

## Common Articulatory Errors of English-Speaking Filipinos

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In this study of the English speech habits of four Filipinos, it was found that no consistent omissions or additions of sounds were found, and the few sound omissions followed no identifiable pattern.

In earlier papers, we discussed elementary matters concerning phonetics, pronunciation, and usage of Pilipino.<sup>1</sup> In these earlier papers, it was noted that certain phonemes which are present in English are absent from Pilipino. These include the [ɪ, æ, ɛ, ɔ, ʊ] and consonants [z, v, ʃ, ʒ, θ, ʒ, dʒ]. Similar matters are covered in most grammatical discussions of Philippine languages, and the phonemic makeup of the various Philippine languages and dialects seems to be quite similar.

A general assessment of the effect of the absence of the aforementioned phonemes from the Pilipino language on the speech of English-speaking Filipinos was the purpose of the present study.

*Method.* Speech samples of four Filipinos, two males and two females, were recorded on a tape recorder of high fidelity. The speakers were in the United States for graduate study. They were young adults, with ages between 25 and 29 years. Like most Filipinos, they had been taught in their Philippine schools primarily through English, but, as is typical in Tagalog regions, they spoke Pilipino in their

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<sup>1</sup>Berger, K.W. "An Introduction to Pilipino Phonetics and Pronunciation," *Phonetica*, XVII (1967), 24-30. And, "A Study of Printed Pilipino Usage," *Phonetica*, XVII (1967), 31-37.

homes. Each speaker had been in the United States for at least one year and all were pursuing an M.A. or higher degree. Thus, the speakers were presumably much more facile in and familiar with English than the typical young Filipino.

Each speaker read the 40 sentences from Fairbank's book on voice and articulation which are designed to sample the various sounds of English.<sup>2</sup>

The tape recordings were listened to by the author and two other judges, each of whom holds the Certificate of Clinical Competence in Speech Pathology by the American Speech and Hearing Association. Each of the judges has had considerable experience in testing for speech errors. The judges were asked to indicate on mimeographed sentence lists corresponding to those read by the subjects, such additions, omissions, and substitutions as were heard. Substitutions were indicated by International Phonetic Alphabet symbols, broad transcriptions. Since this study was concerned with articulation in the broad sense, the judges were advised to disregard mild sound distortions. The judges were allowed to replay the tape recordings, or portions of them, as many times as desired before marking such articulatory errors as might be noted.

*Results.* The results were not surprising and in most respects could have been predicted on the basis of known phonemic differences between English and Pilipino. No consistent *omissions* or *additions* of sounds were found. The few sound omissions found among the four speakers followed no identifiable pattern and they could be accounted for as probable reading and/or pronunciation errors rather than articulatory errors.

The most consistent *substitution* error as that of [d] for [ð], as found in such words as "the" and "them". Since the article "the" is common in English this was also the most noticeable substitution error. This particular substitution error, as well as those which follow, are directly related to the absence of certain English sounds from Pilipino, as noted above.

Other consistent substitutions were [i] for [I] (such as in "it")

<sup>2</sup>Fairbanks, Grant. *Voice and Articulation Drillbook* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1940), pp xii-xv.

and "swimming"), [t] for [θ] (such as in "thought" or "through"), [e] or [a] for [æ] (such as in "chasm" or "captain"), [a] or [e] for [ɛ] (such as in "yellow" and "weather"), [ʃ] for [ʒ] (such as in "pleasure"), [o] for [ɔ] (such as in "toiled"), [a] or [o] or [ɔ] for [ʌ] (such as in "under" or "monks"), [u] for [ʊ] (as in "hook"), and [tʃ] for [dʒ] (such as in "Johnson").

Less consistent was the substitution of [b] for [v], and that of [i] for [ə] (such as in "the"). In the latter case, the tendency was to stress each schwa. Another inconsistent substitution was that of [s] for [z]. This substitution was primarily in words where the [z] was spelled other than by the letter "z" (such as in the words "please" or "eggs"). A trilled [r] was noted in most words beginning with an initial "r" or those beginning with an r-blend.

It is interesting to note that although Pilipino does not contain the [z, ʃ, f, v], these were neither inconsistently substituted or else were spoken correctly.

Originally, it was intended to add further speakers as subjects. However, since the articulatory production of English among these four speakers was so similar, no further samples were considered to be warranted.

*Conclusions.* Filipinos could greatly improve their production of English speech by paying particular attention to four aspects of spoken English.

1. Correct articulation of the lax vowels [ɪ] and [æ].
2. Correct production of the lingua-dental sounds [ʒ] and [θ].
3. Learning the pronunciation rules for the [z] when it is spelled other than "z".
4. Unstressing appropriate vowels (i.e., producing the schwa).

Although this study dealt with the articulation of English as spoken by Pilipino speakers, it is likely that the general results and conclusions apply to other languages and dialects in the Philippines.