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The social life of Philippine English phonology: Implications for international communication

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Philippine English is one of the New Englishes in the world that is situated in a country where numerous languages exist all over the archipelago. Given such diverse background, it is imperative that the approach to be used in illustrating its features must be inclusive to provide strong and acceptable claims particularly in the aspect of phonology. It has been suggested that the possible starting point for a more comprehensive description of its phonological features can be found in mother-tongue-based investigation that would include the speakers of the major languages. Thus, this investigation aims to describe the features of PE phonology based on the speech samples gathered from the speakers of the 13 major languages in the country. A total of 26 participants were asked to perform the reading aloud from the list of words and sentences as well as spontaneous verbal tasks. The data obtained were then transcribed and analyzed to illustrate the segmental (vowels and consonants) and suprasegmental (stress and intonation) features of PE. Based on the results, it was found that the vowel system of PE includes /ɪ/, /e/, /ɛ/, /a/, /ɔ/, /o/, and /ʊ/. Moreover, the findings showed that speakers do not differentiate /i/ from /ɪ/; and /ʊ/ from /u/. As regards consonantal inventory, PE is characterized by stops /p/, /b/, /t/, /d/, /k/ and /g/; fricatives /f, v, s, h, ʃ/; affricates /tʃ, dʒ/; nasals /m, n, ŋ/; liquids /l, r/; and glides /w, j/. Furthermore, this study argues that voiced fricatives /z/, /ʒ/, /θ/, and /ð/ are excluded from the phonological inventory PE as speakers tend to use /s/ for /z/; and approximant /ʃ/ for /ʒ/. Also, the /θ/ and /ð/ were inconsistently realized as /t/ and /d/ respectively. In the suprasegmental level, PE is characterized by penultimate stress, and all types of questions receive a rising intonation. This study indicates that new English varieties are influenced by various factors since they are situated in diverse context. With this, speakers from different backgrounds have multiple possibilities of phonological productions. Thus, variation is the norm as English language has been localized and indigenized to fulfill both local and international functions.

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