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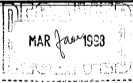
# Readings in Philippine Sociolinguistics

edited by Ma. Lourdes S. Bautista...  
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*Edited by*

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## Philippine English (1992)

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Andrew B. Gonzalez, FSC

Philippine English is the English language as used in the Philippines. The 1980 census counted the number of Filipinos with some competence in English as around 65%: some 35 million people. Ability ranges from a smattering of words and phrases through passive comprehension to near-native mastery.

### Background

Filipino experience of Western colonialism and its linguistic effects has been unique, in that there have been two colonizers in succession: Spain from the 16th century and the US from 1898, when English arrived in the islands. It spread rapidly, to the detriment of Spanish, because it was the new language of government, preferment, and education. Incentives to learn English included recruitment into the civil service and study in the US. In 1935, US-educated *pensionados* (scholars) became leaders of the Senate and the House of Representatives as well as members of the cabinet. English was used universally in the elementary-school system set up by the colonial government, which brought in American teachers. Education was the last government department to be indigenized, with US superintendents still functioning under the Commonwealth government before the outbreak of World War II. In the Philippines there are some 85 mutually unintelligible though genetically related languages of the Malayo-Polynesian family, such as Tagalog, Cebuano, Ilocano, Hiligaynon, Waray, and Bicol. These languages of the home serve as substrates whose features have variously influenced the development of Philippine English.

### Pronunciation

(1) Philippine English is rhotic, but the local /r/ is an alveolar flap, not an American English retroflex, (2) It is syllable-timed, following the rhythm of the local languages; full value is therefore given to unstressed

syllables and schwa is usually realized as a full vowel, (3) Certain polysyllables have distinctive stress patterns, as with *eligible*, *establish*, *ceremony*, (4) Intonation is widely characterized as 'singsong'. (5) Educated Filipinos aim at an American English accent, but have varying success with the vowel contrasts in *sheep/ship*, *full/fool*, and *boat/bought*. (6) Few Filipinos have the /æ/ in American English *mask*; instead, they use /a/ as in American English *father*. (7) The distinction between /s, z/ and /ʃ, ʒ/ is not made; *azure* is 'ayshure', *pleasure* 'pleshure', *seize* 'sees', *cars* 'kars', (8) Interdental /θ ð/ are often rendered as /t, d/, so that *three of these* is spoken as 'tree of dese'.

## Grammar

The following features occur at all social levels: (1) Loss of the singular inflection of verbs: *The family home rest on the bluff of a hill*; *One of the boys give a report to the teacher every morning*. (2) Use of present perfect for simple past (*I have seen her yesterday* I saw her yesterday) and past perfect for present perfect (*He had already gone home* He has already gone home). (3) Use of the continuous tenses for habitual aspect: *He is going to school regularly* He goes to school regularly. (4) Use of the present forms of auxiliary verbs in subordinate noun clauses rather than past forms, and vice versa: *He said he has already seen you* He said he had already seen you; *She hoped that she can visit you tomorrow*; She hoped that she could visit you tomorrow; *He says that he could visit you tomorrow* He says that he can visit you tomorrow. (5) An apparent reversal of the norms for the use of the definite article: *He is studying at the Manuel Quezon University*; *I am going to visit United States*. (6) Verbs that are generally transitive used intransitively; *Did you enjoy?*; *I cannot afford*; *I don't like*.

## Vocabulary and Idioms

(1) Loans from Spanish: *asalto* a surprise party, *bienvenida* a welcome party, *despedida* a farewell party, *Don/Dña* title for a prominent man/woman, *estafa* a fraud, scandal, *merienda* mid-afternoon tea, *plantilla* faculty assignments and deployment in an academic department, *querida* a mistress, *viand* (from *vianda* provisions for a journey) a dish served to accompany rice in a Filipino meal. (2) Loans from Tagalog: *boondock* (from *bundok*) mountain (compare the AmE-extension: *the boondocks*), *carabao* (from *kalabaw*) a water buffalo, *kundiman* a love song, *sampaloc* (from *sampalok*) the fruit of the tamarind, *tao man* (as in the *common tao*). (3) Loan translations from local usages: *open the light*

*radioturn* on the light/radio (also found in IndE), *since before yet* for a long time, *joke only* I'm teasing you, *you don't only know* you just don't realize, *he is playing and playing* he keeps on playing, *making foolishness* (of children) misbehaving, *I am ashamed to you* I am embarrassed because I have been asking you so many favors. (4) Local neologisms: *aggrupation* (from Spanish *agrupacion*) a group, *captain-ball* team captain in basketball, *carnap* to steal (kidnap) a car, *cope up* to keep up and cope with (something), *hold-upper* someone who engages in armed hold-ups, *jeepney* (blending *jeep* and *jitney*, AmE a small bus) a jeep converted into a passenger vehicle.

## Written Models

Because of the influence of reading and writing and the academic context in which English is learned, local speech tends to be based on written models. Filipinos generally speak the way they write, in a formal style based on Victorian prose models. Because of this, spelling pronunciations are common, such as 'lee-o-pard' for *leopard*, 'subtill' for *subtle*, and 'wor-sester-shire sauce' for *Worcestershire sauce*. Style is not differentiated and the formal style in general use has been called the *classroom compositional style*. When style differentiation is attempted there may be effects that are comical from the point of view of a native speaker of English: 'The commissioners are all horse owners, who at the same time will appoint the racing stewards who will adjudicate disputes involving horses. Neat no?' (from a newspaper column); 'Now the tandem [pair] is making its dreams come true, so it's not Goin' Bananas forever for Johnny' (from a gossip column).

## Code-switching

A register has developed for rapport and intimacy that depends on code-switching between Filipino and English. It is largely confined to Metro Manila and other urban centers and used extensively in motion pictures and on television and radio as well as in certain types of informal writing in daily newspapers and weekly magazines. Examples:

(1) 'Peks man,' she swears. 'Wala pang nangyayari sa amin ni Marlon. We want to surprise each other on our honeymoon.' 'Cross my heart,' she swears. 'Nothing yet has happened between Marlon and me...' (from a movie gossip column).

(2) Donna reveals that since she turned producer in 1986, her dream was to produce a movie for children; 'Kaya, nang mahasa ko ang Tuklaw

sa Aliwan Komiks, *sabi ko*, this is it. And I had the festival in mind when finally I decided to produce it, *Pambata talaga kasi ang Pasko*,' Donna says. [That is why when I read the story "Snake-Bite" in the Aliwan Comic Book, I told myself, this is it... Because Christmas is really for children] (from a movie gossip column).

## Social Issues

Philippine English is currently competing in certain domains with the rapidly spreading and developing Filipino, which is in a process of register-building sometimes called *intellectualization*. Filipino is not fully developed for academic discourse, especially in the sciences, and there is an ongoing debate on the use of Filipino instead of English for school work and official purposes. There is also conflict between the learning of Filipino for symbolic purposes and the learning of English for utilitarian, largely economic, purposes. The two official languages are propagated through a bilingual education scheme begun in 1974; mathematics and science continue to be taught in English although it is envisaged that when possible the teaching of these subjects at certain grade levels shall be in Filipino. The print media are dominated by English, but television, radio, and local movies are dominated by Filipino.

English in the Philippines shares patterns of development and constriction with English in Malaysia. From a situation similar to that of Singapore, where a premium is placed on learning English and using it extensively, the Philippines has now moved on to a stage at which English has developed a vigorous literature. It is in the process of standardization, with a variety no longer marked by regional accents associated with regional languages, but a converging variety that originates in Manila. This form is propagated largely through the school system, the mass media, and tourism. Because of code-switching, it seems unlikely that a colloquial variety of English alone will develop. The future is open, without clear trends. On the one hand, code-switching may end up in code-mixing, resulting in a local creole. On the other hand, the need for international relations, the dominance of the print media, and the continued use of English in education may exercise a standardizing role, making it possible for the Philippine variety to be mutually intelligible with other varieties of English. It is also possible that the present system of bilingual education will be converted into a purely monolingual Filipino scheme in which English is taught as a foreign language and becomes available only to an elite.

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# Addendum: Notes on three sub-varieties of Philippine English (1995)

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Ma. Lourdes S. Bautista

## 1. Yaya English

The *yaya* is the Filipino version of the European governess or the Chinese *amah* and is a ubiquitous feature in the home of young upwardly-mobile Filipino families. Although the *yaya* is typically not equipped with English language skills, being a girl from the provinces who many not even have reached high school, she is compelled to use English because it has almost become customary for young affluent Filipino families in urban centers to bring up their children speaking English.

What are the characteristic features of *yaya* English? Bautista (1982) has described the syntactic and lexical features of *yaya* English. She found that the characteristic syntactic features of *yaya* English are gross deviations in

*Tense and tense sequence:*

- (1) I finished my six-month training. Then I *specialize* when somebody *get* me. I *specialize* to care a baby, newly-born.

*Subject-verb agreement:*

- (2) After *she drink* milk, then she goes to sleep.

*Pronoun-antecedent congruence:*

- (3) Then I teach *him* [another *yaya*] if *she* [the child, male] will not eat, don't force him to eat.

*Use and placement of adverbs:*

- (4) He has a crib and I have *also* my own bed.

*Use of articles:*

- (5) She has *sister*, older than her. Sometimes [they quarrel] because her *sister* is very naughty girl. Charlotte is very quiet girl, *she* is very good girl.

Bautista found that the characteristic lexical features of *yaya* English are the insertion of Tagalog particles such as