

Attitude of Non-Kapampangan Students in Learning Kapampangan Culture

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The Philippines is multicultural country. Because of various factors, people from different cultural groups transfer from their homeland to another. In this scenario, either cultural diffusion or acculturation takes place. One of the places in the Philippines where people from other cultural groups migrate is Angeles City, Pampanga. Many people stay in Angeles City to study. City College of Angeles, a local higher education institution, caters Angeles City residents. Inclusivity is observed through accepting migrants from other cultural groups who have opted to live in the city. This paper aims to determine the attitude of these non-Kapampangan students in learning Kapampangan culture as part of their curriculum. Through focused-group discussion, pertinent data were gathered from five non-Kapampangan students who have already taken the subject. The study generally revealed favorable results to students' perception and attitude about the Kapampangans and the Kapampangan culture.

Keywords: *Kapampangan, Culture-based education, multiculturalism*

Introduction

The Philippines is a multicultural and multilingual country. Ethnologue (n.d.) states that there are 186 languages in the entire archipelago. Depending on the source, this number may vary. Despite the claims that languages in the Philippines came from a common language family, the Austronesian family of languages, differences among the languages are dominant. Differences in this element among communities within the country are entailments of the distinctiveness of their culture. Culture and language are intertwined with each other. Aside from its use as a primary tool for communication, language functions as transmitter and reflection one's culture (Day Translation, 2018).

One of the provinces in the Philippines is Pampanga. Pampanga, which is located in the central region of Luzon island, is the homeland of the 7th largest ethnic groups in the Philippines known as Kapampangan(s) (Pangilinan, 2015). Historical records reveal that the Kapampangan (referring to the homeland) had a larger territory covering a portion of Bulacan, Tarlac, Bataan and other neighboring towns in the region and even parts of Manila. Several factors had contributed in the decline of the number of speakers and even their territory. One factor is the creation of new political subdivisions during the Spanish regime. Although dominantly surrounded by Tagalog-speaking people, Pampanga has retained its identity of having a distinct culture and language.

Different institutions and organization have done steps to safeguard and promote Kapampangan cultural traditions, practices, and heritage. Catholic churches maintain pieces of information on traditions of Kapampangans related to their religiosity. Educational institutions have created centers that play as depositories, archives and galleries exhibiting information and artifacts about Kapampangan culture. Some higher education institutions have integrated the study of Kapampangan culture into their curriculum. All these endeavors aim to maintain cultural traditions, practices, and heritage amidst the cultural threats to Kapampangan culture brought about by factors, such as the influences of its neighboring culture, proximity to Manila, foreign culture exposure through media, cultural assimilation and migration.

Since the beginning of history, migration has been part of humanity. People transfer from one place to another caused by a number of factors and reasons. Through migration, language and cultural contact happen. As a result, language and culture may undergo changes which may impact positively or negatively to an individual or to a community. Bhugra and Becker (2005) state that migration also affects the mental well-being, cultural norms and customs of the immigrants.

Many other factors may contribute to the decline of Kapampangan culture and language. Del Corro (2000) as cited by Pangilinan (2009) reveals that the Kapampangan language would be endangered despite the continuous use of the people.

As part of its curriculum, a three-unit course in Kapampangan culture is required to all students of City College of Angeles. As a melting pot and a highly-urbanized city, Angeles City is composed of people coming from different regions of the country. Thus, as a community college, City College of Angeles is mandated to cater Angeles City locals who opt to pursue higher education. The subject aims to develop to students cultural understanding and to be cultural advocates. Its goal does not end in the classroom, but it goes beyond paper and pencil tests. Students, as they are entrusted as cultural heritage bearers, are expected to address cultural threats inside and outside the school.

Banks (1999) explains the four levels of multicultural content, 1) the contribution approach, 2) the additive approach, 3) the transformation approach, and 4) the social action approach. The contribution approach is limited to integration of local holidays, festivities, personalities, and significant local events in the subject-matter or school-based activities. Integrating ethnic or cultural subject matters and affairs to the curriculum without largely restructuring it is the emphasis of the additive approach. However, the two approaches make students view culture in the surface level. When the curriculum is developed to aim cultural understanding and appreciation, the approach is on the transformation level. Students are taught to analyze cultural issues and concerns from different ethnic perspectives. The highest level, the social action approach, aims that students take actions on various cultural issues. Through reflections and analysis, students have to partake, in different ways, on addressing socio-cultural issues and concerns.

This paper is intended to determine the attitude of non-Kapampangan students in learning Kapampangan culture. It specifically aimed to describe how non-Kapampangan students perceive Kapampangan, identify challenges encountered and strategies to address them in learning

Kapampangan culture, and determine the implication of the subject on how the participants perceive Kapampangan culture.

Methodology

This qualitative study employed descriptive design of research. The researcher conducted focused-group discussion to five non-Kapampangan students of the City College of Angeles. The participants were students who already passed the subject Kapampangan Culture. Age and length of stay were not considered as factors. The interview recorded lasted for 20 minutes. Informed consents were distributed before the conduct of the interview. After the transcription of the interview, thematic analysis was done to come up with relevant results.

Results and Discussion

Perception of Non-Kapampangan Students to the Kapampangan People and Culture

Prior to having the subject, the participants' perception to the people of Pampanga is that they are boastful but with accommodating personality. According to them, Kapampangans tend to brag their material possessions, taste of fashion, and physical attributes. It was also perceived that part of Kapampangan culture is being extravagant and luxurious in terms of food. This was supported through personal interactions, conversations and experiences with their neighbors and classmates.

In the process of learning general information about the Kapampangan people, the participants were able to grasp that their perceived attribute to the Kapampangans was brought about their experiences and based on historical events. Because of this, they were also able to develop deeper sensitivity to the Kapampangan people.

Challenges in Learning Kapampangan Language and Culture

The primary challenge that the participants encountered in the subject and in their exposure to the cultural community is language barrier. As much as they wanted to fully participate during class discussion and conversation with their peers, they are bounded with reservations and limitations because they are not fluent and competent in the use of Kapampangan language. That is why they take every opportunity when they were given accommodations by using Tagalog/Filipino or English language.

It was also a problem for the participants that they were not able to connect with the historical and cultural contexts of the lessons because the materials presented in class were from a different perspective and were not taught in mainstream history and social sciences classes. Examples of these topics were the significant contributions of the Kapampangans during the Spanish regime, Kapampangan indigenous writing system, and the unique features of the Kapampangan language.

Adaptation Strategies

The participants were able to formulate strategies to address the abovementioned difficulties. One of their initiatives was peer teaching. From time to time, they set time schedules for group discussions gaining insights and clarifications from their classmates who are native speakers of Kapampangan. Also, extended reading activities were administered to gain more knowledge and schema on Kapampangan. Being keen observers was also a way to comprehend what being a Kapampangan is all about.

Implication of the Subject to Non-Kapampangan Students

Based on the inputs of the participants, the course Kapampangan Culture has affected them positively towards the Kapampangan people and culture. They were able to attain an overview explaining the unique characteristics of Kapampangan. It was also an avenue for them to be aware of what Kapampangan really is all about. Cultural appreciation and sensitivity were the results of being able to study and learn in the Kapampangan culture subject. It was also found out that students observed metacognitive awareness. Because of the need to learn in their Kapampangan Culture class, students used alternatives or extended strategies to achieve learning.

Conclusion

The following were formulated based on the relevant data gathered from the participants of the study:

- The characteristics of being boastful and bragging are still common perceptions to Kapampangan people;
- Language is a key element in learning a particular culture. Hence, it is a requisite to learn the language before or alongside learning the culture; and
- Cultural education or culture-based education is an avenue for cultural awareness, preservation, promotions and sensitivity goals.

Recommendation

Based on the findings and the conclusions, the following are the recommendations of the study:

- Conduct a more comprehensive study to evaluate the implications of the Kapampangan culture subject to various students;
- Involve more participants and use other methods of research; and
- Assess the cultural sensitivity of the students after taking the subject.

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