

**DEFINING STANDARD
PHILIPPINE ENGLISH**

**Its Status and
Grammatical Features**

MA. LOURDES S. BAUTISTA



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*To my mother,
with love and gratitude*

FOREWORD

The monograph by Professor Ma. Lourdes S. Bautista of De La Salle University, entitled *Defining Standard Philippine English: Its Status and Grammatical Features*, is a welcome addition to the body of scholarly literature on the Philippine variety of English and on the varieties of English which have arisen in different parts of the globe following the period of colonialism.

In its excellent comprehensive review of literature on Philippine English, it updates the interested student on the scholarly literature in the field and reviews the issues confronting adequate description and standardization of this variety of English.

The analysis uses a subset of written texts in the Philippine component of the International Corpus of English. Building on Kachru's distinction among innovations, performance and acquisition errors, and deviations, Bautista makes an inventory of deviations in the sentences in the corpus (setting guidelines for distinguishing performance and acquisition errors from deviations). Moreover, using D'Souza's criteria for considering deviations as standardized when they meet benchmarks of frequency, systematicity (rule-governedness), and use by educated exponents of the language, she focuses on grammatical features which based on carefully applied criteria have now become acceptable and part of the standard Philippine English grammar. These features include seemingly irregular instances of agreement between subject and verb, article use, prepositions (in collocations), tenses, and mass versus count noun classification. Other types of subject-verb disagreement she classifies as acquisition errors; she does the same for pronoun-antecedent lack of concord.

The study breaks new ground in its careful application of Kachru's distinctions and D'Souza's criteria for the standard variety and thus enables the careful investigator to find more definite guidelines to answer Gonzalez's earlier question: **When does an error become a [standardized] feature of Philippine English?**

Thus on the basis of these applications, her methodology yields a growing inventory of features which have by now become standard in the grammatical structures of the Philippine variety of English: variations of rules for subject-verb agreement; a different subset of rules for the use of articles *a, an, the* and \emptyset ; local collocations of verb/adjective and preposition combinations as well as preposition-noun co-occurrences; tense choice based on an altered time orientation with regard to verb forms (including modals) and reclassification of nouns from mass nouns (in Standard American English) to count nouns in Standard Philippine English. Especially intriguing are indications that scientific-technical writing and journalism writing provide some contexts in Philippine English which give rise to deviations which have now become acceptable.

In her conclusion, Bautista rightly states that linguistic investigation in the Philippines, especially in the area of sociolinguistics, yields insights that have contributed to world scholarship. She includes the past and present studies on the Philippine variety of English as another field of special inquiry within sociolinguistics in which interested students of varieties of English (study of post-colonial varieties of English, variation and change in language, the emergence of new varieties or standard dialects of English) may profitably delve into for insights not only in methodology but likewise in substantive discovery.

The monograph therefore merits the attention of the international scholar interested in examining the problem of post-colonial Englishes, nativization of a nongenetically related language into the matrix of a society and culture that has its own set of indigenous languages, the process of standardization and the discovery of the process in its various stages and its multiple possibilities, and the dynamics of language change in general brought on by social forces of different kinds.

We look forward to further work on Standard Philippine English from the painstaking work of Professor Bautista as she applies her analysis not only to written, but likewise to spoken, texts which display not only similar characteristics of the written text but likewise differences because of shifts in registers and contexts, shifts already noted in the different types of writing in the corpus of written texts.

Andrew Gonzalez, FSC

Manila
October 1999

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