

# **Exploring the Filipinization of the English Language in a Digital Age: An Identity Apart from Other World Englishes**

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## **Abstract**

Since the colonization of the Americans, Filipinos have been using English as their second language and have been accustomed to using the language alongside local languages. The centuries of the extensive contact between American English and Filipino language raises questions pertaining language change and language identity. This paper reports the analysis of 60 selected tweets from Twitter individually, with the purpose of highlighting the distinctive features of Philippine English. The tweets were examined for lexical and grammatical features, alongside with the following linguistic features: graphology, syntax, and lexical semantics. The Language Drift Theory was used as a basis to explain the process of Filipinization. In giving light to the discussions, descriptive quantitative-qualitative research was employed. Results revealed the prominent lexical, grammatical, and linguistic features through tables and textual analyses, illustrated from the most to the least dominant linguistic elements. Specified comparative analyses were made to characterize the features of Philippine English as a dialect of International English with graphology, syntax, and lexical semantics as bases for the discussion. The researcher also had a native speaker as a key informant to support the details and provide nativized English translations.

**Keywords:** English as a global language, world Englishes, Philippine English, language drift, applied linguistics

## **Introduction**

Present-day English is a part of the lives of millions of people, and the multiple crucial roles it now fulfills. According to Morrison (2002), with an estimated 350 million native speakers and 1.9 billion competent speakers, the spread of the English language around the world over the last few decades has been swift and steady. English has become the lingua franca of our time. It is the international language of the airlines, the sea and shipping, computer technology, science, and indeed communication generally. In the course of its spread, English has diversified by adapting to local circumstances and cultures, resulting in different varieties of English in every country.

English speakers are divided into three groups: native speakers, speakers of English as a second language, and speakers of English as a foreign language. Kachru (1994) provided a model to categorize the three concentric circles of World Englishes: “Inner circle”, “Outer circle” and “Expanding circle” (Bauer,

2002). In the Inner circle, English is the language of identity for its native speakers. However, when transferred to countries in the Outer and Expanding circles, English becomes an alien form of expression with different structural properties and a different vocabulary to organize experience (Doms, 2003). Hence, Philippines is one of the largest English-speaking nations that belongs in the Outer circle.

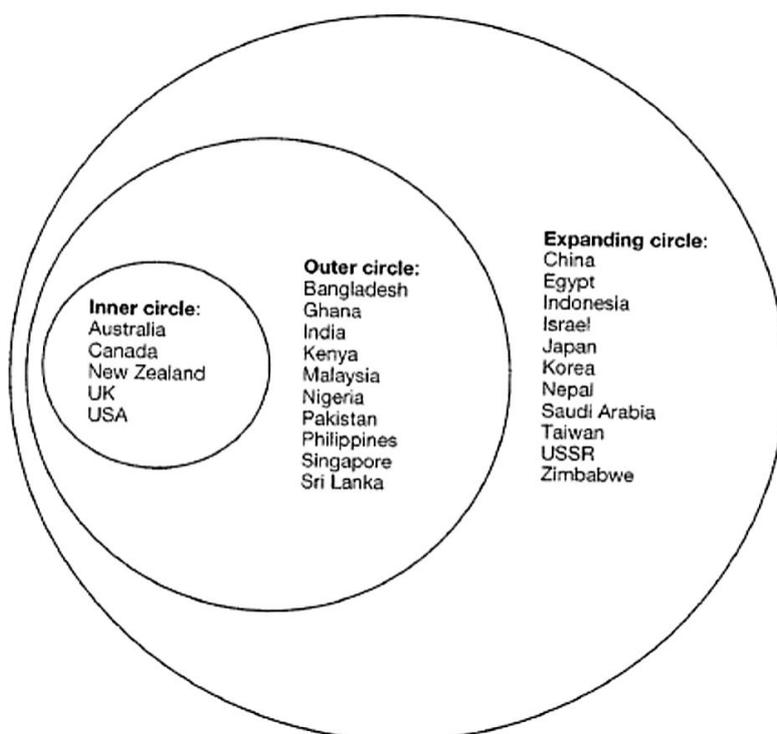


Figure 1. Kachru's concentric circles of English (Bauer, 2002, p.23)

Since the colonization of the Americans, Filipinos have been using English as their second language and have accustomed to using the language alongside local languages. The phonological, morphological, semantic, and syntactic features of the English language, throughout the time of Filipinos' utilization, had undergone a process that executed a series of changes. These "changes" generated by the process of Filipinization gave birth to Philippine English (PE), the variety of English native to the Filipinos. According to Florendo (2012), PE is recognizably English except that it is infused with creative vocabulary, syntax, and intonation that only Filipinos can decipher correctly. Kachru (1992), in his book entitled *The Other Tongue: English Across Cultures*, mentioned that Philippine English has its distinct characteristics, functions, and forms different from the other World Englishes like Singaporean English, Malaysian English, and Thai English. Moreover, its acceptance and legitimacy lie in the fact that English has penetrated the historical, functional, sociocultural as well as the creative processes or contexts

of the Filipinos (Kachru, 2004). English is used in official documents of business, government, the legal system, medicine, the sciences, and as a medium of instruction. Textbooks for subjects like calculus, physics, chemistry, and biology are written in English rather than Filipino. Thus, Filipinos assert English with a sort of “worldly” and “cultured” standing as compared to the local languages. The use of English attempts to give an air of formality in the Philippines, recognizing its importance as the international language.

The presence of English towards Filipino discourse is also felt in social media. With over 80 percent of Filipinos engaged in social networking sites (Camus, 2017), the usage of social media in the Philippines is evidently high. According to Flores (2014), the influence of social media contributes to the acculturation of English into the Filipinos’ psyche and culture. Language does influence social status. For the linguist Edward Sapir (1929), language is not only a vehicle for the expression of thoughts, perceptions, sentiments, and values characteristic of a community; it also represents a fundamental expression of social identity. Being able to utilize English fluently is usually taken as a sign of good education, resulting in a majority of Filipinos interacting in social media using the language. In the modern-day culture, different social networking sites have been popularized among Filipinos. As of year 2018, Twitter has generated an estimated 9.5 million users in the Philippines (Mateo, 2018). With the act of “tweeting”, Filipinos can express their thoughts, ideas, and sentiments. As the findings of Mateo (2018) imply that Twitter is generating a massive use in the Philippines, the researcher chose it as the initial ground for the study.

The extensive contact of American English and Filipino language for centuries raises questions pertaining to linguistic influence and language change. Therefore, leading to the importance of studying Philippine English, it simply defines Filipino’s own culture, history, and the “progress” that has taken place in which could be seen in the way the language is used in the present time.

## **Research Questions**

The main objective of the study was to explore Twitter so as to further expound the features of Philippine English. Thus, to unveil the differences of Philippine English in the context of American English or so-called International English. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following questions:

1. How are the lexical features of Philippine English described with regard to the use of nouns, lexical verbs, adverbs and adjectives?
2. How are the grammatical features of Philippine English described with regard to the use of prepositions, pronouns, auxiliary verbs, articles, and conjunctions?
3. What are the dominant lexical and grammatical features of Philippine English in terms of the frequencies?
4. What are the graphological substances present in each tweets?

5. What are the sentence patterns and sentence structures employed in each tweet?
6. What are the different Filipinized idioms translated in English and lexical innovations present in the selected tweets?
7. What are the distinctive features of Philippine English as a dialect of International English based on graphology, syntax and lexical semantics?

## **Literature Review**

### ***Philippine English***

“The linguistic background and colonial history of the Philippines provide an illuminating example of the development of a new variety of English” (Kirkpatrick, 2007, p. 34). The use of English as the primary medium of education in the Philippines started in 1901 together with the arrival of some 540 Thomasites (US Soldiers-Teachers sent by USA). English has understandably developed to be the main language of education and as it has broadened its use, it turned out to be indigenized through the addition of vocabulary from native dialects, the adaptation of English words to local needs, and modifications in pronunciation and grammar (McArthur, 1988).

English has officially become Philippine’s official second language ever since the start of American occupation up on to the recent times as it has preserved its eminence as one of the two official languages of the Philippines (Filipino and English) and been commonly spoken among Filipinos. According to Gonzales (1998), more people use English as a second language than those who speak it as a first language. English is used in teaching Filipino students, together with Philippine’s official and national language, Filipino. Not only is English used for education. “It is also employed in religious affairs, print and broadcast media, and business. English is highly believed to be able to increase the status of one who speaks it including respectability and marketability” (Espinosa, 1997, p. 4). Philippines has a variety of English called Philippine English or Taglish. This variety of English is passed down as the medium of communication of the media and the majority of educated Filipinos. “As in the case for Singlish in Singapore, some educated Filipinos consider Taglish as an inferior form of English while others recommend its promotion, at least as a source of social cohesion” (Lambert, 2005, p. 6).

### ***Philippine English: A case of language drift***

A study entitled *Philippine English: A Case of Language Drift*, by Jonathan Malicsi (2007) from University of the Philippines Diliman, found that Philippine English has particular linguistic features that arose out of a gradual drift in language learning away from the native language speaker such that generations of Filipino learners of English have picked up the form and rules of English from Filipino second-language learners trained by other Filipino second

language learners. While international travel and information technology now allow Filipinos to have ample exposure to and easily learn the English of the US, UK, Canada and Australia, the English teaching tradition in the country has persisted in espousing Philippine English. He added that while American sounds and idioms have become the norm for call centers and FM radio, all other language-based institutions have resisted the so-called foreign sound, with some educators ever considering the standardization of Philippine English for academic purposes. He pointed out that Philippine English was identified as the English output of educated Filipino professionals, many of them considered as leaders of Philippine society. This study concludes that some of the forms of Philippine English differ from those expected in International English. He focused on the Inaugural Address of President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo.

### **Methodology**

The research was descriptive in nature, since it aims to identify and describe the variables needed in the study. Descriptive study is primarily concerned with finding out “what is”. Thus, it tries to determine the linguistic features of the selected tweets individually. Moreover, it tries to differentiate the determined linguistic features of Philippine English within the context of American English. The study was a quantitative-qualitative type of research. In conducting the quantitative part, the researcher quantified the collection of results to find out the dominant lexical and grammatical features of Philippine English in terms of the frequencies. On the other hand, in conducting the qualitative part, this study included purposive sampling and content analysis procedures.

The researcher used the purposive sampling technique in getting respondents for this study. A purposive sample is a non-probability sample that is common to studies of particular groups within larger populations. Two tweets from each of the 30 selected respondents were chosen from Twitter. This concludes for a total of 30 respondents that were used as the sample in this research; and a total of 60 tweets that were examined in this study.

According to Anderson and Smith (2018), younger generations tend to stick on using Twitter. Anderson and Smith (2018) added that 36 percent of people around the globe, with ages of 18 to 29 are engaged in Twitter. The researcher limited the age group to 18 to 28 year old for a smaller group of respondents. To become eligible for the inclusion in this study, a respondent should be a natural-born Filipino citizen, a current resident of National Capital Region (NCR) and have an account in Twitter. NCR is the main financial, commercial, and educational center of the Philippines, thus, it was the appropriate locale of the participants to be chosen.

The researcher did not ask for affirmations since the participants' profiles were public. According to the Terms of Service in Twitter, any content that was submitted, posted, or displayed is public in default; and could be viewed by the other users and through third party services and websites. Therefore, any information tweeted is for public consumption unless the account is private.

The tweets were selected according to the availability, validity; and more importantly, the sentences involved were constructed in plain Philippine English. The structure of the tweets should be close to the entity of academic English. Further, the samples were tweeted during the period of April 2017 to March 2018, thus covering a one-year span.

The 60 selected tweets were examined in terms of the lexical and grammatical features. Pertaining to the lexical features of the texts, only the content words including nouns, lexical verbs, adverbs, and adjectives were analyzed. As for grammatical features of the texts, only the function words such as prepositions, pronouns, auxiliary verbs, articles, and conjunctions were the focus. The frequencies were computed for the lexical and grammatical features. Under graphology, the researcher focused on punctuations and spelling. As for syntax, the researcher only concentrated on the sentence level that includes sentence patterns and sentence structures. Moreover, only idioms and lexical innovations were the focus in terms of lexical semantics. Validations in Language Drift Theory formed the basis of Filipinization of the English language in this study. Figure 2 shows the research paradigm.

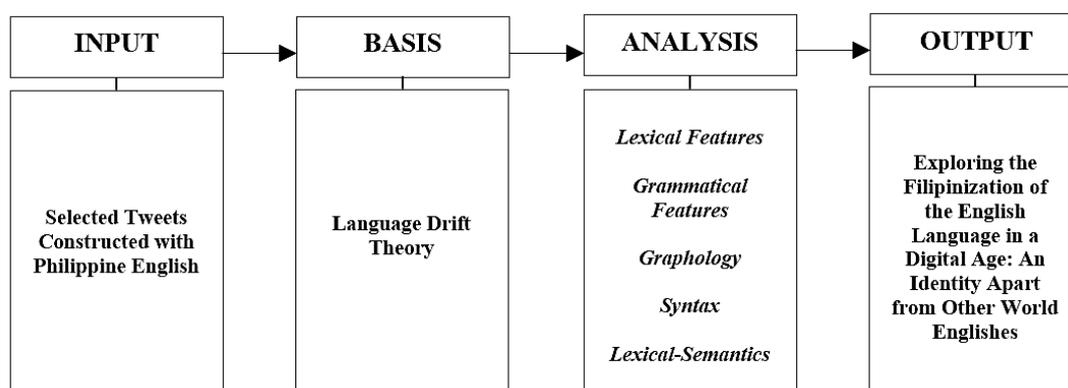


Figure 2. Research paradigm

## Results and Discussion

### *Analysis of lexical features (Content words)*

In the noun category, singular noun was more prominent than plural noun, while count noun was the most notable among the other types of nouns mentioned. In the lexical verb category, there were seven classifications present in the samples. These classifications included: base form of lexical v, -s form of lexical verb, -ing form of lexical verb, past participle form of lexical verb, past tense form of lexical verb, infinitive of the verb “BE”, and infinitive of lexical verb. The predominant usage was the base form of lexical verb. In the adverb category, the identified classifications were seven which included: adverbs of time, adverbs of manner, adverbs of place, adverbs of degree, adverbs of

frequency, conjunctive adverbs and adverb particles. Adverb of time had the highest usage among the other types of adverbs mentioned. In the adjective category, the gathered tweets established only three types, which included: descriptive adjective, quantitative adjective and possessive adjective. The dominating type of adjective was descriptive adjective and the most prominent type of degree was positive.

#### *Analysis of grammatical features (Function words)*

In the preposition category, there were only four types examined, which involved: simple preposition, compound preposition, participle preposition and double preposition. Simple preposition was the most dominant type employed. In the pronoun category, almost all of the various types were present in the selected tweets. These types exhibited: personal pronoun, possessive pronoun, indefinite pronoun, demonstrative pronoun, reflexive pronoun and relative pronoun. Further, ranking by usage, personal pronoun was the most prominent classification of pronouns found in the samples. In the auxiliary verb category, 14 different forms appeared in the tweets. These forms included: -s form of the auxiliary verb “BE”, “base forms” of the auxiliary verb “BE” except infinitive, past form of the auxiliary verb “BE”, -ing form of the auxiliary verb “BE”, past tense form of the auxiliary verb “HAVE”, past participle of the auxiliary verb “BE”, past participle of the auxiliary verb “DO”, base form of the auxiliary verb “DO” except infinitive, base form of the auxiliary verb “HAVE” except infinitive, past form of the auxiliary verb “DO”, -ing form of the auxiliary verb “HAVE”, -s form of the auxiliary verb “HAVE”, -ing form of the auxiliary verb “DO”, and modal auxiliary verb, whereas the most employed was the –s form of the auxiliary verb “BE”. In the article category, the observed articles present in the samples were definite and indefinite articles and the most prominent type was the indefinite article. In the conjunction category, amongst the three basic types, only two were revealed in the tweets. Further, coordinating conjunction was the most dominant in appearance.

Comparatively, lexical features dominated (total of 464) compared to grammatical features (total of 446). Function words had five classifications while content words only had four. Overall, pronoun was the most prevalent grammatical feature in Philippine English amongst the rest with content and function words combined, with a total of 163 utilizations. See Table 1 and Table 2 for the frequency statistics.

Table 1

*Frequency of the total number of lexical features from the 60 selected tweets*

<b>TWEETS</b>	<b>NOUNS</b>	<b>LEXICAL VERBS</b>	<b>ADVERBS</b>	<b>ADJECTIVES</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>
Tweets 1 & 2	1	5	3	0	<b>9</b>
Tweets 3 & 4	11	6	2	2	<b>21</b>
Tweets 5 & 6	5	13	5	2	<b>25</b>
Tweets 7 & 8	2	6	5	2	<b>15</b>
Tweets 9 & 10	8	8	3	4	<b>23</b>
Tweets 11 & 12	12	7	2	5	<b>26</b>
Tweets 13 & 14	6	7	5	3	<b>21</b>
Tweets 15 & 16	7	4	2	6	<b>19</b>
Tweets 17 & 18	8	4	3	2	<b>17</b>
Tweets 19 & 20	6	4	3	1	<b>14</b>
Tweets 21 & 22	4	4	7	3	<b>18</b>
Tweets 23 & 24	6	3	2	3	<b>14</b>
Tweets 25 & 26	3	7	3	0	<b>13</b>
Tweets 27 & 28	5	3	1	1	<b>10</b>
Tweets 29 & 30	3	4	7	2	<b>16</b>
Tweets 31 & 32	5	6	2	0	<b>13</b>
Tweets 33 & 34	8	6	4	1	<b>19</b>
Tweets 35 & 36	5	4	7	2	<b>18</b>
Tweets 37 & 38	4	2	1	1	<b>8</b>
Tweets 39 & 40	3	5	4	2	<b>14</b>
Tweets 41 & 42	6	4	4	2	<b>16</b>
Tweets 43 & 44	6	4	1	0	<b>11</b>
Tweets 45 & 46	3	2	4	1	<b>10</b>
Tweets 47 & 48	3	4	3	1	<b>11</b>
Tweets 49 & 50	4	5	1	4	<b>14</b>
Tweets 51 & 52	9	4	1	4	<b>18</b>
Tweets 53 & 54	6	4	3	3	<b>16</b>
Tweets 55 & 56	3	2	0	2	<b>7</b>
Tweets 57 & 58	3	4	3	2	<b>12</b>
Tweets 59 & 60	4	7	3	2	<b>16</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>464</b>

Table 2

*Frequency of the total number of grammatical features from the 60 selected tweets*

TWEETS	PREP	PRON	AUX	ART	CON	TOTAL
Tweets 1 & 2	2	4	3	2	1	12
Tweets 3 & 4	6	4	4	5	4	23
Tweets 5 & 6	5	11	4	2	4	26
Tweets 7 & 8	4	7	0	0	3	14
Tweets 9 & 10	8	15	6	3	8	40
Tweets 11 & 12	5	9	8	4	5	31
Tweets 13 & 14	3	4	3	1	1	12
Tweets 15 & 16	5	5	2	6	1	19
Tweets 17 & 18	6	4	2	3	2	17
Tweets 19 & 20	1	8	0	0	3	12
Tweets 21 & 22	1	6	2	1	1	11
Tweets 23 & 24	2	6	3	2	2	15
Tweets 25 & 26	2	4	3	2	1	12
Tweets 27 & 28	2	6	1	3	1	13
Tweets 29 & 30	2	7	0	2	1	12
Tweets 31 & 32	4	6	1	1	2	14
Tweets 33 & 34	3	5	1	1	4	14
Tweets 35 & 36	2	8	4	0	3	17
Tweets 37 & 38	3	2	0	1	0	6
Tweets 39 & 40	3	3	1	1	1	9
Tweets 41 & 42	2	2	3	3	1	11
Tweets 43 & 44	6	2	2	3	3	16
Tweets 45 & 46	2	3	1	3	1	10
Tweets 47 & 48	2	5	0	1	1	9
Tweets 49 & 50	3	5	2	1	2	13
Tweets 51 & 52	4	2	1	0	4	11
Tweets 53 & 54	3	6	4	1	1	15
Tweets 55 & 56	0	3	1	1	1	6
Tweets 57 & 58	1	5	1	3	1	11
Tweets 59 & 60	3	6	3	2	1	15
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>446</b>

*Abbreviations:* PREP=prepositions; PRON=pronouns; AUX=auxiliary verbs; ART=articles; CON=conjunctions

### *Linguistic analysis at the graphological level*

Graphologically, specified usages of punctuations and spelling differed on those that were expected in International English. An example is provided below:

Tweet 57: Ashley (pseudonym) December 02, 2017

I am finally learning to throw away the things I've always hoarded (,) but I know I don't need.

Nevertheless, a specified observation for the word “everyday” in terms of spelling was significant in Malicsi’s (2007) study, which is entitled, *Philippine English: A Case of Language Drift*. According to Malicsi (2007), Filipinos tend to use the one-word spelling “everyday” as an adverb, and “everyday” as the adjective. In order to support this, the tweet was shown, as follows:

Tweet 12: ZDS (pseudonym) January 03, 2018

I think it’s because a lot of people are still on holiday in their provinces, so less congestion. If the provinces can create more competitive jobs and higher quality of living, then the Philippines will be like this **everyday** (every day).

On the other hand, it was found that the respondents had the method of clipping and affixing executed in their tweets. These two creative methods led the standard forms of English words in the dictionary to obtain new form of spellings, which were considered coinages. Abdullahi-Idiagbon and Olaniyi (2011) from their study of *Coinages in Nigerian English: A Sociolinguistic Perspective* pointed out that these coinages were created purposely for new experiences, lack of correct standard lexical items to express, or the need to satisfy the communicative purpose of the immediate environment. They also added that such coining could be a result of interference or transfer of traits from a speaker’s first language to the target language. A sample tweet is provided below:

Tweet 34: Jade (pseudonym) May 21, 2017

My **derma** (dermatologist) tried to set me up with her bro.

### ***Linguistic Analysis at the Syntactical Level***

A study entitled, *The Philippine Variety of English in Selected Universities in Metro Manila*, by Patricia Garcia-Arañas (1990) from Ateneo de Manila University, stated that in using the L1 syntax, Philippine English is characterized by stringy elements, wordiness, and inverted subjects and predicates. Such characterizations were present in 27 samples, thus, the respondents executed the “Philippine-type” patterning in their tweets. The evidence of the claim was the use of sentence patterns that begin with the predicate, which abounds within the Tagalog canonical word order. This feature was characterized by word arrangement, which would not ordinarily be observed with native speakers. Sample tweets are provided as follows, and to describe the comparisons, Filipino versions were given by the researcher, and the key informant provided the American English versions.

#### ***Stringy Elements***

Tweet 33: Jade (pseudonym) May 03, 2017

My parents and sibs are in the other room very loudly laughing while watching Kim Bok Joo and I'm here stuck finishing work and to-dos (Ang aking mga magulang at mga kapatid ay nasa kabilang kwarto, tumatawa nang napaka-lakas habang nanonood ng Kim Bok Joo samantalang ako ay nandito, tinatapos ang trabaho at mga dapat gawin.)

[My family is laughing very loudly at Kim Bok Joo in the other room, while I'm stuck here finishing work and errands.]

### *Wordiness*

Tweet 26: Rai (pseudonym) September 06, 2017  
like I want to go back to school. LEGIT

(Parang gusto kong bumalik sa paaralan.)

[I seriously want to go back to school.]

### *Inverted Order of Subject and Predicate*

Tweet 8: Lance (pseudonym) April 21, 2017  
Hope I never get to meet someone again who only knew nothing, but to use you and also take advantage of you for their own benefit.

(Umaasa akong hindi na ako makatatagpo ulit ng isang taong walang alam kundi gamitin ka at abusihin ka para sa kanilang ikabubuti.)

[I hope I never have to reencounter somebody that only knows how to survive by leeching off others.]

In terms of sentence structure, there were five classifications observed among the tweets: dependent clause, simple sentence, compound sentence, complex sentence and compound-complex sentence. The wordiness and complexity of the tweets made way for the dependent clause and complex sentence structures to be the most apparent in the respondents' tweets. To support this, below are some examples:

Tweet 12: ZDS (pseudonym) January 03, 2018  
I think it's because a lot of people are still on holiday in their provinces, so less congestion. (complex sentence) If the provinces can create more competitive jobs and higher quality of living, then the Philippines will be like this everyday. (complex sentence)

Tweet 37: Jaycee (pseudonym) December 06, 2017

Now a morning person on weekdays. (dependent clause) Feels like HS again. (dependent clause)

### *Linguistic analysis at the lexical semantic level*

In lexical semantic level, Filipinized idioms translated in English, and lexical innovations were identified. These words or phrases resulted from Filipinized modification and revitalization of existing morphological materials and lexical items from International English. This remarked the process of the “transfer” of culture and meaning from the native language, which is Filipino, to International English, producing the identified localized or nativized lexical item. The following tweets constituted the Filipinized idioms translated in English, and lexical innovations that were identified as the researcher had a native speaker as a key informant in order to support the observations. The demonstration of each sample was described, as follows:

Tweet 16: Jai (pseudonym) December 08, 2017

There’s a **thin line** between educating superficial people and making fun of them. Be careful because at the end of the day, you might just be worse. The word “thin” was implied instead of the word “fine”. “Fine line” is the Americanized version of this localized idiom.

Tweet 48: Lain (pseudonym) January 06, 2018

The **parentals** celebrated their 21st anniversary!! Thanks for deciding to make us!!

The word “parents” was semantically localized, resulting in the word “parentals”, which is non-existent in International English.

Tweet 56: Lea (pseudonym) November 05, 2017

Dolores Jane Umbridge **makes my blood boil**.

The idiomatic expression, “makes my blood boil” was derived from the Tagalog idiom, “pinapakulo ang dugo ko”.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings, this study has proven that Filipinos paradoxically have restrained themselves from American English, and have taken the language for their “own” purposes. Philippine English establishes its identity apart from other World Englishes. Moreover, the localization of English in Philippines was evident from the data, which was solidified by the occurrences of localized spellings, syntax, translated idioms, and innovated lexical items. Therefore, Philippine English finds its expression in the linguistic perspective of language drift. In addition, as the samples were extracted from a social media service; it can be undeniably assumed that modernization also has implications in

localizing English. Hence, this paper serves both foreign and local academic scholars, a cross-language perspective on how Philippine English varies from its other Asian counterparts: Singaporean English, Indian English, Malaysian English, Chinese English, Japanese English and the like.

In this modern age, as factors such as new technologies, industries, products, and experiences ascend, PE will have a continuous language shifting and develop more innovative features. After all, Hickey (2010) states that there is no such thing as a language, which is not changing, and the rate of change may vary considerably due to both internal and external factors.

From a pedagogical perspective, teachers must consider the innovative features, variations, and uniqueness of Philippine English apart from other World Englishes. Hence, the teachers must not use either the Standard American English or Standard British English as the exclusive basis for the evaluation of their students' outputs. Moreover, the syntactically and semantically individualized characteristics of Philippine English should no longer be seen as errors but as emerging features that distinguish PE from other World Englishes. Thus, active steps must be reckoned by teachers to expose the Filipino students to the actual use of English varieties; using literature in non-native English per se.

Finally, this study can be a resource material and guide for interpreting the descriptive Filipinization of the English language, for both foreign and local future educational researchers on their respective future studies featuring PE.

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