



THE WORLD LEARNS **SPANISH**



THE PHILIPPINES
2020



Introduction

The Spanish language in the Philippines is present in approximately one third of the lexicon in Filipino, and in the vast majority of first names and family names, which shows the presence of Spanish in the archipelago for over three centuries. However, from the Constitution of 1987, the Spanish language ceased to be an official language in the country and with that, the subject of Spanish in Secondary Education was eliminated.

In 2009, the Department of Education in the Philippines, with the aim of reintroducing Spanish in the education system, requested the collaboration of the Spanish Government. This request led to the beginning of the presence of the Spanish Ministry of Education in the Philippines, through the Spanish Education Office at the Embassy of Spain, which functionally depends on the Spanish Education Office in Australia. Since it opened, the Spanish Ministry of Education has signed different agreements with DepEd, TESDA, CHED, as well as the main universities in the country.

One of the most successful programs run by the Spanish Ministry of Education in the Philippines is the Language and Culture Assistants Program in Spain, which started in 2014 with a small number of participants and has grown significantly in the last years, with over 350 Filipinos in Spain as language assistants in the school year 2019-2020. It consists of an internship for one school year in a school in Spain, providing assistance to the teacher of English in the classroom.

On the other hand, in September 2018, the Spanish Education Office, in collaboration with Instituto Cervantes and UP Diliman, launched the *I Jornadas de ELE en Manila*, a series

of seminars addressed to teachers of Spanish in the Philippines. In 2019 they were held again with the collaboration of AECID, the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation and DepEd. These *jornadas* have become an important teacher training event, especially for Secondary School teachers in the Philippines, and are currently one of the most important teacher training activities in relation to the Spanish language.

Spanish teaching in the Philippines

Generally speaking, there is an interest to learn Spanish, probably because of its global position as an international language as well as the job opportunities linked to the knowledge of Spanish.

In the last decade, a significant number of companies, principally BPO companies, are recruiting personnel who is competent in Spanish in order to meet the demands of Hispanic America and the USA, and they offer attractive incentives to professionals that have a high level of Spanish.

On the other hand, since the mandatory study of Spanish was abolished in 1987, the teaching of our language has only been preserved in some private schools and universities. It is not taught in primary education, although some centers linked to Spain for historical reasons, such as Saint Pedro Poveda College, offer Spanish at all levels of primary and secondary education.

Since the implementation of DepEd's Special Program in Foreign Languages – SPFL, the Spanish language is present in all the regions in the country as an elective subject in some secondary schools. The students that take Spanish can reach an A2 level of the CEFR when they finalize their studies.

All in all, even though there is a notable interest to learn Spanish, there is a shortage of teaching staff with the appropriate qualification to teach the subject at various levels. Only the University of the Philippines Diliman offers an undergraduate program in Hispanic Studies, although it is not usually the qualification that the teachers of Spanish hold, except in private institutions or universities. In some schools and universities, the difficulty to find teachers of Spanish has brought about the outsourcing of this service, which is sometimes carried out by Instituto Cervantes.

Secondary Education

When the Spanish language subject was introduced in the public education system, the teachers of Spanish were trained through a series of agreements that were signed between the Spanish Ministry of Education, Instituto Cervantes, AECID and DepEd. However, there is still an important number of teachers to be trained.

In spite of this, the number of public schools that offer Spanish in grade 7, 8, 9 and 10 has increased progressively, as can be seen in this chart:

School year	Schools	Teachers
2014-15	78	175
2015-16	80	187
2016-17	80	182
2017-18	82	189
2018-19	83	190

Source: Own data

Higher Education

The teachers of Spanish in Philippine universities are a fundamental part of the Modern Languages departments or Foreign Languages departments. The main universities that offer Spanish in their programs are University of the Philippines Diliman, Ateneo de Manila, University of Santo Tomas, De La Salle University, Cebu Normal University and Xavier University Ateneo de Cagayan. In addition, four of them have a Spanish Visiting Teacher through the Program of MAEC-AECID, namely, University of the Philippines Diliman, Ateneo de Manila, University of Santo Tomas and Cebu Normal University.

As for the certification of the knowledge of Spanish, Instituto Cervantes in Manila certifies it through its DELE exams, with 231 candidates taking these tests in 2019.

Finally, in 2019 a new association of teachers of Spanish in the Philippines was created under the acronym AFELE, *Asociación Filipina de ELE*, in order to put in touch professionals in the area of Spanish teaching. It is also important to mention university student associations which have an active role in the spread of the Spanish language and culture, such as *Círculo Hispánico* in UP Diliman.

Spanish International Education Programmes in the Philippines

The Spanish Ministry of Education coordinates the programs of international cooperation and promotion of the Spanish language and culture in the Philippines since 2009, through the Spanish Education Office at the Embassy of Spain.

In order to promote the Spanish language and culture, the Spanish Ministry of Education, together with Instituto Cervantes and AECID, has signed agreements with different Philippine educational institutions, such as DepEd, TESDA and CHED, as well as cooperation plans with University of the Philippines Diliman, Ateneo de Manila, University of Santo Tomás and Xavier University Ateneo de Cagayan.

Through these collaborations the Language and Culture Assistants Program in Spain for Filipinos was launched in 2014, a program which has grown greatly, as can be seen in this chart, and which has a remarkable reputation in the Philippines:

	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
Language Assistants Program for Filipinos	15	31	53	75	226	371

Source: Own data

The candidates to the Program are selected by the Spanish Education Advisor through face-to-face or online interviews. The universities which offer Spanish and have agreements with the Spanish Ministry of Education collaborate with the Education Office in the pre-selection of candidates. In 2018 and 2019 Cebu Normal University collaborated with the Education Office, and West Visayas State University, De La Salle University Manila and De La Salle College of Saint Benilde have recently become collaborators.

The Spanish Education Office organizes briefings at some of the above-mentioned universities, where the number of attendees increases every year. In addition, in May or June there is an orientation session for the participants about the visa application process and all the necessary information for their stay in Spain.



Orientation session for the Language and Culture Assistants in Ateneo de Manila

On the other hand, the Spanish Education Office works actively with DepEd and they have meetings throughout the year to plan training activities for teachers of Spanish. The Spanish Education Office also provides resources and programs of the Spanish Ministry of Education and participates in events organized by DepEd, especially those linked to SPFL and the teaching of Spanish. For example, in October 2018 the Education Advisor attended the Forum on Enhancing International Partnerships in Basic Education, together with the diplomatic representatives of other countries.

After the expiration of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Spanish Ministry of Education, DepEd, Instituto Cervantes and AECID, there have been meetings with DepEd to negotiate a new agreement with regard to the training of teachers of Spanish of public secondary schools and to guarantee the continuity of the program and the offer of Spanish. With this aim, in

August 2019 Education Secretary Leonor Magtolis Briones had a meeting with Spanish Ambassador to the Philippines Jorge Moragas, together with the Spanish Counsellor for Education in Australia, New Zealand and the Philippines David G. Ferrán Priestley and the Spanish Education Advisor Sandra Lozano.



Meeting with Education Secretary

As for the training of Spanish teachers, the Spanish Education Office organizes seminars and teacher training events for teachers of Spanish in the country, in collaboration with Instituto Cervantes and publishing houses of teaching materials of Spanish, as well as local educational institutions.

In September 2018, the *I Jornadas de ELE Manila* were held in Manila, a series of seminars for teachers of Spanish, organized by the Spanish Education Office, UP Diliman, Instituto Cervantes, and with the collaboration of DepEd, with a participation of 60 teacher. In 2019, the *II Jornadas de ELE Manila* were held again in October, this time with the collaboration of AECID, through its program ACERCA, as well as Edelsa Publishing House, and DepEd, which shouldered the expenses of the travels of its participating teachers from different provinces. These *Jornadas* counted on the participation of international speakers and there were approximately one hundred and seventy attendees.

In March and April 2019 two workshops for teachers of Spanish were held in Instituto Cervantes of Manila, with the publishing houses of Edinumen and EnClaveELE, and the collaboration of Instituto Cervantes and the Spanish Education Office.

In addition, the Spanish Education Office works with the European Union Delegation in the Philippines to promote Spain as a destination in Europe to pursue Higher Education studies. In that respect, the Spanish Education Office takes part annually in EHEF, European Higher Education Fair, with the participation of educational institutions from Spain, such as Instituto Empresa IE, Catholic University of Murcia UCAM, University of Navarra and Campus Spain. Likewise, the Spanish Education Advisor gives talks and seminars on studying in Spain at different universities that have education abroad fairs throughout the year, for example, Ateneo de Manila, De La Salle University or University of the Philippines Diliman.

On the other hand, the Spanish Education Office has close relations with the above-mentioned universities, and they work together to organize activities such as cultural talks,

workshops or screenings of Spanish films, in collaboration with other institutions, for example, La Liga or AECID.



II Jornadas de ELE Manila, University of the Philippines Diliman

In April 2019, *Certamen Juvenil de Creación Literaria “Rafael Palma”* was launched. It is a writing contest – organized by the Department of European Languages of UP Diliman, together with Revista Filipina, AFELE, the Spanish Education Office and Círculo Hispánico – and it aims to promote the Filipino literature and culture written in Spanish. It is addressed to young writers between 15 and 25 years old, who can participate with poems, short stories, or essays.

Likewise, the Spanish Education Office takes part in events organized by schools or regional departments of education, such as the Spanish Day or Spanish Week celebration, or the Festival of Talents, a DepEd competition addressed to students of foreign languages under SPFL, who compete in different categories using the language or culture of the foreign language they are learning.



El Día del Español in Honorato C. Perez Memorial Science High School

The presence of the Spanish Ministry of Education is increasing gradually in the Philippines, and the Language and Culture Assistants Program is the program with most impact at the moment. Thanks to this program, there has been an increase in the interest of learning Spanish at the universities which collaborate with the Spanish Education Office and it is an essential tool for the promotion of the Spanish language and culture in this country. However, there is still a long way to have a solid base with regard to the teaching and learning of Spanish in the country.