

Standard Philippine English: A Linguistic Exploration of a Developing English Variety

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Abstract

Standard Philippine English (SPE) has recently gained attention in the Philippine applied linguistics community. This study used a qualitative research design to explore the content and pedagogy of SPE, identify its distinct features, and examine the basis for its inclusion in the Philippine educational system. Data were gathered through interviews and surveys with English teachers and analyzed to generate key findings. Results show that SPE has unique structures and features. While it is already part of some course content and is offered in selected colleges and universities, it should also be formally integrated into the teaching of English across the curriculum. The study concludes that SPE is a clear and acceptable variety of English, with a growing vocabulary and flexible grammar, style, and usage rules. Its continuous development is supported by the influence of Filipino professionals in the business process outsourcing industry, media, literature, and education.

Keywords: Linguistic Features, Philippine English Integration, Standard Philippine English

INTRODUCTION

The Philippines ranked among the bottom ten countries in reading, mathematics, and science in the 2022 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). Despite a slight improvement in rank, the country showed minimal progress, especially in reading comprehension (Servallos, 2023).

Standard Philippine English (SPE), a localized variety of English, is often used unconsciously by Filipino speakers, yet it remains underrecognized in formal education. While some universities have included SPE in their curriculum, most students and teachers still prefer American or British English (Dimaculangan, 2018; Policarpio, 2021).

Various studies emphasize the importance of embracing SPE in education to promote linguistic identity and inclusivity. Government and international organizations, such as UNESCO and DepEd, have supported inclusive education efforts, but SPE still lacks widespread acceptance and formal integration. This study aimed to examine the linguistic features and educational relevance of Standard Philippine English. It also aimed to understand how SPE can be better integrated into English pedagogy in the Philippines.

METHODOLOGY

To collect relevant data, the researcher designed a survey questionnaire containing guide questions. The questions aimed to explore key issues related to the study.

The participants consisted of senior high school English teachers and college instructors who teach English courses. They were selected as they are best positioned to provide informed responses on the topic.

Before conducting the interviews and distributing the questionnaire, participants were given an informed consent form outlining the purpose of the study and assuring them that their responses would be used solely for academic research and kept confidential.

All participants answered the survey questions. In-person interviews were conducted with the selected participants to gather in-depth insights. Their responses were reviewed, analyzed, and compared to identify consistent findings and develop a clear summary of results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study found that all respondents, who were senior high school and college English teachers, recognized Standard Philippine English (SPE) as a distinct and valid form of English. They described it as unique, localized, and still developing, reflecting Filipino identity and usage. However, they also noted that SPE is not yet fully accepted in academic or international settings, and some believed it has not yet entered Kachru's "inner circle" of recognized World Englishes.

The findings also showed that SPE has specific features that set it apart, especially in pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. Some words in SPE differ in meaning from American English. For example, one respondent mentioned the word *salvage*, which in the Philippines means "to kill," while in American English, it means "to save." These differences can lead to confusion, particularly among students who are exposed to various Englishes through school and media.

Respondents shared several classroom challenges in teaching SPE. Students often mix different English varieties and are unsure about SPE's standard status. Teachers observed that learners struggle with grammar, pronunciation, and usage. They also pointed out that SPE is not formally included in the curriculum, which limits its use and recognition in schools.

Despite these challenges, teachers offered recommendations to improve the teaching and acceptance of SPE. They suggested focusing on strong language foundations starting in basic education and promoting learning through practice. Some recommended that the government work with language experts to develop better teaching strategies. Others emphasized the need to formally include SPE in the curriculum, not only as a topic but as a regular part of communication. Teachers also stressed that students must understand English—especially SPE—as a practical and meaningful language, not just a subject to memorize.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that Standard Philippine English (SPE) is a distinct and valid variety of English that reflects Filipino identity and cultural context. While teachers recognize its uniqueness and value, they also acknowledge that SPE remains a developing form that has not yet gained full acceptance in international and academic settings. Differences in pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary, along with the lack of formal inclusion of SPE in the school curriculum, pose challenges for both teachers and students.

Based on the results, there is a need for stronger efforts to standardize and promote SPE within the Philippine education system. Building a solid foundation in English at the early stages of learning, incorporating SPE into teaching materials and classroom instruction, and fostering collaboration between educators, language experts, and policymakers are crucial steps. Recognizing and integrating SPE into the curriculum will not only improve students' language competence but also affirm the Filipino voice and identity within the global community of English speakers.

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