


Research Article

Lazy or Creative: Linguistic Behavior of Filipinos

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<https://doi.org/eiki/10.59652/jcpas.v2i3.278>

Abstract: This paper aims to explore the linguistic behavior of Filipinos through the lens of the pragmatic philosophy of language and the prototype theory of cognitive linguistics. It provides answers to whether Filipinos are linguistically lazy or linguistically creative. Surprisingly, Filipinos do not usually care about what a word or a concept is; they only care about how a word will be used in their daily lives. This research uses textual analysis methodology to provide possible explanations for the linguistic traits of Filipinos using philosophy and cognitive linguistics. In-depth analysis of the works of William James and Eleanor Rosch was done to answer the research problem. Pragmatism explains that Filipinos are genius communicators who prioritize the practical use of a word rather than its definite meaning, while prototype theory validates the wisdom of Filipino people in creating prototypes in language for easy communication. Therefore, this paper concludes that Filipinos are linguistically creative and not lazy.

Keywords: philosophy of language; Philippine linguistics; Philippine culture; cognitive linguistics; pragmatism

1. Introduction

This paper explores the Linguistic behavior of the Filipinos within the lens of pragmatic theory of William James (1907) and Prototype Theory of Eleanor Rosch (1973). These theories are used to investigate the framework of whether Filipinos are linguistically lazy or creative. Filipinos are known for their rich culture, since the Philippines is an archipelago, every major island has their own dialects. Filipinos love to communicate; they love to use words without considering the context and they also love to invent new words that they can use in a certain situation. There are two possible frameworks of this linguistic behavior, it is either the Filipinos are linguistically creative or linguistically lazy.

The Philippines has diverse languages; it is composed of 70 to 75 aboriginal languages. Philippine languages belong to Austronesian family which are divided into two main groups. The first one is the Meso-Philippine languages or the Central Philippines languages and the Cordilleran Languages or the Northern Luzon languages. Tagalog is the official dialect of the Philippines among 172 dialects such as Cebuano, Ilocano, Hiligaynon, Kapampangan and Waray (Lotha & Singh, 2024).

Before the pre-colonial period, the Philippines was already known to be an open and welcoming country. The Philippines was one of the centers of trading in Southeast Asia together with China. In the study of Orillaneda (2016) he argued the Philippines played a very important role in Southeast Asian trading during the 15th century. Filipinos made themselves known for their welcoming personality and hospitality among foreign individuals during the pre-colonial period until now. This indicates that the Philippines was exposed to different cultures and linguistic backgrounds (Orillaneda, 2016).

According to McFarland (2008), the Philippines is a very diverse country linguistically, it has numerous dialects which are connected to each other. But McFarland observed that even Philippine dialects are so connected, they are also differentiated extensively. This study discusses the linguistic diversity in the Philippines where he found out that Philippine linguistics is extremely rich in indigenous languages which show that Filipinos are good communicators.

In addition, according to the study of Pizarro-Guevarra and Garcia (2024) in Philippine psycholinguistics, they emphasized that Philippine languages are important for the

Received: August 8, 2024

Accepted: August 25, 2024

Published: August 30, 2024



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psycholinguistics field for few reasons such as Philippine language are verb-initial when communicating, which means that the argument structure and the requirements of a predicate imposes will be available early on. This is a unique feature of Philippine dialects. They argued that this linguistic behavior of Filipinos is important to be studied. They found out that this verbal complexity is an advantage in the context of communication for the receivers of the message from the sender. It can be concluded that Filipinos have innate capability to communicate well verbally.

"Pabili nga po ng Colgate." If you are a Filipino, you will understand that someone who buys Colgate intends to buy another brand of toothpaste. Filipinos used to call toothpaste *colgate*. Colgate is the famous brand of toothpaste introduced to the Philippines. Sociologically, it is innate to Filipinos to use a substitute word for a thing or a concept that they do not know yet, and because Colgate is the only brand of toothpaste they know, all the toothpaste will be called Colgate.

Filipinos call the crown cap of soda *tansan* because Tansan is the first known soda company that offered crown cap beverage bottles to the Filipino people in the 1900s. Most Filipinos do not know that *tansan* is not the name of that crown cap but a brand of soda in Japan. Tansan is actually a Japanese word for carbonated. As you can read, Filipinos thought that the *tansan* is the name for the crown cap of the soda bottle of *tansan* brand.

In the 80's, cameras were introduced in the Philippines. The most famous brand of camera from 1980 up until 2005 is the brand Kodak. Surprisingly, Filipinos used to call every camera Kodak, without knowing that Kodak is only a brand of camera, but, since Kodak is a well-known brand in the Philippines, Filipinos with this behavior learned that a camera, whatever brand it is, should be called Kodak. There is a famous line from the 90's that goes like this *"Magpa-Kodak tayo"*. They used to say this if they wanted to be photographed by a camera.

When it comes to drinking water, this linguistic behavior can also be observed. Filipinos used to call any drinking water from a water station as mineral water without knowing that water stations only offer purified or distilled water. Mineral water is a drinking water found in the mountains, clearly, the water from any stations that offer it is not mineral water. But there was a water brand that offered mineral water in the container and bottles. Since it is newly introduced to the Filipinos, they thought that any bottled water from any water stations is mineral water.

Today, this Filipino linguistic culture is updated. But they keep the same behavior in misusing words and their meanings.

For example, someone posted that he wants to buy a used phone, it was indicated to his post the term *"budget meal"*. Budget meal is a term used by food chains and restaurants to tell their customers that their food is affordable. But, as we can see, the person who posted that social media post used the term budget meal to tell his audiences that he wants to buy a phone at an affordable price, and surprisingly, his audiences got what he meant by *budget meal*.

Based on the scenarios, it can be concluded that Filipinos do not care about the meaning of a word. They get the concept of a word and use it to explain things or another concept that they do not know how to name or label, they use a word not by their meanings but by their functions. This linguistic phenomenon is related to pragmatic theory of language.

Filipino linguistic culture is anchored with laziness as marked to their culture that they do want to know the meaning of a word and its usage in a certain context or they are just creative that they are able to adapt the word and use them to another context. Filipinos can be labeled as "lazy" or perhaps "creative". They do not rely on the represented meaning of a word, but they focus on the concept and function of a thing represented by a word. If they are linguistically lazy, it means that they tend to use words without their meanings due to their laziness to the point that they do not even bother to analyze the semantic of a word that they are going to use to use it better with proper context. On the other hand, Filipinos are not lazy, but linguistically creative, which means that they can adapt a word without considering their meaning but they can use it properly with its utility, concept and function.

This paper aims to answer whether Filipinos are linguistically lazy or creative. Filipinos as linguistic lazy means that they do not care to know the meaning of a word that they are using in communication within a specific context. Linguistic laziness can also be a behavior of Filipinos that is why they have a linguistic trait of naming everything based on their convenience. However, there is also a possibility that Filipinos are not lazy but linguistically creative for being able to communicate without knowing the semantics of a word that they are using. This paper provides an explanation to answer whether Filipinos are lazy or creative in the sense of linguistics.

2. Materials and Methods

This paper uses analysis of philosophy of pragmatism and prototype theory as its method to evaluate and answer the research problem. This method uses in-depth but comprehensive analysis of these two prominent theories. Its analysis of pragmatism lies within the primary work of a famous pragmatic philosopher, William James. In using the prototype theory of Eleanor Rosch as the method to explore the research problem, his major works in cognitive linguistics were chosen carefully, and a comprehensive summarization of her theory was done. The researcher intends to make this paper as comprehensive as possible to attract younger researchers.

This paper uses textual analysis methodology to carefully evaluate the two known theories in philosophy of language and cognitive linguistics. These theories can evaluate the linguistic behavior of Filipinos. With the use of textual analysis, the contents of the main works of William James and Eleanor Rosche are selected using purposive sampling technique where the texts are chosen based on the one main criteria, that is, the selected texts from the work of William James must be about pragmatism in the context of language solely, the pragmatic views of logic and reality must not be included. In the prototype theory, only the linguistic contents of this are included, the psychological parts are not chosen to maintain the accuracy of the materials to answer the problem.

Language must be seen in the lens of philosophy; we must study not only the meaning of a word but also its usage and function. That is why pragmatism is the most suitable philosophy of language to use for this research. Pragmatism in the philosophy of language explains that the meaning of a linguistic expression is determined by their practical usage and implications in social interactions and communication, rather than by definitions (James, 1907). Pragmatism is a very useful lens to study language and culture; it can surely evaluate the linguistic behavior of Filipinos.

Since, this paper aims to know the behavior of the Filipinos linguistically, the prototype theory must also be used together with pragmatism. Prototype theory came from the work of Eleanor Rosch, it is typically used in psychology and cognitive linguistics. This theory suggests that categories are structured by prototype examples rather than their definitions (Rosch, 1975). As defined, the prototype theory is an ingenious theory in the field of cognitive linguistics, it can scientifically validate the paper.

Based on these theories they indicate that the linguistic behavior of Filipinos is indeed unique. These literature and theories dissect the linguistic behavior of Filipinos. They show how diverse Filipino linguistics is. The accuracy of the results of this paper relies on pragmatism and prototype theory. It is clear that these theories suit to evaluate and answer the behavior of Filipinos linguistically whether they are lazy or creative.

This research was conducted one month ago when the researcher started to examine the research gap of the linguistic research in the Philippines. The researcher noticed that there is a need for a research paper to understand and explain the linguistic behavior of Filipinos

3. Results and Discussion

To explore the linguistic behavior of Filipinos, in depth discussion of pragmatic philosophy of language and prototype theory in cognitive linguistics is necessary. As explained above, Filipinos have unique linguistic behavior, they tend to use a word without its context and without knowing its meaning. There are two possible concepts to explain this behavior: it is either the Filipinos are linguistic lazy or maybe linguistic creative.

The first theory to investigate the linguistic behavior of Filipinos is the pragmatic theory of language. In modern philosophy, pragmatism is a known theory not only in metaphysics and epistemology but also for the field of philosophy of language (Korta et al., 2024). Pragmatism indicates the practical usage of words; this philosophy does not focus on semantics or any definition of a word. For pragmatists, language must be clear with certain functions. For them, the practical use of words within a specific context defines a word and it does not contain any definite definitions (James, 1907).

To explain this clearly, let us dig into other comprehensive examples. It can be observed that Filipinos call every brand of diaper, Pampers, without knowing that Pampers is only a brand of diaper, in fact there are several brands available in the market with completely different names. But what is the reason behind this? simply because Pampers is the brand of diaper which was first introduced to them. Filipinos do not care about the brand; they only care for the practical usage or function of the product.

It can also be observed in the other scenario where Filipinos call every motor tricycle, Honda, since Honda was the first motor brand to be a tricycle in the Philippines. Therefore, with this linguistic behavior, Filipinos understand that every tricycle must be called Honda for easy communication. This is completely aligned with pragmatism.

This linguistic behavior is clearly anchored within the philosophy of pragmatism. Filipinos only focus on how a word or concept will be used in their daily lives. It indicates that Filipinos are not linguistically lazy, but creative linguistically because they manage to communicate very well without considering the meaning of a word in a context. As defined, pragmatic philosophy of language focuses on how the practical usage of a word or a concept will be used in a context. The meaning of a word will be shaped by how it will be used in daily activities, it can be found in the Philippine culture as its unique linguistic identity, Filipinos use pragmatism in communication, this is probably the reason why Filipinos love to simplify a concept with practical usage.

According to Rosch (1973) complicated concepts or objects can be organized by simplifying it to the thing called “prototype”. As defined by Rosch, a prototype is the representation of the most typical concept of any category. This theory provides understanding on how Filipinos categorize concepts for better communication. For example, since Pampers is the most familiar brand of diaper for most Filipinos, they will call every diaper Pampers. Diapers are the category for this scenario and Filipinos love to simplify things, so they created a prototype for diapers and that is Pampers as it is the most famous brand in the Philippines. Pampers became the representative of all the brands of diapers for Filipinos. Same as why Filipinos call every tricycle Honda to make communication easy, Honda is the prototype of Tricycle in the Philippines.

To answer the research problem clearly, Filipinos are linguistically creative for being able to be pragmatic communicators and being able to simplify concepts with the use of prototypes. With this, the research problem of whether Filipinos are linguistically lazy or creative is answered. As supported by the methodology, Filipinos can be labeled as linguistically creative individuals. As argued, there is no indication that this linguistic behavior pertains to laziness, it is just right to call the Filipinos creative.

4. Conclusions

This paper concludes that Filipinos are linguistically creative within the lenses of pragmatism and prototype theory. It explains some unique linguistic behavior of Filipinos that can still be seen today. This paper offers a comprehensive explanation of why Filipinos use words without considering their meanings in a certain context. As explained above, Filipinos are not linguistically lazy as others thought of them. They are good communicators who prioritize the practical use of their words, not their definite meanings. This type of communication requires wisdom and harmony within the community, that is why, it can be said that Filipinos are genius communicators, surprisingly, they are not familiar with the philosophy of pragmatism in language but they manage to be pragmatic communicators.

This paper provides an answer to whether Filipinos are linguistically lazy or creative. Based on the literature review and results. It is concluded that Filipinos are creative linguistically. The idea that they are linguistically lazy must be disregarded because it is clear within the lens of pragmatism and prototype theory that Filipinos are very creative linguistically for being able to communicate pragmatically within a very diverse community of people. This behavior shows that Filipinos are linguistically intelligent beings. They are able to communicate with different people from different cultural backgrounds. As discussed above, the Philippines is an archipelago which means that this country is composed of various islands and culture, but still, Filipinos are able to establish clear communication with their neighboring islands. In the Precolonial period, before the discovery of the Philippines by Spain, the Philippines was already exposed to different nations such as China, Indonesia, Malaysia and India. The Philippines was one of the centers of trading in Southeast Asia and it proves that before the precolonial period, Filipinos were already genius communicators.

With these findings, Philippine academics in Linguistic and Cultural studies can now understand clearly the linguistic behavior of Filipinos. This finding can surely guide future language researchers to understand better how Filipinos use language. Since there is very limited research about linguistic behavior of Filipinos explaining the linguistic creativity of Filipinos, this finding can be a starting point of linguistic behavior research in the Philippines. In addition, language teachers in the Philippines can use this finding that Filipinos are not linguistically lazy but in fact creative to encourage students to improve their communication

skills more. This finding can motivate Filipino teachers and curriculum experts to develop a language curriculum exclusively for Filipinos.

This paper can be a guide for linguistics, sociology, anthropology and philosophy students. This is not meant only for Filipino students and researchers; other foreign researchers can benefit from this paper. Filipino sociology and anthropology students will benefit the most because in the Philippines, the research with this scope of problem is very limited. This paper can help to pursue this kind of research interest. In the Philippines and other Southeast Asian countries, there are not enough studies about the relationship of linguistics and culture, that is why this paper is such a good start to produce more papers in line with linguistic behavior.

This paper recommends to the future researchers to have an in-depth assessment of a specific cultural behavior. However, a wide range of studies is also suggested. Since this study is multidisciplinary, the researchers are recommended to provide more data from different disciplines.

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