The Millenials' Awareness and Understanding
of Philippine English

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Abstract: The awareness of students to the existence of a variety of English as a result of neologism and labelled as Philippine English is an area worth investigating. By utilising quantitative data from survey questionnaire administered to a fifty five students born in the early 2000, the study was able to determine the respondents' awareness and understanding of the selected words popularised in 1960's to present. The study reveals that 100% of the respondents are aware of the old and new words in the Philippine English. The accessibility to reading materials, television, and internet are found to be significant to the understanding of respondents to the lexemes of Philippine English. Interestingly, the lexicon and the consequent evolution of the words under study is understood by the millenials. In addition, new words have been formed and popularly used today. The lexicon of Philippine English is regarded as an informal language.

Key Words: Philippine English; millenials; awareness; formal; informal; neologism

I. INTRODUCTION

English is the global language (Crystal, 2001). It has become the dominant language around the world (Matsuda & Matsuda, 2010). It is regarded as the global language of the new millennium (Bughesi, 2011). Proponents of English in education refer English as the language of global competitiveness, the language of the open global labor markets, and the language of information and communication (Bernardo, 2007). In Europe, the status of English as lingua franca never changed, as it continued to be the language of trades, diplomacy and foreign affairs. (Bughesi,2011) These statements hardly require justification.

English is not a monolith but a catchall category for all its varieties-linguistic and functional-hence the term World Englishes. (Matsuda & Matsuda, 2010 p.369). English is Englishes (Gilsdorf, 2002), which means that it has gone morphing into multiple varieties through language contact, evolution, compounding, borrowing, coinage, and other linguistic processes.

The variety of English spoken by a particular people is the result of their linguistic, political, geographical, language contact, and cultural heritage and identity.

The Philippines is a nation with rich culture and heritage that reflects the indigenous diversity of the islands. Its present identity and unique features are not whimsical. They are mainly the result of a combination of events throughout its history. With a number of foreign occupations,

including mainly Spain, Japan, and the United States of America for sometime, the country has a diverse and rich cultural and linguistic heritage. As found in a recent study, the destiny of the Philippines is directly tied to its history (Wa-Mbaleka, 2014). The historical background is integrated in the artifacts that the Filipino people keep in their daily life, their communication, their behaviours, and their habits and customs.

Bautista (2000) made a great impact on the status of Philippine English in her paper "Defining Standard Philippine English: Its Status and Grammatical Features" stating that Philippine English is not English that falls short of the norms of Standard American English; it is not badly-learned English as a second language; its distinctive features are not errors committed by users who have not mastered the American standard. Instead, it is a nativized variety of English which has features that differentiate it from Standard American English because of the influence of the first language (specifically in pronunciation [...] but occasionally in grammar), because of the different culture in which the language is embedded (expressed in the lexicon and in discourse conventions), and because of a restructuring of some of the grammar rules (manifested in the grammar). Philippine English has an informal variety, especially in the spoken mode, which may include a lot of borrowing and code-mixing, and it has a formal variety which, when used by educated speakers and found acceptable in educated Filipino circles, can be called Standard Philippine English.

The development of Philippine English has had its own particular history linked to the educational development of the Philippines under American colonial rule and that of the postcolonial era. The first teachers of English to arrive in the Philippines from the USA were collectively known as the 'Thomasites'. The earliest of these arrived in 1901and were soon dispersed throughout the islands. They had an important impact, not only as teachers, but also as teacher-trainers, so that by 1921, 91 per cent of all teachers were native-born Filipinos and, thus, 'almost from the beginning, Filipinos learned English from Filipinos and the seeds of what we now call Philippine English began. (Gonzalez, 1997: 26-7)

Since then, the Philippine English as a variety has been an accepted phenomenon. Bautista (2006) worked with Susan Butler of Macquarie Dictionary in compiling a list of 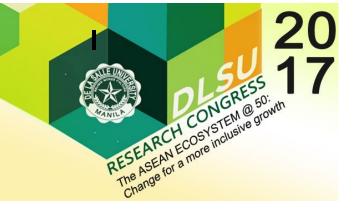Philippine English words for inclusion in an Asian English Dictionary and in 1992, aiming to form an Asian English data base, Macquarie started collecting works of fiction and non-fiction in English, and English language newspapers from Singapore, Malaysia, Hongkong, and Philippines-countries which have well-established varieties of English. (Bautista, 2006) Philippine English has continuously flourished, giving birth to new words which are popularly and widely used by Filipinos today.

Roxas et al (2008) reiterated that the lexicon (or dictionary) is a collection of source words with the corresponding translation in the target language, and their features (such as part-of-speech tag, sample sentences, and semantic information), and that the base lexicon for the Multi-engine MT project is the dictionary of the Commission on the Filipino Language (CFL) of the Philippine government, which contains approximately 10,000 English source words with a total of about 25,000 Filipino meanings. Roxas et al (2008) further explained that each English entry in the lexicon contains the POS tag of the word and the corresponding Filipino meaning, with co-occurring word information, and other English features or attributes (e.g., other acceptable spellings or syn set id based from WordNet) for proper translation. Semantic features address the problem of ambiguity since many words have many to many relationships and determining the proper translation is vital. A study is currently being explored in building a Tagalog WordNet so that the base lexicon can be extended to handle semantic features as in the WordNet.(Roxas et al, 2008)

With the presence of Corpora on Philippine languages such as Tagalog, Cebuano, Ilocano and Hiligaynon texts with 250,000 words each, and seven thousand signs in videos based on the Filipino sign language available through an online application, the inclusion of as many Philippine languages as possible with the cooperation and involvement of more linguists and researchers who are willing to document as many Philippine languages as possible is what the authors Roxas1, Asenjo, Corpuz, Dita, Inventado, Sison-Buban, and Taylan (2009) recommends.

Thus, in response, this study aims to explore the awareness and use of the lexicon of Philippine English by students belonging to Generation Y or Millenials.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

This paper characterizes the respondents' sociodemographic status. The study highlights the awareness and

understanding of the respondents towards the selected words resulting from neologism in the lexicon of Philippine English and find out if these words are regarded as formal or informal.

Specifically, it aims to answer the following questions:

1. What is the awareness and understanding of the respondents towards the specific words in the lexicon of the Philippine English?

2. How do the respondents view the lexicon of Philippine English with regards to formality?

1.2. Objectives of the study

This paper aims to characterise the respondents' sociodemographic profile. It focuses on the students' awareness and understanding of specific words which are products of neologism in the lexicon of Philippine English . It further aims to determine respondents' view on the formality of the usage of Philippine English.

Specifically, it aims:

1. To characterise the awareness and understanding of the respondents towards the old and new lexicon of the Philippine English;

2. To identify the respondents' view of the formality in the use of the lexicon of Philippine English.

1.3 Significance of the Study

This study is significant in determining the awareness and understanding of the respondents towards the lexicon of the Philippine English. It also investigates the view of the respondents on the formality in the use of the lexicon of Philippine English.

1.4 Theoretical Framework

The study is guided by a grounded theory on neologism or dynamism and creativity of language. Lexicon develops in various ways namely a) expansion, b) preservation of items which have been lost or become infrequent in other varieties, c) coinage, d) borrowing (Butler, 1996, cited by Bautista) Thus, this undertaking is primed at the theoretical framework also used by Bautista in her study Lexicon of Philippine English, and on the premise that the words which are considered as variety of Philippine English is an influence of culture, history, community through language contact, evolution, compounding, borrowing, coinage, and other linguistic processes.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Research Design

This study utilized qualitative data from survey questionnaire administered to students in obtaining specific answers and relevant information.

2.2. Respondents

The respondents of the study were the whole class (total enumeration) consisting of 40 Grade 10 students at a national high school in the City of San Jose, Nueva Ecija. Other millennials were invited but only 15 responded and participated, which gave a total of 55 respondents

2.3. Instrumentation

A self-made survey questionnaire was developed based from the study of Bautista (2006) in her paper 'The Lexicon of Philippine English'.

2.4. Data Analysis

Analysis was done through descriptive analysis using frequency count.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This is an empirical study which aimed to determine the students' awareness and understanding of the words classified as Philippine English.

3.1. Socio-demographic Profile of Respondents

Majority or 60.0% of the total respondents are from households having five and above members and a close percentage having a low monthly income of Php 15,000.00 and below. On the other hand, 34.54% of the respondents are from lower-middle income families. Majority of the fathers and mothers have reached secondary level; but noticeably, there are more male parents who have reached the tertiary level of education. The reading materials available at home are important in socialisation and language familiarity among the family members especially those who attend a formal schooling. However, this kind of learning resources may depend on various factors such as family income, family expenditure and interest of parents. Studies have shown that educational background of parents is important factor in influencing the attitude and learning practices of their children. Families with parents having a good educational background can be more encouraging in their children's education by providing them access to various learning materials at home. Similarly, in this study, although we can consider that parents are not highly educated, their dreams to have children who will alleviate them from poverty is a motivating factor for parents to provide learning materials for their children. Eighty percent of the respondents have available reading materials at home while 20% of the respondents have none. All of the respondents' households have televisions at home.On the other hand, internet access at home is a media for educational exploration on huge information around the world and an opportunity for the students to be familiar on oral and written English. Majority of the students 40 or 72.73%) have an internet access at home. Interestingly, the availability of reading materials at home and access to internet are in close range of percentages. This validates that those who invest in reading materials also access the internet to supplement their printed reading resources. All of the respondents speak Tagalog followed by Ilokano, which is spoken by 32 or 58.18% of the respondents. Interestingly, 45.45% have answered that they speak English at home.

3.2 Awareness to the selected words

The awareness, which, in this study, is operationally defined synonymously with understanding, is determined. Thirty five words were selected and presented to the students through a survey questionnaire. Surprisingly, 100% of the respondents completely understand the words 'querida' and 'TY', while the words 'carinosa' and 'gives' are the words they are least aware of or they least understand. The word 'querida' is a borrowed Spanish word, and in the Philippine English it means 'mistress'. The complete understanding and awareness of respondents to the word 'querida' or 'mistress' maybe attributed to their exposure to immoralities which are the usual plot or subject in the current 'teleseryes' , films, magazines and newspapers today. These social media expose the existence or may even be prevalence of other family or other woman in the Philippine culture, though it also exposes the non-acceptance of society to the plot. It is worth mentioning that respondents have access to internet (72.73%), availability of reading materials (80%), and 100% have televisions at home. This may have influenced their awareness and understanding of the words. The word' TY' which is an acronym for Thank You connotes that Filipinos, even at their age, are people who are appreciative and values the cultural influence of expressing appreciation and gratefulness. Filipino time, 97.5% and Taglish 95% are also close in range. It is worth mentioning that the word 'Filipino time' is often used to students when teachers emphasise rules on punctuality in attending classes and school programs, and which is also used to criticise the tardiness and 'by and by' attitude connotative of the Filipino culture. Other items in the words they least understand are placed at a distant percentage from the words they are fully aware of. These words are 'carinosa' at 17.5% and 'gives' at 27.5%. Carinosa is a borrowed Spanish word which means sweet or charming, while the word 'gives' is used to mean the mode of payment when acquiring a good, such as " I will pay this bag in four gives" meaning the payment will be in four instalment basis. It is worth mentioning that the awareness and understanding of the respondents were validated by their understanding to the evolution or retention of the words in the Philippine English. Considering that the respondents were born in 2000, they were asked to identify if the words in the 1960s have evolved into new words or retained the same

word, even in the passing of time. Results show that there are 16 words which have replaced the old words. This means that the evolution or morphing of words is evident. This can be attributed to the presence of media, language contact, and other forms of word formation.

Fourteen out of 35 words in Philippine English in 1960s have retained the same word today. These words are pasalubong, sayang, traffic, Pinoy, istambay, advanced, bongga, busted, eat and run, masa, japajuki, macho dancer, talgish and trapo.. On the other hand, 16 new words have come to replace the old words. Stateside and PX now popularly known as imported, from promdi to probinsihyano, querida to kabit or mistress, toilet humour to mean bastos, TY to thanks, onion-skinned to sensitive, anting anting to magic, American time means on time, bake to badly, burgis to rich kid, carinosa-sweet, DH to katulong, DOM to rich man, family way is jontis, and home boy to simply boy.

3.3 New words as result of neologism

Asked what new words are popular to the respondents, ten new words were identified as words widely used mostly in the social media today. These comprise the language that people often use in relation to technology and the presence of the LGBT society. Social media seem to disperse the words, and people seem to become tolerant of the neologism spreading as a result of the coined, clipped, compounded, abbreviated, and the 'invented lingo' . Seven words are used exclusively when speaking with a friend, while the other three, 'selfie', 'push', and 'gora' are used when speaking both with a friend and a teacher. This can be reasoned from the fact that the words are used in general, and not related to gender, body parts, and relationships.

3.4 Usage of the words whether formal/ informal

Moreover, the use of lexemes in formal or informal situations are determined. The words when used with a friend stand for informal situation, and words used when speaking with a teacher defines the formality of the word. If words are used both with a friend and a teacher, this means that respondents are not particular with words they employ in different situations. They do not give much attention to the appropriateness of the words in terms of formality. Forty eight or 87% of the respondents exclusively use the words
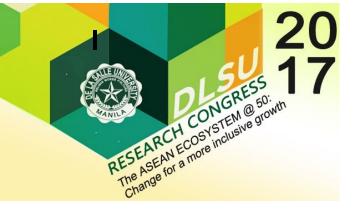
'Toilet humor', 'Green Joke', 85% and 'Macho Dancer' also at 85% exclusively with a friend. This means that the line in using these words which are considered 'toilet' are not appropriate to use since these words are not accepted in public domain of Philippine culture. These words are somehow related to gender and body parts, which are considered sensitive issues. The eighty percent would use the coined word Pinoy when speaking both with a friend and with a teacher. This is not surprising since the word Pinoy, which was used to connote the Filipinos, specifically the masses, is actually familiar to the millennial kids since today, it is more of a name to represent Pinoy, the president, and a line found in the famous song in the 'PBB House', a television show reflecting a real-life situation. This, of course, is a shared 'language' with all the sectors in the society, heard and used in all avenues. Interestingly, the words DH(52.5%) pasalubong, sayang, TY, advanced, onion-skinned, anting anting, American time, Filipino time, carinosa, masa, dirty ice cream and Pinoy (80%) are used by half or 50% of the respondents when speaking both with a friend and a teacher. These words are associated with culture and history of the Philippines.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Technology is an effective vehicle for language disposal since the accessibility to reading materials, television, and internet are significant to the understanding of respondents to the lexemes of Philippine English. Despite the fact that the words were popular in 1960's, millennials reported a significant understanding to the words. This understanding was validated by being able to trace the evolution of the words. In addition, they identified new words popular today. The neologism in Philippine English is regarded by millennials as informal language. Further research may help identify the correct level of utilising Philippine English in an appropriate discourse.

5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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