PHILIPPINE LANGUAGES: AS COLORFUL AS THE COUNTRY ITSELF

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The Philippines is an archipelagic country consisting of over seven thousand islands. With vast variation of landscapes and terrains. With the majority of the country being divided by either vast waters to huge mountain ranges, it is not surprising that there are also many variations in language.

There are eight major dialects in the Philippines, not including sub-dialects.

The first one is Bikol, the language use in the southern tip of the Luzon islands, the Bikol region, which includes Naga, Camarines Sur, Camarines Norte, Legazpi, and Albay, as well as parts of Surigao islands. The Bikol language is further divided to four sub-groups, the Northern Coastal Bikol, Southern Bikol language, Central Bikol language, and the Bisakol.

Then there is the Cebuano language or also referred to as Visaya is the native language of the majority of people in the Visayan islands.

The third one is Hiligaynon or the Ilonggo, which originated in Iloilo still a part of the Visayan Islands. Hiligaynon is not as wide spread as that of Cebuano language, the native speakers are mostly concentrated in the Western Visayas region which includes Iloilo, Capiz, Guimaras, and Negros Occidental. Although some of the neighboring islands also adopted the language.

Ilocano on the other hand is the language of the spoken in the Ilocos region as well as other northern provinces in the Philippines. Ilocano is the major spoken language in
the Northern Luzon. Provinces that consider Ilocano as their first language are Ilocos Norte, Ilocos Sur, Abra, La Union and some parts of Nueva Ecija, Pangasinan, Tarlac, and Benguet. It is considered as the national language of the North.

Just a little further down, in the central part of Luzon, is the Kapangpangan dialect. Spoken in the Province of Pampanga and other neighboring towns and Municipalities. The Kapangpangan word which was derived from the word “Pangpang” or riverbank in English. The province of Pampanga on which the dialect originated is streamed with major rivers, hence the name.

Pangasinan is the language of the province of Pangasinan which is situated in the west central part of Luzon. Pangasinan is facing the West Philippine sea that is why the commerce and livelihood of the people are mostly related to the ocean, including salt making or “asin” the root word of the name of the province as well as its language.

Waray is the fifth spoken language in the Philippines native to Eastern Visayas region. Waray is the common second language of many Visayan people, from Eastern and Northern Samar, to Leyte islands.

And of course, the largest spoken language of the Philippines and considered as the national dialect in the country, Filipino or as some like to call it “Tagalog”. Filipino is spoken in most off the central Philippines including parts of Region three and National Capital Region. Tagalog which originated from the word “from the river” is the most common communication dialect in the Philippines.

Although there are more sub-dialects that are derived from or a variation of the stated eight major dialects, those were the most common and widely used by larger number of the population. Each language is a part of the Austronesian family language falling under Malayo-Polynesian branch, these are the language that were brought by the Malayo-Polynesian settlers that occupied our country at the beginning of the great migration when people from the Central Asia traveled South-East using the land bridges
of that time but as the tides and the oceans change the land bridges disappear isolating the Philippine islands from the rest of Asia. As time went on the language evolved with the people, and with the influence of colonialists that came into the islands the languages we knew today came to be. A melting pot of dialects and culture and as colorful as the tropical flowers and plants found in the archipelago.

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