

English Words in the Filipino Lexicon

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Words express our thoughts and feelings. They reflect the sentiments and dynamism of a speech community and the creativity of its members. Thus, the inventory of words in a given language (lexicon) is never static --some words are retired, others undergo semantic changes (i.e., broadening, narrowing, meaning shift), and some new words are added.

New words in the lexicon attest to the dynamism of a language. Filipino, presently our lingua franca, (and national language in the becoming), adopts quite a number of English words into its lexicon. These words are widely used by students, movie and television personalities, tabloid and radio reporters, comics illustrators, the man on the street, and the third sex who usually coin their own set of vocabulary which eventually finds its way into the mainstream. Even professors in the academe use them in their papers.

Some English terms are Filipinized through **affixation, clipping, and blending**.

Dialog 1

Pedro: *Gumimik ba sila kagabi?* (Did they go out last night?)

Juan: *Paki ko! Nakakapraning ang mga chakang pipol na 'yan.*

(I don't care! Those ugly people drive me crazy.)

Pedro: *Bakit mo ba sila dinededma?* (Why do you snub them?)

Juan: *Karambol kasi ng frat ko ang mga 'yan. Gets mo?*

(You see, my fraternity often meet these guys in a rumble.)

The following words are borrowed from English: gumimik (gimmick), nakakapraning (paranoid), dinededma (dead malice), gets mo? (get it?), karambol (rumble). Notice that these borrowed words take on Filipino rules on phonology, ortography and syntax once we use them. Thus, they take on our affixes -um-, nakaka-, ka-, etc. and very easily and naturally become part of our conversation.

Clipping is another way by which our lexicon is enriched and made more colorful. This shortens a word. Let's take note of another Juan-Pedro dialog.

Dialog 2

Pedro: *'Tol sosi ang syota mo, ah.*

(Brod, I see your girlfriend has class.)

Juan: *May condo pa. Utol siya ng brod ko sa frat.*

(And with a condo to her name. She's my frat brother's sister.)

Pedro: *Walandyo, elib talaga ako sa iyo, Pard.*

(Truly, I take my hats off to you, Pal)

Juan: *O, sya. May exam pa ako. Kitakits tayo kasbu.*

(Okay, I still have an examination. See you tomorrow)

Clips flow very naturally in the conversation of young people nowadays. In Dialog 2, frat from fraternity; condo (condominium); brod (brother); exam (< examination). We also find the Pilipino clips: 'Tol and utol from kaputol (sibling), pards from kumpadre which also yields 'adre, and pare; kitakits (kita-kita) and paki (paki-alam) in Dialog 1.

Other common clips are direk (director), org (organization), prosti (prostitute), porno (pornographic), sked (schedule), isko (iskolar), trayk (tricycle), and prof (professor).

Blending is the compounding of two or more clipped words.

Dialog 2 gives us syota (< syo(rt) + ta(ym) < short time), walandyo, a combination of the Pilipino wala and the English "joke" (walandyo < walandyok < walaN dyok < walang joke). Other blends are promdi (prom di prabins < from the province), brenda (brain damage), trapo or tradpol (traditional politician), telebabad (English "telephone" > telepono + Pilipino "babad").

Common Pilipino blends which do not have English components are: tapsilog (ta[pa], si[nangag], [it]log ~ breakfast fare of fried dried beef, rice and egg); iskargu (is[da], kar[ne], gu[lay] ~ a dish of fish meat and vegetables); badaf (ba[bae], daf[at] ~ "should have been a woman"), bilmoko ([i]bil[i] mo [a]ko ~ buy me that), swangit (swa[pang], [pa]ngit ~ greedy and ugly); kapalmuks ([ma]kapal [ang] muk[ha] + s ~ shameless).

Blending is economical and fun. It groups together related words to produce a compound indicative of their individual meaning. Anybody can create the blends he/she fancies and see how they catch on.

There is no limit to the words one can derive by applying the three processes discussed above to English loan words. The predominance of English borrowing in the national lingua franca cannot be denied. It is prevalent in the tri-media, the movies, the universities and other learning institutions, and in other fora.

This is not a new phenomenon. Way back in the 1960s, Hermosisima's Dictionary Bisayan-English-Tagalog (Manila:Pedro S. Ayuda, 1966) listed respelled English words as main entries. John Wolff's A Dictionary of Cebuano Visayan (Manila: Linguistic Society of the Philippines and SEA Program of Cornell University, 1972) listed quite a sizable number of English loan words respelled to fit the orthography he set for Cebuano. This two lexical works indicate that adopting English words into the Cebuano lexicon has been practised for the past 30 or more years.

In the same way that Spanish has influenced the lexicon of some of the major languages in the Philippines, English presently pervades the consciousness of the Filipino speakers. For some of them, English borrowing may be a modern-day phenomenon. But this just proves that the evolving Filipino language is equal to the demands of the present and its speakers are well-equipped and creative enough to rise up to these demands.

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