
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Speakers' Ambivalent Attitude toward Philippine English: An Issue for Integrating the Variety into ESL Instruction

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| ABSTRACT

Philippine English (PhlE) evolution and its roles have brought challenges and issues to the Philippines' English Language Teaching (ELT) classrooms. Filipino ESL teachers are confronted by issues regarding the appropriate variety to teach and whether or not the local variety should be taught or integrated into the teaching of American English (AmE) or British English (BrE) varieties. World Englishes (WE) and PhlE scholars have asserted the variety's legitimacy and intelligibility, and some have been recommending the integration of the variety into the teaching of ESL and assimilating it in English language programs of all curricular levels from elementary to college. However, studies suggest that the PhlE paradigm is not reflected in the country's English curriculum blueprint and college English textbooks. This conceptual paper presents a revisit to PhlE literature that suggests the issue of its speakers' attitude toward it. It claims that ESL teachers and students have an ambivalent attitude toward PhlE and are not yet open to celebrating its existence. It argues that these PhlE users' ambivalence and unwelcoming attitude toward their English variety among other reasons, possibly hinder the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) and the Department of Education (DepEd) from integrating the variety into the English language curricula.

| KEYWORDS

Philippine English; legitimized variety; ELT; English language curriculum, English language attitude

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1. Introduction

The Englishes spoken in the different parts of the world give rise to other regional and social dialects, just as the UK and USA Englishes have. Their phonology, lexicon, and grammar show endonormative features that distinguish them from L₁ English. New Englishes, World Englishes (WE), or Dialects of English inevitably sprung and have become an active scholarship for over two decades since its introduction. Relatively, the Philippines is known for its large English-speaking population. Despite the various language policies, particularly 1974, 1987 Bilingual Education, and 2012 MTB-MLE, English has maintained its roles as one of the country's official languages in various domains of work and one of the mediums of instruction in schools and universities.

English went along with the educational development of the Philippines under American colonialism from 1898 to 1941. Bolton and Bautista (2004) state that even after independence, the US government and language have greatly influenced the lives of Filipinos. English has become a co-official language used in various sectors such as government, law, and education (Bolton & Bautista, 2004). It has been customized and hybridized (e.g., Bautista, 2008; Bolton & Butler, 2009; Salazar, 2013, 2020; Tayao, 2009), and thus a distinct variety, Philippine English (hereafter, PhlE) was born, although with the heavy American English (AmE) features.

PhlE has long been a part of the World Englishes (WE) paradigm and English Language Teaching (ELT) scholarship in the Philippines. PhlE scholarship began with Llamzon's (1969) Standard Filipino English (SFE) and was continued by other linguists and scholars who looked into its phonological, lexical, and grammatical features. It is a legitimate variety of English as prestigious as other varieties of English. Locating PhlE in Schneider's (2003) dynamic model of the evolution of postcolonial Englishes, Bautista

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(2011, p.175) argues that PhilE has gone beyond the stage of internalizing the norms of AmE and is well into the stage of nativization; Borlongan (2016) advances that it has reached endonormative stabilization. Interestingly, Gonzales (2017) proposes the framework of Philippine Englishes and suggests that PhilE is approaching the differentiation stage, the final stage of Schneider's dynamic model.

Philippine-based survey studies (Alieto & Rillo, 2018; Bernardo & Madrunio, 2015; Borlongan, 2009; Hernandez, 2020) acclaim that it must be assimilated into English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. PhilE scholars have recommended integrating this variety in the ELT classroom with other varieties in English Language tests (e.g., Bernardo, 2017; Hernandez, 2020; Policarpio, 2021). Nonetheless, the Language Education sector appears silent about this recommendation of Applied Linguists to integrate PhilE into the English curriculum. This paper presents a possible issue that may be hindering the full integration of the language variety into the English curriculum. It offers a brief revisit to literature that defines it, confirms its intelligibility, and suggests the issue of its speakers' negative attitude towards it that possibly bars it from becoming a complete part of Philippine ESL classrooms.

2. Qualifying the Intelligible Philippine English

PhilE has developed vigorous literature. A great deal of research has successfully described PhilE's phonology, grammar, lexicon, and discourse, especially among the educated, since the late 60s until now; hence, this paper no longer presents its characterizing marks which have been discussed well. The earliest definition of PhilE is Llamzon's (1969). He calls it Standard Filipino English (SFE) and describes it as the type of English that educated Filipinos speak and which is acceptable in Filipino academic circles (p.15). After over two decades, Bautista (2000) supports his assertion and defines PhilE as a nativized variety of English with features different from AmE because of the influence of Philippine languages. She also underscores Llamzon's earlier claim that its distinctive features are not errors committed by users who have not mastered the American standard.

Gonzalez and Bautista (1985) argue that the best way to describe the subvarieties of PhilE is to refer to them as *edulects* more than *acrolects*, *mesolects*, and *basilects*; since these types are a function of the education of the speakers and the kind of English tuition they receive in school. Dimaculangan and Gustilo (2017) anchor their definition of PhilE from the above discourses and phrase it as an ESL *de facto* variety, a legitimate *edulect* that emanates from AmE. It developed into a distinct variety due to its new sociolinguistic environment and is used by educated speakers when communicating locally and internationally.

Moreover, Dayag (2012) qualifies PhilE as a legitimate nativized variety of English that Filipinos use in controlling domains (i.e., science and technology, the judiciary, the legislature, bureaucracy, higher education, and scholarly discourse). Interestingly, McKaughan (1993, as cited by Lopez-Escalona, n.d.) claims that PhilE emerged as an autonomous variety with its self-contained system that many Filipinos understand and use in different language domains. In a 2020 webinar organized by the Philippine Embassy in Spain, Salazar emphasized:

"Philippine English is not slang, not wrong, not carabao English, or any other derogatory word that's been used over the years. Our variant should not be thought of as wrong—as what hyper-correcting, misguided grammar nazis would have you believe. Philippine English does not deserve all the flippantly derogatory words—such as "carabao English." (Salazar, 2020)

Although worded distinctly, the definitions reflect similar ideas that qualify PhilE and establish its prestige. Literature on PhilE shows that it has been through linguistic and sociolinguistic processes in its national ecology. The Filipinos have their way of speaking it without strict compliance to the standards of the AmE or BrE varieties. As PhilE sprung and spread across Philippine archipelagos, intelligibility concerns became a research area within the WE paradigm. Intelligibility denotes the listener's perception or comprehension of the speaker's speech; for example, Smith (1987) claims that intelligibility is the degree to which an individual can recognize a word or utterance spoken by another. With spoken PhilE, however, Dita and de Leon (2017) note that the articulation of PhilE words is not essential to the speaker's intelligibility. Despite the local pronunciation and diction of a speaker, the listener still understands the meaning by determining the context of the uttered word.

The studies along the line of PhilE intelligibility have been conducted (e.g., Dayag, 2007; Dita & de Leon, 2017; Tonio, 2019) and conveyed that PhilE is intelligible to Filipino speakers of English. Furthermore, PhilE is intelligible to speakers of other varieties of English. For instance, Mendoza et al. (2014) conducted a study on the intelligibility of PhilE to 10 South Korean English major students and ten non-English majors from Far Eastern University. The researchers recorded a two-minute speech by a Filipino and an American speaker. The 20 Korean participants, divided randomly into four batches, transcribed the speech by answering the fill-in-the-blanks questionnaire. Then, the listeners were given survey questionnaires about their perception of the recorded speech. Analysis of data from the objective and subjective tests mentioned above showed that the English major students found PhilE 61% intelligible, while the non-English majors found it 40% intelligible. In short, PhilE was 51% intelligible to Korean students.

Likewise, Tonio's (2019) study communicated the intelligibility of PhilE to 21-grade school pupils in an international school. His intelligibility cloze tests bared that the mesolectal speaker of PhilE was more intelligible than the acrolectal speaker. The data also revealed that PhilE had higher intelligibility to young international students with high English proficiency levels. Moreover, Salazar (2020) states that the PhilE accent is one of the most understandable globally. She shares that she has been speaking with a Philippine accent in the UK for seven years, and no one has complained about its unintelligibility. She stresses that the PhilE accent is legitimate and encourages the PhilE speakers to rejoice and not be ashamed of it.

3. ESL Teachers' and Students' Attitude toward PhilE Lexical and Grammatical Features

Two theories are utilized by researchers as frameworks for the study of language attitudes, the Behaviorist and the Mentalist (McKenzie, 2010). Both theories assert that attitude is a result of socialization done over time. However, studies anchored on Behaviorism argue that human actions are behavioral; hence, mere observation of an individual's behavior is sufficient to determine their attitude. Furthermore, it suggests that behavior is suggestive of attitude; therefore, if one expresses like about a language, language situation, preference, and use, such behavior can be taken as a positive attitude toward the language. Therefore, an individual's language attitude is their disposition to respond positively or negatively to a language and its users.

As regards PhilE, Dimaculangan (2018) and Hernandez (2020) observe that there are still educated Filipino speakers of English who are not open to this sociolinguistic reality. Consequently, their attitudes towards the variety or its specific components differ. Nevertheless, since the existence of the various Englishes has significant implications for ELT teaching in the country, this section suggests the possible issue behind the Education sector's coldness toward the idea of integrating its teaching in ELT classrooms.

Gustilo and Dimaculangan (2018) looked at 200 university ESL teachers' attitudes of acceptance toward selected lexical items. The ESL teachers were from five government and ten private colleges/universities in the Philippines. Fifty ESL teachers from each of the four major regions of the country: Luzon, Visayas, Mindanao, and National Capital Region (NCR), participated in the attitude study. The researchers administered a language attitude questionnaire with fifteen five-point Likert-scale statements that favored the PhilE lexicon and a specific lexicon acceptability test that included 99 PhilE lexical items randomly chosen from the wordlist.

The analysis of the respondents' attitude towards the development, intelligibility, and prestige of the PhilE lexicon obtained a weighted mean of 4.09, which revealed their positive attitude toward the lexicon. However, the acceptability test showed their negative attitude toward the PhilE lexicon. Out of the 99 lexical items subjected to the acceptability test, only five were accepted for formal writing, and only two were accepted for informal writing. Surprisingly, not even one of the expressions was accepted for formal oral context, and only 33 were accepted for use in everyday oral contexts. Twenty were judged unacceptable PhilE lexicon for use in any four domains.

Their findings suggested the ESL teachers' indifference to the sociolinguistic reality of PhilE and their negative attitude to specific PhilE lexes. The study also conveyed that PhilE is very much alive. Its lexicon is growing; however, some gatekeepers of standard English usage, such as ESL teachers, still hold a negative attitude toward it. It is essential to mention that the acceptability test reflected PhilE words and expressions and their contextual definitions with the L1 English definitions. After the data collection for the said attitude study, sudden changes in commonly used forms in colleges and universities' promotional tag lines were observed by the authors. For instance, the long-time used expressions, *Enrolment is going on*, and *Dean's listers* were changed to their L1 English forms *Enrolment is ongoing* and *Dean's list*.

Another study was done by Torres and Alieto (2019), which specifically determined the extent of acceptability of the lexical variance of PhilE to pre-service Basic Education teachers in Luzon and Mindanao. Closely related to the previous studies' findings, their analysis revealed that the PhilE lexical and grammatical items were *somehow accepted*. Nevertheless, their acceptance was limited; AmE was still the preferred model. Relatively, Martin (2010 in Martin, 2012) shares that her teacher participants identified AmE as their target model for English Language Teaching (ELT) for less than 20 reasons (p. 253): it is the global, universal, and standard international language, among others.

Lopez-Escalona (n.d.) investigated the attitudes of the English teachers in Bukidnon State University on PhilE using a survey questionnaire. Her findings revealed that the English teachers had a *positive* attitude towards the PhilE as a variety of the standard Englishes. Moreover, they *agreed* with the positive statements and *strongly disagreed* with the negative comments about the PhilE. Regarding lexical items and phrasal constructions (Filipinisms), the English teacher-respondents accepted most coined words used and adapted in the Philippines. Nonetheless, they did not accept what they perceived as non-standard words and idioms' ungrammatical constructions. She observed that most prepositional phrases were unacceptable to the English teachers. Akin to the earlier findings, although her English teacher-respondents had a positive attitude towards the PhilE variety, they were strict about what they considered incorrect and non-standard terms. They were neutral about other items, i.e., they felt that the words

might be simultaneously acceptable and unacceptable. This conveyed that the respondents had an impartial judgment about the lexical items.

A similar study was done, however, using a corpus from social networking sites. Gustilo et al. (2020) analyzed the digital writing features in Internet Philippine English (IPE) and the attitudes of Filipino high school ESL teachers toward the non-standard usage of digital writing. They found 20 digital talk conventions and predominantly non-sentence structures used across Facebook and Twitter. They used the 20 identified non-standard conventions extracted from the corpus to determine the ESL teachers' attitudes. Although their analysis showed that most of the respondents accepted all the 20 non-standard conventions in informal writing, 50% of the respondents did not accept any non-standard patterns for formal writing. Only 20% of the respondents favored the use of fragments in formal writing. A few respondents indicated that the non-standard conventions were unacceptable in informal and formal writing in the Philippine context. The researchers' ESL teacher respondents deemed all the identified non-standard patterns inappropriate in formal writing; thus, they claimed that their respondents are still gatekeepers of the standard usage of English despite their prevalent use of IPE emerging structures.

In the same year, Hernandez (2020) determined Filipino graduate students' (FGS) awareness of PhilE's meanings, features, and uses. He also measured their notions of educated PhilE and their attitudes toward teaching it. His data disclosed that the FGSs were *moderately aware* of the variety in terms of meaning, features, use in textbooks, codification into dictionaries and grammar books, and its acceptable linguistic variants. However, they were *extremely aware* of the existence of PhilE as a local variety. His data likewise revealed their positive dispositions towards both PhilE and AmE and towards a pluricentric model in teaching ESL in the Philippines. Nonetheless, despite such positivity, the FGSs were ambivalent about certain notions. For example, they were indecisive about whether educated PhilE is mistakes made by people who speak poor English and whether the spoken educated PhilE is globally acceptable. The FGSs were also ambivalent about educated PhilE being taught in ESL classes and written works of educated Filipinos. These uncertainties were supported by FGSs' indecision towards AmE (not educated PhilE) that should be taught in Philippine ESL classes.

Even the earlier studies on attitude toward PhilE recorded the ESL teachers' and students' partial positive results and ambivalence. Bautista (2001) described the attitudes of selected Luzon University students and faculty towards PhilE. She involved convenience samples, i.e., all the faculty and students available to complete her questionnaires. The investigation revealed her respondents' awareness of the English variety they speak, which has features identifiable as Philippine variety but not complete acceptance. Half of her student respondents chose AmE as the variety to learn, while 12% chose BrE. Only 31% favored PhilE. Over half of the faculty respondents believed that the Filipinos should learn AmE or BrE. Her teachers and students acknowledged speaking PhilE but aspired to speak either of the L₁ Englishes. Seventy percent of the faculty and 81% of the students believed that English teachers should be knowledgeable and fluent in AmE. Thirty-seven percent of the students and 23% of the faculty respondents agreed that PhilE was a mistake made by poor speakers of English.

Before her (2001) study, Bautista (1997) conducted a small survey to gauge the general acceptability of some words in her provisional list of PhilE expressions. Eighty-five percent registered a preference for PhilE or a mixture of PhilE and AmE as the variety to communicate with fellow Filipinos. Sixty-one percent chose the same variety to be taught in school, while 53% chose it to be used for communication with foreigners. However, it was not the whole picture because their attitudes toward specific lexical items sharply contrasted with their high recognition of PhilE. For instance, only 18 of the 30 lexical items judged for acceptability in spoken discourse were acceptable to 50% of the respondents, and only 11 out of those 18 were good to 75. The results are repeated in Gustilo and Dimaculangan's (2018) study, whose respondents expressed a positive attitude towards PhilE but a negative attitude towards its lexicon. It may also be essential to mention that Bautista's (1995, 1997) Anvil Macquarie Dictionary of PhilE for high schools has been in the market for quite long ; however, it is observed that L₁ English dictionaries like Merriam-Webster's continued to dominate the market even in the bookstores near the writer's place.

The common denominator among the findings in the presented attitude studies may not be surprising because studies on WE varieties reflect the same trend. For instance, Xuan and Yihong (2017) claim that empirical research concerning attitudes toward WE varieties in the Kachruvian Expanding Circle shows that English users in the EFL countries view British and American native varieties as the standard ones.

Martin's (2014) circles of English in the Philippines may explain the issue of acceptability of PhilE. Her three circles within the Kachru's Outer Circle comprise an Inner Circle of educated, elite Filipinos who have embraced the English language and actively promote it; an Outer Circle of Filipinos who are aware of PhilE as a legitimate variety but who are ambivalent about its promotion; and an Expanding Circle with whom the status of PhilE is a non-issue. In addition, her model manifests that Filipino ESL teachers, who still appear to be severe gatekeepers of L₁ Englishes, compose the Outer Circle of Filipinos. These include ESL teachers who are aware of the phenomenon but not open to teaching and promoting it.

4. ELT Instruction and the Call for PhilE Classroom Integration

The ESL teachers' and writers' attitudes toward PhilE may be silently communicated in the ESL classrooms lessons, examinations, and textbooks used in the classrooms. Using 24 audio-recorded English classes in three universities in Metro Manila, Bernardo (2017) described K-12 PhilE in classroom interactions, identified students' and teachers' conversation norms in English during class hours, and characterized the English spoken by the teachers and the students. His analysis of the transcripts and the classroom observations suggested that PhilE structures were not taught. He noted that the WE framework in general and PhilE, were scarcely mentioned or conversed about.

Before his description of PhilE in classroom discussion, Bernardo (2013) examined different English(es) hints in three Philippine locally printed college English textbooks. His analysis showed that the varieties of English are rarely extensively discussed in such books. Moreover, he found that teachers observed the exogenous norm in explaining grammar and rhetorical conventions. They would use English grammar books written and published by English language educators, like Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman. He conveyed that no local textbooks and reference books on grammar teaching and composition writing were consulted in designing the lessons. Consequently, he concluded his article with a strong recommendation that the WE should be counted as one of the criteria in selecting and evaluating textbooks.

Bernardo (2015) also analyzed sample examinations in English. His close analysis of the sample examinations bared no clear hint that a specific variety of English was observed in answering the test items. Even the essay tests did not reflect clear instructions on the particular variety of English to use. Nonetheless, both AmE and BrE words were represented in the examinations. Bernardo's (2015) claim that the WE paradigm in general and PhilE, in particular, are not regarded as a severe pedagogical agendum in the ELT curriculum implemented in the Philippines still holds in the present-day ELT. Bernardo's (2015) claim that the WE paradigm and PhilE are not regarded as a severe pedagogical agendum in the ELT curriculum implemented in the Philippines still holds in the present-day ELT. His observations and findings reflect similar notions conveyed by earlier presented attitude studies, i.e., Filipino ESL teachers look up to L₁ English as the more prestigious variety with the only correct grammar; hence, it is the only grammar they intend to teach in the classroom.

Bernardo (2013, 2017, 2018) has been recommending the integration of the WE and PhilE paradigm in Filipino ELT. Indeed, he proposes the endonormative educational model for teaching and learning acceptable features of PhilE. The *procedural level* of his endonormative model consists of five stages that ESL teachers can easily follow. These are Stage 1: *Notice* in which the teachers let the students notice the distinctive phonological, lexical, or grammatical features of PhilE that differ from AmE or BrE; Stage 2: *Compare* when teachers lead the students to compare and contrast idiosyncratic in PhilE with AmE or BrE while emphasizing that the differences are acceptable; Stage 3: *Comment* which appears to be a repetition and extension of stage 2 discussion where the teachers' comment that the distinctive features are not errors but innovations that can be used in formal and informal discourses; Stage 4: *Encourage* when the teachers lead learners to use the local variety both in formal and informal communication without uncertainties; and finally, Stage 5: *Familiarize* in which the teachers encourage students to be familiar with other varieties of English for more successful communication.

He explains that at the *axiomatic level*, the endonormative grammar teaching and learning may be achieved by 1) using corpus in teaching the language, 2) designing PhilE and AmE-based ELT syllabi, 3) conducting pedagogical acceptability judgment tests, 4) featuring both PhilE and AmE grammar in ESL textbooks and worktexts, 5) incorporating the WE framework in textbooks and worktexts, and 6) by testing learners on varieties of the language. Bernardo and Madrunio (2015) and Bernardo (2018) propose adapting this endonormative model for designing a PhilE-based pedagogic model for teaching English grammar. Likewise, Matsuda (2003) offers that the immediate steps teachers can take in English pedagogy are acknowledging the language varieties and variations in WE and incorporating them into the materials and curricula.

Hernandez's (2020) recommendation of assimilating the teaching of PhilE is supported by Policarpio (2021). After the latter's scrutiny of the arguments from a range of articles and studies on standard PhilE, she presents a number of substantial points for integrating PhilE from the primary to tertiary level of the English curriculum of the Philippines and finally recommends the integration. Among them, it is a legitimate variety of English, and its mere existence is rightful of recognition and formalization. She advances that *The Teacher Education Council of the Philippines* should consider designing an English specialization course that highlights the varieties of English language (ESL, English as a foreign language, English as a lingua franca, SPE, World Englishes, and Global Englishes), to ensure that pre-service English teachers are aware of and well informed with these variations.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The revisited literature on attitude toward PhilE conveys the Filipino ESL teachers, students, and writers' bias for L₁ English over the local variety, PhilE. They reflect the impression that ESL teachers themselves still see AmE or BrE grammar as the only standard, correct, and prestigious variety. Hence, they consciously stick to teaching either of the two varieties and may unconsciously

promote them by using L1 materials in grammar. Bautista's (2001) conclusion that Filipino teachers of English accept an endonormative standard for teaching pronunciation and vocabulary but an exonormative (i.e., AmE or BrE) standard for teaching grammar still holds this 2021st century. As a result, the teachers settle for sounding Filipino when speaking English but approximate L1 English grammar when speaking and writing.

This observation suggests that the introduction of the WE paradigm and PhilE to Filipino teachers of English nor the corpus of PhilE has not entirely changed their old paradigm and outdone the dominance of L₁ Englishes norms in the classroom. Their awareness of PhilE and the great deal of research on PhilE have not changed their hesitant attitude toward this localized variety. Conservative teachers remain prescriptivists and gatekeepers of English amidst a huge corpus that describes current language usage that facilitates communication. Therefore, it may be claimed that ESL teachers and students in the country do not entirely manifest favor for their variety. The community does not seem ready to celebrate it, although literature shows that they speak and use it.

What seems to be the ESL teachers' and students' attitude of ambivalence toward PhilE may be understood because the fact is that PhilE is still powerless within the Filipino academic circle. Martin (2014, p.483) conveys that SAE is still a prestigious language in the Philippines, and this status is not the fault of the language. The issue, according to her, is not the language, but the attitude attached to it, which is the assignment of superiority to SAE at the expense of other languages. Zeng and Yang (2022) suggest that English education in the Philippines may still be essential to the American overseas colonization. Therefore, as one of the recipients of English education, the Philippines inevitably faces the challenge of resisting English Linguistic imperialism. However, it is L1 English imperialism over ESL/PhilE, and it is the ESL teachers' voluntary choice of AmE or BrE.

After reviewing the literature on ESL teachers' and students' ambivalent attitudes toward PhilE, it is still recommended that teachers teach the variety that their lesson or students' needs call for. For instance, when it is an academic writing lesson, formal L1 English must be taught. When it is a reading or a literary study that reflects the use of English in informal social contexts, PhilE expressions and grammar may be taught deliberately. In addition, teaching the appropriate registers will help Filipino teachers implicitly promote their multilingualism; thus, both teachers and students can claim that they are multilingual speakers of English. This paper also recommends more studies on Filipinos' awareness and attitude toward PhilE to monitor its status and prestige. When studies show that this variety is acknowledged fully as prestigious even in formal discourse, the Basic and Higher Education Sectors may probably formally integrate them into their language programs.

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