



## Acculturation of American English as Philippine English: An affective critique

Randy P Lamanilao <sup>1\*</sup>, Francis Mervin L Agdana <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Master Teacher I, Department of Education, Balite National High School, District of Anaon, Schools Division of Surigao del Norte – Caraga, Philippines

<sup>2</sup> Assistant Professor IV, Surigao del Norte State University – Malimono Campus, Malimono, Surigao del Norte, Caraga, Philippines

\* Corresponding Author: **Randy P Lamanilao**

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### Article Info

**ISSN (online):** 2582-7138

**Volume:** 05

**Issue:** 01

**January-February 2024**

**Received:** 02-12-2023

**Accepted:** 03-01-2024

**Page No:** 453-458

### Abstract

This paper posits that Philippine English is a Filipino nativized variant of General American English, a unique linguistic outcome shaped by the historical imprints of Western Colonialism under Spain and the United States. Employing a Qualitative Research design, specifically a reader-response critique, the study delves into the acculturated lexicon processing of Philippine English. The findings indicate that English has evolved into the functional native tongue of Filipinos, serving diverse functions across linguistic and cultural groups. Filipinos demonstrate a tendency to overgeneralize word meanings and utilize derivational suffixes creatively. Notably, the preservation and widespread use of archaic or obsolete words persist in contemporary discourse. The Filipino English lexicon showcases analogical constructions, clippings, and coined words, contributing to the evolution of language. Spanish loanwords further enrich this linguistic tapestry. The study concludes that Philippine English is indeed a Filipino nativized variant of General American English. Recommendations include the creation of a monograph detailing English words and their functions in the Philippine context. Additionally, educators are urged to disseminate research insights within educational institutions or to higher authorities, fostering a deeper understanding of Philippine English and informing potential language education enhancements.

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.54660/IJMRGE.2024.5.1.453-458>

**Keywords:** Philippine English, language, lexicon, American English, Filipino English

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### Introduction

The evolution of the English language and its global significance are compelling facets of linguistic exploration, particularly when considering its impact on diverse cultures. In the Philippines, the historical trajectory of English becoming a prevalent language unfolds a captivating narrative. Despite the increasing prevalence of English as a means of communication among Filipinos, the recognition of English as a functional native tongue is a relatively recent development. This research aims to delve into the acculturation of American English into Philippine English, with a specific focus on its affective dimensions.

The Philippines, renowned as one of the largest English-speaking countries globally, boasts a population with a considerable degree of fluency in English. English holds a pivotal role as a language of business, law, and the primary medium of instruction in educational settings (Cabigon, 2015) <sup>[2]</sup>. Leshio (2018) <sup>[9]</sup> provides a historical account in his journal, emphasizing how American influence, beginning in 1898, propelled English instruction in Filipino schools, leading to the widespread adoption of Philippine English. While there is an extensive body of literature on Philippine English, phonological studies remain relatively scarce, especially pertaining to its sound system.

Kachru's (1997) <sup>[8]</sup> sociolinguistic criteria shed light on the multifaceted role of English in Filipino society. English serves as a

medium for communication across diverse linguistic and cultural groups, a nativized vehicle expressing local identity, and a language fostering creativity and sub-variety development. Despite the extensive literature on Philippine English, a research gap exists, particularly concerning phonetic investigations into its sound system.

Moreover, Gonzales (1992)<sup>[6]</sup> describes the pronunciation of Philippine English as *rhotic*, but the local /r/; syllable-timed; full value is given to unstressed syllables and schwa is typically realized as a full vowel; certain polysyllables have individual stress patterns, as with *elígible*, *establiš*, *ceremony*; ‘*singsong*’ as intonation. Educated Filipinos aim at an American English accent, but have accomplishment with the vowel differences in *sheep/ship*, *full/fool*, and *boat/bought*. Few Filipinos have the /æ/ in American English *mask*; instead, they use /a/ as in American English *father*. The difference between /s, z/ and /ʃ, ʒ/ is not made: *azure* is ‘*ayshure*’, *pleasure* ‘*pleshure*’, *seize* ‘*sees*’, *cars* ‘*karss*’; Interdental /θ, ð/ are often rendered as /t, d/, so that three of these is spoken as ‘*tree of dese*’.

The existing body of literature on Philippine English, while comprehensive, reveals a gap in research concerning its phonetic aspects. The phonological descriptions are limited, and there is a scarcity of studies exploring the nuances of the sound system, including detailed phonetic research. This research seeks to address this gap by providing an in-depth analysis of the affective dimensions of acculturation, specifically in the context of Philippine English.

Understanding the affective dimensions of American English's acculturation into Philippine English holds paramount importance. This study aims to contribute to the existing knowledge by unraveling the intricacies of the Philippine English lexicon, exploring unique features that distinguish it from other English varieties. The primary objectives include examining the affective aspects of language acculturation, identifying phonetic peculiarities within Philippine English, and delineating its role in shaping cultural identity. By achieving these objectives, this research aspires to offer valuable insights into the dynamic interplay between language, culture, and identity in the Philippine context.

### Materials and Methods

This study uses Qualitative Research design, precisely a reader-response critique. Reader-response criticism is a school of literary theory that focuses on the reader (or “audience”) and their experience of a literary work, in contrast to other schools and theories that focus attention primarily on the author or the content and form of the work (Eward-Mangione, 2020)<sup>[4]</sup>. The paper argues that Philippine English is a Filipino nativized variant of General American English, which Gonzales (1992)<sup>[6]</sup> described as a “unique linguistic effect” of the Filipino experience of Western Colonialism brought by two colonizers in succession: Spain and the United States.

This paper reacts and investigates the lexicon of the existing Filipino variety of English in terms of (1) normal expansion, (2) preservation of archaic and obsolete usage, (3) coinage, and (4) borrowing. The study limits to the following processes.

### A. Normal expansion by

- a. Extensions or adaptations of meaning and
- b. Shift in firm classes.

### B. Preservation of archaic or obsolete usage

- a. Analogical constructions.
- b. Clippings.
- c. Abbreviations.
- d. Total innovations
- e. Compounding.

### C. Borrowing

Five to ten words are used by the researchers to represent each category. Some of the words can be found in the works of Llamzon (1969)<sup>[10]</sup>, Gonzales (1983)<sup>[5]</sup>, and Tabor (1984)<sup>[12]</sup>. Most of them are randomly taken from various verbal collection of the Philippine society in more common media such as newspaper, literature, broadcast, conversations, newspaper, advertisement which contain Philippine English. Webster’s and Oxford Dictionaries are used to check the words whether these are categorized as Philippine English or not. The Spanish loan-words, on the other hand, are checked with Spanish-English and English-Spanish dictionaries. Words which are not found in these dictionaries are considered to be a Filipino variety of English.

## Results and Discussion

### English as functional native tongue of the Filipinos: A sociolinguistic phenomenon of acculturation

English, one of the world's most widely spoken languages, occupies a unique position in the Philippines. Beyond its function as a common tool for global communication, it has become deeply embedded in the Filipino cultural fabric, evolving into a distinct variety known as “Philippine English” (Dayag, 2012)<sup>[3]</sup>. This paper delves into the historical, social, and cultural factors that have shaped this complex linguistic phenomenon, analyzing its impact on Filipino identity and language policy.

### Historical Roots and Evolution

The story of Philippine English begins in 1898, when the United States replaced Spain as the colonial power. Recognizing the importance of English for global communication, the American government prioritized its incorporation into the education system (Gonzalez, 1992). American teachers, known as the Thomasites, spearheaded this effort, establishing a public school system in 1901 that made English the primary language of instruction (Cabigon, 2015)<sup>[2]</sup>. Over time, Filipinos adopted English and blended it with their existing linguistic influences, resulting in a unique variety characterized by distinct pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammatical features.

### English in Filipino Society

Today, English permeates virtually every aspect of Filipino life. It serves as the language of government, law, and business, dominating workplaces, courtrooms, and media platforms (Kachru, 1997)<sup>[8]</sup>. In education, English continues to hold primacy despite ongoing debates about the role of Filipino as the medium of instruction. Furthermore, Filipinos

readily employ English in everyday conversations, forging a sense of unity and bridging linguistic divides within the diverse archipelago (Gonzales, 1992) <sup>[6]</sup>.

### The Rise of Filipinized English

This widespread use of English has led to its natural adaptation and integration into Filipino culture. A hybrid form known as "Filipinized English" or "Anglicized Filipino" has emerged, where elements of both languages seamlessly blend in informal communication (Dayag, 2012) <sup>[3]</sup>. For many Filipinos, particularly those belonging to the higher echelons of society, English has become their primary language, blurring the lines between a learned and a native tongue (Lichio, 2018).

### Challenges and Opportunities

The prominence of English raises important questions about language policy and cultural identity. While it undoubtedly opens doors to global opportunities and facilitates communication within the diverse Filipino population, concerns remain about the potential neglect of Filipino and the erosion of traditional cultural values (Kachru, 1997) <sup>[8]</sup>. Striking a balance between promoting global competence and preserving national identity remains a crucial challenge for the Philippines.

### Filipino English Lexicon by normal expansion

Normal expansion forms "words" or "idioms". The concept is divided into two categories: (1) extensions or adaptations of meaning and (2) shift in form classes.

**Normal Expansions by Extensions or adaptations of meaning**  
This category of linguistic evolution is prominently observed in various media sources, reflecting the adaptability and creative usage of language by Filipinos. It involves the extension or adaptation of meanings, where brand names and terms are overgeneralized, often shaping a unique semantic landscape within Philippine English.

One prevalent example is the term "undersecretary," originally denoting a deputy to an assistant secretary in American English. In the Philippine context, however, this term may encompass both deputy and assistant secretaries, showcasing the local adaptation of its meaning. Similarly, the term "calling card" takes on a new meaning in the Philippine variety of English, transforming from a name card to a business card.

Another noteworthy adaptation involves the word "commute." While American English defines it as 'travel between home and work,' Philippine English employs it to convey 'travel by public transportation.' This shift in meaning reflects the nuances of daily life in the Philippines, where public transportation plays a central role in commuting experiences.

Brand names also undergo normal expansions in Philippine English, with examples like "Pampers" and "Colgate" becoming generic terms for disposable diapers and toothpaste, respectively. In everyday conversations, Filipinos commonly use "Pampers" to refer to any brand of disposable diapers and "Colgate" to represent various toothpaste products. This linguistic phenomenon highlights the tendency of Filipinos to generalize brand names, treating them as representative of entire product categories.

Furthermore, the word "salvage" undergoes a semantic

transformation in Philippine English. While its original meaning is 'to save,' Filipinos associate it with a more ominous connotation – 'to kill someone in cold blood.' This adaptation may be linked to the Spanish word "salvaje," meaning 'wild,' suggesting a cultural and historical influence on the evolution of the term.

In essence, these normal expansions by extensions or adaptations of meaning illustrate the dynamic nature of language in Philippine English. The creative reinterpretation of words reflects the cultural context and societal experiences, showcasing how language continually evolves within a specific linguistic community. This linguistic phenomenon not only enriches the expressive capacity of the language but also serves as a fascinating testament to the adaptability and creativity inherent in the Filipino linguistic landscape.

### Normal expansions by shift in form classes

This category delves deeper into the intricacies of normal expansions within the Philippine variety of English, emphasizing the tendency of Filipinos to overgeneralize certain words, leading to a shift in form classes. The phenomenon manifests through the creative use of derivational suffixes, transformations of mass nouns, and alterations in preposition usage.

One notable aspect of this linguistic evolution is observed in the utilization of derivational suffixes. Filipinos exhibit a propensity to overgeneralize words, resulting in the formation of new verbs through derivational suffixes. For instance, the term "manualize" derives from 'manual,' signifying the act of 'preparing manuals.' The incorporation of the suffix '-ize' demonstrates the adaptability of Philippine English in forming verbs from nouns or adjectives. Similarly, "culturize" evolves as a verb, originating from the noun 'culture,' while "concretize" emerges from 'concrete,' showcasing the versatility of linguistic expression.

Moreover, the shift in form classes extends to the treatment of mass nouns. In Philippine English, there is a tendency to use mass nouns as singular nouns, leading to distinctions such as "research" as a singular noun and "researches" as the plural counterpart. The same pattern is observed with "equipment," where "an equipment" is employed for the singular form, and "equipments" represents the plural form.

Another noteworthy aspect involves the manipulation of prepositions by Filipinos. The variations in preposition usage include the substitution, confusion, or elimination of prepositions, resulting in nuanced differences in meaning. Examples include the use of 'cope up with' instead of 'cope with,' 'based from' in lieu of 'based on,' 'shared to' instead of 'shared with,' and 'fill up' as an alternative to 'fill in' or 'fill out.' These shifts in preposition usage highlight the dynamic nature of language, where subtle alterations contribute to the evolving syntax of Philippine English.

Normal expansions by shift in form classes exemplify the adaptability and creativity inherent in the linguistic landscape of Philippine English. The utilization of derivational suffixes, transformations of mass nouns, and modifications in preposition usage contribute to the rich tapestry of the language. This linguistic phenomenon not only reflects the evolving nature of communication in the Philippines but also underscores the inventive ways in which Filipinos navigate the intricacies of language to express their thoughts and ideas.

### **Filipino English lexicon by preservation of archaic or obsolete usage**

The discourse surrounding the assumption that Philippine English speakers continue to employ archaic or obsolete forms of the English language has been a focal point for Filipino language researchers. In the context of a highly globalized world, English holds a pivotal role in facilitating communication, prompting researchers to delve into various aspects of language development. Recognizing the dynamic nature of language evolution, researchers have explored how archaic or obsolete words persist in Philippine English, shaping the lexicon of both spoken and written communication.

The preservation of archaic or obsolete words is notably observed in various forms of basic communication in Philippine English, including speaking and writing. Even in contemporary times, letters, journalism works, and public addresses retain these archaic words, underscoring their enduring presence in the linguistic fabric of the Philippines. Examples of such archaic words persisting in Philippine English include "dispraise," denoting censure or criticism; "expiry" or "expired," meaning death or died; "hereunto" in letters signifying 'to this document'; "repulsive," conveying a lack of friendliness or sympathy; "recompense," representing the appropriate punishment or reward; "plight," used to solemnly pledge or promise when making commitments to loved ones; "tithe," the tenth part of a Christian's income given to the church as a form of thanksgiving; and "trespass," employed when one commits an offense.

In a world where language serves as the primary medium for expressing thoughts, the consideration of language's evolving nature is paramount. The persistence of archaic or obsolete words in the Filipino English lexicon prompts reflection on the importance of using modern, commonly adopted, and easily comprehensible words. As language continues to evolve, so does the manner in which people express themselves. This linguistic phenomenon reflects the intricate interplay between historical language remnants and the contemporary linguistic landscape, illustrating how the Filipino English lexicon preserves linguistic elements from the past even as it adapts to the changing needs and preferences of its speakers.

### **Filipino English lexicon through coinage by analogy, clippings, and abbreviations, total innovations, and compounds**

The evolution of the Philippine English lexicon is marked by a rich tapestry of words coined over time, reflecting the creative ingenuity of Filipino speakers in expressing their thoughts across diverse situations. This linguistic dynamism not only facilitates communication but also broadens the avenues for conveying nuanced meanings. The expansion of the Philippine English lexicon is particularly driven by coinage, a process of inventing new words or phrases, often referred to as neologisms.

#### **Coinage by Analogy**

Analogical constructions play a significant role in the Filipino English lexicon, with speakers crafting words based on the analogy of commonly existing forms. For instance, the term 'holdupper' is used instead of 'robber,' drawing an analogy from 'kidnapper' derived from 'kidnap.' Analogical constructions extend to terms like 'honoree,' referring to an

honored guest, and 'mentee,' denoting a student, both modeled after the structure of 'employee' and 'examinee.'

#### **Coinage by clippings and abbreviations**

Clippings and abbreviations form an integral part of the Philippine English lexicon, offering concise and commonly used terms in everyday conversations. Filipino speakers often use 'bot' for 'robot,' 'phone' for 'telephone,' 'net' for 'internet,' and 'exam' for 'examination.' Abbreviations like 'LOL' for 'laugh out loud,' 'CR' for 'comfort room,' 'DIY' for 'do it yourself,' and 'IDK' for 'I don't know' further exemplify the adaptability and efficiency of language in conveying messages.

#### **Coinage by total innovations and compounds**

Filipino English speakers showcase linguistic productivity through total innovations and compounds, reshaping existing words through contamination, meta-analysis, assimilation, or dissimilation. Examples include 'senatoriable,' formed by combining 'senator' and the suffix '-able,' and 'presidentiable,' similarly constructed from 'president.' These terms refer to individuals likely to be candidates for presidential or senatorial positions. Additionally, the compound 'bring house' is derived through transliteration from 'dala sa bahay,' signifying take-out food.

Generally, the Filipino English lexicon thrives on a vibrant linguistic landscape shaped by coinage through various processes. Whether by analogy, clippings, abbreviations, total innovations, or compounds, Filipinos continue to contribute to the lexicon's growth, reflecting the dynamic nature of language and its capacity to adapt to the evolving needs of communication. This linguistic richness not only aids in conveying thoughts effectively but also showcases the cultural and creative identity embedded in the Philippine English lexicon.

### **Filipino English lexicon by borrowing from Filipino loanwords**

The infusion of loanwords into the Filipino English lexicon serves as a testament to the dynamic nature of language, where cultural influences leave an indelible mark on linguistic evolution. A loanword is adopted from one language, the donor language, and seamlessly merged into another language without translation. In the case of Filipino English, the incorporation of Spanish loanwords is particularly significant, stemming from 333 years of contact with the Spanish language.

As evaluated by Llamzon and Thorpe (1972) in their analysis of a Filipino-English dictionary, approximately 33% of word roots in Filipino are of Spanish origin. This extensive integration of loanwords reflects the enduring impact of historical and cultural interactions on language development. Over time, loanwords become integral to the language, so much so that even native speakers may struggle to identify their origin. This seamless integration facilitates language education, as learners are likely to encounter familiar words based on their existing language skills.

Several examples underscore the richness of borrowed Spanish loanwords in Filipino English. For instance, 'delikadeza' in Spanish signifies delicacy or refinement but has evolved in Filipino usage to convey 'modesty.' Similarly, 'despedida' means farewell in Spanish, but among Filipinos, it commonly refers to a 'farewell party.' Another example is



'plantilla,' originally meaning staff or personnel in Spanish, which now signifies 'faculty assignment and deployment' in the Filipino context.

The borrowing of loanwords not only expands the lexical repertoire of Filipino English but also serves as a cultural bridge, connecting historical influences with contemporary linguistic expressions. This linguistic integration enhances communication and understanding among speakers, as shared loanwords create points of connection and recognition. The Filipino English lexicon, enriched by these borrowed expressions, exemplifies the intricate interplay between language, history, and cultural amalgamation, illustrating the adaptive nature of language as it continues to evolve over time.

### Findings

Generally, this paper reacts to the acculturated lexicon processing of Philippine English and found the following: a) English has become the functional native tongue of the Filipinos over the years as it serves various functional nativeness across distinct linguistic and cultural groups, and many more; b) Filipinos overgeneralize the adaptations of the meaning of the words; c) In the use of derivational suffixes, Filipinos tend to overgeneralize some words which resulted to shift in form classes; d) Philippine variety of English still considers the use of Archaic or obsolete words which had been preserved through the years and are widely used in the country in the present; e) Filipino English lexicon features analogical constructions or creations of commonly existing words, cutting and shortening of existing words, and even coined words which are products of combined words usually resulting to a new word or phrase; and lastly, f) Philippine English lexicon contains Spanish loanwords which are very evident in the use of the language by the Filipinos.

### Conclusion

In the ever-evolving landscape of language, English stands out as one of the most influential languages worldwide. This study has offered insights into the nature of Philippine English, establishing it as a Filipino nativized variant of General American English. Through an examination of its lexicon, derived from acculturation processes, it becomes evident that Philippine English is not merely a borrowed language but a dynamic linguistic entity shaped by the Filipino people in their English conversations and various forms of communication.

The conclusion drawn from this research is that Philippine English, with its distinctive lexicon, emerges as a product of the acculturation experiences of Filipinos. This nativized variant, rooted in the learning of English alongside culture and traditions, exemplifies a natural socio-linguistic phenomenon. The language has become ingrained in the fabric of Filipino society, adapting to local contexts and reflecting the nuances of the Filipino identity.

As English continues to be a pervasive global language, the dativization of Philippine English underlines the adaptability and creativity of language speakers. It is a testament to the fluidity of language, as it intertwines with cultural elements and evolves in response to the diverse linguistic needs of its users. Understanding Philippine English as a nativized variant broadens our comprehension of the complex interplay between language, culture, and identity in the Filipino context.

The recognition, therefore, of Philippine English as a nativized variant emphasizes its role as a living linguistic phenomenon, shaped by the experiences, expressions, and cultural context of the Filipino people. This study contributes to our understanding of language evolution, shedding light on the intricate dynamics that transform a borrowed language into a distinct, nativized form within a unique socio-linguistic setting.

### Recommendations

#### It is recommended in this study that

1. Contextualized Introduction of General American English Words: It is recommended that teachers introduce General American English words to students within the context of their usage in Philippine settings. This approach would enhance students' understanding of the language's practical application, fostering a more relevant and meaningful language learning experience.
2. Development of Instructional Materials: Teachers are encouraged to develop instructional materials tailored to the Philippine English context. These materials can serve as valuable resources to support students in their language learning journey, providing them with relevant examples, exercises, and cultural insights that align with the nuances of Philippine English.
3. Creation of a Monograph on English Words in Philippine Variety: A significant recommendation is for researchers to create a comprehensive monograph that catalogues English words along with their functions in the Philippine variety. This monograph could serve as a reference guide for educators, students, and language enthusiasts, offering insights into the dynamic and evolving nature of Philippine English.
4. Conduct Linguistic Research on Filipino Lexicon Across Regions: To deepen our understanding of the diversity within the Filipino lexicon, it is suggested to conduct further linguistic research that explores the usage of English words in various regions of the country. This research could unveil regional variations, linguistic nuances, and unique expressions, contributing to a more holistic understanding of the Philippine English landscape.
5. Development of a Mini-Dictionary on Filipino Lexicon: A linguistic researcher is encouraged to create a mini-dictionary focusing on Filipino lexicon, encompassing coinage by analogy, abbreviations, incremental innovations, and compounds. This resource would be a valuable asset for language researchers, educators, and language learners seeking a comprehensive understanding of the intricate linguistic features embedded in Philippine English.
6. Dissemination of Research Insights: Teachers are recommended to actively disseminate the insights gained from this research within their educational institutions or to higher authorities. Sharing these findings can foster a broader awareness of the unique characteristics of Philippine English, potentially leading to the implementation of more effective language education strategies and policies.

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