Corpus-Based
Grammatical
Studies of
Philippine English
and
Language
Assessment:
Issues and
Perspectives

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This paper is organized as follows: First, it contextualizes the discussion within the landscape of Philippine English as a new English and as a field of study, with emphasis on endonormative stabilization of grammatical structures. Then, it will discuss the meta-synthesis of Borlongan and Lim (2012a) of corpus-based grammatical studies of Philippine English. Finally, directions to take towards a world Englishes paradigminformed language assessment in the Philippines will be suggested.

Keywords: Grammatical Studies, language assessment

ow the world Englishes paradigm impacts language assessment has been perplexing among scholars and stakeholders of various interests on the matter. While the issue remains controversial, most especially because language testing and assessment is one enterprise that is about accuracy, the apparent 'dilemna' that the world Englishes paradigm presents is that of accommodation of variety and, in effect, divergence. The stands present paper on а dispassionate plane: How a sub-set of world Englishes studies - to be more specific, corpus-based grammatical studies Philippine English - may influence the practice of language testing and assessing.

The Development and Present Status of Philippine English

Bolton and Bautista (2008) say, "the story of English in the Philippines is a compelling tale" (p. 2). The Americans brought and introduced English when they colonized the Philippines towards the end of 1800s. Actually, the first English teachers were the American soldiers that were posted in

country that also served as English teachers, until the more qualified teachers, the Thomasites, arrived after three years. According to Gonzalez (1997, 2008), the number of American English teachers diminished significantly when Filipino teachers were already capable of teaching English, replacing most of the American teachers, and, when Filipinos started learning English from fellow Filipinos, Philippine English was born.

A publication by Llamzon came out in 1969, which was truly groundbreaking and which Bautista (2000) considered as "truly radical at that time" (p.6). In his publication, Llamzon claimed that "there is a standard variety of English which has arisen in the Philippines [and it] stands or falls short on the premise that there is a sizeable number of native and near-native speakers of English in the country" (p. 84). Hidalgo (1970) and Gonzalez (1972) questioned Llamzon's claim that there exists a sizeable number of native or near-native speakers of English in the Philippines, because Filipinos are not native nor near-native speakers but mostly second language speakers of English. Bautista however presents evidences that supported the claim of Llamzon (1969): That there was already the existence of Philippine English and that it is a variety on its way to standardization. Bautista also strengthened her claims by proving how English has penetrated in various parts of the society and that it was already functionally-native to the Philippines. Thus, new definitions of a native speaker emerged - "[some]one who learns English in childhood and continues to use it as his dominant language and has reached a certain level of fluency in terms of grammatical well-formedness, speech-act rules, functional elaboration, and code diversity" (Richards & Tay, 1981, p. 53) and "someone, who was born and/or nurtured (to adolescence and/or beyond) in that language (possibly, in addition to other languages, in a multilingual context) in a relevant speech community/group, who can successfully use it for his/her daily sociocommunicational needs (and thought processes, therefore), and who possesses the (minimal) oral-aural skills (in the language)" (Mann, 1999, p. 15), a sizable number of Filipinos would definitely qualify as native speakers of English. Hence, she remarked that, "30 years after Llamzon proclaimed the existence of a Standard Filipino English, such a claim now has a basis in reality" (p. 17).

Schneider (2007) considers the Philippines to be in endonormative stabilization - phase 4. The case of the transplantation of English in the Philippines he describes this way: "Signs foreshadowing codification in phase 4 can be detected, though they remain highly restricted" (p. 143). However, very recently, Borlongan (2011c) makes a claim that Philippine English already reached endonormative stabilization - phase 4. He says that Event X - a requisite to endonormative stabilization - has already taken place. He considers as Event X the ratification and implementation of the Tydings Rehabilitation Act of 1946 and Bell Trade Relations Act of 1946, which were seen as somehow unfair to the Philippines, as their primary goal was to serve as an aid during the post-war rehabilitation but were not completely as such. Borlongan also points to what he calls post-Event X incidents, such as the rejection of the 1947 Military Bases Agreement, which drew American military bases out of the

Philippines by 1992 and the pull out of the Philippine troops that were originally sent to support the American-led coalition forces in Iraq. Aside from these, after the independence from the Americans, the Philippines has been able to self-govern and formulate its own language policies internally. Consequently, emerging local norms have been generally more acceptable and English has become widely in literature. And thus, Philippine English has shown some signs of phonological and grammatical stabilization. Furthermore, Philippine English has grown to a level of homogeneity and dictionaries and referece grammars provide (initial) codification. Hence, Philippine English is not so far away, if not, already in the endonormative stablilization - phase 4 in Schneider's (2003, 2007) dynamic model of the evolution of postcolonial Englishes, Borlongan asserts.

Corpus-Based Grammatical Studies of Philippine English

A foreign scholar once remarked, "of the Southeast Asian countries, the Philippines has perhaps produced the most comprehensive research on an indigenised variety of English" (Tay, 1991, p. 323). However, it is the availability of a Philippine English corpus in the form of the Philippine component of the International Corpus of English (ICE-PH) that paved the way to the advancement of the linguistic description of Philippine English, to a more empirical and quantitative approach that corpus-based linguistics can offer. ICE-PH was compiled at De La Salle University in Manila, the Philippines by a team headed by Ma. Lourdes Bautista, started in the early 1990s and completed in mid-2000s. ICE-PH is composed of about one million words distributed almost evenly across 500 texts with specified categories; therefore, there are approximately 2000 words per text with some being composite to reach the 2000-word minimum. Also, the texts were sampled from the English spoken or written by adults aged 18 and above and who received formal education through the medium of English up to the postsecondary level. The texts are divided into spoken and written texts, the major text categories. All in all, the texts include private and public dialogues, unscripted and scripted monologues, and non-printed and printed written materials. Bautista however made no claim with regard to the representativeness of the data but said the corpus can still be a solid basis for future studies.

To date, at least around 50 studies would have been made with ICE-PH serving as dataset. These studies have been reported in various forms - journal articles, papers in edited volumes (including one solely devoted to ICE-PH studies [Bautista, 2011b]), monographs, and theses and dissertations. Borlongan and Lim (2012a) systematically summarize in a meta-synthesis the findings of corpus-based studies of Philippine English that have seen publication¹. The studies they have included are in Table 1, a listing that seems

¹ Borlongan and Lim (2012b) also reviewed corpus-based studies of Philippine English specifically made at De La Salle University. The university has pioneered corpus-based

to be necessarily indicated in this paper as a way to demonstrating which grammatical aspects have been explored thus far:

Table 1 Studies included in Borlongan and Lim's (2012a) meta-synthesis

Study (Scholar, year of publication)	Grammatical aspect explored
Bautista, 2000a	Subject-verb concord, tense and aspect, articles, prepositions
Pauwels & Winter, 2004 Schneider, 2004 Nelson, 2005 Schneider, 2005 Hundt, 2006	Generic pronouns and gender-inclusive language Particle verbs Expression of future time Subjunctive mood Concord patterns in collective nouns,
Bautista, 2008	One of the + singular noun, Ømajority, such + Ø singular noun, assure + Ø indirect object, wherein
Borlongan, 2008 Collins 2008 Collins, 2009 Alonsagay & Nolasco,	Tag questions Progressive aspect Modals and quasi-modals
2010	GET-passives
Bautista, 2010a	Mandative subjunctive, modals of obligation and necessity, HAVE-negation
Bautista, 2010b	Subjunctive mood, case marking of wh-pronouns, indefinite compound pronouns in -body and -one
Bautista, 2011a Borlongan, 2011 Collins, 2011 Coronel, 2011 Dita, 2011 Gustilo, 2011 Lim & Borlongan, 2011 Nelson & Hongtao, 2011 Schneider, 2011	Pragmatic particle 'no Irregular verbs, comparison of adjectives, s-genitive Concord in existential there-constructions Intensifiers Adverbial disjuncts Modal auxiliaries Tagalog particles 'Grammatical keywords' Subjunctive mood

And Borlongan and Lim (2012a) point to the following with regard to Philippine English grammar:

• Philippine English has been initially described as being linguistically conservative as seen in its stylistic homogeneity across different genres

work on Philippine English, rather quite expectedly, because of its being the 'home' of ICE-PH as well as Borlongan's Philippine parallel to Brown University Standard Corpus of Present-Day Edited American English.

of speech and writing and it has been argued that it does not have a distinct stylistic differentiation between speech and writing (Alberca, 1978; Gonzalez & Alberca, 1978; Gonzalez, 1982, 1983, 1985, 1991). However, Borlongan and Lim's meta-synthesis has made a case for Philippine English; that, in fact, it manifests differentiation among and between genres. These differentiations are in the grammatical categories of aspect, modals and quasi-modals, voice, wh-pronouns, indefinite compound pronouns, gender-inclusive pronouns, adverbial disjuncts, relative clauses, and tag questions. This is not to say that stylistic underdifferentiation was not evident. It is, but in much fewer grammatical categories (as compared to the number of grammatical categories where differentiation has been observed) such as subjunctive mood and collective noun concord across genres.

- Philippine English, having American English as its parent, draws out some foreseeable structural development regarding its linguistic structures that would most likely follow the footsteps of its parent Englishy. But despite the continuous influence of American English, Philippine English still manages to develop, to the point of even showing some clear signs of linguistic independence and, therefore, quite possibly, it is moving towards endonormative stablilization. Some grammatical aspects such as subjunctive, regularization of irregular verb morphology, and concord in relation to collective nouns and *there*-existentials still have traces of influence from the parent, but Philippine English has not been faithful to its parent in the grammatical aspects of the progressive, modals and quasi-modals, *s*-genitive, *wh*-pronouns, and indefinite compound pronouns.
- Philippine English certainly has come up with its own distinctive patterns
 of use in some grammatical aspects (i.e. the subjunctive and concord in
 relation to collective nouns and there-existentials). Although Philippine
 English still does follow some of the norms of its parent, in some aspects,
 Philippine English might even be more advanced that American English
 (i.e. regularization of irregular verb morphology, s-genitives, whpronouns, and indefinite compound pronouns). Looking at specific
 aspects (the progressives and modals and quasi-modals) has shown a
 thorough difference in patterning; thus, they have taken different paths
 of development.
- Philippine English has as its closest affinity American English due to its lineage, but Singapore English is next in line due to, probably, the similar contextual and developmental dynamics. This status of closeness, however, is not constant; which means, it is not always the case that American English will always be the closest and Singapore English the next. Thus, there are other Englishes with which Philippine English shows similar patterning and they are Hong Kong English, New Zealand English,

and British English. Therefore, Philippine English is a lot more flexible and not just a fixed English. And so, although it is expected that Philippine English is closest to its parent, it might not always be the case.

• In the dynamic model of the evolution of postcolonial Englishes, Philippine English was initially positioned in phase 3 - nativization (Schneider, 2003, 2007). However, a recent attempt by Borlongan (2011b) to relocate Philippine English to endonormative stabilization - phase 4 has been supported with various sociolinguistic evidences for the proposed relocation. And concurrently, fundamental linguistic and structural effects are also seen to be manifesting in Philippine English.

But the most important feat of Borlongan and Lim's (2012a) metasynthesis is its showing of clear evidences of internal norms, which are stabilizing, and its pointing out of an emerging local standard. Thus, there exist marked differentiation in the use of grammatical structures across different genres of speech and writing and independent linguistic choices, i.e. not following the patterns of its parent but still similar with its parent in many ways.

There are some other corpus-based work on Philippine English worth the mention here but was not not included in the Borlongan and Lim (2012a) (because they do not meet their selection criteria which is that the study must already be in published form): The pioneering corpus-based grammar of the Philippine English verb system of Borlongan (2011a) and the diachronic studies of Philippine English (Borlongan, Lim, Collins, & Yao, 2012; Collins, Borlongan, & Yao, in press for 2013; Collins, Yao, & Borlongan, 2012) which were made possible with the availability of the Philippine parallel to Brown University Standard Corpus of Present-Day Edited American English (more commonly known as the Brown corpus, and so the Philippine parallel is genially called 'Phil-Brown'), the compilation of which was directed by Ariane Borlongan of De La Salle University. These works nonetheless all lend support to what Borlongan and Lim (2012a) have said of Philippine English.

Towards a World Englishes Paradigm-Informed Language Assessment: Problems and Prospects

Ample descrption of Philippine English grammar have been made available through the compendium of corpus-based grammatical studies of Philippine English. Corpus-based reference works (e.g. Borlongan, 2011a) are also being prepared, and hopefully a much more comprehensive grammatical desciption of Philippine English will be ready soon. These are valuable resources, among others, in informing language assessment of the world Englishes paradigm, of the variation that should be recognized as acceptable, and not labelled as learner errors. Standardized tests are fairly institutionalized mechanisms, and may be hard to commit to transitionary

change. Also, comprehensive paradigm shifts in the construction and implementation of these standardized tests require access to a readily available grammar. This notwithstanding, the reality that remains is that these standardized tests (which are Anglo-American-based) are given high recognition and validity for the various purposes it may serve. And therefore, how the results of these tests are valued and used as a means to discriminate persons in general and students in particular must be reconsidered.

Within the present realities, it is almost impossible to instigate institutional change and comprehensive paradigm shift. The perennial problem of the Philippine educational system is lack of resources, most especially financial resources, and this delays innovation. Putting up standardized tests that conform to the conviction of the world Englishes paradigm requires comprehensive linguistic descriptions of Philippine English. A grammatical description of just one grammatical category (i.e. Borlongan's [2011a] verb grammar) will not be able to warrant paradigm shift. Though efforts leading to more grammatical descriptions are in progress (e.g. Carissa Anna Cariño and JooHyuk Lim of De La Salle University are working on adjectives and prepostions respectively), a concrete and tangible reference work must be in place. Of course, introducing variance in these standardized tests remains an issue and more complex psychometric techniques must be used to be able to assess users of Philippine English (cf. Davidson, 2005).

In the interim, what can be done should be done: Teachers in service must be informed of this emerging, liberating paradigm. They must be made aware that English is not a monolithic entity, and the norms have become pluricentric. These should first and foremost be reflected in their teaching philosophies, and then translated into action: Teachers should start teaching Philippine English, not necessarily as the target variety but simply to increase awareness on the existence of such a legitimized new English, thereby also helping students improve their sociolinguistic competence. Classroom evaluation schemes must reflect this reinvigorated philosophy and enhanced content. This can be easily applied in less objective assessment tools like essays and research papers, which should be common in English language classes. Teachers must point in class how Philippine English textual patterns may differ from other Englishes and must instruct their students to be aware of how these differences and variations may be used appropriately. The findings of corpus-based studies of Philippine English with reference to internal stylistic variation may help in pointing out when Philippine English discriminates between the use of the subjunctive mood, for example, and so the teacher must try to make the most out of this kind of resource. Given this, teachers must likewise rate submissions without judging those works that make use of Philippine English patterns as inferior.

But like standardized tests, classroom objective-type tests will continue to conform to the exonormative standard as long as high-stake standardized tests also remain to be Anglo-American-based. That these classroom tests will favor an exonormative standard at present - until such a time when Philippine English standardized tests are available - is understandable because these tests

are usually taken as preparations for high-stake standardized tests. However, in light of the world Englishes paradigm, teachers should also make mention how some answers which are categorically right may be variably optional (cf. Bautista, 2000, 2004 on catgorical/invariable and variable rules in Philippine English). Teachers should take advantage of post-test implentation discussions as teaching and learning moments when students can be made to realize how grammatical variation exists across Englishes, and it is also at these moments when corpus-based findings become invaluable.

While, as mentioned earlier, standardized tests are the most difficult to change, in relation to a world Englishes-informed language assessment, efforts should remain unrelenting as to the development of standardized tests that accurately measure language proficiency and competence, and this kind of proficiency and competence must include sensitivity to the reality of the existence of a local English, which is legitimate and not that that falls short of American or British English. It is at this stage of reenvisioning a more world Englishes-informed language assessment that findings of corpus-based studies will be most important and truly necessary.

The task of putting up a world Englishes paradigm-informed language assessment in the Philippines is a difficult one. Borlongan (2010a, 2010b) it is difficult to introduce an innovation in English language teaching in the Philippines, primarily because there is no system for managing innovations in English language teaching in the Philippines. However, sacrifices must be done as to as develop English language teaching in the Philippines and the development of Philippine English as a legitimate English (Borlongan, 2011b).

Concluding Remarks

Because ultimately, the most important is that Philippine English progresses in its development. Borlongan (2011d, p. 196) ardently says:

PhilE [Philippine English] does follow AmE [American English], undeniably a child of its parent. But like a typical child of any parent, it has a life of its own, too. One sees traits inherited from the parent ('nature') but, likewise, it manifests traits resulting from developmental and contextual dynamics ('nurture').

However, a pre-requisite to its further development, no matter how difficult it may be, is the construction of valid and reliable assessment techniques for English language teaching in the Philippines, techniques that are sensitive to the sociolinguistic reality of a localized English. Hence, it is important that stakeholders of English language teaching in the Philippines and scholars working within the world Englishes paradigm look into this issue more closely.

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