PHILIPPINE ENGLISH GOES CRAZY

by:

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People are absolutely amazed when they hear someone speaking in English fluently as if he is a native speaker of the language. Pronunciation and intonation matter as they say. It is overwhelming if we encounter persons having an American or British accent because according to us, they are the standard accents. But who sets the standard? What things to be considered to make a type of English a standardized one?

Based on the article written by Maria Lourdes Tayao entitled “A Lectal Description of the Phonological Features of Philippine English”, she reveals how Filipinos create their own identity in terms of speaking the language. Sometimes, the problem is with the sounds or syllabication of words. She also categorizes three kinds of Philippine English speakers.

First is the “basilectal” variety and included in this category are the Filipinos who have limited access to the English language. Therefore, their English vocabulary is very restricted in terms of communicating to others. They also have their own way of speaking the language like the phoneme /f/ and /p/, as well as /v/ and /b/ that are used interchangeably. For instance, instead of saying “flower,” they pronounce it as “plower.” In addition the words starting with “v” like victory, vase, vague are pronounced as “bictory, base, and bague.” Because such interchangeable sounds become a part of our culture, we accept them as if we understand them.
Next category is the “mesolectal” speakers who are considered as professionals who use English language for specific purposes. For example, if you are an English teacher, you are required to speak in English for such language is the medium of your instruction.

The last one is the “acrolectal” variety or the Filipinos speaking the English language as if they are native speakers of it. They have both the accuracy and fluency of the language. And sometimes, if we Filipinos try hard to be in this kind of variety, we tend to be incomprehensible in terms of speaking the English language and producing the proper sounds or pronunciation for it.

So why are these three categories created?

Well, these three are the results of the study of distinct phonological features of the English language produced by Filipinos or in short, the Philippine English. These three varieties of speakers have the similarities in the use or application of the intonation patterns (Tayao, 2004). Yet, the three varieties are not mentioned or enumerated by the level of English speaking ability for such are developmental process in a sense that a particular type of speaker cannot only stay at the variety he is into, but he can move on to the next type by means of learning the English language more.

The question is this: Does this mean that the Philippine English is not the standard?

The answer is NO. We should not sound like the Americans or Britons for we considered as excellent speakers of the language. We Filipinos have our own identity of the language speaking and that what makes us unique among the others who speak English as well.
Way back 2010, a Korean actress named Lee Da Hae presents how English language is spoken by people in specific countries. The Filipinos find it offending and insulting. According to Junielyn Linaja, one of the interviewees and Filipino teacher, she is dismayed on how the hosts also laugh at the actress’s joke. She states, “Hindi po ako makapaniwala na nagawa niya ‘yon. Para po sa akin, hindi lang po ako ang dapat ma-offend sa ginawa nya kundi lahat ng mga Pinoy sa buong mundo. Dapat malaman po ang pambabastos na ito sa ating lahi.” No doubt that such situation brings some to light how Philippine English, though always applied, is discriminated by some people in other parts of the globe. According to Tayao (2004), educated Filipino people talk to another Filipino using the Philippine English for they know that they can be possible to be unintelligible at times.

Philippine English not only merely centers on how the Filipinos speak and pronounce words in English, but it pictures that Filipinos create their only kind of English. In the research presented by Maria Lourdes Bautista in 1997 entitled “The Lexicon in Philippine English,” only Filipinos use brand names to identify or represent a thing. As she states, “Philippine English uses words like “pampers” for disposable diapers, “pentel pen” for a color marker, “to osterize” for the process of using a food blender, and “Colgate” for toothpaste. Mr. Lemuel Fontillas, a professor of Bataan Peninsula State University, tells us in the Graduate School class that the words “Masteral” and “grocery” only exists in the Philippines for in most of the countries, they mean “Masters” and “supermarket” respectively. As mentioned by Bautista (1997), another feature of Philippine English is the fact that the English words we use in the country differ from that of the foreign ones in terms of meaning. Filipinos create words also by means of clippings. Example is the use of the term “ball pen” where in fact it is called as “ball point pen.”
Furthermore, during the special lecture in lexicography led by Dr. Danica Salazar, a lexicographer and contributor to Oxford Dictionary, the words we have in the country like “Mabuhay,” “adobo,” “letson,” “kare – kare,” “bahala na,” are already included in the mentioned dictionary for they originate in the Philippines and those should not have their translations to maintain their essence. The previous words mentioned is a part of our own English.

Philippine English not only deals with the manner the Filipinos speak the English language, but also, it reflects how rich we are in creating our own language and meaning. As Filipinos, we should be proud on how we use and develop the language for it mirrors the countries’ culture and identity. Philippine English is not as its very lowest level. Every English speaking manner in different countries doesn’t tell us about their level of speaking, but of the variety and distinction. It is not our responsibility to mimic native speakers of the language for we can express our own ideas in our own way.

And that is how Philippine English goes crazy. It goes crazy for it is being told that it is not standardized English that everyone should consider. It goes crazy for we create a boundary between the American and British English and the Philippine English. We look at it as if different Englishes are arranged according from the best to the least one. But try to think of this. Philippine English has rich features when it comes to phonology, morphology, meaning – making, and lexical items. This kind of English gives us a lot of twists and encourages us to make studies or researchers about it. Because of the thrill that the Philippine English provides, it is no doubt how far it can go and how many people can be influenced, and later appreciate the variety of English we have.
References:

