

Philippine English Constructions in Select Original Pinoy Music Titles: An Analysis

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Abstract

This study examines the unique constructions of Philippine English as used in Original Pilipino Music (OPM) song titles released from the Calendar Year 2020 to 2025 by analyzing Taglish blending, code-mixing, lexical innovation, syntactic structures, and discourse markers manifest in contemporary Filipino music. Drawing from World Englishes Theory, Code-Switching Theory, and Sociolinguistic Variation Theory, the research investigates how these constructions reflect the bilingual nature of Philippine society and its cultural attitudes toward language use. Findings reveal a strong influence of Tagalog-English code-mixing, localized grammatical structures, and semantic shifts reflecting the evolving nature of Philippine English in popular culture. Data analysis reveals significant patterns, including the integration of Filipino syntax with English lexicon, the use of discourse markers, reduplication, and semantic shifts in localized English expressions. Findings suggest that PhE in OPM titles not only mirrors everyday speech but also serves as a marker of linguistic identity, creativity, and cultural hybridity. While the study contributes to the growing body of research on Philippine English by highlighting its evolving role in contemporary media and popular culture, the researcher recommends to extend the current research by exploring broader linguistic, sociocultural, and commercial aspects of Philippine English, ensuring that its dynamic and evolving nature continues to be documented and understood.

Keywords: Code-Mixing and Switching, Content Analysis, Original Pinoy Music, Philippine English

Introduction

Philippine English (PhE) is an evolving variety of English shaped by the interplay of local languages, cultural influences, and historical developments. It is a nativized English variety, which continuously adapts to the communicative needs of Filipinos especially embedded in domains such as education, media, literature, digital communication, and entertainment. Despite its widespread use, however, PhE still faces challenges regarding its recognition as a legitimate linguistic system, often being perceived as an informal or hybridized form of English rather than a structured and evolving variety.

One of the most dynamic spaces where PhE thrives is Original Pinoy Music (OPM), which serves as both a cultural and linguistic platform. Within OPM, the phenomenon of Taglish or the seamless mixing of Tagalog and English has become a defining characteristic, reflecting the bilingualism of Filipino speakers. While often viewed as a spontaneous or casual linguistic practice, code-mixing in OPM song titles follows systematic patterns that reveal deeper insights into language evolution, artistic expression, and audience engagement. Through code-switching, lexical borrowing, semantic shifts, reduplication, and discourse marker integration, PhE constructions in song titles exemplify how language is used not only for communication but also as a creative tool in shaping musical identity.

The increasing globalization of OPM through digital streaming platforms and social media has further amplified the visibility of PhE, allowing Filipino artists to reach audiences beyond national borders. However, while PhE-infused song titles contribute to the distinctiveness of Filipino music, their linguistic significance remains underexplored. Much of the existing research on PhE has focused on its grammatical and phonological features, with limited attention given to its artistic and sociolinguistic applications. The lack of systematic studies on PhE constructions in OPM raises important concerns such as the way the perception to PhE linguistic patterns is shaped and the larger sociolinguistic trends in the Philippines; likewise, the contribution of music influence in the ongoing development of PhE as an adaptive English variety.

This qualitative analysis of PhE constructions in OPM song titles, focusing on their syntactic structures, lexical innovations, and sociolinguistic significance addresses the aforementioned to consequently, provide a deeper understanding of how PhE evolves within creative industries and how linguistic choices in music reflect broader social and cultural dynamics. The study highlights the cultural and communicative roles of PhE in contemporary Filipino music, reinforcing the idea that language is not static but continuously shaped by artistic expression, media, and globalization. Given the rapid changes in language use brought about by digital platforms, further exploration of PhE in creative industries could provide valuable insights into its development, as well as its role in shaping Filipino identity in both local and international contexts.

Literature Review

A review of existing research and theories relevant to the study's focus provides insights into the evolving nature of PhE and its broader sociolinguistic significance in Filipino discourse and the ongoing discourse on the localization of English in the Philippines, offering perspectives on how language is continuously shaped by culture, creativity, and social trends.

Philippine English (PhE) is a recognized variety within the World Englishes paradigm, distinguished by unique lexical, syntactic, and semantic features shaped by Filipino languages and cultural influences (Bautista, 2008; Schneider, 2011; Tupas & Salonga, 2016). The development of PhE as a nativized English variety follows the evolutionary framework of localized Englishes, wherein English undergoes linguistic adaptation to fit local communicative needs and sociocultural contexts (Schneider, 2007; Bolton & Bautista, 2008). As a result, PhE has become an intrinsic part of Filipino linguistic identity, widely used in education, media, literature, digital communication, and entertainment (Gonzalez, 2019; Dayag, 2021).

One of the most dynamic domains where PhE constructions thrive is Original Pinoy Music (OPM), which serves as a linguistic and cultural space for hybridization and creativity. The prevalence of Taglish, or the code-mixing of Tagalog and English, has become a defining feature of contemporary OPM, reflecting Filipinos' bilingual proficiency and their ability to fluidly switch between languages (Bautista, 2004; Cruz, 2020). Notably, OPM song titles encapsulate contemporary linguistic trends, showcasing code-switching, lexical borrowing, semantic shifts, reduplication, and discourse marker integration (Tayao, 2008; Martin, 2022). These linguistic processes highlight how PhE serves not only as a functional means of communication but also as a creative instrument for artistic and cultural expression.

With the global expansion of OPM through digital streaming platforms and social media, the influence of PhE in song titles has become increasingly visible and impactful, allowing Filipino artists to reach both local and international audiences (Miranda, 2021; Reyes, 2023). The growing use of PhE-infused song titles in mainstream music reinforces the role of language in shaping artistic and commercial identities within the global music industry. However, despite the prominence of PhE in OPM, scholarly inquiry into its systematic linguistic patterns remains limited, particularly in examining how song titles function as sites of linguistic adaptation and sociolinguistic variation (Bautista & Gonzalez, 2020). While previous studies on PhE have focused on grammar, phonology, and discourse strategies, fewer investigations have explored its artistic and sociolinguistic applications in music (Tupas, 2019).

This research analyzes Philippine English constructions in select OPM song titles, focusing on their syntactic structures, lexical innovations, and sociolinguistic significance and seeks to uncover the linguistic mechanisms underlying PhE constructions in OPM titles and explore their implications for the evolution of PhE as an adaptive and socially-embedded English variety. Furthermore, the study highlights the cultural and communicative functions of PhE in contemporary Filipino music, demonstrating how language functions as both an identity marker and a medium for creative expression. PhE seamlessly blends English words with Filipino syntax and discourse strategies to convey nuanced meanings. The increasing integration of PhE constructions in song titles, characterized by code-mixing, lexical innovation, localized English usage, discourse markers, and reduplication reveals a key linguistic trend in modern OPM.

Additionally, linguistic processes such as portmanteau formation and phonological adaptation are commonly observed, creatively modifying English words to align with Filipino linguistic norms and pop culture influences (Cruz, 2020; Gonzalez, 2019). This dynamic interplay of English and Tagalog in OPM reflects the bilingual nature of Philippine society and its capacity to shift fluidly between languages for stylistic and expressive purposes (Tayao, 2008; Bautista & Gonzalez, 2020).

Although Philippine researchers investigate aspects the key linguistic trend in modern OPM, there remains a challenge in understanding the systematic linguistic patterns involved and their implications for PhE's status as a recognized English variety; while some may view these constructions as informal linguistic adaptations, their role in shaping Filipino linguistic identity and cultural expression cannot be overlooked.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative content analysis of 33 OPM song titles released between 2020 and 2025. Data were gathered from YouTube based on their potentialities as a rich data source of the study. OPM were posted as widely recognized songs in a playlist form. Titles were analyzed based on the nature of code-mixing, sentence structure, and contextual semantic shifts. The following were some of the song samples which were included in the study based on their characteristics and features: Ayoko Na Maging Single (Poy Labartinos); LDR (Shoti); Alam mo ba Girl (Hev Abi); Miss miss (Rob Deniel); WYAT (Where you at) SB19; Pinay na Sobrang Fine (Kyle Zagado); ATM (Aiza Seguerra); Panghabang-baby (Aljon Mendoza); BB Girl (Anthony Jennings); Night calls (Seth Fedelin); Sorry na, Pwedi ba (Kaye Cal); Sobrang Miss na Kita (Musikalye Still One); Bakit Bes? (JBlack ft. Joy); DI KITA MA'GETS (Guthrie X Ben X Humprey Lofranco); Fake Love (Michael Pacquiao & Jom); Di Kita Trip (CK YG); Tara Chill Lang

(Bigshockd); Happy Crush (Alex Vasquez); Di Sapat Ang Sorry (Z Y N C ft. Bishnu); Sana May Forever (Arnold Reyes); Love, Love, Love (Jun Toyco and MP Band) ; Not My Loss (Kian Sanchez); This naMalambing (Ryannah J ft. Nateman); Goldigs (Masaya na Ko) (Henyong Makata); Miloves (OTW Sa'yo) (King Badger); Randomantic (James Reid); Raining in Manila (Lola Amour); and Cherry on Top (Bini).

Findings

Philippine English (PhE) in OPM song titles exhibits Taglish constructions; reduplication of English words; Filipino syntax with English words; tag-switching with discourse markers; semantic shifts; and English phrases with Filipino influence. These constructions in general show linguistic hybridity, demonstrating code-switching, lexical innovation, semantic shifts, and discourse strategies that reflect contemporary Filipino communication, which are aligned with the bilingual and bicultural identity of Filipinos, who seamlessly blend English and Filipino for stylistic and expressive purposes. Using qualitative content analysis in examining OPM titles released from 2020 to 2025, the study identified the following categorization on how these linguistic features are structured in the given OPM song titles:

Table 1
OPM Title Construction Pattern and Characteristic

No.	Pattern	OPM Song Titles	Characteristic
1	Taglish Constructions	"Ayoko Na Maging Single" "Alam Mo Ba Girl" "Pinay na Sobrang Fine" "Sobrang Miss Na Kita" "Di Kita Trip"	Tagalog syntactic structure and blending of English and Filipino within titles
2	Reduplication of English Words	"Miss Miss" "Love, Love, Love"	Repetition heightens sincerity or affection and most of the time used for emphasis
3	Filipino Syntax with English Words	"Panghabang-baby" "Tara Chill Lang" "BB Girl"	English words embedded in Filipino sentence structures.
4	Tag-Switching with Discourse Markers	"Bakit Bes?" "Sorry Na, Pwede Ba?" "This na Malambing"	Use of Filipino markers like <i>na</i> and <i>bakit</i>
5	Semantic Shifts	"Di Kita Ma'gets" "Fake Love" "Di Sapat ang Sorry"	English words used with altered meanings.
6	English Phrases with Filipino Influence	"LDR" (Shoti) "WYAT (Where You At)" "Maybe Next Life" "Not My Loss" "Night Calls" "Raining in Manila" "Cherry on Top" "Goldigs" "Miloves" "Randomantic"	Titles where the structure remains English but carries a local meaning.

Taglish, a blend of Tagalog and English, is one of the most dominant forms of bilingual expression in the Philippines. In these song titles, Tagalog grammar and syntax serve as the foundation, while English words or phrases are inserted for emphasis, style, or cultural relevance. The study reveals a significant presence of Taglish constructions in OPM song titles, reflecting the bilingual nature of Philippine society and its linguistic hybridity.

On the other hand, the study reveals reduplication as a common grammatical process in Filipino, which is often used for emphasis, intensity, or emotional weight. When applied to English words, it follows Filipino linguistic patterns and enhances expressiveness. In the featured OPM titles, English words are inserted into Filipino grammatical structures, often functioning as nouns, adjectives, or verbs while following Tagalog syntax rules. Furthermore, discourse markers are common in informal Filipino speech, often structuring conversational flow and emotional tone. Some song titles integrate these markers within a mix of English and Filipino words.

Semantic shifts occur when English words take on meanings that differ from their original usage, influenced by Filipino cultural and linguistic norms while some song titles maintain a full English structure but are deeply influenced by Filipino cultural themes, relationship dynamics, or emotional expressions.

Discussion

The OPM song titles analyzed here demonstrate the linguistic fluidity and adaptability of Philippine English, integrating code-mixing, reduplication, semantic shifts, and discourse markers in unique ways. These titles not only reflect everyday Filipino speech but also contribute to the continuous evolution of PhE as a dynamic and expressive English variety. The influence of digital culture, pop media, and social trends further shapes these constructions, making OPM an essential platform in the emergence of new linguistic patterns in Philippine English.

Taglish, or the mixing of Tagalog and English, has been widely studied as a sociolinguistic phenomenon that allows for flexible and expressive communication among Filipinos (Bautista, 2004; Dayag, 2021). The dataset highlights how OPM titles mirror conversational speech patterns, with English words embedded within Filipino syntactic frames. The featured song titles "Ayoko Na Maging Single," "Alam Mo Ba Girl," "Pinay na Sobrang Fine," "Sobrang Miss Na Kita" and "Di Kita Trip" exemplify this pattern, where Filipino syntax structures the use of English words, reinforcing the bidirectional influence of both languages (Gonzalez, 2019; Cruz, 2020). These findings align with previous studies indicating that code-switching and code-mixing are not merely linguistic convenience tools but also markers of identity and emotional expression (Tayao, 2008; Martin, 2022).

In detail, "Ayoko Na Maging Single" shows "Ayoko na" or "I don't want anymore" follows a Tagalog syntactic structure, with "maging single" or to be single showcasing the natural incorporation of English terms in Filipino relationship discourse. Shown in "Alam Mo Ba Girl" is a common Tagalog phrase "Alam mo ba" or "do you know?" is combined with "girl" as an address term, a common feature of Taglish speech. In "Pinay na Sobrang Fine," "Pinay" is a Filipinized English noun, while "sobrang fine" or "very attractive" reflects a Taglish adjective phrase, highlighting how English descriptors are blended with Filipino intensifiers "sobrang".

Moreover, "Sobrang Miss Na Kita" reveals "miss," an English word which is used as a verb with Filipino grammatical markers, forming the Taglish phrase "miss na kita" or "I miss you already." On the other hand, "Di kita trip" or "I'm not into you" combines Filipino negation "di kita" with the slang adaptation of "trip" or "enjoy or like someone," demonstrating semantic innovation in Taglish.

Another notable linguistic feature observed is reduplication of English words, which is a grammatical strategy in Philippine languages used for emphasis, plurality, and intensification (Tupas, 2019). Love, Love, Love illustrates how English words are subjected to this Filipino linguistic process, adapting foreign lexicon into native expressive patterns (Schneider, 2011). While reduplication is a common syntactic strategy in Tagalog, for example "ganda-ganda" meaning very beautiful or extreme beauty), its application to English words within PhE constructions suggests a systematic process of linguistic adaptation (Bolton & Bautista, 2008). The reduplication of "miss" in "Miss Miss" intensifies longing, a trait common in Filipino speech while "Love, Love, Love" follows Filipino expressive reduplication, where repetition heightens sincerity or affection.

The data further indicate that Filipino sentence structures incorporating English words are common in OPM titles. Examples such as "Panghabang-baby," "Tara Chill Lang" and "BB Girl" demonstrate how English lexical items are embedded within Tagalog morphosyntactic patterns. This aligns with prior research on matrix language-frame theory, which describes how bilingual speakers insert words from one language (English) into the grammatical structure of another (Filipino) while maintaining fluency and comprehension (Poplack, 1980; Tayao, 2008). These constructions highlight the pervasiveness of English influence in everyday Filipino discourse, particularly in informal and artistic domains (Reyes, 2023).

Particularly, the OPM "Panghabang-baby" which is modeled after the phrase "panghabang-buhay" or for a lifetime is a creative modification which replaces "buhay" with "baby", making it a playful term of endearment and permanence in a relationship. Additionally, in "Tara Chill Lang," "tara" or let's go is a Filipino imperative, with "chill lang" or just relax maintaining the Filipino adverbial marker "lang", indicating casualness. "BB Girl" shows "BB" as a Filipinized

version of "baby," which is shaped by texting culture, while "girl" retains its English noun form within a Filipino construct.

Another linguistic strategy evident in the dataset is the use of Filipino discourse markers in song titles, such as "Sorry Na, Pwede Ba?" and "This na Malambing". "Sorry na" in "Sorry Na, Pwede Ba?" follows a Filipino apology structure, where "na" softens the statement. "Pwede ba?" or can it be? uses a Filipino pragmatic marker for making requests, blending English and Filipino discourse strategies. Meanwhile, "This na Malambing" shows a playful hybrid of "This" which is an English demonstrative with "na malambing" which is translated as "already being affectionate", showcasing how Filipino discourse markers "na" integrate with English expressions. "Bakit Bes?" reveals "Bakit" or "why?" as a Filipino interrogative, while "Bes" is Filipino slang for "best friend", showing how informal speech patterns influence OPM titles.

Studies on Philippine discourse have established that markers such as "naman" and "na" serve pragmatic functions, including softening statements, signaling politeness, and adding emotional nuance (Bautista, 2008; Dayag, 2021). Their presence in PhE song titles suggests that Filipinos use these discourse markers even when incorporating English words, reinforcing their role in Filipino pragmatic communication (Tupas & Salonga, 2016).

A significant observation in the data is the occurrence of semantic shifts, where English words acquire culturally specific meanings within the Philippine linguistic context. For example, "gets" is a Filipino slang adaptation of "get" meaning "understand," forming the conversational phrase "Di kita ma'gets" or "I don't understand you." While "fake love" exists in English, it is linked to relationships based on materialism or emotional deception in the Philippine context. "Di sapat" or "not enough" in "Di Sapat Ang Sorry" introduces a Filipino evaluative phrase, reinforcing Filipino emotional expression in apologies.

Accordingly, "Di Kita Ma'gets," "Fake Love" and "Di Sapat ang Sorry" demonstrates how the English phrase "move on" has undergone semantic expansion, shifting from its original meaning of "changing location" to an emotionally charged phrase related to heartbreak and recovery in Filipino culture (Gonzalez, 2019; Tupas, 2019). Similarly, phrases at some point retain English syntactic structures but resonate deeply with Filipino sentimentality, fate, and relationship discourse, reflecting local interpretations of emotion and destiny (Miranda, 2021; Reyes, 2023).

The study also identified localized lexical innovations in OPM titles, demonstrating creative language blending, code-mixing, and phonetic adaptations. Some song titles maintain a full English structure but are deeply influenced by Filipino cultural themes, relationship dynamics, or emotional expressions. The use of portmanteau formations is particularly significant, as seen in "LDR," "WYAT (Where You At)," "Maybe Next Life," "Not My Loss," "Night Calls," "Raining in Manila" and "Cherry on Top."

Specifically, "LDR" is a commonly used Filipino acronym for "Long-Distance Relationship," frequently seen in Filipino social media discourse. "WYAT (Where You At)" is a phonetic contraction mirroring Filipino speech rhythms, making the phrase sound more conversational. "Maybe Next Life" reflects Filipino fatalistic views on love, hinting at missed opportunities and destiny. While an English phrase, "Not My Loss" aligns with Filipino breakup narratives, particularly those emphasizing empowerment after rejection. In Filipino dating culture, "night calls" often suggest deep or emotional late-night conversations. "Raining in Manila" symbolizes nostalgia and emotional longing, consistent with Filipino literary and musical themes. While a universal idiom, "Cherry on Top" suggests confidence and female empowerment in Filipino pop culture.

Meanwhile, "Goldigs" which is a fusion of "gold diggers," which truncates and phonetically adapts the original phrase into a localized, playful slang term. This linguistic modification reflects Philippine English's tendency for abbreviation and slang formation, particularly in informal speech and pop culture (Bolton & Bautista, 2008; Cruz, 2020).

Also, it is observed in "Randomantic" which is a blend of random and romantic, showcasing PhE's productivity in word formation by creatively merging lexical units to capture hybrid meanings. Similar coinages are common in Philippine social media and music, reflecting the linguistic creativity of young Filipinos (Martin, 2022).

"Miloves" on the other hand, which is derived from my love, is an adaptation that follows a PhE pattern where English words are phonologically modified to suit Filipino pronunciation and social usage. The addition of -s does not indicate plurality but rather functions as an affectionate marker, a pattern also observed in localized slang terms such as lodis (from idol) (Dayag, 2021).

These linguistic innovations underscore how Philippine English continues to evolve within popular culture, particularly in the digital and entertainment spheres. Such modifications highlight the Filipino penchant for linguistic playfulness, further cementing PhE as a dynamic and socially embedded variety of English (Schneider, 2007).

The findings of this study highlight the prevalence of Taglish and localized English constructions in OPM song titles, demonstrating their role in shaping Filipino linguistic identity. The blending of English and Filipino, as well as features such as reduplication, code-switching, discourse markers, and semantic shifts, reinforce how PhE operates not just as a means of communication but as a cultural and artistic tool (Bautista & Gonzalez, 2020).

Moreover, the presence of portmanteau formations and phonetic adaptations in PhE song titles showcases how language evolves creatively within specific cultural contexts. These constructions are not merely linguistic curiosities but reflect larger sociolinguistic patterns, indicating that Philippine English remains a dynamic, evolving variety shaped by artistic expression and digital influence (Tupas, 2019; Reyes, 2023; Schneider, 2011). With the aim of contributing to the ongoing discussion on Philippine English and the localization of English in postcolonial societies, this research reaffirms that music serves as a powerful linguistic and cultural platform where language innovation thrives.

Conclusion

The linguistic patterns observed in these song titles affirm the creative and dynamic nature of Philippine English. Through code-mixing, syntactic adaptation, semantic shifts, and lexical innovation, OPM titles serve as a reflection of how Filipinos naturally integrate English into their everyday communication, reinforcing the evolving identity of Philippine English in contemporary discourse. Conclusively, Philippine English (PhE) constructions in OPM titles exhibit distinct features that blend English and Filipino linguistic structures. The study highlights how music facilitates language evolution, making PhE a dynamic and adaptable variety of English. Future research may explore the role of other creative industries in shaping PhE or examine generational differences in the usage of Philippine English in social media discourse. The integration of World Englishes Theory, Code-Switching Theory, and Sociolinguistic Variation Theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the construction of PhE in OPM song titles. These theories collectively explain how English in the Philippines has evolved into a distinct variety, how Filipino-English bilinguals naturally mix languages for expression and communication, and how linguistic choices are influenced by social, cultural, and contextual factors. By situating the study within these linguistic frameworks, this research affirms that PhE is not only a product of historical and colonial influences but also a living, adaptable, and culturally meaningful language variety that thrives in contemporary Filipino music and media.

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