FOSSILIZED MISTAKE: A FEATURE OF PHILIPPINE ENGLISH

d by:

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In an ordinary Philippine classroom where our learners are also considered as second language (L2) speakers, it is somehow ordinary as well to hear a certain learner to correct his classmate since the latter has committed error in using the English language. A student can have a fluency of using the L2 with the aid of different factors. One important factor is the exposure of the learner to an environment where he has a strong potential to learn the target language. On the other hand, some learners have been hooked by the glory of the American English that makes them adapting this so called “Standard English.” Well, it is quite good to hear especially for the language teachers that the students know how to use the English language correctly which later help them to become sensitive of the grammar structure. On contrary, they must realize that the society where they belong must also be put into consideration. The statement, “I’m sure I’ll be asked what those terms mean when I fill up the next forms I get.” will be considered grammatically incorrect by a Grammar Nazi whose idea of Standard English is the American one. From the presented example, the verb-preposition fill up makes the statement wrong if and only if we follow the American English which will suggest that fill in is better in the context. But, since we will use these words in Philippines and not in America, the presented verb-preposition will be highly accepted. What important thing which second language speakers must always know is, “English is a universal language which means that it is not solely owned by the Americans.” Thus, different variations of English can be made around the world – one is the Philippine English.

Among the prominent Philippine linguists who work with the lexicon of our own variation of English, Maria Lourdes Bautista has taken her place as one in the front
In her article (1997) entitled "The Lexicon of Philippine English" she has enumerated lists of Philippine English words which have been commonly spoken even by the educated Filipinos. Furthermore, she has also discussed some considerations that can help in developing this such lexicon. These are normal expansion, preservation of items, coinage, and borrowing. One interesting fact about the development of our own variation of English is that, many of these words are product of mistakes which have been fossilized since they were considered as words started from the slip of the tongue which later be widespread in the Philippine setting through transferring. In addition, these have been considered as mistakes repeatedly done which turns into error if and only if we put this lexicon in American society. On the other hand, some of these words have already been entered the American English and have been highly accepted globally. One example is the inclusion of the word “xerox” in different American dictionaries which can now function as verb besides from its origin of being just a noun. From this, we can easily realize that our variation of English is really alive and it has started to be recognized by the other powerful variations.

Since we are living in a society where putting our own identity is highly possible, we can easily observe how Filipinos add flavor to the long-time existence of English. Many of these words have been commonly used in the daily conversation where some people have not recognized that these words do not really exist in American society or the other way around people know that these words are logically incorrect but since they live in the Philippine society, they will just follow what is trend. Well, this thing makes Philippines as Philippines that will also connote, “It is more fun in the Philippines.”

Here are some of the words which have new meanings and are originally flavored in the Philippines that even second language learners and teachers can bring it
inside the classroom. Well, they can be considered as errors by the others but these fossilized mistakes make our own English so much interesting:

1. **Pampers.**

   Subconsciously, a Filipino will tell a person to buy “pampers” instead of disposable diapers. In fact, Pampers is just a brand name and its general name is disposable diapers. Can I buy a pampers which brand name is Huggies?

2. **Blow-out.**

   When a teacher for instance has been promoted, we can ask him for a “blow-out.” Well, don’t be shocked if he will refuse because he will say that he has no enough money. In America, this term means “big meal” or “lavish feast” but in Philippines, it can be just a simple meal or snack. So, I doubt if that teacher will refuse because when we say, “blow out! blow out!” it only means “treat us to a snack or meal.”

3. **Salvage.**

   Hearing this word can give you goose bumps because this is really threatening. But, if an American person will hear it, I am pretty sure that he will be glad. For them, it means “to save” which is the opposite of us, “to kill.”

4. **Masteral.**

   A teacher may excuse herself for not attending an important occasion because he needs to attend his “masteral.” This concept has been created because of the analogy, since there is doctoral degree, then why not to have masteral degree. In American English, it is master’s degree. Well, it is a nice analogy for Filipinos.

5. **Ball pen.**
Normally, we can hear how a student ask for borrowing a ball pen. And we know that saying ball pen is right. However, American English has not followed this, instead of saying ball pen, they prefer ball point – a clipped word for ball point pen. Yet, we can always keep on asking, “Can I borrow your ball pen?”

6. CR.

We all know that CR is the abbreviation for comfort room. And inside the classroom, a student may ask, “Sir, can I go to the comfort room?” Naturally, only few will say of bath room because Filipinos prefer comfort room and Americans prefer bath room. Luckily, we are Filipinos so will go to the CR.

7. Cope up with.

This phrase can actually give confusion especially to our students. What is the correct one? Is it cope with or cope up with? Obviously, the former will be the correct phrase to use since it is used by the other variations of English. But, the latter is ours and it doesn’t really provide misunderstanding. That’s why cope up with can still be accepted especially in our own field.

These enumerated words are just some of our English lexicon that gives richness and uniqueness to Philippine English. From this, we can draw on mind that it is also significant to our educational system to preserve its uniqueness and to make certain move to attain its richness. A language teacher should still teach the concept of American English which is universally used since the aim of our education is to create a globally competitive Filipinos but he must not also forget to introduce the existence of Philippine English. Teachers have a role on helping students in differentiating American English and Philippine English. Well, learning American English is a need but learning Philippine English should be a must.
On a final note, everyone must realize that despite the fact that Philippine English is a product of error – “fossilized mistake” what more important is, it helps us to communicate efficiency in a society where we belong.

References:

Bautista, M. L. (1997). The Lexicon of Philippine English. pg. 49-70