAS FILIPINAS: UM ESTUDO EXPLORATÓRIO

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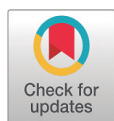
## ABSTRACT

The small Caribbean republic of Trinidad and Tobago and the much larger south-east Asian republic of the Philippines shared colonial rule first by Spain and then by a major English-speaking power (the United Kingdom, in the case of Trinidad & Tobago, and the United States, in the case of the Philippines). Recent years have seen a distinct resurgence in interest towards the Spanish language and culture in the two island nations. Applying a cyclical five-stage language policy framework, this comparative exploratory analysis foregrounds the political, educational, and sociocultural developments regarding Spanish as a foreign language through the prism of the model's stages of language policy emergence, agenda setting, formulation, implementation, and evaluation. This is achieved through desk-based analysis, thereby enabling a deeper understanding of the policy-related factors underpinning approaches to Spanish in the two case studies, whilst also noting the importance of relevant geopolitical factors. Finally, further suggestions are given to expand the scope of the analysis in the future. The model applied could be extended to include other Caribbean and southeast Asian countries, thereby enriching wider discussions on policies relating to the role and status of Spanish in the regional and international contexts.

**Keywords:** language policy, Spanish language, language-in-education, Trinidad and Tobago, Philippines

## RESUMEN

La pequeña república de Trinidad y Tobago en el Caribe y la extensa república de Filipinas en Asia tuvieron en común regímenes coloniales, primero de España y luego de importantes potencias anglófonas (el Reino Unido, en el caso de



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Trinidad y Tobago, y Estados Unidos, en Filipinas). En los últimos años ha habido un marcado resurgimiento del interés por el idioma y la cultura españoles en ambas naciones isleñas. Aplicando un marco de políticas lingüísticas en cinco fases, este análisis exploratorio comparativo destaca los avances en los ámbitos político, educativo y sociocultural en relación con el español como lengua extranjera bajo el prisma de las etapas del modelo, de surgimiento de la política lingüística, definición de agendas, formulación, implementación y evaluación. Esto se realizó mediante un análisis de escritorio, que permitió una comprensión más profunda de los factores de política que apuntalan el español en ambos estudios de caso, a la par que se señala la importancia de los factores geopolíticos relevantes. Finalmente, se presentan recomendaciones para ampliar el alcance de futuros análisis. El modelo aplicado podría ampliarse para incluir otros países del Caribe y el sudeste asiático, lo que enriquecería las discusiones sobre políticas relacionadas con el rol y el estatus del español en contextos regionales e internacionales.

**Palabras clave:** política lingüística, español, la lengua en la educación, Trinidad y Tobago, Filipinas

### RÉSUMÉ

La petite république de Trinité-et-Tobago, no Caraïbe, et la plus étendue république des Philippines, dans le Sud-Est d'Asie, ont partagé la domination coloniale, d'abord par l'Espagne, puis par des grandes puissances anglophones (le Royaume-Uni, dans la Trinité-et-Tobago, et les États-Unis, dans les Philippines). Ces dernières années ont vu un vif regain d'intérêt pour la langue et la culture espagnoles dans ces deux nations insulaires. En appliquant un cadre cyclique de politique linguistique en cinq étapes, cette analyse exploratoire comparative met en avant les développements politiques, éducatifs et socioculturels concernant l'espagnol en tant que langue étrangère à travers le prisme des étapes du modèle : émergence de la politique linguistique, définition de l'agenda, formulation, mise en œuvre et évaluation. Cet objectif est atteint grâce à une analyse documentaire qui permet de mieux comprendre les facteurs politiques qui sous-tendent les approches de l'espagnol dans les deux études de cas, tout en soulignant l'importance des facteurs géopolitiques pertinents. Enfin, d'autres suggestions sont faites pour élargir la portée de l'analyse à l'avenir. Le modèle appliqué pourrait être étendu à d'autres pays des Caraïbes et de l'Asie du Sud-Est, ce qui permettrait d'enrichir les discussions sur les politiques relatives au rôle et au statut de l'espagnol dans les contextes régionaux et internationaux.

**Mots clés :** politique linguistique, espagnol, langue dans l'éducation, Trinité et Tobago, Philippines

### RESUMO

A pequena república de Trindade e Tobago no Caribe e a mais extensa república das Filipinas no sudeste asiático compartilharam o domínio colonial, primeiro pela Espanha e depois por uma grande potência de língua inglesa (o Reino Unido, no caso de Trindade e Tobago, e os Estados Unidos, no caso das Filipinas). Nos últimos anos, houve um claro ressurgimento do interesse pela língua e cultura espanholas nas duas nações insulares. Aplicando uma estrutura cíclica de política lingüística em cinco estágios, esta análise exploratória comparativa destaca os desenvolvimentos políticos, educacionais e socioculturais relacionados ao espanhol como língua estrangeira pelo prisma dos estágios do modelo — surgimento, definição de agenda, formulação, implementação e avaliação da política

linguística. Isso é feito por meio de análise documental, possibilitando, assim, uma compreensão mais profunda dos fatores relacionados à política que sustentam as abordagens ao espanhol nos dois estudos de caso, ao mesmo tempo em que se observa a importância de fatores geopolíticos relevantes. Por fim, são apresentadas outras sugestões para ampliar o escopo da análise no futuro. O modelo aplicado poderia estender-se para englobar outros países do Caribe e do sudeste asiático, enriquecendo, assim, discussões mais amplas sobre políticas relacionadas ao rol e ao status do espanhol nos contextos regional e internacional.

**Palavras chave:** política linguística, espanhol, línguas na educação, Trindade e Tobago, Filipinas

## Introduction

Though ostensibly dissimilar in geographical location, land area, and population, the Caribbean republic of Trinidad & Tobago and the Asian archipelagic nation of the Philippines share several common features. Both countries have experienced the fate of being doubly colonised, firstly by the Kingdom of Spain (late fifteenth century until 1797 and mid-sixteenth century to 1898, respectively) and subsequently by a major Anglophone power. In the case of Trinidad & Tobago, this was Great Britain (until 1962); for the Philippines, it was the United States (until 1946). Though Spanish had long ago lost its dominance owing to the officialization of English (alongside Filipino/Tagalog in the Philippines), in recent years, both nations have sought to accord greater prominence to the former through specific education-related policies: in Trinidad & Tobago through the 2005 Spanish as the First Foreign Language (SAFFL) scheme (Hoyte-West, 2021); and in the Philippines via a relevant 2008 presidential decree and ensuing official memoranda (Galván Guijo, 2021).

Utilising a desk-based methodological approach to obtain a preliminary overview, this exploratory contribution compares and contrasts the current policy situation in relation to the status of Spanish in Trinidad & Tobago and the Philippines through the application of the novel five-stage language policy framework devised by Michele Gazzola, François Grin, Linda Cardinal, and Kathleen Heugh (2023a), which identifies the core areas of emergence, agenda setting, formulation, implementation, and evaluation.

Given its newness, this framework is a recent addition to research and policy, and the present article therefore intends to demonstrate its practical implications via a brief comparative analysis which aims to provide a foundation for further theoretical and practical work in the Caribbean and southeast Asia. In juxtaposing the two case studies through evaluating the necessary historical

and sociocultural context, it aims to shed light on and discuss any similarities and differences, common trends, and potential future steps by examining relevant media, policy-related, and educational resources. Additionally, the article's preliminary analysis of the current position of Spanish in public school and university education will be embedded within wider discussions of both nations' language and multilingualism policies since Independence, paying specific attention to the present situation in the countries concerned (for example, in the case of Trinidad & Tobago, with regard to the recent and ongoing arrivals of Spanish-speaking immigrants from Venezuela).

## Trinidad & Tobago and the Philippines: General Overviews

Before delving into contemporary discussions of policies and planning for multilingualism in the two polities presented here, it is necessary to provide a brief summary of the necessary sociocultural and historical context related to the role of Spanish in both countries.

As is well-known, Spanish is one of the world's major languages, with over half a billion speakers. Originally spoken on the Iberian Peninsula, it is a Romance language which is spoken natively not only in Spain, but also in numerous countries across the world, principally in North and South America (Ardila, 2020, pp. 42–45; Fernández Vítóres, 2023, pp. 23–25). Spanish is an official language of the United Nations and also of several regional supranational and intergovernmental organisations such as the European Union (EU) and the Organisation of American States (OAS), and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC; Council of the European Union, 2023; Fernández Vítóres, 2012; Sevillano, 2020).

Although Spanish remains important in certain international and regional contexts, it is essential to remember that Spain's once-vast colonial empire spanned enormous areas of the globe.

As reiterated by Beule & Douglass, in addition to the Americas, at its zenith Spain's imperial designs also "sought outposts in the Caribbean, the Pacific, Southeast Asia, and Africa, with varying degrees of success" (Beule & Douglass, 2020, p. 3). Consequently, as detailed in the two country case studies below, there are several modern-day nations where Spanish does not hold official status, but for historical and sociocultural reasons the language and culture remain part of their respective heritages.

Situated in the southern Caribbean, Trinidad & Tobago is an independent republic within the Commonwealth that gained its independence from the United Kingdom in 1962. The country consists primarily of two islands: Trinidad, and the much smaller island of Tobago. It has a population of around 1.3 million and a land mass of around 5,500 sq km (Watts et al., 2024). English is its only official language, though a local English creole is also widely spoken. The islands' history of migration means that in its past many other languages were once spoken there, including Spanish, French, Trinidadian French Creole, Portuguese, and a local variety of Hindi, among others (Watts et al., 2024).

In contrast, the Republic of the Philippines is located in the western Pacific, consisting of almost 8,000 islands and a total land area of around 300,000 sq km, thus dwarfing Trinidad & Tobago both in geographical size and in population (over 110 million) (Borlaza et al., 2024). The Philippines has been an independent nation since just after the end of World War II, when it received its independence from the United States.

The country is officially bilingual (Filipino/Tagalog and English), with Filipino, a standardised variant of Tagalog, holding the status of national language. In addition, dozens of other languages are spoken in the country, with several holding varying status (Borlaza et al., 2024). According to the most recent data from the Instituto Cervantes (Fernández Vitores, 2023, p. 28), both the

Philippines and Trinidad & Tobago have a similar number of native Spanish speakers (around 4,000), though the numbers with limited competence in the language vary more significantly (c. 66,000 in Trinidad & Tobago compared to c. 462,000 in the Philippines).

In terms of languages spoken, in pre-European times the islands which now comprise Trinidad & Tobago were originally inhabited by an Indigenous population of Arawak and Carib origin, speaking now extinct languages whose vestiges survive in several local placenames (Thompson, 1959, pp. 138–139). Columbus sighted and claimed Trinidad for the Catholic Monarchs in 1498, with the island's three southernmost peaks giving rise to its modern name after the Holy Trinity. As increasing territories of the Americas were conquered by various European powers during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Trinidad remained a Spanish possession.

However, with Spain also having much more lucrative and resource-rich colonies in the Caribbean as well as on the South American mainland, Trinidad remained underdeveloped and underpopulated until 1783, when a royal decree permitted settlement by non-Spanish Catholics, such as French-speaking plantation owners and their slaves, who brought their languages (primarily French and its creolised version) to the island (see. e.g. Thompson, 1959, pp. 137–138). After the virtually bloodless capitulation of the Spanish forces in 1797, Trinidad was occupied by the British and their sovereignty was recognised by Spain at the turn of the nineteenth century, with English becoming the only official language in 1823 (Gamble, 1866, p. 17).

As evidenced by the interpretation requirements for a famous 1806 court case involving the island's first British governor, several languages were widely spoken during the early years of British rule (Hoyte-West, 2023). However, as detailed by scholars (Laurence, 1980, p. 218; Ferreira, 2017) as well as by contemporary observers (Gamble,

1866), the island remained multilingual well into the nineteenth century, with special prominence accorded to French Creole as a lingua franca (Lipski, 1990, p. 8). The much smaller island of Tobago, situated a way north of Trinidad and also part of the Lesser Antilles island chain, changed hands many times between the various European colonial powers, with the Dutch, French, British, and Couronian all claiming the island at different points in the early colonial era. It became definitively British in the early nineteenth century, and the colony was merged with Trinidad in the late nineteenth century (Watts et al., 2024).

Up to the present day, the colonial Spanish legacy in the islands (especially Trinidad) remains visible. This is true in the case of certain placenames (familiar examples are the major towns of San Fernando and San Juan, as well as the capital city of Port of Spain) which, as Thompson claimed (1959, p. 139), still comprise “an important part of the toponymy of the island.” In addition, certain Spanish words have also been retained in the modern-day English creole spoken in Trinidad (Winer & Aguilar, 1991). In terms of active use, however, Spanish was more or less moribund for many decades and even centuries. It was spoken primarily by just three groups: the rural descendants of nineteenth-century immigrants from Venezuela, referred to as the ‘Cocoa Panyols’ (Winer & Aguilar, 1991, p. 156); the descendants of enslaved Africans brought to the island from Spanish colonies on the mainland (Lipski, 1990, p. 10); and, in a notable case of language shift, the very small Amerindian population remaining in Trinidad (Laurence, 1980, p. 221).

However, it must be stated that recent events over the past two decades have sought to change this situation. As will be further discussed, a key initiative includes the Spanish as the First Foreign Language (SAFFL) policy, which began in the first years of the current century and was originally designed to revitalise the language primarily for economic and commercial purposes (Hoyte-West, 2021). In addition, as detailed elsewhere

(see the contributions in Wallace, 2023), the ramifications of the political and economic instability in neighbouring Venezuela have also brought significant numbers of immigrants and refugees over to Trinidad & Tobago, bringing the Spanish language with them.

As observed above, the Philippines consists of thousands of islands and a strong diversity of ethnic groups and languages. Unlike in Trinidad & Tobago, where Indigenous languages have now been wholly supplanted by English, many languages dating back to before European colonisation are still spoken, including the national language (and co-official alongside English), Filipino/Tagalog, an Austronesian language which even in Spanish times was privileged over other Indigenous languages (Llamzon, 1968, pp. 734–736).

With the archipelago coming to European attention in 1521, the Spanish named the islands after the then monarch, Philip II (Borlaza et al., 2024). The colony rapidly assumed commercial importance for the Spaniards, and, unlike in Trinidad or Tobago (but similarly to other colonies in the Spanish Caribbean such as Cuba (Hernández Sandoica, 1992), an institution of higher learning was founded on the islands, the Colegio de Santo Tomas (Alcala, 1999, p. 115).

Spain’s long period of imperial decline and the rise of other European colonial powers meant that, by the second decade of the nineteenth century, the vast majority of its overseas empire had been lost. This occurred following the successful independence struggles of various Latin American nations, or – as in the case of Trinidad – after other colonies had been seized by rival nations. By the late nineteenth century, Spain’s major colonial possessions were limited to the Philippines and the Caribbean islands of Cuba and Puerto Rico. These colonies were not immune to calls for independence, as exemplified by uprisings in the Philippines and Cuba, as well as by important activists such as the polymathic nineteenth-century Filipino author

and political dissident José Rizal (1861-1896), who, as Ofilada Mina (2014, p. 55) highlights, also draws attention to the contested status of Spanish in the colony in his landmark 1891 Spanish-language novel *El Filibusterismo*.

The 1898 Spanish-American War led to the American acquisition of Spain's colonies in the Pacific and the Caribbean, and the Philippines thus came under control of the United States. This state of affairs brought the English language to the island which was promoted heavily through education and administration at the expense of Spanish, though sources vary as whether the language was initially proscribed (de Argüelles, 1963, p. 135) or reserved for specific circumstances (Symaco, 2017, p. 53). Hence, although American rule was to last for less than five decades, these actions irrevocably altered the linguistic topography of the archipelago.

Following independence after World War II, though Tagalog/Filipino was the principal vehicular language of the Philippines, English continued to retain an important influence in this multiethnic and multilingual state. This was demonstrated by its continuing co-official status and usage in education and public life (Martin, 2014, pp. 475–476; Santos, Fernandez, & Ilustre, 2022, p. 46), as well as its perceived economic prestige (Zeng & Yang, 2022, pp. 4–5).

Similar to Trinidad & Tobago, Spanish remains somewhat peripheral, although a Spanish-based creole, Chavacano, is “very vigorous” (Bradley, 2010, p. 67) in the south of the country (Madrid Álvarez-Piñer, 2018a; Melchor & Blázquez-Carretero, 2022). As summarised by Díaz Rodríguez (2021), the Spanish language never penetrated as deeply into the Philippines as it did in the Americas. Indeed, as noted historian Vicente Rafael observes, the imperial Philippines was economically and commercially peripheral in comparison to Spain's Latin American colonies; accordingly, in 1898, the local Spanish population in the former comprised less than 1% of the colony's total

population (Rafael, 2006, pp. 6–7). In addition, though officially mandated to use the medium of Spanish, Catholic missionaries eager to convert the Indigenous inhabitants of the Philippines also often acquired local languages in order to proselytise more effectively (e.g., see Sales, 2019, p. 302).

### Theoretical and Methodological Considerations

As demonstrated by the outline in the previous section, over time the historical role of Spanish in both countries has been supplanted by other languages, principally by English. Multilingualism, however, remains important in the current situation of the two nations, with varying degrees of official recognition in terms of policies and planning for multilingualism. In keeping with the theme of this special issue, the specific contexts of Trinidad & Tobago and the Philippines are particularly important given the multifaceted nature of language policy in the contemporary global environment.

As Oliveira (2019, p. 18) states, multilingualism intersects with several areas of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. In addition, autochthonous languages have also received more attention than before through the international Year of Indigenous Languages in 2019 and the 2022-2032 UNESCO Decade of Indigenous Languages (Schreyer, Granadillo, & Daveluy, 2022). With its panoply of languages, the Philippines has many Indigenous tongues which have survived centuries of language contact and conflict, though in terms of vitality several of these tongues are featured in the *UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger* (Bradley, 2010, p. 67). In Trinidad & Tobago, however, as previously outlined, the Indigenous languages have disappeared, and peripheral Spanish has replaced them among the Amerindian population (Laurence, 1980, p. 221).

Observing that the role of (post-)colonial languages in education and administration has been

much discussed in the Trinidad & Tobago and Philippine contexts, studies have been undertaken on the linguistic landscapes (Hewitt-Bradshaw, 2014; Cantina, 2021) as well as on the efficacy of language-in-education policies (Youssef, 2002; Robertson, 2010; Symaco, 2017; Mideros et al., 2023a). In addition, studies relating to the vitality of local minority and minoritised languages in these two post-independence societies (Dekker & Young, 2005; Hoyte-West, 2022a) can also be thought of as relevant to the current study. Before turning specifically to the examination of the case study of the Spanish language in education and other domains in both countries, it is necessary to present the model utilised in this article, which builds on previous research such as the late Bernard Spolsky's seminal book *Language Policy* (Spolsky, 2004). Developed by a team of well-known international scholars comprising Michele Gazzola, François Grin, Linda Cardinal, and Kathleen Heugh, its scope and methodology are advanced in the opening chapter of the recently edited landmark volume, *The Routledge Handbook of Language Policy and Planning* (Gazzola et al., 2023b), the structure of which it guides. Noting the eminently interdisciplinary characteristics of the domain of language policy and planning, the model situates it as a specialised form of public policy (Gazzola et al., 2023a, pp. 3–5), with Gazzola and colleagues developing a five-stage framework for the language policy cycle conceived as a “circular flow chart” (Gazzola et al., 2023a, p. 4). Noting that their model “can be used both as a positive tool to analyse and interpret reality and to provide guidance in the making of language policies” (Gazzola et al., 2023a, p. 4), the scholars situate the central issue of the “language question and its treatment through policy” in the middle of five key cyclical factors (Gazzola et al., 2023a, p. 5). As delineated in the model, brief definitions of the five areas can be summarised as follows:

1. “Emergence (or re-emergence) of awareness of a public issue to be solved in a given

sociolinguistic, political, economic and cultural context” (Gazzola et al., 2023a, p. 5) – in other words, when a given language contact situation (e.g., relating to a minority language) attracts growing public attention – e.g., for ideological, political, socioeconomic, or cultural reasons (Gazzola et al., 2023a, p. 7) – and thus becomes a topic for greater scrutiny.

2. “Recognition and placement of the question on the political agenda; political debate over priorities and goals” (Gazzola et al., 2023a, p. 5) – where the issue acquires greater political relevance and a relevant agenda is created (e.g., pertaining to relevant political ideologies and conceptualisations of a given language; Gazzola et al., 2023a, pp. 7–8).
3. “Policy formulation and adoption, connecting means and ends, in their broader sociolinguistic, political, economic, and cultural context” (Gazzola et al., 2023a, p. 5) – relating to the creation of given policies and the means through which they are to be administered (Gazzola et al., 2023a, p. 8).
4. “Policy implementation and monitoring through a dedicated institutional and administrative structure” (Gazzola et al., 2023a, p. 5) – referring to the application of a given policy in practice (in the current context, through language in education; Gazzola et al., 2023a, pp. 8–9).
5. “Evaluation of the public policy and its effects on individual actors, groups and society” (Gazzola et al., 2023a, p. 5) – a final stage offering a retrospective lens on the efficacy of a given language policy in the relevant context (Gazzola et al., 2023a, p. 9).

As featured in the volume as a whole, this framework is analysed from various disciplinary perspectives, thereby illustrating the multifarious impact and influence of language policy across



diverse fields. Indeed, as depicted in the preceding section, various aspects pertaining to the role of Spanish in both Trinidad & Tobago and the Philippines have been written about in the past. Yet, following previous work relating to the present sociocultural environment, contemporary status, and situation of said language, this contribution aims to present an overview of the current state of play, focussing particularly on the fifth stage of the model, i.e., evaluating language policy and its wider effects. As such, in going beyond these previous analyses, it outlines, compares, and contrasts the two case studies. In centring relevant language policy efforts within the five specified areas of policy analysis, it offers a practical application of this newly-devised theoretical framework (Gazzola et al., 2023a), thereby giving insights relevant to the wider Caribbean and southeast Asian contexts.

In regard to the chosen methodology, the application of the model is centred on a desk-based approach (Bassot, 2022), which includes the analysis of academic literature such as journal articles and dissertations as well as online media sources such as newspapers and administrative documents in both English and Spanish, thereby aiming to provide an overview of current policy-related initiatives in the two nations.

As the contribution's subtitle suggests, this study is characterised by an exploratory approach. In applying the selected theoretical model to real-life situations, the key aim is to ascertain the present situation surrounding the usage of Spanish in the two distinct case studies. Notwithstanding the limitations of a desk-based analysis, and as detailed in the broader literature on the importance and value of exploratory studies within social science research (Swedberg, 2020), it is envisaged that the data collected could potentially prove useful groundwork for more extensive studies.

## Findings

In accordance with the theoretical model, the first stage refers to the “emergence (or re-emergence)

of awareness of a public issue to be solved in a given sociolinguistic, political, economic and cultural context” (Gazzola et al., 2023a, p. 5). To start with the case of the Philippines, though officially disfavoured by the American administration after 1898, Spanish did, however, manage to endure, and moves were made by civil society to safeguard its heritage and culture in the Philippine context.

As stated by Elizalde (2018, p. 106) and Blázquez-Carretero et al. (2022, p. 163), initiatives included the creation of the Philippine Academy of the Spanish Language (Academia Filipina de la Lengua Española) in 1924. In addition, other moves include the continued use of the language within intellectual circles, as well as educational efforts through various political amendments to make Spanish an elective in schools (Elizalde, 2018, p. 107). Andrijević (2023, p. 245) also details the importance of cultural organisations in promoting the language, such as the Asociación Cultural Galeón de Manila. Other endeavours include recognition of literary production, such as the long-established Premio Zóbel, which was founded in the early twentieth century and designed to reward contributions to Spanish-language literature and culture by Philippine authors and cultural figures (Álvarez Tardío, 2015; Elizalde, 2018, p. 106; Andrijević, 2023, pp. 248–249).

Therefore, linguistic and cultural components of Spanish identity remained somewhat visible during the period of American rule and the first few decades of independence. This can be contrasted with the situation in Trinidad & Tobago, where, as mentioned earlier, Spanish remained much more of a peripheral language, being far less institutionalised and lacking the cultural and linguistic support of an influential Spanish-speaking intelligentsia. Accordingly, for many decades it was more of a local issue, rather than an issue of great public concern. Yet, as also mentioned in Hoyte-West (2021, p. 239), with an aim to broaden the country's commercial links beyond the English-speaking world, particularly the United States, as

well as the United Kingdom- its former colonial power, ties with Latin America and the Spanish-speaking world became of more interest. This was especially evidenced in plans for a wider free trade area spanning virtually the entirety of North and South America, though due to certain challenges, they were never fulfilled (Charnock, 2023).

Turning now to the second stage of Gazzola et al.'s (2023a, p. 5) framework, "recognition and placement of the question at hand on the political agenda; the political debate on priorities and goals", the early years of the current millennium saw a distinct change in focus towards Spanish-centred initiatives in both nations.

In Trinidad & Tobago, the Spanish as the First Foreign Language (SAFFL) plan was devised and promulgated through the Secretariat for the Implementation of Spanish (SIS), an institution inaugurated in 2004 and launched the next year. The aim was for the country to have a vastly improved level of Spanish by 2020, mirroring other development-related schemes. It was relevant that, at a time of global economic growth, the resource-rich nation of Trinidad & Tobago was eager to foster closer relations with the vast markets in Latin America. In addition, as mentioned in Hoyte-West (2021), Trinidad & Tobago also hosted the intergovernmental Summit of the Americas in 2009, which was attended by regional heads of state including the then American president Barack Obama (Obama White House, 2009; Malcolm, 2010).

In the Philippine context, Spain's shift in foreign policy, expanding towards Asia, was illustrated by a number of agreements and memoranda signed with the Philippines (Andrijević, 2023, p. 247; Elizalde, 2019; Galván Guijo, 2021). These included one in 2007 that aimed to recognise and revitalise the status of Spanish in the country, which since then has been followed by several bilateral summits (Elizalde, 2018, p. 112).

As an aside, it is also notable that both Trinidad & Tobago and the Philippines have recently been

the subject of official visits by Spanish monarchs. In the case of Trinidad & Tobago, King Juan Carlos I and Queen Sofia were the guests of President George Maxwell Richards in 2009 (Casa Real, 2009), and in 2012 the President of the Philippines, Benigno Aquino III, hosted Queen Sofia (Fundación Reina Sofía, 2012). These events demonstrate the significance and symbolic importance of the two nations to Spain—and by extension, to the promotion of Spanish language and culture—at that point in time.

The third level of the model concerns "policy formulation and adoption, connecting means and ends, in their broader sociolinguistic, political, economic, and cultural context" (Gazzola et al., 2023a, p. 5). In terms of promoting Spanish in Trinidad & Tobago society, the SIS encapsulated many of these policy objectives through joining together the requisite 'means and ends'.

The SIS website lists its aims as "facilitat[ing] a new learning environment through which the citizens of Trinidad and Tobago will learn and effectively utilise Spanish as the First Foreign Language (SAFFL) by the year 2020" (Secretariat for the Implementation of Spanish, 2024, n. p.), as well as encouraging intercultural dialogue and raising awareness and support for the SAFFL scheme among the general public. Carter (2008) outlines the organisational structure of the SIS, observing that it comprises a steering committee and two sub-committees on communications and language planning. The SIS is under the stewardship of a director, and the steering committee is headed by the permanent secretary of the Ministry of Trade, with other members drawn from government ministries (e.g., education, tourism, and foreign affairs); private sector organisations (the country's Chamber of Commerce); as well as the country's universities and tertiary education institutions, e.g., the UWI St Augustine, the University of Trinidad & Tobago (UTT), and the College of Science, Technology and Applied Arts of Trinidad and Tobago (COSTAATT) (Carter, 2008, p. 57).

In bringing together these varied stakeholders with a common interest in promoting improved Spanish language proficiency among the populace, the SIS was thus also a component of a wider socioeconomic development strategy which was to be accomplished by 2020. In terms of policy, recognising the importance of language-in-education, some of the recommendations from an expert report (Robertson, 2010) suggested the introduction of compulsory Spanish at primary level, thereby leading to communicative competence in the language by the end of formal mandatory secondary education.

Moving on to the Philippines, 2009 saw the launch of important policy-related initiatives relating to language-in-education schemes at school level. One such initiative was the move towards mother tongue-based multilingual education (Zeng & Li, 2023, p. 5), which primarily focused on the numerous Indigenous languages spoken in the country.

The other, of particular relevance to the current analysis, was the creation of the Special Program in Foreign Languages (SPFL), which was designed to improve pupils' linguistic competence. As outlined by Kristine Cabling and colleagues (Cabling, 2020, p. 194), at first the SPFL was only introduced in selected schools, with Spanish as the sole language available. This demonstrates the importance of the language in this context, as well as the impact of the bilateral memoranda mentioned above (Blázquez-Carretero et al., 2022, p. 166). In higher education, provision for Spanish tuition was implemented via two memoranda (in 2010 and 2017) from the country's Commission of Higher Education (Cabling et al 2020, p. 185), which aimed to promote Spanish language courses in tertiary institutions across the country.

Outside of education, the Instituto Cervantes in Manila has also had an important role in the promulgation of Spanish language and culture in the Philippines (Díaz Rodríguez, 2021), not only through providing expert language tuition, but

also through cultural exhibitions and other events. Additionally, Elizalde (2018, pp. 112–113) suggests that future support could include the establishment of Aula Cervantes mini Spanish-language centres at universities across the country, as well as increased visits from lecturers who speak native Spanish and even European Union support for relevant language-related schemes.

The penultimate stage of the model relates to “policy implementation and monitoring through a dedicated institutional and administrative structure” (Gazzola et al., 2023a, p. 5). In Trinidad & Tobago, the SAFFL was articulated by the SIS. According to its website, the services available included Spanish courses for civil servants, training courses for Spanish language teachers, the organisation of activities designed to promote intercultural awareness, as well as encouraging the use of Spanish in private companies. Given the absence of an Instituto Cervantes in Trinidad & Tobago, the SIS also adopted a cultural responsibility, aiming to promote international programmes and scholarships, as well as organising Spanish clubs and events for school pupils. Additionally, translation services are also foreseen, as well as the dissemination of relevant pedagogical materials (Secretariat for the Implementation of Spanish, 2024). As such, the intention has been to stimulate interest in the language by implementing it in primary education (see Yamin-Ali, 2004, and the doctoral dissertation by Wilson, 2016). Likewise, in secondary schools, Spanish was integrated into teacher education programmes (University of Trinidad and Tobago, 2021) to help the profession respond to modern needs.

Turning to the tertiary level, as detailed in Hoyte-West (2021, pp. 239–240; 2022b, pp. 47–48), Spanish is available for degree study at the UWI St Augustine and at COSTAAT, with undergraduate degrees available at both institutions, and extramural courses and postgraduate studies (including advanced translation and interpretation programmes) at the former. As outlined in a study on telecollaboration between the UWI St

Augustine and a Colombian university (Neva et al., 2010), there have also been inter-institutional efforts centring on linguistic and educational exchange with other institutions located in the Spanish-speaking world.

In the Philippines, there have also been significant institutional efforts, and the impact of the memoranda is visible. At the school level, the aforementioned SPFL scheme with Spanish has been implemented in 16 of the country's 17 regions (Cabling et al., 2020, p. 196); other European and Asian languages (German, French, Mandarin Chinese, Japanese, and Korean) have now also been incorporated into the programme (Blázquez-Carretero et al., 2022, p. 166). As summarised in Blázquez-Carretero et al. (2022, pp. 161–163), Spanish is taught at many universities across the country, although primarily at elementary level—a full suite of qualifications is only available at selected institutions.

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In addition, there is considerable support from Spain, which includes official teaching schemes where Filipino students go to teach English in Spain for a predetermined period of time, thereby acquiring or improving their Spanish during their stay there (Blázquez-Carretero et al., 2022, p. 163). In addition, graduates from the Philippines can also apply for scholarships to pursue a master's degree in Teaching Spanish as a Foreign Language in Spain (Cabling et al., 2020, p. 195).

In analysing the fifth and final stage of Gazzola et al.'s (2023a, p. 5) cycle, “evaluation of the public policy and its effects on individual actors, groups and society”, it is important to note Díaz Rodríguez's (2021) assertion with regard to the promotion of Spanish overseas. He writes that the “language has become part of Spain's cultural capital and [is] endowed with symbolic power. It is not just a system of communication, but a political issue and, hence, it is contentious” (Díaz Rodríguez, 2021, p. 267). Accordingly, when extrapolating this statement to this exploratory comparative study, it is important to bear in mind

the complex geopolitical environment which both countries have experienced in the past two decades, including the global economic crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, and internal and external political and societal changes. For example, as also highlighted in Hoyte-West (2021, p. 239), Gómez (2018) draws attention to criticism received by the SAFFL policy in Trinidad & Tobago: it was widely viewed as having been unsuccessful, as demonstrated by the ostensibly low uptake of Spanish among school pupils and university students; there was a seemingly insufficient number of language teachers, combined with perceptions of inadequate collaboration between institutions in the country and the Spanish-speaking world; and there was an apparent waning of the political momentum.

Yet, with the passing of time and given the current social context in Trinidad & Tobago vis-à-vis the humanitarian and economic situation in neighbouring Venezuela, it is clear at present that “communicative competence in the Spanish language is now a much-sought-after skill” (Mideros et al., 2023b, p. 5) in the country. Small-scale interview-based research projects conducted by final-year undergraduate students at the UWI St Augustine have highlighted the importance of the language in the very different domains of the food and beverage sector (Lingo, 2021) and in the professional and public sectors (Mahabir, 2022).

In addition, the changing reality has also influenced the private sector, as chronicled by Diego Mideros and Paola Palma in their study on developing a bespoke in-house Spanish programme for the staff of a major Caribbean airline (Mideros & Palma, 2023). As suggested by Hosein et al. (2022), acquiring Spanish proficiency would also have significant commercial benefits for Trinidad & Tobago, thereby harking back to the original trade-based focus of the SAFFL initiative.

In the Philippines, though Spanish-related projects have been diffused around the country via the SPFL (Cabling et al., 2020, p. 196), Blázquez-Carretero

et al. (2022, pp. 176–177) note that, in general, most resources tend to be centred around Manila and thus need to be disseminated further. In an echo of the Trinidad & Tobago context, it has been observed (Blázquez-Carretero et al., 2022, p. 166) that Spanish provision in schools and universities still remains insufficient. In highlighting a lack of personnel able to teach the language effectively, Blázquez-Carretero (2021, p. 19) also draws attention to further complicating factors, such as a dearth of relevant linguistic training options for staff, as well as a lack of suitable pedagogical materials. Indeed, with regard to the latter aspect, Spanish is certainly not alone among the many languages taught in the educational system of the Philippines.<sup>1</sup>

However, spearheaded by the Department of European Languages at the University of Philippines Diliman, various important schemes have been launched in recent years with the objective of improving the present situation. These pioneering activities include the creation of a professional association for teachers of Spanish in the Philippines (AFELE, 2024), the development of a valuable treasury of online resources relating to the teaching of Spanish in the country, as well as professional training and development seminars for teachers of the language (Blázquez-Carretero, 2024, pp. 240–248).

These moves are timely as studies have shown that wider interest among Filipinos in acquiring and using Spanish seemingly remains quite buoyant. For example, in her recent analysis of Filipinos using Spanish in specific Facebook groups, Pattanaro (2023, pp. 124–125) demonstrated that there were large numbers of groups catering to learners and speakers of the language. Filipino millennials were also the subject of a survey-based inquiry by Miñoza et al. (2022), who determined that, at least from a sociolinguistic perspective, the legacy of Spanish was still highly

relevant among young people nowadays. In addition, it can also be stated that the visible presence of Spanish multinationals in the Philippine market also enhances the commercial benefits of learning the language (Elizalde, 2019, pp. 38–39). As such, this aligns with the conclusions by Blázquez-Carretero, Young, and Sibayan-Sarmiento (2022, pp. 176–177), who state that Spanish is currently one of the most important foreign languages in the Philippines, with demand for it related to its global importance and the professional and economic advantages that proficiency in the language confers.

## Conclusions

The present study has offered an exploratory overview of the application of Gazzola et al.'s (2023a) language policy cycle framework with regard to the situation of the Spanish language in two post-colonial nations: Trinidad & Tobago and the Philippines. As per the model's first stage, emergence, Spanish remained much more visible in the Philippines than in Trinidad & Tobago under Anglophone dominance, as demonstrated by the significant cultural vitality.

To turn to the second stage, agenda setting, the issue reached the political agenda in the two nations in different ways. In the case of Trinidad & Tobago, it was linked to overtures for a closer economic relationship with Latin America; while in the case of the Philippines, it reflected closer ties with Spain. Both nations also received royal visits from the Spanish monarchs, thus illustrating this importance on the political front.

With regard to the formulation of Spanish language policies, in Trinidad & Tobago, the SAFFL policy was created to improve Spanish proficiency in the educational, public, and private sectors. In the Philippines, this was done primarily through the creation of educational initiatives such as the SPFL and the CHED directives.

Moving to the stage of implementation, in Trinidad & Tobago this was done under the auspices of the SIS, which also involved representatives of various

1 For example, see Melchor's (2020) analysis of pedagogical materials for Ilocano.

stakeholders, as well as through universities themselves. In the Philippines, the SPFL was expanded and educational links with Spain were deepened significantly.

In terms of the final stage, i.e., evaluation of the language policy, it is clear that, although the relevant policies may not have been implemented as fully as originally envisaged, the changing geopolitical and trade-related environments mean that Spanish has become a valuable and valued language in both Trinidad & Tobago and the Philippines.

Noting the cyclical structure of the framework, it is also important to highlight that many of the issues which originally featured in the first two stages of the model have recurred in recent times. For example, in the Trinidad & Tobago context, this includes emergence of relevant public and political debates on the role of Spanish with regard to the Venezuelan immigrant population. Therefore, it is clear that the situation in both nations continues to evolve in response to domestic and international factors.

Given the recency of Gazzola et al.'s (2023) novel framework, in providing a comparative overview of the role of a specific language in two distinct country case studies, the present desk-based research article has briefly illustrated that the model represents an apt and effective tool for general policy analysis, offering a useful and important point of departure for more far-reaching work. As such, its application to other contexts across the world is strongly recommended and will doubtlessly be utilised frequently by future researchers.

In delving deeper into some of the information contained in the exploratory study, supplementary research could look into several further factors related to Spanish language policies in Trinidad & Tobago and the Philippines. Mindful of the often-overlooked role of translation policies in this regard, further research could include analysis of the role of translation and interpreting in Spanish-language policies—for example, as

mentioned by Hoyte-West (2021), the implementation of bilingual English-Spanish signage in Trinidad & Tobago, or more generally, Spanish might be interlinked to discussions on translation studies in the Philippine context (Moratto & Bacolod, 2023). Further work could also compare the treatment of Spanish with those of other languages in the two countries, such as with regard to literacy and education schemes with Creole in Trinidad & Tobago (Hoyte-West, 2024) or Indigenous languages in the Philippines.

Additionally, this desk-based analysis would also require data from those actively working with the implementation of Spanish-based policies in both countries, such as civil servants, language teachers and lecturers, and other relevant parties. To this end, the author has been made aware that a comprehensive interview-based report on the situation of Spanish in the Philippines and across southeast Asia is currently being prepared by the Real Instituto Elcano, a prestigious Madrid-based think tank. Though not yet available at the time of writing, this report will undoubtedly shed more detailed light on the current state of relevant language policies across the region.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, the role of Spanish in both countries will certainly be a point of interest over the coming years. For example, as Madrid Álvarez-Piñer (2018b) observes with regard to the Philippines, the development of the language there will doubtlessly be linked to the changing role of Spanish in the Americas and elsewhere in the world. For Diego Mideros and colleagues working on the Trinidad & Tobago context, it is clear that “new developments surrounding migrants and refugees dictate that Spanish also holds a pivotal role in many of the countries in the region” (Mideros et al., 2023c, p. 219), observing that “the recent influx of migration from Venezuelan nationals in the region makes it more tangible for the

2 The author would like to thank one of the anonymous reviewers for drawing his attention to the existence of this upcoming report.

population to see that the Spanish language is now close to them and coexists in the same environment” (Mideros et al., 2023c, p. 216).

Accordingly, in terms of future perspectives for analysis, it is clear that Gazzola et al.’s (2023a) model could certainly be extended to encompass other nations in the Caribbean and southeast Asia, thereby contributing to practical discussions on policies relating to the role and status of the Spanish language in these regions and beyond.

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