Morphological Analysis of English Journalese in Cebu-Based Dailies

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Abstract

This study investigated the discourse in Cebu-based English dailies to determine variations in morphology, the dominant morphological variants, and the composite forms of the emergent variations. The research is significant because the students acquire implicit knowledge of English from the newspapers. Language theorists consider the environment, such as reading materials, as a major source of comprehensible input for language acquisition. English usage in the Philippines may have become localized, and these variations may be found in print media communication. Thus, linguistic investigations are important to enhance classroom instruction. The descriptive method was used, focusing on the discourse analysis of data taken from hard news and editorials through convenience sampling. The hard news and editorials are two sections of the newspapers that command high readership. Frequency count and percentages were used in categorizing the variants and determining the dominant forms. Since the analysis presupposed a model language variety, standard American English was used. The findings indicated that variant English lexicon was evolving in Cebu-based newspapers and that geography and culture had caused these emergent variations. Among other things, it was recommended that words borrowed from the local language for lack of English equivalents be accepted in journalistic communication.

Introduction

English has been used in the Philippines for more than a century now. It became a foreign language to the Filipinos at the start of the American regime which started in 1898. Later on, it became the language of academic instruction. The pioneering English teachers were the American soldiers. According to Andrade (quoted in Aprieto, 1993), the use of English during the American era resulted to many humorous events. An example was this letter of a Filipina teacher to Edwin Murphy, one of the first superintendents of schools of Pangasinan:

> *Dear Mr. Superintendent:*
>
> *I have the honor to resignate because my works are many and my salaries are few – besides sir my supervising he makes many lovings to me but I say O not! O not! O not!*

From the stumbling start, the Philippines rose to become the third largest English-using country, next only to the United States and the United Kingdom. However, the Philippines uses English as a second language unlike the said two countries which use English as a native language. Oral English has no local model in the Philippines because no Filipino speech community speaks English as a first language. English is reserved only for special occasions and classroom instruction. Filipinos do not speak English at home, in the neighborhood, in the streets, in the marketplace, and other public places.

English has established itself as a medium of written communication of practically all sectors of society. Office correspondence is written in English. Court records are written in English, even if the witnesses speak in the native languages. Even ordinary people read written English,

especially newspaper reports, at home and elsewhere. The print media are an important part of the lives of the Filipinos, and the print media practitioners are highly regarded as far as written English use is concerned.

The popular construct that language is constantly evolving, supported by the ideas of Boeree (2003), Baugh and Cable (1978), Shuy (1972) and DeCamp (1972), intrigued this researcher into conducting a linguistic study on the English journalese in Cebu. The study is significant because the newspapers are among the reading materials that the students are exposed to and from which they acquire implicit knowledge of English. Of all reading materials, the newspapers are the most accessible to the students both outside and inside the school.

In Cebu, the local newspapers, namely: *Sun Star Cebu and The Freeman,* are widely read. The researcher's frequent visits to school libraries in Cebu City have shown that they have regular subscriptions of these two dailies. Students regularly read the local newspapers for various reasons; it may be for their school assignment, or for their desire to keep updated of the news of the day, or simply out of habit. Whatever their reasons may be, the regular exposure of the students and the public in general to the English usage in local newspapers makes these publications a major reinforcement tool for the learning of English as a second language.

Reading materials are very important for learning. This is especially so in second language acquisition. According to Krashen (1985), the learner improves and progresses along the natural order when he/she receives second language input that is one step beyond his/her current stage of linguistic competence (Krashen in Schütz, 2007). Krashen (1985) considers the environment as a major source of comprehensible input for language acquisition. According to Saville-Troike (2006), linguistic input consists of words, phrases, sentences and other surface-level units of a specific human language.

It is, therefore, within the ambit of curricular planning to conduct linguistic investigations to enhance classroom instruction. This is especially so because according to Shuy (1972), the differences between standard and nonstandard English have something to do with the variables of time, geography, and society. The geographical distance of the Philippines from the United States whose English variety is the model used by Filipinos is most likely a factor for language evolution in the Philippines. The three variables cited by Shuy (1972) are also considered by other linguists as the primary agents for language evolution. For example, DeCamp (1972) cites six dimensions, namely: functional variety or style, geography, time, age, sex, and culture. In the Philippine context, the geographical and cultural dimensions are seen to be of great significance. Because of these two dimensions, English usage in the Philippines may have become localized and these variations may have crept into people's writing, including print media communication.

In general, variations of English in the Philippines are termed *Filipinisms.* However, although there are general *Filipinized* usage of English among Filipinos, most of the variations are of local color considering the wide ethno-linguistic Philippine culture. In *Ethnologue: Languages of the World* (Lewis, 2009), the number of Philippine languages is said to be 175, of which171 are living languages and four are extinct. There are eight major Philippine languages, one of which is Cebuano Visayan. CebuanoVisayan, also known as Bisaya, Visayan, Binisayâ and Sugbuanon, is a member of the Western or Indonesian branch of the Austronesian (Malayo-Polynesian) language family. Native CebuanoVisayan speakers constitute one-fourth of the population of the Philippines and as such comprise the largest linguistic and cultural group in the country (Language Directory, 2000-2007). In Cebuano Visayan-speaking regions, English variations may be more aptly described as *Cebuanisms* instead of *Filipinisms* as other Filipinos may not understand them.

Variations take place faster in the language's lexicon than in their grammar and pronunciation. Lexicon refers to the dictionary or the words used in a language (Merriam-Webster's Advanced Learner's English Dictionary, 2008). The study of the lexicon is associated with morphology which is the study of word formation (Lieber, 2004). Morphology, in fact, deals with lexical morphemes, among other things.

The *New Lexicon Webster's Dictionary of the English Language* (1991) states that the ever-increasing size of the English vocabulary results from a variety of processes, mainly of two kinds: the processes of growth through which words enter the language, and the processes of change whereby words already in use undergo alterations in meaning. It mentions the following processes as the chief sources of English vocabulary: borrowing from other languages, compounding, formation by affixes, functional shift, figures of speech, clipping and back-formation, initial words or acronyms, imitation of sounds, name words, and blending.

Objectives

This study aimed to determine and analyze the variant morphological forms of English in Cebu-based dailies, the variant morphological forms dominating the discourse corpus, and the composite forms of these emergent variations.

Methodology

Research Design. The study used the descriptive method of research, specifically   documentary analysis. This method of research involves gathering information by analyzing written records and documents in order to solve a problem (Sevilla, 1990). Another term for this is content analysis.

Research Procedure. The data were gathered through purposive sampling. These were taken from the researcher's newspaper clippings of hard news and editorials from 2000 to 2007 of the newspapers that command high readership.

The data were analyzed linguistically through the process of discourse analysis. Discourse analysis is a non-statistical, exploratory-interpretive method which utilizes a non-experimental procedure; yields qualitative data and provides an interpretive analysis (Grotjahn, 1987). The analysis focused on the variant morphological forms in Cebu-based English newspapers.

However, acronyms, which are generally considered part of the lexicon of a language, were excluded from the study. This was necessary because an acronym represents a group, association, administrative body and related entities that can be abolished easily, and thus may easily disappear from the lexicon of a language. Second, an acronym is not used exclusively by English speakers but also by speakers of other languages. Third, the Cebu-based dailies, are full of acronyms of local bodies or associations that to include these acronyms in this study was to make it look like a directory of these organizations. Lastly, variation presupposes a model which is the basis of comparison, and a local acronym has no standard model.

Standard American English was used as the model for comparison. Standard American English is the variety of English that is taught in Philippine schools. It was, therefore, necessary to refer to the academically recommended and internationally used English dictionaries.

Sources of Data. The data were taken from the two leading Cebu-based English newspapers, The Freeman and Sun Star Cebu. These newspapers have earned very high readership through long years of service in the Visayas and other parts of the country. They have

practically become part of the Cebuano culture. The term Cebuano refers to the residents of Cebu, and loosely to anybody who speaks Cebuano Visayan. The Freeman is one of the oldest newspapers in the Philippines. It was founded in 1919. Through the years, it has received various awards. In 1999, it was voted into the Hall of Fame of the National Community Press Awards for winning ten of twenty-two Community Press Awards. Sun Star Cebu has served the public since 1983. It was elevated to the Hall of Fame of the Cebu Archdiocese Mass Media Awards in 1989.

Results and Discussion

The discourse corpora of the two newspapers showed variations in morphology. These consisted of borrowing, extension of meaning, compounding, shortening and affixing, functional shifting, clipping and compounding, and affixing.

Morphological Variants

The morphological variants fall under the following categories: borrowing, extension of meaning, compounding, shortening and affixing, functional shifting, clipping and compounding, and affixing.

Borrowing. Borrowed words topped all other morphological variants in terms of number and occurrences. Twenty-eight (28) such words occurred 312 times. These words, borrowed from Cebuano, Tagalog, and Spanish may be categorized into two: those which can be translated into English directly or have equivalent English words, and those which can be understood by the native English speakers by means of descriptive definitions and whose nuances get lost in the English translations. Nuances are shades of meanings (Merriam-Webster's Advanced Learner's English Dictionary, 2008) distinct to a language.

Words like *barangay* (village), *gaba* (bad karma), *higante* (giant), *kagawad* (councilor), *labada* (laundry), *pahinungod* (offering), *pogi* (good-looking/handsome), *sari-sari* (miscellaneous), *lumad* (native), *manicurista* (manicurist), *pulong-pulong* (meeting), *delicadeza* (sense of dignity), *tanod* (peace officer), *tigbakay* (illegal cockfighting), *balimbing* (political turncoat), *bayong* (native bag), and *Pinoy* (Filipino) have direct English translations which may well be used to produce a standard English sentence. However, there are borrowed words which do not have direct English translations. These are *habal-habal* (a motorcycle used as a means of public transportation), hantak (a game that involves the tossing of coins), *jeepney* (a popular means of mass transportation), *sigbin* (a mysterious creature in urban legends that is said to look like a kangaroo), *dagdag-bawas* (literally: add-deduct, referring to election cheating), *balikbayan* (a returning Filipino migrant worker), *shabu* (a kind of illegal drug), *masiao* (an illegal numbers game in the Visayan regions), *jueteng* (an illegal numbers game in the Tagalog regions), *trisikad* (a kind of mass transportation using a bicycle attached to a small carriage), *kapihan* (a meeting over cups of coffee, or a place where such a meeting is held), and *paregla* (the act of waylaying an innocent person without any apparent reason).

Translating some Cebuano words instead of loaning them into the English discourse will result in the failure of accurate communication that the print media have sworn to observe. For example, *habal-habal* and *sigbin* may be translated as "motorcycle-for-hire" and "Philippine kangaroo", respectively. However, these translations do not capture the nuances of the original Cebuano Visayan terms.

Habal-habal is an improvised motorcycle that can carry several passengers who, sometimes, are boarded on inconvenient sensual positions. Thus, the term *habal-habal* was born, taken from the old Cebuano word habal

which had earlier been adopted from the Spanish word *jabal,* meaning "boar". So much of the CebuanoVisayan vocabulary comes from Spanish courtesy of the almost four centuries of Spanish colonization of the Philippines.

In Cebuano Visayan-speaking areas, the word *habal* refers to the impregnation of a female pig by a boar. In the Philippine rural areas, it has been a practice among the raisers of female pigs and boars to bring their animals together for mating purposes. The business arrangement is for the female pig owner to give one piglet to the boar owner. Thus, the term *habal-habal* has a sexual connotation.

Habal-habal is a linguistic concoction specific in the Cebuano Visayan-speaking areas. It is a term coined for a particular mode of transportation widespread in the region. Since language is cultural, *habal-habal* has no English equivalent because this mode of transportation is not found in the culture of native English-speaking countries.

Sigbin, which is loosely considered as Philippine kangaroo because of its alleged similarity in features, exists only in folktales and is more mythical than real. The term *sigbin* even has an eerie nuance as the "animal" is said to be a pet of a witch. Clearly, it is not apt to use "Philippine kangaroo" (to mean *sigbin)* in a sentence as it will mislead the reader into thinking that kangaroos do exist in the Philippines. The descriptive definition of this word shows that it has no one-word English equivalent.

To illustrate, this is how habal-habal and sigbin are used in the journalistic discourse:

1. *He has been leading a group of young men suspected of robbing habal-habal drivers.*
2. *The councilor introduced a controversial resolution for the protection of sigbin.*

Moreover, the study found that some borrowed words were treated like English words as evidenced by the application of inflection on them, e.g. the addition of a bound morpheme (letter s) to pluralize a noun. A bound morpheme cannot stand alone; it has to be attached to a free morpheme. A free morpheme is a basic word, e.g. a verb in its base form. For example, in the word "eats", "eat" is free and "s" is bound. The inflection of borrowed native words treats them not only as lexical items but also as syntactic words. Syntactic words (Pesirla, 1999) refer to the different syntactic roles played by words in sentences. Thus, a verb is inflected with an "s" if its subject is singular, if the tense is in the simple present, if the voice is active, and if the mood is indicative. The inflected borrowed words were all nouns, namely: *balikbayans, bayongs, higantes, lumads, kagawads, Pinoys, tanods,* and *tigbakays.* In their original Philippine languages *(balikbayan, kagayad* and *tanod* are Tagalog; *lumad* and *tigbakay* are Cebuano Visayan; *bayong*, *higante* and *Pinoy* are common in Tagalog and Cebuano), these words cannot be inflected in their plural forms. Tagalog and Cebuano Visayan use the marker *mga* to pluralize a noun, e.g. *Ang mga higante* (The giants). Moreover, some borrowed words originate in Spanish (e.g. *higante* and *delicadeza*), but the same are not borrowed from Spanish directly but from either Cebuano or Tagalog into which they have been originally adopted.   This phenomenon may be called double lexical borrowing.

Extension of Meaning. Words with extended meanings ranked second. There were six (6) such words occurring nineteen (19) times, namely: *dispose* (to mean *dispose of*), *others* (in the phrase among others to mean things), personnel (to mean an employee), staff (to mean staff member), salvage (to mean murder), and show off (to mean to show).   These variations are common in Philippine English usage.

Merriam-Webster's Advanced Learner's English Dictionary lists both dispose and dispose of as verbs with

different meanings. Dispose means to give a tendency to; incline; put in a place; arrange; set in readiness; regulate; bestow; settle in a manner finally; or come to terms of. Its meanings do not include "to get rid of something" (as trash or waste), which is one of the meanings of 'dispose of'. In the sentence, The symposium is open to anyone interested in efficiently disposing household garbage, the word dispose is used to mean dispose of, a compound verb.

The meaning of others in the sentence, The court…is slower than usual, thanks, among others, to the large number of party-list participants, is an extension of its standard meaning. The word others (in among others) refers only to persons. Thus, when what is meant is not a person or group of persons, the class or group or idea to which it belongs should be indicated, e.g. thanks, among other things, to the large number of party-list participants. The correct usage of among others is as follows: Michael and Mike, among others, came to the party.

Personnel and staff are collective nouns. But in the sentence, 'One of the suspects allegedly went to one side of the compound where another security personnel saw him', the word is used as a common noun to mean a person. Staff was used in the same manner. While a collective noun may refer to the individual parts or members of the group, it can never be used to mean a single part or member of the group. Instead of personnel (security personnel), the word guard (security guard) is preferable.

Salvage in the dictionary means to save or rescue (as:from wreckage or ruin), but in the sentence, A survivor has tagged two barangay kagawads as behind the salvage of two guest relations officers in Caloocan City 16 years ago, the word takes an opposite meaning: murder in cold blood. This usage of salvage is very common in the Philippines.

Show off means to make a show of, to display or exhibit in an ostentatious manner (e.g. She goes to church to show

off her new dress). However, show off takes a variant meaning in the sentence, Rogelio and son Mike were shown off to reporters hours after their arrest. As used in the sentence, show off means the same as show whose dictionary meaning is to cause or permit to be seen; to exhibit; to present as a public spectacle; or to display for the notice of others.

Compounding. Two variant compound words occurred eighteen (18) times in the journalistic discourse. These were party-list (e.g. He would run for Congress as a party-list representative) and test-buy (e.g. They were the ones who conducted test-buy and surveillance). Neither is found in the English dictionary. In English, the use of a hyphen is the most common method of combining words already existing in the language. Party-list is a coinage of the framers of the Philippine Constitution which refers to the list of representatives of a marginal group to join the Lower House of the Philippine Congress after an election. Test-buy means the act of buying a prohibited commodity, such as drugs, prior to a planned police operation to test if the target person or group is indeed in possession of the stuff.

Shortening and Affixing.   One variant word falls under this category: v-hire, e.g. A senior police officer shot a security guard … at the v-hire terminal. The word v-hire appeared fifteen (15) times. V-hire is formed by shortening the word van into v and making the letter v the prefix of hire. Thus, v-hire is a shortened form of van-for-hire. V-hire is a popular mode of transportation in the Philippines. It functions like a mini-bus.

Functional Shifting. Shifting in word functions accounted for three variant items, namely: kick-off (a noun used as a verb, e.g. The ad hoc committee for the celebration of Calungsod's first fiesta said the activities will kick-off with a thanksgiving mass ….), break-even (an adjective used as a verb, e.g. The company expects to

break-even in 12 months …), and care (a noun used as a verb in the phrase to take care of, e.g. Ouano said there is nothing to worry about the families who will be affected by the project because they will be taken cared of). These variants appeared ten (10) times.

In English, some words may be used either as nouns or verbs with little change in spelling. Such is the case of kick-off (noun) and kick off (verb) whose functions are determined by mechanics, such as a hyphen for the noun function and a space between (splitting) for the verb function. The English usage in Cebu-based newspapers does not follow this linguistic prescription in the case of kick-off and kick off. The same usage was observed in the case of break-even (meaning: having equal cost and income) and break even (meaning: to operate without either a loss or a profit). The variant taken cared of (standard: taken care of) is very common in the Philippines. Instead of treating the word care as a noun, which is its standard function in the phrase to take care of, many Filipinos treat it as a verb, thus the d inflection.

Clipping and Compounding. Trapo, the only variant under this category, results from the clipping of the words traditional and politician and the compounding of the clipped tra and po. It appeared nine (9) times. Trapo is very Filipino in nuance as indeed there is a Tagalog and Cebuano word trapo which means rag. Thus, trapo in Philippine political context refers to a politician who embraces dirty politics (e.g. "I'm not a trapo and I won't play their games", he said in a phone interview yesterday).

Affixing. Overgeneralization in affixing words is common in the Philippines. For example, the suffix –er is freely added to nouns or verbs. One (1) such case is the variant word pickpocketer. It appeared only once: Sidewalk vendors readily provide us information about notorious robbers and pickpocketers. The addition of the suffix –er to pickpocket is unnecessary. Pickpocket is a noun and there is no need to make it a double noun.

Pickpocketer is meant the same as pickpocket: a person who picks or steals from the pocket of another. Pickpocketer is an example of the overgeneralization in the use of the suffix er to structure the noun form of a word, specifically a verb.

Dominant Morphological Variations

Table1 shows that of the total 384 occurrences of variant words, 312 occurrences or 81.25 percent are those of borrowed words. The remaining 72 occurrences (18.75 percent) are divided among the six (6) other categories of variant words.

Table of Variant Lexical Categories

CATEGORIES	NUMBER OF VARIANT WORDS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Borrowing	28	312	81.25
Extension of Meaning	6	19	4.95
Compounding	2	18	4.69
Shortening and Affixing	1	15	3.91
Functional Shifting	3	10	2.60
Clipping and Compounding	1	9	2.34
Affixing	1	1	.26
TOTAL	42	384	

The dominance of borrowed words among the morphological variants shows that culture and geography have caused the lexical variation in the use of English by the Cebu-based journalists. That the Cebuano-based journalists prefer borrowing these words to translating them into English further highlights the relationship between language and culture (Lado, 1978; Lazear, 1997; Neil, 2008; Otto, 2006 citing Anderson & Lightfoot, 2002; Crystal, 1987; Hayes et al.,1987).   To give loose translations to some native words is to deprive the reader of the cultural tinge that goes with the Cebuano lexicon.

It may be said, then, that the English discourse in Cebu-based dailies caters to the Cebuano reader, or that the Cebuano journalists always have in mind the Cebuano

reader when they write their news stories. For how else can they think about the non-Cebuano reader, the native English speaker particularly, and still write words like sigbin, habal-habal, pahinungod, lumad, masiao, paregla, tigbakay, and trisikad. To the non-Cebuano readers, these words will surely impede communication. The Cebuano journalists do not have a reader in mind. Their heavy use of borrowed words has something to do with their cultural orientation. Their being Cebuano or Visayan shows when they write their news reports or editorials.

The culture-oriented journalese in Cebu-based English newspapers is naturally related to the geographical distance of the Cebuano community from the native speakers of English. Culture, after all, is a product of geography. However, the English-Cebuano Visayan lexical integration is a showcase not only of the Cebuano culture but also that of the Filipinos in general. Words like balikbayan, balimbing, barangay, dagdag-bawas, delicadeza, higante, jueteng, kagawad, kapihan, labada, lumad, manicurista, Pinoy, pulong-pulong, sari-sari and tanod are terms which are understood in all parts of the country. Hence, the Cebuano journalist is a complex communicator. He is a Filipino news bearer confined in the geographical culture of the Cebuano. He translates his native thoughts into a language that is both native and foreign-native. Native because English had been existing in his birthplace long before he was born. Foreign because he was not born into the language neither did he grow with it. The Cebuano journalist, like most Filipinos, did not learn English at home, in the streets and the neighborhood, unlike the native speakers. He learned English in the classroom and through the pages of grammar books and publications.

The discourse corpus is an account of events that take place in the streets and various corners of the Cebuano cultural setting – events given shapes and hues in the Cebuano Visayan language but which the Cebuano

journalist must describe in a language that he has learned in the classroom and grammar books. It should not surprise the reader that the medium of communication of the Cebuano journalist cannot at all times capture the nuances of the concepts and events taking place in the Cebuano locus. The result is lexical borrowing. Native words find their way into the English corpus in Cebu-based newspapers.

Other forms of variant lexicon such as words with extended meanings and words that shift in functions seem to indicate a liberal attitude of the Cebu-based journalists towards the English lexicon. In the case of words with extended meanings, this liberal, albeit careless, attitude provides avenues of miscommunication even as it taxes the reader who will have to read deeper to get the meaning that varies from the surface structure of the language. The word salvage is an example. Moreover, pedagogic grammarians will readily say such forms of variant lexicon as pickpocketer and taken cared of are simple errors in elementary English, and that these have little to do with culture since other learners of English also commit careless morphological back formation and inflection.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings prove that variant English is evolving in the Cebu-based newspapers. Geography and culture are seen to have caused the emergent variant forms of the English lexicon as evidenced by the dominant occurrences of borrowed words – words which are popularly used in the Cebuano Visayan language. The variant morphological forms are evidently the result of the two kinds of processes cited in the New Lexicon Webster's Dictionary of the English Language (1991). The journalistic discourse in Cebu-based dailies shows the eloquent impregnation of the English language with the psyche and cultural bearing of the Filipino English users. In this light, it is recommended that variant morphological forms,

especially borrowed words and products of coinage that are distinctly Filipino, be accepted as educated Filipinisms as long as these do not impede communication; that mass communication students doing internship work in mass media be required to avoid the careless use of morphological variants which unnecessarily disregard the standard English lexicon; that local newspapers improve their gatekeeping process; that since the journalists are products of the academe, their use of the English language be considered as a guide to how the English program of the school can be strengthened; that similar studies be made in other regions or provinces where local English newspapers exist.

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