
International Forum
Vol. 17, No. 1
April 2014
pp. 38-55

FEATURE

A Brief Ethnography on Philippine English

*Safary Wa-Mbaleka, Claudia Blath,
Janice Lloren, & Wenwan Duan*

Abstract. *The Philippines is a nation with a 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. Its linguistic diversity and cultural uniqueness—e.g., being the only Asian Christian country—are clear evidence of several colonial influences (Hechanova, 2012; Miller, 2014). Using an ethnographic approach, this paper examines English, Taglish, and pragmatic aspects in a suburb and a metropolitan area of the Philippines. This study reveals that socioeconomic status, educational attainment and background go hand in hand with the level of exposure and usage of the English language. It also shows that the interactional and speech acts that nine participants demonstrated during the interviews, together with the artifacts found on the research sites, are reflections of their culture. The study also led to the conclusion that code-switching or Taglish is common among English-speaking Filipinos. Finally, more English proficiency was evidenced with people who had attended private schools more than those who attended public education.*

Keywords: Philippines, ethnography, English, Tagalog, Taglish, culture, speech acts, interactional acts, code-switching.

Introduction

The Philippines offers a unique context for the interaction of culture and English as a second language. It makes the Philippines an interesting place

for research on pragmatics. This unique setting is due to the rich historical background of the country. With a number of foreign occupations, including mainly Spain, Japan, and the United States of America (USA) for some time, the country has a diverse and rich cultural and linguistic heritage. The Philippines has survived the chaos of the different colonial eras and dealt with change at different historical points. Additionally, it is currently thriving socioeconomically, socio-politically, culturally, and linguistically on both local and global levels.

As found in a recent study, the destiny of the Philippines is directly tied to its history (Wa-Mbaleka, 2014). In trying to understand the present and the future of the nation, people must make an intentional effort to understand its historical background. The historical background is integrated in the artifacts that the Filipino people keep in their daily life, their communication, their behaviors, and their habits and customs. Such a combination results in some intricacies that are worth some systematic exploration.

The goal of this study was to explore the ramifications of the Filipino culture as evidenced through language usage, especially English and Taglish, in the Philippine context. This study is important as the country is in the early years of implementing the Mother-Tongue-Based Multilingual Education while switching from a K+10 to a K+12 educational system. Understanding the current state of culture and language usage in the Philippines brings a good contribution to the ongoing discussion of these new policy changes.

Review of Literature

The Philippines is a nation that underwent occupation from three foreign powers in the 19th and 20th centuries, that is, Spain, the United States, and Japan. Spanish and American influences are still evident in its local languages, culture, religion, architecture, arts, and education (Hechanova, 2012). For instance, Filipino, the national language, still contains several Spanish words, and many Filipinos have Spanish family names, while English is predominantly used as an official language resulting from the American influence.

For the sake of readers outside of the Philippines, it is important to keep in mind the difference between Tagalog and Filipino, as these two languages will be mentioned repeatedly throughout this paper. Tagalog is the language spoken primarily in the Luzon region of the Philippines, where Manila (the capital city) is located. Interestingly, Tagalog makes up more than 80% of Filipino, the national language. It is not uncommon to find people using the two languages interchangeably because, from linguistic perspectives, Tagalog can be considered a dialect of Filipino. Since this study was conducted in Manila and in another city outside Manila, this paper does not use these two concepts interchangeably. We value the linguistically distinct classification that has been given to the two languages.

Globally speaking, the Philippines is situated in the second or Outer Circle of Kachru's three-concentric-circle diagram (Kachru, Kachru, & Nelson, 2009) because English is used as an official language or lingua franca among different ethnic groups (Harmer, 2007). In 1901, English became the medium of instruction along with the local languages. This happened even though there were some periods of time when English was totally dominant or banished at all levels of instruction, according to the ever-shifting educational policies (Bernardo, 2004; Hardacker, 2012).

Currently, every Filipino has an opportunity to learn English. English is found at school, at home, at church, in the media, and on billboards. It is immersive. The degree of proficiency, though, seems to depend on the socioeconomic status of each speaker. Students from lower socioeconomic status attend primarily Tagalog-based public schools that offer English as a subject among others. Those from a higher socioeconomic status can afford private education, which is mainly based on English as the medium of instruction for all subject matters, except the Filipino subject (McFarland, 2004).

This phenomenon is not a minor detail if analyzed through the lens of the Critical Period Hypothesis. According to this theory, the optimum age for the acquisition of languages is before puberty. After that period, the brain's plasticity decreases, inhibiting the individual's ability to learn a language (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, & Goodwin, 2010; Nunan 2009). Therefore, the fact that some Filipinos have access to an early full immersion program in the English language, while others can have only a glimpse of it at school at best, is a present-day pedagogical reality whose influence shapes the social aspects of the Philippine culture to a large extent. It is especially true in big cities where occupations and social functions are more specialized, and socioeconomic differences are more evident.

In big cities in the Philippines, there is no doubt about the strong relationship that exists between English proficiency and socioeconomic status. In fact, as early as a decade ago, McFarland (2004) stated:

What we do see is a division of the country, and especially Manila, into linguistic spheres: such as an English sphere as opposed to Tagalog sphere. English is the language of business, the hotels, the shopping malls. Tagalog is the language of small talk (gossip), the wet market, small businesses. English-speaking people take airplanes and ride in cars. Tagalog-speakers (we should say those who cannot speak English) take boats and jeepneys. (p. 73)

In other words, those who speak English fluently in the Philippines have higher potential access to socioeconomic power than those who do not. Those who cannot speak English, have to embrace a subordinate lifestyle, which, sometimes, comes with some sense of low self-esteem. Wardhaugh (2010) focuses on

regional languages and social languages as two opposite terms, defining the latter as languages typically connected to a particular social class that act as a watershed between them and other classes. This is evidently the case with the highly prestigious place that English is assigned in the Philippine society.

As competent as they are, however, the English-speaking Filipinos bring with them such a rich heritage of social norms and interactional and speech acts from their own local culture and language to the Filipino variety of English that the unsuspecting outsider may have a hard time trying to communicate effectively with them. They often speak Taglish, an informal English where Spanish, Tagalog, and English converge in a code-switching phenomenon (Thompson, 2003). Whether Taglish is a dialect, a language on its own right, or a creole, is not part of this paper. Suffice it to say that it may still be in the *creolization* process that may someday turn into a brand new language.

The most salient feature about the interaction between English and Tagalog is that Filipino people transfer their rich body language in their characteristic fashion, as seen in many illustrations below (Ellis, 2008). For instance, they open their mouths when they do not understand a question, and lift their eyebrows quickly for a greeting or a positive answer. They lift their pinkie to count one, and continue with their ring finger when they mean two. Like most East Asians, they avoid staring, and even direct eye contact as a sign of respect, contrary to the Western connotation of guilt or embarrassment.

In addition, due to the face-saving concept, Filipinos have a hard time when it comes to saying no. Instead, they dissent with their heads down while uttering “yes” and actually meaning no, something that can easily lead to pragmatic failure in communication with foreigners. Non-confrontational communication is appreciated, so a straightforward manner of telling the truth is unwelcome (Akechi, Senju, Uibo, Kikuchi, Hasegawa, & Hietanen, 2013; Murray Bosrock, 2014). All these subtleties deserve careful study as they apparently convey even more meaning than actual utterances. Literature was almost mute on the combined effort of both the insider’s and outsider’s view of the interaction of English, Tagalog, and the Philippine culture from applied linguistic perspectives. Even though Mojica (2002) claimed that studies are highly limited on the topic of speech acts in the Philippines, it seems like the number of the studies is simply not increasing. Yet, such an exploration is of great importance today because the Philippines has become more open to foreigners and this country is well known for influencing the labor market in the global arena.

The purpose of this study, then, was to examine the relationship between the social status, the educational background, and the communication abilities of the Filipinos in their cultural context. It involved exploring how all these factors come into play in the interaction between pragmatics and the use of both English and Tagalog. Such an exploration could not be more timely due to

the extensive international labor market offered to Filipinos and the thousands of international students, businessmen, and tourists flocking to the Philippines today.

Three major research questions were central to exploration for the purposes of this study.

1. How does the historical background of the Philippines affect today's Filipino culture and Philippine English?
2. To what extent is attendance either in public or private elementary schools reflected in English competence?
3. How do interactional acts and speech acts of the Filipino culture contribute to the usage of English and the Filipino language?

Because of the complexity of culture and language, it was necessary to focus on some specific pragmatic elements. This study intended to explore the participants' age group, level of education, first language (L1), English proficiency, attitude towards their second language (L2), socioeconomic status, appearance, degree of openness, face-saving, eye contact (Echeverria, 2009), and settings—the social and physical aspects where the interviews took place.

Methodology

Because of the complexities of the issues explored in this study, qualitative research methods were appropriate. Quantitative research could not have provided the richness sought in order to discover meaning through the study. Qualitative inquiry focuses on gaining deep understanding of a particular phenomenon as experienced by the participants of the study—rather than on factual data—to come to a conclusion (Silverman, 2000). Given that the study's researchers originated from four different countries on three different continents, with individual, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds, only qualitative research could provide the flexibility needed for the study. The different perspectives from the four different countries provided a special opportunity to bring together different perspectives on data analysis and interpretation. The Filipina co-author of the study checked all the interpretation from the insider's perspective.

Research Design

In an attempt to understand and analyze the daily cultural realities of the people who live or work in two different Philippine communities, this study is ethnographic in nature. Ethnography helps learn about a phenomenon experienced by a group of people from the cultural perspective (Fife, 2005). From Fife's perspective, this study was conducted at a micro level. In fact, it was a one-shot study consisting of one day of interviews and observations for each of the two settings described in this study.

This mini-ethnographic study focused on identifying the factors that contribute to, or hinder, the acquisition of English as an additional language of people living and/or working in two settings. They are both located in the Luzon region of the Philippines: a semi-rural *barangay* (or small community) in the province of Cavite, and a compound run by the national government in the most urbanized area of the Philippines.

This study is a mini-ethnographic research with a phenomenological slant, as its purpose was to describe people's experiences from their own perceptions and understanding. An ethnographic design was selected as the best fit for this study, as its aims were to describe, analyze, and interpret a "culture-sharing group's shared patterns of behavior, beliefs, and language that develop over time" (Creswell, 2008, p. 473). In this particular case, the different people interviewed and observed in this study have developed a shared language and have acquired English as an additional language at different degrees of mastery, which was the focus of this research study. The intent was to identify, observe, and analyze data from the standpoint of English as a second language.

Instrumentation

The inductive process of qualitative research required the researchers to be the main instruments in data collection and the subsequent analysis (Merriam, 2009). Therefore, we took pictures of scenes and items; took notes of the short-term observations of settings, activities, behaviors and attitudes; and conducted unstructured interviews with participants. The secretary of the barangay hall in Barangay A and the guard at the entrance of the nationwide cultural compound granted permission to collect data. They also became important informants in this study as they suggested the potential places to conduct interviews and observations.

Each half-day visit in each setting was followed by analysis of written notes and the organization ideas into themes to better comprehend the data and address the research questions. Before the informal interviews began, all the participants were informed of the purpose of the study and were given the option to decide whether or not to participate. Pictures were taken only with their consent, and interviews were kept as short as possible to ensure participants sustained a high level of comfort and willingness to participate in the study. The longest interview took one hour, while the shortest lasted ten minutes.

Description of Settings

This mini-ethnography explored, compared, and contrasted the Filipino culture and language in two settings of the Philippines. The first one, referred to here as Barangay A (BA), is located in the province of Cavite,

one of the provinces of the Luzon region of the Philippines. The second is a metropolitan nationwide-cultural compound (NCC) located in Manila.

Barangay A. BA is a suburban community that boasts several churches—Roman Catholic, Iglesia ni Cristo, Seventh-day Adventist, Methodist, and Born-Again Christian churches—retail stores, *carinderias* or small eateries; and two Christian private schools, along with a barangay hall and simple residential buildings neatly distributed. Unlike other nearby barangays, it has no health center, no hospital, and no bank.

In this area, tricycles are used for public rides, while motorcycles and cars are the primary means of private transportation. There are other services, such as garbage collection and the Water District that provide water for the entire area. The barangay officials are active in implementing cleanliness. Once a week, the officials initiate and perform the Clean-up Drive during which they go around and clean the streets. In relation to cleanliness, most of the houses have septic tanks to ensure proper sanitation. In addition, the barangay has a car that patrols every night to ensure peace and order.

The new barangay secretary was not able to provide an updated population figure, although he estimated a number of 1,500 voters. In this setting, non-permanent residents consisted of students, farm and factory workers from other regions who rent apartments. Residents' occupations vary from teachers, engineers, and nurses, to factory workers, farmers, among others. According to the barangay secretary, more than 50% of the young people in this setting attend school while the rest work in factories and farms. In the secretary's opinion, children who do not attend school are usually from farmers' families—which may be considered stereotypical.

The artifacts sourced from this setting are a *sombrero*, a trophy plaque, and a clay jar. *Sombrero* is a Spanish hat used during *fiestas*. It is “a kind of broad-brimmed hat, worn in Spain and in Spanish America” (English Encyclopedia, 2014, *Sombrero*, para. 1). The use of the *sombrero* has continued in today's Filipino culture, even if it was obviously introduced centuries ago by the Spaniards. It explains the ongoing practice of fiestas around the country. A trophy signifies the Filipinos' love for recognition and awards. A trophy plaque is a means of rewarding or giving recognition for achievements (Kramer, 1980). It is widely used in the Philippines. At academic conferences, professional and formal events, it is common to see Filipino give awards, certificates, and other material gifts that reflect this background of the trophy.

Conversely, a clay jar is a more indigenous artifact. It was one of the earthen pots that ancient Filipinos used to bury their dead according to archaeologists, who discovered earthen jars in some caves in Northern Luzon and concluded that the artifacts were associated with burial (Mijares, 2005). Currently, some Filipinos use clay jars as water containers. The use of the clay jar has

obviously shifted from burial purposes to water conservation. This adaptation is understandable given that the evolution of any culture usually ends with conserving some cultural traits, integrating new ones, and ridding itself of others.

Nation-wide Cultural Compound. On the other hand, the NCC is located along a prominent boulevard in one of the cities in the capital region of the Philippines. This complex encompasses several buildings. The main one houses a museum, a theater, and a library. The others include a convention hall that accommodates graduation programs for colleges and universities, national and international conventions, and other big events; a bank that is the country's central monetary authority; an amusement park that offers entertainment and leisure for families; and a church building. In addition, there is a park with a night bar, an exercise ground, and a fishing spot.

The careful observer can assess what type of people live and interact around the complex, their socioeconomic and educational status, and the values that relate to their preferences of language of communication. Filipinos who live around the complex are from different regions of the country. Most came to this area primarily for job opportunities. There are *Maguindanaoans* from Mindanao, *Kapampangans* from Pampanga, *Visayans* from Visayas, and *Tagalogs* from the capital and southern Luzon regions. Due to poverty or the search for better job opportunities, these people migrated from their provinces to Manila, bringing with them their languages and cultural values. The mixture of these cultural backgrounds certainly has an important effect on the Filipino culture in general, on Tagalog in particular, and on the creolization of Tagalog into Taglish. Additionally, the fact that people who come from other provinces may not be too fluent in Tagalog and Filipino plays a role in the use of English, the official language. Based on the different linguistic backgrounds, the use, teaching, and learning of English in this setting can thus be defined. Chaos or thriving in English teaching and learning in the Philippines can certainly be influenced by these diverse linguistic backgrounds.

According to Brown (2014), art is an element of culture that defines a way of life. It contributes to the understanding of the cultural values and heritage that the members hold. One of the facilities of the NCC is the museum that displays different musical instruments from Southeast Asian countries and showcases the Filipino traditions about life and death. The musical section suggests Filipinos' passion for music. Yu Jose (2007) comments that the top occupation of Filipinos in Japan relates to music as entertainment. Hence, this reality expresses not only the passion for music but also the musical skills that many Filipinos possess. Based on the relationship that has been established between musical talent and ability to learn a second language (Brown, 2014), this cultural trait of the Filipinos must be taken into consideration in English language teaching and learning.

Some artifacts in the NCC emphasized the family unit and the collectivist society of the Philippines. Paintings and sculptures of different colors and shapes highlighted how much Filipinos depend on each other on a daily basis. This cultural value is still generally strongly upheld everywhere in the Philippines. This need of association of members of a community is important in language teaching and learning because it calls for abundant communication.

Some similarities and differences existed between the two settings. Both had businesses, schools, and churches. In both settings, people belonged to different socioeconomic and educational strata. BA is a suburban community with strong agricultural characteristics. The NCC setting is highly urbanized because it is part of a metropolis. Unlike BA, the NCC has easier access to banks, prestigious convention centers, and recreational sites.

Table 1
Demographic Data of the Research Participants – BA

Participants	1	2	3	4	5	6
Gender	Male	Male	Female	Male	Male	Female
Age group	50s	70s	10s	10s	40s	60s
Level of education	Bachelor graduate	College	Grade 1	Grade 3	Bachelor graduate	Elem.
L1	Tagalog	Tagalog	Tagalog	Tagalog	Visayan	Tagalog
Elementary School	Public	Public	Private	Private	Public	Public
Spoken English	Fair	Fair	Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Not at all
Age of 1 st English course	7	7	4	4	7	Informal contact
Language at home	Tagalog	Tagalog/English	Tagalog/English	Tagalog/English	Visayan/English	Tagalog
Interview setting	Barangay Hall	Home	Home	Home	Private School	Home
Socioeconomic status	Low	Middle	Middle	Middle	Middle	Very low

Table 2
Demographic Data of the Research Participants – NCC

Participants	7	8	9
Gender	Male	Male	Female
Age group	20s	50s	50s
Level of education	High school	College level	MA
L1	Visayan	Tagalog	Kapampangan
Elementary school	Public	Public	Private
Spoken English	Broken	Understands but does not speak	Excellent
Age of 1 st English course	7	14	7
Language at home	Visayan	Tagalog	Tagalog/ English
Setting of the interview	CCP seaside	CCP Museum	CCP library
Socioeconomic status	Low	Low	Middle

Description of Participants

Purposive sampling was used for the selection of participants since the main interest of this study was to work with small samples to achieve an in-depth understanding of the phenomena and to create rapport with participants in order to obtain authentic in-depth information (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Nine interviewees participated in this study. Six men and three women of different ages, levels of education, and socioeconomic status were interviewed in both settings. Tables 1 and 2 summarize significant demographic data.

Findings

In this section, the paper presents results related to three main themes: (1) Tagalog-English code-switching (Taglish); (2) the impact of the critical age, socioeconomic status, and educational background on English learning; and (3) cultural meaning conveyed by interactional acts and speech acts. These are the themes that were predominant in both the interviews and informal observations.

Tagalog-English Code-Switching

When two of the research participants—the barangay secretary and the library director in the NCC—were interviewed, snatches of Tagalog words inserted into English sentences became apparent—i.e., “*Pagnagsalita ka, I would say*” [When you talk about it, I would say]. Bautista (2004) calls this linguistic phenomenon Taglish, defining it as a linguistic combination of English with Tagalog.

Although well educated, the barangay secretary and the library director still switched between English and Tagalog according to the situations. The library director often indicated that she spoke Tagalog at home, but sometimes switched to English if the idea was hard to convey in Tagalog. In the office, she used Tagalog with colleagues in casual conversations, but communicated in English in formal meetings. Whether consciously or unconsciously, she employed code-switching for the following reasons: for easier understanding, lack of indigenous terms, brevity, precision, or emphasis.

While some linguists may argue that code-switching is perfectly fine for users of both English and Tagalog, there is reason to be concerned. A recent study found that young Filipinos today are unable to speak competently in either English or Tagalog without using code-switching (Chureson, 2013). On the other hand, it is true that from a sociolinguistic perspective, code-switching may not be viewed as a major issue as long as people can communicate successfully with one another. This is, however, a concern when globalization is concerned because code-switching can negatively affect communication between Filipinos and foreigners.

The problem arises when a city like Manila, where the NCC is located, welcomes many foreigners who are not able to successfully decode the message conveyed in Taglish. Looking at this issue from the global perspective, a purist approach to language usage, teaching, and learning seems to be the best way to go. In other words, Filipinos whose mother tongue is Tagalog must be proficient in Tagalog (for their first language), English (for their official language), and Taglish if that is what binds them together as community of friends.

Critical Age, Socio economic Status and Educational Background

Most signboards and LED advertising screens around the NCC area are written in English. English as a medium of communication has indeed penetrated the Philippine society. The analysis of this study, however, showed that participants presented diverse English proficiency levels, and that they correlated with the factors presented in Tables 1 and 2. An earlier exposure to English enhances English communication skills. For instance, Participants 7 and 9 learned English at age four and showed an excellent competence in English speaking, while Participant 8, who was exposed to English at age fourteen, could understand, but was unable (or at least unwilling) to speak in English most of the time.

An English immersion program administered at an early age does play an important role, but the participants' socioeconomic and educational backgrounds also have some impact on second language acquisition. All the participants who spoke English well—3, 4, 5, and 9—belong to the middle class, and they all studied in private elementary schools. Participants 6, 7, 8, on the other hand, who spoke broken English or were unable to communicate in English, belonged to a lower socioeconomic class and studied in public elementary schools. In addition, it seems that although participants 2 and 7 learned English at an early age, their English proficiency was just fair because they attended public elementary schools.

This finding should not lead to the conclusion that public education in the Philippines is necessarily weak. In Outer Circle, it is a common practice for private schools to emphasize English more than local languages. This preference for English over local languages may be linked to the idea of English imperialism that was so prevalent a couple of decades ago (Finegan, 2011). This attitude usually leads people to believe that if one comes from a high socioeconomic class, she or he must be able to interact with people outside his or her country. Public schools, on the contrary, usually emphasize national identity and national pride, with an emphasis on the value of the national and local cultures and languages.

The interview with Participant 5 revealed that there is a difference in the emphasis of instruction between public and private schools. Private schools use English as the medium of instruction, while public schools follow the 1987 Bilingual Education Policy. They use the English language to teach English, mathematics, and science, and employ Filipino for instruction in other subjects. Moreover, Valdez (2010) confirmed that a considerable amount of teachers in public schools prefer using Taglish as the language of instruction. Therefore, students in public schools have less exposure to English than those that attend private schools. Based on Krashen's (1989) Input Hypothesis, it then makes sense why those who attended public schools would be less fluent in English than those who attended private schools.

In relation to English acquisition and usage, based on the interview with the barangay secretary, the residents' acquisition and usage of English depends on the following factors: (a) educational attainment of their parents, (b) the type of schools that students attend, and (c) the amount of exposure to the language. The same thought was echoed in other interviews. Children who speak and understand English are those who attend private schools, are exposed to the language through media, and whose parents are professionals—engineers, teachers, doctors, businessmen, and the like.

English is widely used in private schools. One interview with the principal of a Christian school provided more information on how much English is used in the private schools in the area. This Christian school has a population of 75 students ranging from Grades 1 to 6. It is an English-speaking school, although all the teachers are Filipinos. English is used as the medium of instruction in all subjects except the Filipino subject. Students are encouraged to speak English with their fellow students in the class and during recess. English is also the means of communication and instruction during school activities such as Nutrition Month and Family Day, and also during religious services. When asked how students learn to speak English, the answers were that “They learn[ed] it from home,” and “because some students are Visayans.” The former suggests that most of the students come from homes where parents are professional and the environment provides an ample amount of exposure to the language. The latter suggests that Visayans prefer English to Tagalog or Filipino because their mother tongue is different—Visayan.

Cultural Meaning Conveyed by Speech Acts

Participants' speech acts sometimes conveyed more meaning than actual utterances. It is important that foreigners learn to read the underlying cultural meaning beyond mere statements in these settings. All participants extended greetings with polite smiles, but sometimes their politeness hindered them from directly refusing requests to participate in the study. For example, Participant 2 said “yes” with his chin down when asked for permission to take pictures of his furniture. What he wanted to convey, however, was that he dissented to the request. This contrast is a clear example of a situation where gestures are more meaningful for communication than direct speech acts.

Such subtleties would not have been noticed without the insider's perspective of the Filipino co-researcher on our team. Such hidden messages can lead to misinterpretation in communication with people who are foreign to these two settings or similar settings in the Philippines. It is not uncommon for a foreigner to interpret such a gesture as a “yes”, when the message is intended to be negative. When intercultural communication is concerned, Tagalog speakers will need to convey an unequivocal message to the interlocutor.

In the NCC, due to the embarrassment he felt because of his low English competency, Participant 8 eluded a face-threatening act by avoiding direct eye contact. When the only Filipina on the research team went out of the musical hall, Participant 8 immediately followed her, leaving the other researchers alone in the hall. Another strategy for dealing with a face-threatening act registered in this study was the strategy of offering silence or excuses in reaction to complaints. For instance, when asked why incorrect information was placed on the NCC's official website, one participant at the NCC simply responded, "I am sorry" without providing any further explanation.

Due to the incorrect information on the NCC's official website regarding its hours of operation, we arrived three hours earlier at the NCC museum than its opening time. On hearing the situation, the receptionist remained silent and offered no apology. When pressed further with additional information regarding the dissatisfaction that resulted from the error and the need for improvement, she simply murmured, "I do not know." Foreign visitors would certainly regard this speech act as rude if they do not understand that this is one of the preferred ways for Filipinos to deal face-threatening acts.

Conclusion

People who live and work in the two selected settings are from low and middle socioeconomic classes, with different educational backgrounds and attainments. This study reveals that there are at least three factors contributing to the preference and use of English as a second language among the participants: their social status, their educational attainment and background, and their exposure to the English language. It also shows that the interactional and speech acts (e.g., lack of apology and eye-contact avoidance) demonstrated by the participants are reflections of their culture, and that code-switching or Taglish is common among English-speaking Filipinos.

The participants who attended private schools and belong to the middle class have better English communication skills than those who attended public schools and come from a lower class. Those who attended private schools have more exposure to English because it is used as the medium of instruction and the means of communication even during break-time (McFarland, 2004). This high level of exposure to English (or input in Krashen's Input Hypothesis) certainly plays an important role. Notwithstanding, there could be other factors that can affect the ability to communicate in English than those analyzed in this study. Therefore, further studies might take into consideration other factors that may affect the communicative ability of the Filipinos; the purpose of speech acts—whether they are a cultural or a personality matter—and the effects of English on the Filipino culture.

It is also recommend that English teachers in these settings develop strategies to reach students who belong to low socioeconomic status by opening opportunities for them to obtain better quality education, emphasizing the communicative aspect of English. On the other hand, an effort must be made in private schools to help Filipino learners develop and support their mother tongue and the cultural identity pertaining to their mother tongue. As much as we acknowledge the importance of promoting English for globalization purposes, local languages and cultures should be taught, promoted, and enhanced in the classroom.

Pedagogical Implications

An L2 teacher must choose teaching strategies tailored for the local culture. A Filipino will feel ashamed and lose self-esteem if publicly embarrassed or is unable to live up to expectations (Kwintessential, 2013). An L2 teacher, then, can use implicit recast strategies to soften acts that might threaten students or make them lose face. Nassaji and Fotos (2011) listed several recast options. Two of them are giving partial agreement (*yeah, but...*), and repeating the student's answer with a rising intonation or added stress to indicate an indirect correction. In addition, nonverbal feedback with gestures and facial expressions can minimize social distance and power difference between teachers and students. Public-school teachers must be sensitive enough to build students' confidence and communicative skills, since some of them have low self-esteem due to their socioeconomic and family background, and their inability to express themselves well in English.

Currently, many foreigners are in the Philippines to learn English or to study in general (Wa-Mbaleka & Gaikwad, 2013). They might experience frustration because teachers and students unconsciously switch to Taglish. Filipinos are considerate and willing to switch back to English if foreigners ask for clarification and express their confusion. This issue of code-switching needs to be brought to the awareness of educational leaders and educators in the Philippine schools that host international students. The moment such schools agree to enroll international students, they must understand that they have the duty to avoid code-switching at school.

English is enjoying its imperialism era today. For the sake of the survival of local languages, linguists should work hand-in-hand with applied linguists to promote purist approaches of teaching languages. This recommendation holds true whether it is for Tagalog as a mother tongue or English as an additional language.

References

- Akechi, H., Senju, A., Uibo, H., Kikuchi, Y., Hasegawa, T., & Hietanen, J. K. (2013). Attention to eye contact in the West and East: Autonomic responses and evaluative ratings. *Plos One*, 8(3), 1-10. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0059312
- Bautista, M. L. S. (2004). Tagalog-English code switching as a mode of discourse. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 5(2), 226-233.
- Bernardo, A. I. (2004). McKinley's questionable bequest: Over 100 years of English in Philippine education. *World Englishes*, 23(1), 17-31. doi:10.1111/j.1467-971X.2004.00332.x
- Brown, H. D. (2014). *Principles of language learning and teaching* (6th ed.). White Plains, NY: Pearson.
- Celce-Murcia, M., Brinton, D. M., & Goodwin, J. M. (2010). *Teaching pronunciation: A course book and reference guide* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Cambridge University.
- Chureson, O. (2013). The impact of English as a global language on Filipino language practices. *International Forum*, 16(2), 22-36.
- Creswell, J. W. (2008). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Echeverria Castillo, R. E. (2009). *The role of pragmatics in second language teaching*. Retrieved from http://digitalcollections.sit.edu/ipp_collection/479
- Ellis, R. (2008). *The study of second language acquisition* (2nd ed.). Oxford, UK: Oxford University.
- English Encyclopedia. (2014). *Sombrero*. Retrieved from <http://www.encyclo.co.uk/define/Sombrero>
- Fife, W. (2005). *Doing fieldwork: Ethnographic methods for research in developing countries and beyond*. New York, NY: Palgrave.
- Finegan, E. (2011). *Language and its structure and use* (6th ed.). Boston, MA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.
- Hardacker, E. P. (2012). The impact of Spain's 1863 educational decree on the spread of Philippine public schools and language acquisition. *European Education*, 44(4), 8-30. doi:10.2753/EUE1056-4934440401
- Harmer, J. (2007). *The practice of English language teaching*. Essex, England: Pearson Longman.

- Hechanova, R. (2012). Culture masquerading, identity and organizational commitment. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, 15(3), 208-219. doi:10.1111/j.1467-839X.2012.01377.x
- Hesse-Biber, S. N., & Leavy, P. (2011). *The practice of qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kachru, B. B., Kachru, Y., & Nelson, C. L. (Eds.). (2009). *The handbook of world Englishes*. Wichester, United Kingdom: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Kramer, M. (1980). *U.S. Patent No. 4,190,691*. Washington, DC: US Patent and Trademark Office.
- Krashen, S. (1985). *The Input Hypothesis: Issues and implications*. New York, NY: Longman.
- Kwintessential. (2013). *Philippines: Language, culture, customs and etiquette*. Retrieved from <http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/resources/global-etiquette/philippines-country-profile.html>
- McFarland, C. D. (2004). The Philippine language situation. *World Englishes*, 23(1), 59-75. doi:10.1111/j.1467-971X.2004.00335.x
- Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Mijares, A. S. (2005). The archaeology of Peñablanca cave sites, Northern Luzon, Philippines. *Journal of Austronesian Studies*, 1(2), 65-92.
- Miller, J. (2014). *Religion in the Philippines*. Retrieved from <http://asiasociety.org/countries/religions-philosophies/religion-philippines>
- Mojica, L. A. (2002). Compliment-giving among Filipino college students: An exploratory study. *Asia Pacific Education Review*, 3(1), 115-124.
- Murray Bosrock, M. (2014). *Philippines*. Retrieved from http://www.ediplomat.com/np/cultural_etiquette/ce_ph.htm
- Nassaji, H. & Fotos, S. (2011). *Teaching grammar in second language classrooms: Integrating form-focused instruction in communicative context*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Nunan, D. (2009). *Second language teaching & learning* (Philippine Edition). Pasig City, Philippines: Cengage Learning Asia.
- Silverman, D. (2000). *Doing qualitative research: A practical handbook*. London, UK: Sage.
- Thompson, R. N. (2003). *Filipino English and Taglish: Language switching from multiple perspectives*. Philadelphia, USA: John Benjamins.

- Valdez, P. (2010). Powerless in policy, powerful in practice: Critical insights on pedagogical code switching in the Philippine context. *ISLS Readings in Language Studies*, 2, 7-21.
- Wa-Mbaleka, S., & Gaikwad, S. (2013). Current climate in higher education: Perceptions of international students in the Philippines. *IAMURE International Journal of Education*, 6(1), 1-13. doi: dx.doi.org/10.7718/iamure.ije.v6i1.490
- Wa-Mbaleka, S. (2014). Teaching English to speakers of other languages: The case of the Philippines. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 3(3), 64-78. Retrieved from http://hrmars.com/hrmars_papers/Teaching_English_to_Speakers_of_Other_Languages_The_Case_of_the_Philippines.pdf
- Wardhaugh, R. (2010). *An introduction to sociolinguistics* (6th ed.). Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Yu Jose, L. N. (2007). Why are most Filipino workers in Japan entertainers? Perspectives from history and law. *Kasarinlan: Philippine Journal of Third World Studies*, 22(1), 61-84. Retrieved from <http://journals.upd.edu.ph/index.php/kasarinlan/article/view/363/335>

*Safary Wa-Mbaleka, EdD, PhD, Associate Professor
Claudia Blath, Janice Lloren, & Wenwan Duan, MA-Ed/TESOL Students
Education Department
Adventist International Institute of Advanced Studies
Silang, Cavite, Philippines
wa-mbalekas@aiias.edu*