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Bilingualism and the politics of recognition: A Taylorian view of cultural identity in Philippine language policy

Canete, Jonathan James O. ✉
Department of Innovation and Sustainability, De La Salle University, Laguna Campus, Philippines
(Ncanete976@gmail.com / Jonathan.canete@dlsu.edu.ph)

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Abstract

This study conceptually offers a philosophical inquiry into the bilingual education policy of the Philippines, employing Charles Taylor's theory of the politics of recognition as a lens for re-evaluating its ethical and sociocultural dimensions. It argues that the state-sanctioned privileging of English and Filipino within formal education systems, while often justified in the name of national unity and global competitiveness, has contributed to the systemic marginalization of regional and indigenous languages. This marginalization, the paper posits, is not a neutral byproduct of modernization but a form of misrecognition that undermines the formation of cultural identity and belonging among students whose mother tongues lie outside the dominant language pair. Taylor's philosophical emphasis on the dialogical nature of identity and the moral significance of recognition provides the theoretical framework for analyzing how language policy functions as a site of either affirmation or exclusion. The paper further critiques the prevailing instrumentalist logic that equates language education with economic utility, calling attention instead to the deeper human need for cultural rootedness and expressive freedom. Drawing on both philosophical insight and contextual analysis of Philippine educational history, the study envisions a more inclusive language policy; one that actively embraces linguistic plurality as a source of national richness rather than as an administrative challenge. In so doing, it repositions bilingual education as a moral and political commitment to justice, dignity, and the recognition of all cultural narratives within the nation's pedagogical spaces.

Keywords: bilingualism, politics, Taylorian view, policy, language, Philippines

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1. Introduction

The history of language education in the Philippines reflects the complex and often contradictory intersections of colonial legacies, nationalist aspirations, and economic rationalities. From the Spanish colonial period to the American occupation and beyond, language has been used as both a mechanism of domination and a symbol of resistance. The institutionalization of English during the American period dramatically reshaped the linguistic landscape of the archipelago, privileging a foreign tongue in the spheres of education, governance, and social mobility (Bernardo, 2004). Post-independence efforts to assert a national identity led to the establishment of the 1974 Bilingual Education Policy (BEP), mandating the use of Filipino and English as the dual languages of instruction: Filipino for social sciences and civics, and English for mathematics, science, and technical subjects (Gonzalez, 1996).

This framework was reaffirmed in 1987 under Department Order No. 52, which reinforced the role of bilingualism in promoting national development and international competitiveness (Tupas, 2001). The emergence of the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) policy in 2009, formally institutionalized through the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013 (Republic Act No. 10533), marked a significant shift in educational language planning. It recognized regional and indigenous languages as foundational mediums of instruction in early education (Department of Education [DepEd], 2012). However, while these developments reflect evolving policy priorities, the entrenched linguistic hierarchy—where English remains dominant, Filipino is promoted as the national language, and mother tongues are peripheral—continues to raise unresolved ethical and philosophical questions about the role of language in education and identity formation.

Central to these concerns is the dual function of language in education: as a tool for cognitive development and as a bearer of cultural identity. Despite the institutional recognition of regional languages, prevailing classroom practices often reduce them to transitional tools, useful only until learners are deemed proficient enough in English and Filipino. English, in particular, is perceived as the language of social and economic advancement, while Filipino is valorized as the symbol of national cohesion. This instrumentalist treatment of language, as a means to a utilitarian end rather than an expression of cultural depth, risks marginalizing the very learners the policy aims to include. As Bernardo (2004) observes, English proficiency in the Philippines remains a key determinant of access to higher education and employment, reinforcing social inequalities. Martin (2014) similarly highlights the tension between stated policies of inclusion and the reality of continued linguistic discrimination against non-dominant language speakers. The result is a structurally embedded system where learners whose first language is neither English nor Filipino often face cognitive, psychological, and social disadvantages. They are not only expected to learn content through unfamiliar languages but are also implicitly taught that their own linguistic heritage lacks legitimacy and value in formal education spaces.

This context necessitates a deeper philosophical engagement with the meaning and purpose of bilingual education. While pedagogical, sociolinguistic, and policy-oriented analyses have been critical in evaluating the effectiveness of bilingual and multilingual frameworks (Tupas, 2015), fewer studies have examined the ethical dimensions of how language policies affirm or deny personal and cultural identities. Charles Taylor's (1994) theory of the politics of recognition provides a powerful lens through which to examine these dynamics. According to Taylor, recognition is a vital human need, essential for the development of a coherent sense of self. Identities are not formed in isolation but are shaped dialogically within cultural and linguistic contexts. When institutions fail to acknowledge the linguistic identity of individuals, especially through exclusionary or tokenistic policies, they inflict what Taylor describes as a form of misrecognition that can cause real harm, both

psychologically and socially. In this light, language education becomes more than an academic or policy issue; it becomes a site of moral contestation, where inclusion and exclusion are not merely procedural outcomes but reflections of deeper value commitments.

Applying Taylor's theory to the Philippine case reveals the ethical shortcomings of a bilingual education system that continues to prioritize dominant languages at the expense of linguistic pluralism. While the MTB-MLE policy officially acknowledges the pedagogical and cultural benefits of using the mother tongue, its implementation is often limited by resource constraints, policy inconsistencies, and prevailing biases toward English and Filipino. In practice, many students are subtly discouraged from speaking their first language beyond early grade levels, reinforcing a perception that it is inferior or unsuitable for academic discourse. Such practices mirror what Taylor (1994) critiques as "the monological imposition of identity," wherein the state or dominant culture defines the parameters of legitimacy without engaging in a genuine dialogue with marginalized communities. The consequences are profound: students internalize linguistic shame, lose confidence in their cultural identities, and become alienated from their educational experiences. These outcomes are not incidental but symptomatic of a broader failure to recognize linguistic difference as a legitimate expression of human identity and dignity.

A recognition-based approach to language policy thus demands a radical shift in how educational institutions conceptualize language, identity, and justice. It challenges the technocratic view that language planning is merely a matter of administrative efficiency or global competitiveness. Instead, it repositions language as a moral and political concern, one that speaks to the core of democratic participation and cultural belonging. Rather than viewing linguistic diversity as an obstacle to national unity, policymakers must embrace it as a constitutive element of the Philippine nation itself. This requires going beyond surface-level inclusion to create institutional structures that meaningfully support linguistic plurality across all levels of education. It also entails a rethinking of the role of Filipino as the national language not as a homogenizing force but as a bridge language that coexists with, rather than eclipses, other tongues. In this way, Taylor's notion of dialogical recognition offers both a critique and a constructive alternative: it calls for a model of education where all students can see their linguistic identities reflected and affirmed in the curriculum, pedagogy, and institutional culture.

This philosophical reorientation holds significant implications for both theory and practice. While existing research has provided valuable insights into the historical and political evolution of bilingualism in the Philippines (Tupas, 2001; Gonzalez, 1996), much of it stops short of articulating a normative vision for what language justice might look like. By incorporating Taylor's moral framework, this study contributes to a growing body of work that seeks to align language policy with ethical commitments to dignity, diversity, and democratic inclusion. It foregrounds the lived experiences of students, particularly those from marginalized linguistic communities, whose stories are often lost in technocratic debates over policy implementation and academic performance. In doing so, the study not only enriches the field of philosophy of education but also offers concrete insights for educators, administrators, and policymakers striving to build a more equitable and inclusive educational system. It suggests that recognition—far from being a vague philosophical ideal—is a practical imperative with real consequences for how students learn, grow, and participate in the life of the nation.

Nevertheless, I argue that while the Philippine bilingual education policy has undergone important reforms, it continues to perpetuate a structure of cultural misrecognition by privileging dominant languages and marginalizing the linguistic identities of regional and indigenous communities. Drawing on Charles Taylor's theory of the politics of recognition, the study reexamines language policy not simply as a pedagogical tool, but as a moral and political instrument that shapes the development of identity and the experience of dignity. Any meaningful reform must therefore go beyond the utilitarian logic of bilingualism and embrace a more dialogical, inclusive, and justice-oriented framework. Such a shift would transform the classroom from a site of linguistic hierarchy into a space of cultural affirmation, ethical encounter, and democratic participation of laying the groundwork for a more pluralistic and morally responsive national education system.

2. Theoretical Framework: Charles Taylor's Politics of Recognition

At the heart of Charles Taylor's philosophical project is a fundamental assertion: human identity is not formed in isolation but arises through interaction, affirmation, and mutual understanding within a social and cultural context. This assertion becomes central in his influential essay The Politics of Recognition (1994), where he explores the moral and political consequences of acknowledging, or failing to acknowledge, the cultural identities of others. Taylor argues that recognition is not a mere courtesy extended to individuals or groups; rather, it is a constitutive component of personhood. One's sense of self is shaped dialogically through conversation with others, and through affirmation of the cultural frameworks in which that self is embedded. Thus, when individuals or communities are misrecognized, when their identities are ignored, marginalized, or denigrated, they do not simply suffer an external injustice. They are also denied the basic social conditions necessary for self-realization and dignity (Taylor, 1994).

Taylor's framework pivots on several interrelated concepts: authenticity, dialogical identity, and misrecognition. Authenticity, as he describes it, is not the pursuit of a solitary, self-generated identity, but a process rooted in one's cultural and linguistic milieu. The modern ideal of authenticity, while often misunderstood as inward-looking individualism, is in fact socially mediated. One cannot be true to oneself without a context of mutual recognition and cultural affirmation. In this sense, identity is not chosen arbitrarily; it unfolds within a horizon of values and traditions that are shared and negotiated with others (Taylor, 1994). Dialogical identity, then, becomes a necessary feature of human existence: to develop a coherent self, one must be acknowledged by others who recognize the validity of one's cultural narrative and symbolic universe.

It is precisely in the absence of such recognition that the phenomenon of misrecognition emerges—a condition Taylor considers not merely an epistemic failure but a moral injury. Misrecognition involves more than misunderstanding; it entails denying others the legitimacy of their cultural symbols, languages, and histories. When perpetuated through institutions, such as the state or the education system, misrecognition takes on a systemic form, contributing to what Taylor calls "a grievous form of oppression" (Taylor, 1994, p. 36). In multicultural and postcolonial societies such as the Philippines this philosophical insight bears enormous significance. The privileging of certain languages and cultural norms, often justified through appeals to national unity or global competitiveness, can easily slip into a form of institutionalized misrecognition. When students from linguistic minorities are discouraged from using their mother tongue, or when their language is absent from curriculum and pedagogy, what is denied is not just a means of communication but a fundamental aspect of who they are.

Taylor's political philosophy operates within the broader landscape of liberal-democratic thought but offers a crucial modification to its standard formulation. Classical liberalism, with its emphasis on individual rights and state neutrality, often avoids endorsing particular cultural identities. Taylor challenges this "difference-blind" model, arguing that state neutrality can paradoxically perpetuate inequalities by ignoring the social and historical contexts that shape identity (Taylor, 1994). In multicultural societies, where certain groups have historically dominated the political and cultural space, neutrality is never neutral, it always benefits the already privileged. A just society, therefore, must go beyond procedural fairness to actively support the flourishing of all cultural identities, particularly those that have been historically marginalized. This involves not only legal protections but also symbolic recognition of affirming through policy and public discourse that all identities matter and that they have a rightful place in the common life.

The implications of Taylor's theory for language and education are profound. Language is not simply a technical medium for conveying information; it is one of the deepest markers of identity and a vessel for a community's memory, values, and worldview. To strip a learner of the right to be educated in their mother tongue is, in effect, to deny them access to their own horizon of meaning. Moreover, it communicates a subtle but powerful message: that some languages—and by extension, some cultures—are more legitimate than others. This hierarchization of language mirrors Taylor's concern about "misrecognition becoming a form of

oppression" (1994, p. 36), where learners internalize the inferiority of their own linguistic and cultural background. The politics of language policy thus becomes inseparable from the politics of recognition. It is not enough for multilingualism to be legislated; it must be meaningfully implemented in ways that affirm the linguistic identity of all learners and enable their full participation in both the educational process and the broader civic sphere.

In the Philippine context, Taylor's insights shed light on the persistent marginalization of regional languages despite formal policies that purport to promote linguistic inclusion. The introduction of the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) policy in 2012 by the Department of Education was an attempt to address historical imbalances by recognizing the pedagogical and cultural value of regional tongues in early childhood education (Department of Education, 2012). However, as Martin (2014) notes, deep-seated ideological biases continue to position English as the language of aspiration and power, relegating mother tongues to the realm of the informal or the obsolete. This suggests that recognition, in Taylor's sense, has not yet been realized. The policy shift toward multilingualism remains incomplete unless it is accompanied by a deeper cultural and institutional transformation that treats all languages not as temporary scaffolds but as legitimate vehicles of knowledge, identity, and civic participation.

Taylor's theory of the politics of recognition, therefore, provides a compelling philosophical foundation for rethinking language policy in education. It reframes bilingual and multilingual education not simply as a pedagogical or administrative issue but as a moral question about how we affirm or deny the identities of others. Recognition, authenticity, and dialogical identity are not abstract concepts, rather, they are lived realities with concrete implications for how learners experience the classroom; how they see themselves, and how they envision their place in the nation. For language policies to be truly inclusive and just, they must move beyond the surface-level accommodation of diversity and toward a deeper commitment to cultural and linguistic recognition; one that honors the full humanity of every learner.

3. Colonial Legacies and Linguistic Hierarchies in Philippine Education

The foundations of language policy in the Philippines are inextricably tied to the country's colonial experience, which laid the groundwork for deeply entrenched linguistic hierarchies. Under Spanish rule, while a degree of linguistic pluralism was preserved through the use of vernacular languages in religious catechesis, formal education was reserved for Spanish speakers, creating a linguistic elite. However, it was during the American occupation that language policy was radically restructured. English was institutionalized as the exclusive medium of instruction through Act No. 74 of 1901, positioning it as the language of civilization, reason, and modernity (Bernardo, 2004). The imposition of English was not simply an educational reform; it was a deliberate act of ideological engineering. The colonial state sought to replace native epistemologies with Anglo-American norms and practices, thereby embedding imperial authority in the minds of young Filipinos (Gonzalez, 1996). This linguistic engineering did not merely introduce a foreign language—it actively subordinated local languages and redefined what counted as legitimate knowledge and speech.

This linguistic framework persisted well into the post-independence era. Despite the political shift in 1946, the educational system remained English-centric, a reality that reflects what Tupas (2001) refers to as the "coloniality of language policy." English remained the language of opportunity, governance, and global integration, while the attempt to develop a national language a Filipino, based largely on Tagalog, produced another layer of linguistic centralization. Although constitutionally declared as the national language in 1935 and reinforced in 1987, Filipino did not arise from democratic linguistic consensus but from state-driven policy that elevated one regional language above others (Martin, 2014). Consequently, rather than bridging linguistic diversity, Filipino reinforced Tagalog dominance, relegating non-Tagalog languages to a symbolic or folkloric role. As a result, Filipino and English together formed a binary of national and global linguistic capital, marginalizing regional languages that continued to flourish in households and communities but found little affirmation in formal institutions.

Within the classroom, these policies produced a fragmented linguistic experience for many students. While English was upheld as the language of science, technology, and upward mobility, Filipino was associated with citizenship and cultural identity. Yet both languages excluded the mother tongues of the majority, including Cebuano, Ilocano, Waray, and Hiligaynon, among others. These mother tongues were either ignored altogether or tolerated as informal speech outside of instructional time. This hierarchy created what Lippi-Green (2012) calls a "standard language ideology," where certain languages are treated as inherently superior, while others are stigmatized as unfit for intellectual engagement. This reality fostered what Martin (2014) identifies as a pervasive ideological conflict in schools: the dissonance between the multilingual lives students lived at home and the monolingual expectations of the classroom. For many learners, this meant not only struggling with comprehension but also feeling that their linguistic identity was somehow unworthy of academic or national recognition.

The consequences of this exclusion are not merely educational; they are ethical. Drawing from Taylor's (1994) theory of the politics of recognition, we can understand this linguistic marginalization as a form of misrecognition that undermines both individual identity and collective dignity. For Taylor, recognition is a fundamental human need, and when individuals or communities are denied acknowledgment of their cultural and linguistic particularities, they suffer harm that is more than symbolic. In the Philippine context, language policy that privileges English and Filipino while tokenizing other languages institutionalizes this misrecognition. It sends a message to learners that their home language and by extension, their familial histories and cultural perspectives, is not worthy of public legitimacy. In the words of Tupas (2015), this is not simply a pedagogical misstep but a continuation of coloniality, where systems of exclusion are perpetuated under new forms.

Recent developments in policy, such as the Department of Education's (2012) implementation of the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE), aim to address these historical injustices. The MTB-MLE policy mandates the use of regional languages in Kindergarten through Grade 3, based on the premise that learners acquire foundational skills more effectively in their first language. However, as Galang and Tupas (2022) note, implementation has been uneven and often symbolic. Many teachers lack formal training in the assigned regional language, textbooks are limited or nonexistent, and social prejudices persist against the use of mother tongues in academic settings. This situation illustrates a broader issue flagged by Gonzalez (1996): policy without political will and cultural transformation results in superficial change. Although MTB-MLE reflects a significant philosophical shift, it often fails to translate into meaningful classroom practice. The result is that mother tongues remain at the margins, reaffirming a hierarchy that privileges English as global capital and Filipino as national identity, while offering regional languages a brief and conditional space.

This enduring hierarchy cannot be dismantled without an honest reckoning with its colonial and postcolonial origins. It is not enough to symbolically include regional languages in early education if their value is not affirmed throughout the educational continuum and in society at large. Language, as Taylor (1994) reminds us, is constitutive of identity; it is the medium through which individuals articulate who they are and how they belong. Therefore, recognition must be more than representational; it must be structural. This means investing in mother tongue education beyond Grade 3, developing curricular materials in multiple languages, and most importantly, shifting societal attitudes that equate linguistic diversity with backwardness. Until these changes occur, the Philippines will continue to carry the burden of a colonial linguistic legacy that denies many of its citizens the full affirmation of their cultural identities.

4. Bilingualism, Economic Rationality, and Neoliberal Logic

The persistence of English as a dominant language in Philippine education cannot be explained solely through historical analysis; its modern resurgence is deeply entangled with contemporary economic rationalities and global neoliberal ideology. English proficiency has become synonymous with professional success, international mobility, and cultural capital, especially in the context of labor export policies and the booming business process outsourcing (BPO) industry. Bernardo (2004) identifies how English, once imposed through

colonial rule, is now widely accepted as a "neutral" vehicle for economic integration. However, this neutrality is illusory. English's continued dominance in the Philippines reflects a broader economic discourse in which language is no longer valued for cultural or communicative richness but for its market utility—its ability to generate income, facilitate outsourcing, and train a globally mobile labor force.

This instrumentalization of language is a hallmark of neoliberalism, which reframes education as a tool to produce efficient, employable individuals in service of the global economy (Apple, 2001; Block et al., 2012). In this framework, bilingual education is promoted not as a means of fostering inclusion or affirming identity, but as a method of enhancing human capital. Learners are groomed to master English not to engage with diverse ideas or preserve heritage, but to compete in global markets. Block et al. (2012) argue that neoliberalism imposes a business logic upon language education—where linguistic proficiency is measured through standardized testing, and where "worthwhile" languages are determined by their perceived economic return. Filipino, while celebrated in state discourse as the national language, lacks the same economic cachet. Regional languages, meanwhile, are often ignored, trivialized, or viewed as obstacles to advancement.

Within Philippine classrooms, the effects of this ideology are palpable. Instructional time is often geared toward preparing students for English-medium assessments, even in early grades, despite the existence of the MTB-MLE policy that mandates the use of mother tongues until Grade 3 (Department of Education, 2012). Martin (2014) observes that many educators, particularly in urban or elite settings, resist implementing the MTB-MLE policy fully, perceiving English as more prestigious and more practical for their students' future careers. As a result, regional languages are used inconsistently, and students internalize the message that success is best achieved through linguistic assimilation. Flores and Rosa (2015) label this process as guided by "raciolinguistic ideologies," where nonstandard accents or vernacular speech forms are pathologized, even when expressed in English. Learners are not merely expected to use English—they must embody a particular "ideal speaker" imagined through colonial and racialized norms.

This form of linguistic gatekeeping exacerbates educational inequalities. Learners from marginalized communities often lack access to the linguistic capital that more privileged students acquire at home, through private schooling, or through early exposure to English media. As Galang and Tupas (2022) point out, the classroom becomes a space of surveillance and silence, where learners feel compelled to abandon their mother tongues to conform to expectations of linguistic appropriateness. Yet even when they speak English, they are often deemed deficient due to accent, vocabulary, or cultural framing. The result is a pedagogy of exclusion, where the language of instruction alienates learners from their identities, their communities, and sometimes even their own voice. These dynamics undermine not only academic engagement but also emotional well-being and social participation.

Taylor's (1994) concept of recognition helps elucidate the deeper ethical stakes of such a system. In a neoliberal framework where value is measured by productivity, only those linguistic identities that align with dominant norms are "seen" or legitimized. Taylor insists that recognition is not a luxury but a fundamental human need, one rooted in mutual affirmation and respect for difference. When learners are only affirmed insofar as they approximate English fluency, they are misrecognized; their full selves are reduced to marketable traits. This produces a disjuncture between the learner's internal sense of self and the identity validated by institutions. In such a setting, bilingualism becomes a form of assimilation rather than a site of plurality and dialogue. Recognition, in this sense, must go beyond technical inclusion and confront the systemic devaluation of languages deemed economically useless or culturally inferior.

To resist the reductive economic framing of bilingualism, educators and policymakers must reframe language policy as a commitment to justice and democratic participation. This would require de-centering English as the default language of progress and acknowledging the epistemic value of all Philippine languages. Tupas (2015) suggests that multilingual education must be reclaimed as a project of social equity, not merely pedagogical efficiency. He emphasizes the need to interrogate the structural forces that produce linguistic

inequality; forces that are often embedded in teacher education, textbook development, national assessments, and the broader culture of schooling. Ultimately, resisting the neoliberalization of language policy entails embracing a multilingual paradigm not as a compromise but as a vision of what it means to affirm the dignity, identity, and voice of every learner in the archipelago.

5. Dialogical Identity and the Classroom

The classroom, often imagined as a neutral site of learning, is in fact a space where identities are shaped, challenged, and either affirmed or suppressed. For Charles Taylor (1994), identity is dialogical; it arises in and through our interactions with others, in contexts where we are either recognized or misrecognized. This insight is crucial when applied to language education, where the medium of instruction is not simply a conduit for knowledge transmission but a vehicle for forming self-understanding. Language carries within it not only the lexicon of a people but their stories, their metaphors, and their memories. To speak in one's language, especially in the formative years of education, is to be seen and heard in a manner that validates one's place in the world. When that language is silenced or devalued in the classroom, it is not merely a pedagogical inconvenience, it is a form of ontological denial.

In the Philippine context, this tension is particularly acute. The implementation of the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) policy in 2012 acknowledged the cognitive and cultural importance of learners' first languages. It promised to transform early childhood education by anchoring it in the linguistic realities of Filipino children (Department of Education, 2012). However, the policy's rollout has faced numerous challenges, from inadequate teacher training and lack of localized materials to deep-seated social biases against regional languages. As Martin (2014) has noted, many teachers view English and Filipino as "better" languages, more aligned with progress and academic seriousness. This perception inevitably affects classroom practices, where students may be formally taught in their mother tongue but subtly encouraged to aspire to proficiency in English or Filipino. The result is a conflicted linguistic environment, where recognition is partial, conditional, and often performative.

In such environments, students may experience what Galang and Tupas (2022) term a "pedagogy of silence"—a classroom culture in which learners internalize the marginal status of their mother tongue and gradually retreat from expressing themselves fully. This is not simply a question of language mismatch; it is a question of identity safety. Learners who feel that their home language is unwelcome or inferior may also feel that their cultural background is inappropriate for academic engagement. This has implications far beyond immediate academic performance. When students do not see their identities reflected in the classroom, they are less likely to participate, to ask questions, or to take intellectual risks. This diminished engagement is a silent but powerful consequence of misrecognition, students learn to speak less because they have learned that their way of speaking is less valued.

The concept of dialogical identity calls for a rethinking of the teacher's role not merely as a content provider but as a mediator of recognition. Teachers shape the ethical climate of the classroom by determining which voices are amplified and which are minimized. Apple (2001) argues that classrooms are not apolitical; they are structured by broader ideologies that seep into lesson planning, discipline practices, and language expectations. In a neoliberal system, these ideologies often prioritize English as the language of performance and global competitiveness, leaving little space for other linguistic registers. Block, Gray, and Holborow (2012) emphasize that language choices are never neutral in such systems, they reproduce hierarchies and communicate to students who belongs and who does not. The dialogical model, in contrast, would require teachers to engage students in their linguistic and cultural specificity, fostering a space where recognition is not contingent on assimilation.

Moreover, recognition in the classroom must be more than symbolic. It must involve structural and curricular changes that reflect the lived linguistic realities of students. This includes the integration of local literature, histories, and oral traditions into the curriculum, as well as assessments that allow students to

demonstrate understanding in their mother tongue. It also calls for a reorientation of teacher education. As Flores and Rosa (2015) argue, the very idea of "appropriate" language use must be challenged, since it often reflects raciolinguistic ideologies that pathologize non-dominant speech patterns. In the Philippine context, this means resisting the tendency to view English proficiency as synonymous with intelligence or civic virtue. Instead, teachers and policymakers must affirm multilingual competence as a legitimate and powerful form of knowing. Recognition, in this sense, is not a passive tolerance of difference but an active reshaping of educational norms and expectations.

Ultimately, a dialogical classroom is one in which students are not merely accommodated but affirmed. Such affirmation enables them to speak from where they are—linguistically, culturally, and intellectually—without fear of correction or exclusion. Taylor (1994) reminds us that identity is always vulnerable to the judgments of others. In the classroom, this vulnerability is magnified. Every correction, every curriculum choice, every language policy sends a message about who belongs and who does not. A just education system, therefore, must take seriously its role in either reinforcing or dismantling these hierarchies. The classroom, far from being a passive vessel for information transfer, is a battleground for recognition—a place where the nation is rehearsed, contested, and possibly reimagined through the everyday acts of speaking, listening, and being heard.

6. Proposing a Taylorian Model of Language Policy

Language is more than a tool of communication; it is a vessel of identity, memory, and belonging. In multilingual societies like the Philippines, language policy is never neutral; it either affirms or denies the dignity of its citizens. Current bilingual education in the Philippines, despite reforms like MTB-MLE, continues to operate within frameworks shaped by colonial legacy and neoliberal efficiency. Charles Taylor's (1994) theory of recognition provides a compelling philosophical lens through which to reframe these policies. He argues that identity is dialogically formed, meaning individuals become who they are through recognition by others. Denying recognition—especially in the form of linguistic exclusion—is not a benign oversight; it is a form of injustice that undermines self-worth and limits one's participation in society.

Recognition, in Taylor's model, must be both interpersonal and institutional. It is not enough for individuals to accept each other's differences; institutions must actively affirm them. In language policy, this means more than allowing mother tongues in classrooms—it entails creating structures that validate those languages across curricula, assessment, governance, and teacher formation. In this context, bilingualism or multilingualism should not be seen as a transitional phase toward English fluency, but as a lasting, pluralistic framework that acknowledges the diverse linguistic realities of Filipino learners. Flores and Rosa (2015) remind us that language hierarchies are often naturalized through what they call "raciolinguistic ideologies," in which certain ways of speaking, typically closer to white, Western norms—are considered more legitimate. A Taylorian model would reject such ideologies and call for an educational culture grounded in ethical pluralism.

To articulate this vision, this paper introduces the Recognition Circle Model, a conceptual and visual framework that places learners' linguistic identities at the heart of policy and practice. The model is structured as three concentric circles. At its center lies the Mother Tongue and Identity, emphasizing the learner's foundational relationship to their language and community. Surrounding this is the ring of Institutional Affirmation, representing curricula, teacher practices, and education policies that sustain and legitimize the learner's language in formal settings. The outermost circle, Dialogical Structures, reflects the role of community partnerships, inclusive policymaking, and local governance in maintaining linguistic diversity as a shared social value. Each layer reinforces the others; recognition must flow from the individual outward to institutions and back through participatory dialogue.

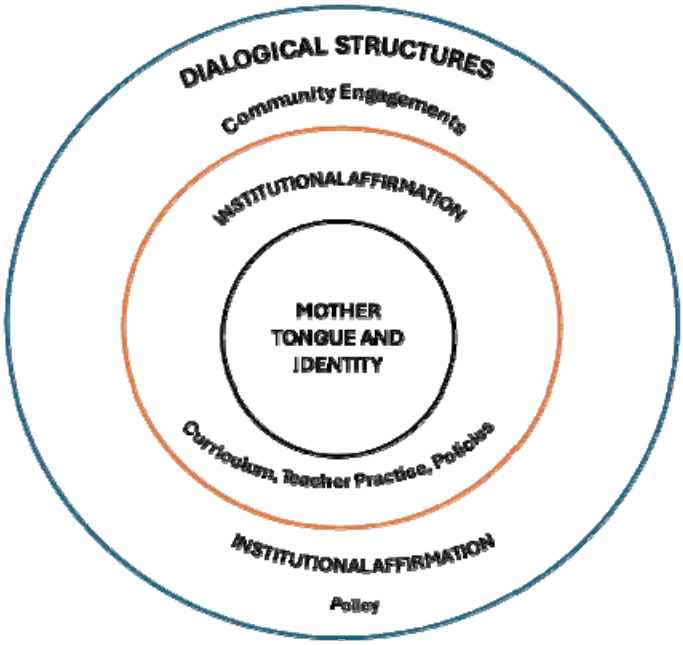

Figure 1. Recognition Circle Model: A Taylorian Framework for Linguistic Justice in Language Policy. The model visualizes a learner-centered approach rooted in identity, affirmed institutionally, and reinforced through dialogical engagement with communities.

The first layer, Mother Tongue and Identity is where recognition begins. Language is the medium through which children first experience the world. It carries ancestral knowledge, spirituality, humor, and ways of being that are irreducible to other tongues. For many Filipino learners, the mother tongue is not simply a "home language", it is the language of emotion, kinship, and moral formation. To silence this language in formal education, or treat it as a temporary scaffolding, is to communicate that the learner's primary identity is unsuited for academic spaces. As Taylor (1994) notes, denying the public legitimacy of someone's identity is a form of harm with long-term psychosocial consequences. Recognition at this level, then, is foundational to all other educational outcomes.

The second layer, Institutional Affirmation, focuses on how schools, curricula, and teacher practices operationalize recognition. While the Department of Education (2012) has taken steps through MTB-MLE to mandate mother tongue instruction in early grades, its implementation remains partial and inconsistent. Martin (2014) notes that many educators resist the policy due to deep-seated biases or lack of training, often reverting to English or Filipino even when not pedagogically appropriate. In a Taylorian model, institutions must move beyond compliance to conviction: they must develop curriculum materials rooted in local knowledge, assess students in their own languages, and restructure teacher education to include linguistic pluralism as a core competency. Institutional recognition cannot be symbolic; it must be embedded in the daily practices of the school.

The outermost layer, the Dialogical Structures, recognizes that language recognition cannot be imposed from above. It must be co-produced with communities who are the bearers and transmitters of local languages. This includes involving elders, local historians, Indigenous leaders, and cultural workers in curricular design, school governance, and textbook production. Hornberger and Johnson (2007) argue that language policy becomes meaningful when it emerges from what they term "ethnographic layering," or the intersection of top-down policy and bottom-up cultural practice. In this way, recognition is not only distributed across time and institutions but co-authored by those most affected by it. Language justice, then, becomes a civic project that

fosters solidarity, not just access.

The Recognition Circle Model also challenges dominant forms of assessment. High-stakes testing in English or Filipino creates what Apple (2001) refers to as an "audit culture," in which education is driven by what can be easily measured, often at the expense of what truly matters. Standardized tests disproportionately disadvantage learners from non-dominant linguistic backgrounds, whose cognitive and cultural capital are often invisible to such assessments. A recognition-based policy would prioritize assessments that reflect linguistic diversity and multiple forms of intelligence—narrative-based portfolios, community presentations, and multilingual performance tasks. These methods not only affirm the learner's language but also reflect more authentic understandings of competence and contribution.

Additionally, the Taylorian model insists on political accountability. Recognition is not charity; it is a right. The state has an obligation to fund, implement, and evaluate language programs that serve marginalized linguistic communities. As Tupas (2015) contends, language inequality in the Philippines persists not due to lack of policy but due to a lack of political will. A recognition-based model would require localized budgets, protected time for community consultation, and equity metrics to track inclusion across linguistic groups. Galang and Tupas (2022) further emphasize that policy alone is insufficient without cultural change: it must be accompanied by shifts in attitudes, practices, and discourses that stigmatize local languages as backward or unworthy of academic engagement.

What sets the Recognition Circle Model apart is that it invites a radical rethinking of educational purpose. It asks not only what languages we teach in, but what values we affirm in doing so. Language policy becomes a space where democracy is enacted not merely through voting or legislation, but through daily classroom interactions, curricular decisions, and institutional priorities. A school that recognizes its students' languages recognizes their personhood. This is the crux of Taylor's (1994) claim: that recognition is constitutive of identity, and that its denial is a form of cultural injury. A multilingual education that upholds dignity, fosters mutual respect, and shares narrative space with all Filipinos is not simply preferable; it is a moral necessity.

It is in this regard that the Taylorian model, conceptualized through the Recognition Circle, offers a comprehensive and justice-oriented framework for Philippine language policy. It responds to the failures of colonial hierarchy, neoliberal efficiency, and nationalist uniformity by rooting policy in dialogical identity, institutional affirmation, and participatory democracy. While the road to implementation is complex, the moral clarity of the model offers a direction for reform that honors the nation's linguistic heritage and the dignity of its most vulnerable learners. Through this model, recognition becomes not only a philosophical ideal but a practical strategy for building a more humane and inclusive educational future.

7. Conclusion

This study began with a central claim: that the Philippine bilingual education policy particularly as implemented in the 1974, 1987, and 2012 language reforms, must be examined not only as a pedagogical or political tool, but as a moral issue concerning identity, justice, and recognition. Drawing on Charles Taylor's (1994) philosophical framework, we argued that language is not merely a medium for instruction, but a formative site of identity construction. The politics of recognition thus provides a robust theoretical lens to critique the unequal linguistic landscape of Philippine education, where English and Filipino remain dominant while regional and indigenous languages continue to be marginalized, often invisibly. The denial of linguistic recognition, as Taylor posits, is a form of cultural misrecognition that threatens not just educational access, but the very selfhood and dignity of learners.

This ethical insight brings into sharp relief the limitations of prevailing policy models. While the Department of Education's MTB-MLE program (DepEd, 2012) made strides toward acknowledging the pedagogical value of mother tongue instruction, its fragmented implementation, lack of community engagement, and failure to institutionalize deep cultural affirmation have constrained its transformative potential. As scholars

such as Tupas (2015), Martin (2014), and Galang and Tupas (2022) have shown, these policies often coexist with persistent language ideologies that associate English with intelligence and progress, and local languages with backwardness or marginality. Such ideologies are further reinforced by neoliberal logics of competitiveness and standardization (Block, Gray, & Holborow, 2012; Apple, 2001), which reframe language not as a right, but as a commodity. The result is a system where recognition is uneven, conditional, and ultimately exclusionary.

The Taylorian model of language policy presented in this paper, summarized visually in the Recognition Circle Model, offers a holistic, justice-oriented alternative. By centering mother tongue and identity, embedding institutional affirmation, and cultivating dialogical structures with local communities, this model imagines language education as a moral project grounded in plurality and dignity. It calls for a reconstitution of the classroom, the curriculum, and the policymaking process as spaces where learners are seen, heard, and empowered to express themselves through the language most intimately tied to their being. Recognition, in this sense, becomes not a supplement to technical reform but the very foundation of an inclusive educational paradigm.

The implications of such a model for Philippine education are profound. It challenges the nation to confront the lingering shadows of colonialism and the flattening force of economic globalization. It demands that educational justice be rooted not only in access to schools or textbooks, but in the cultural and linguistic validation of every Filipino child. This entails revising teacher education programs to include linguistic sensitivity, reforming national assessments to be multilingual and culturally grounded, and redesigning curricula that honor rather than erase local epistemologies. It also requires sustained political commitment to community consultation, budget allocations, and equity monitoring. In short, the Taylorian approach reframes education policy as a dialogical and participatory ethical process, not a technocratic imposition. Furthermore, this model intersects with broader national questions about identity and sovereignty. A nation that silences its linguistic plurality risks eroding the very fabric of its democratic life. The recognition of all languages—spoken not just in classrooms but in streets, homes, rituals, and dreams—is also the recognition of the people who speak them. The preservation and affirmation of linguistic diversity is thus not a nostalgic gesture, but a forward-looking commitment to equity and belonging. As Flores and Rosa (2015) assert, resisting dominant raciolinguistic ideologies is key to building truly emancipatory learning environments. In the Philippine case, it is also essential for national coherence that respects difference without flattening it.

In light of this, recognition must be understood not as a concession offered by those in power, but as a moral obligation embedded in the very structure of democratic life. Language education, when approached through Taylor's philosophy, ceases to be merely a battleground of scripts and standards; it becomes a site of encounter, solidarity, and human flourishing. The question, then, is not whether we can afford to recognize linguistic diversity, but whether we can afford not to—given its central role in shaping not only individual identity, but the future of the nation itself. Furthermore, a Taylorian-informed language policy offers a compelling vision for a more just, pluralistic, and dialogical Philippine education system. It challenges us to rethink not only the languages we teach in, but the values we teach for. It reminds us that to recognize someone's language is to recognize their humanity, their dignity, and their rightful place in the story of the nation. This is the promise and the moral imperative of a language policy built not on domination or utility, but on mutual respect and recognition.

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