

**AWARENESS OF PHILIPPINE ENGLISH:
THE CASE OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS**

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Abstract. Although there is an increase in the number of studies on Philippine English (PE), there is very little research tackling Filipinos' awareness of PE. This study was done to help expand the limited research on PE awareness, fill the gaps in a few related studies, and test Filipinos' cognizance of their English variety. Specifically, this research investigated undergraduate students' awareness of the meanings, features, and uses of PE and its relationship with their age. This study employed a quantitative approach and used an online survey form to collect data. The form consisted of Likert items on PE which were rated by the respondents according to their awareness of each statement. After surveying 216 respondents, it was found that the undergraduate students were slightly aware of the existence of a local English variety, i.e. PE. However, the data show that the respondents were moderately conscious of the other meanings, features, and uses of PE. This suggests that the students were fairly aware of PE but have slight cognizance of its legitimacy as an English variety. A similar finding can be observed in the students' consciousness of PE features, where they showed moderate awareness of PE having its own accent, phonology, vocabulary, and grammar, but low average consciousness on the acceptability of PE lexicon and grammar. These findings reveal the respondents' lack of recognition of PE validity, a common issue in non-native English varieties. Spearman rank correlation was used to determine the relationship between the students' age and their level of PE awareness. With a rho of -0.07, this study claims no significant correlation between the two variables and concludes that age is not a factor influencing PE awareness. Overall, this study reveals the fair awareness of Filipino undergraduate students towards PE and their low awareness of its legitimacy. Also, as shown in the results, the cognizance of a local English variety cannot be assumed among its speakers. Thus, language awareness should be considered as a factor in World Englishes studies.

Keywords: World Englishes, Philippine English, Language Awareness.

1. Introduction

World Englishes (WE) pertains to the myriad varieties of English and creoles based on English that developed in different parts of the world. As an area of study, it includes the identification of English varieties in numerous sociolinguistic frameworks and analysis of their history, function, and impact [Kachru 1996]. Philippine English (PE) is a legitimate variety of English in the Philippines [Llamzon 1969, as cited in Martin 2014; Bautista 2001]. According to Kachru's [1996] model, PE belongs to the outer circle because of its status as a second language. Moreover, PE is at the nativization stage in terms of Schneider's [2007] dynamic model. As a field of study, PE is relatively new and can be traced from Llamzon [1969] onwards [Hernandez 2020].

After Llamzon's [1969] seminal work, more research on PE gradually followed. In retrospect, old and recent studies on PE, especially regarding its phonological [Flores 2014], lexical [Salazar 2017], and grammatical [Dayag 2004] features were made [Hernandez 2020]. Intelligibility [Dayag, 2007], acceptability [Alieto & Torres 2019], and attitudes [Bautista 2001] towards PE are also prominent areas of research. However, Filipinos' awareness of PE has been overlooked as a topic of study despite its importance. As mentioned by Hernandez [2020], the

awareness of English varieties, such as PE, helps in promoting language variety acceptance and development, language teaching and learning, and better communication and understanding within a society. Moreover, it was only recently that research on this subject was conducted, and gaps on these few studies are notable. For instance, the research of Astrero [2017] and Hernandez [2020] arguably have a narrow scope of respondents, which is limited in terms of size, proximity, and assortment.

This paper sought to contribute to this underexplored area of PE research. It aimed to explore the awareness of Filipinos towards their English variety and address the gaps in previous related studies. Specifically, it intended to achieve this by investigating the awareness of undergraduate students towards PE.

1.1 Review of Related Literature and Studies

1.1.1 Awareness

Awareness refers to “the state of being conscious of something”. In particular, it is the quality of being able to feel, perceive, or be cognizant of objects, happenings, or any sensory pattern [Chalmers 1997]. It is used interchangeably with “consciousness” [Hussain et al. 2008] and is also often related to the concepts of “knowledge” and “understanding”. Furthermore, Abdul Gafoor [2012] stated three definitions of awareness used in research: (1) common understanding from observations; (2) self-perceptions; and (3) “ability to deal with” (e.g., Phonological Awareness Skills Test). In this study, awareness refers to the general knowledge of undergraduate students towards PE.

1.1.2 Philippine English

PE is described as a legitimate variety of English [Llamzon 1969] used by Filipinos especially within the country [Bautista 2001], such as in the local media [Dayag 2008]. It has different sub-varieties which are used by PE speakers of different academic and socioeconomic backgrounds [Martin 2014]. According to Borlongan [2009], PE signifies Filipinos’ ownership of the English language and freedom from the colonial influence of native speakers. Furthermore, Bautista [1997] states that PE reflects Filipinos’ national and cultural identity.

PE has phonology, lexicon, and syntax distinct from other English varieties [Bautista 1997]. It has acceptable variants from American English [Bernardo 2013] which have been codified into dictionaries and grammars [Borlongan 2011] and included in Filipino English instructional materials, such as textbooks [Dayag 2010]. Moreover, PE is deemed as proper, comprehensible, and intelligible when used in communication [Dayag 2007]. It serves as the norm in English communication between Filipino English teachers and students [Bernardo 2013] and could be potentially implemented into ESL classrooms officially [Bautista 2001].

1.1.3 World Englishes Awareness

Ahn [2014] explored the attitudes and awareness of English language teachers in South Korea towards World Englishes (WE). 204 participants took part in a survey and interview on WE awareness and attitudes. The study revealed that the participants recognized the existence of WE. However, it was found that their general idea of WE is English varieties with unique accents and colloquial phrases. Therefore, Ahn [2014] concluded that the participants’ level of awareness towards WE was limited and claimed their lack of exposure as the reason.

Jindapitak and Teo [2012] investigated Thai English majors’ attitudes and awareness towards WE. 52 respondents were asked to identify six different English accents: Thai, American, British, Indian, and Filipino. As expected, the Thai English accent was the most recognizable for them, followed by the accents of inner circle varieties: American English and British English. The research showed that Indian English and PE accents were the least recognizable among the accents featured.

A similar study was conducted by Natiladdanon and Thanavisuth [2014]. 20 students in an international university in Thailand, each originally from an ASEAN country, were assessed on their attitudes, awareness, and comprehensibility of ASEAN English accents via survey, interview, and listening comprehension testing. It was found that Thai English was the most recognizable SEA accent. Contrary to Jindapitak and Teo's [2012] findings, Natiladdanon and Thanavisuth [2014] claimed that PE accent is the second most recognizable SEA accent based on their study.

1.1.4 Philippine English Awareness

Astrero [2017] investigated millennials' awareness and understanding of Philippine English. 55 respondents were surveyed on their awareness and understanding of selected PE words. The research found that millennials have significant awareness and understanding of old and new PE words. This result was claimed as an effect of the respondents' access and exposure to online, print, and broadcast media.

Furthermore, Hernandez [2020] explored the awareness of graduate students towards Philippine English. A questionnaire, based on Bernardo's [2013] study, was administered to 95 respondents. The research revealed that graduate students were very aware of the features of PE and moderately aware of its meanings and uses.

The studies on the awareness of World Englishes are scarce. Additionally, the idea of WE awareness in some of these studies [Jindapitak & Teo 2012; Natiladdanon & Thanavisuth 2014] is limited only to accent recognition and does not include a variety's lexicon, grammar, meanings, and functions. Furthermore, no research was done on WE users' in-depth awareness of their language variety [Hernandez 2020].

Research on the awareness of Philippine English is just as uncommon as that on WE, if not rarer. Although there is an increasing number of successful studies on PE, Hernandez [2020] argued that PE awareness remains an underexplored area of research. Accordingly, the foci of PE studies have been Filipinos' attitudes towards PE and its acceptability and not on the cognizance of PE. Thus, the findings of this research cannot be conclusive regarding Filipinos' consciousness of PE, which means that more studies on PE awareness have to be conducted [Hernandez 2020].

Aside from the lack of research on this topic, limitations can be noted in the study of Astrero [2017] and Hernandez [2020]. Both works [Astrero 2017; Hernandez 2020] were limited in terms of the diversity of respondents. In addition, the respondents of Hernandez [2020] were graduate students pursuing a master's degree in linguistics, English Language Teaching, or reading, if not a doctorate in English Language Education or Philippine Applied Linguistics. This could mean that they are more likely already aware of PE. This study aimed to address: (1) the issue on the scarce number of research-into the awareness of PE, and (2) the gaps in the few available studies on the area. This study intended to conduct these by investigating the PE awareness of undergraduate students in Mindanao State University-Main Campus.

1.2 Research Questions

This paper sought to investigate the awareness of undergraduate students towards Philippine English. Specifically, the study aimed to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of awareness of the respondents towards the meanings, features, and uses of Philippine English?
2. Is there a significant correlation between the age of the respondents and their level of awareness towards Philippine English?

1.3 Theoretical Framework

This study is based on the work of Hernandez [2020]. Thus, in determining the level of awareness of the respondents, this research followed Hernandez's [2020] concept of using PE descriptions made by Filipino scholars to devise a concrete way of measuring PE awareness. Accordingly, linguists' accounts of PE can be classified into three: meanings, features, and uses. These descriptions are used to gauge the level of PE awareness of undergraduate students, as shown in Figure 1.

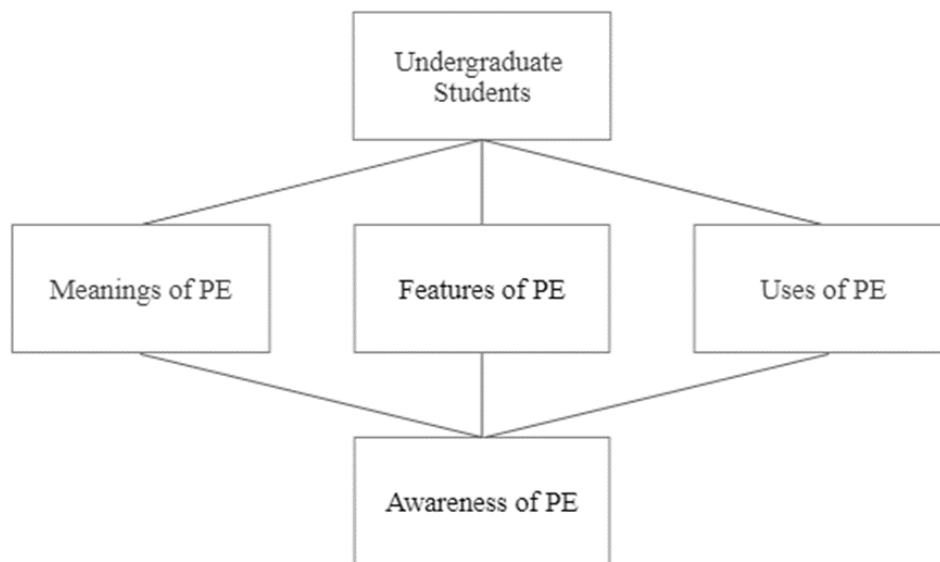


Figure 1. Framework of the Study

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study was undertaken to determine the level of awareness of the respondents on Philippine English and its possible correlation with their age. This research will benefit Filipino English teachers as they will have an idea regarding the level of awareness of undergraduate students towards PE and possible explanations for this degree of consciousness. The results of this study will also be beneficial to curriculum planners as it will guide them in designing lessons and activities that will increase awareness of PE, assuming that they are supportive of the PE movement. To the promoters of PE, this will help them in proving the importance of raising awareness on PE, and why it must be included in various academic curricula. Lastly, this study will aid current and future researchers, as it will serve as a reference to studies on World Englishes and PE awareness.

2. Methodology

This section discusses the methodology that the researcher employed to accomplish the goals of this study. Specifically, this section describes the research design, research setting, research participants, instruments of the study, procedures, and methods of data analysis.

2.1 Research Design

This study utilized a descriptive quantitative research approach, specifically survey design. This research design was used because it offers a quantitative report of opinions, attitudes, and knowledge of a population by taking a sample from that population and studying them. It can also help determine relationships between variables [Creswell & Creswell 2018]. The data were gathered using a modified version of the survey questionnaire from the study of

Hernandez [2020]. Afterwards, the data were statistically analyzed using weighted mean and standard deviation. Spearman rank correlation was also employed.

2.2 Research Setting

This study was conducted within Mindanao State University (MSU)-Main Campus, located at Marawi City, Lanao del Sur. MSU was established on September 1, 1961, by virtue of Republic Act 1387 with the vision of becoming a center of excellence in instruction, research, and extension [MSU-Main, n.d.]. Additionally, the university is dedicated to the integration of Muslims and non-Muslim minorities into mainstream society, being a home to students from different places, tribes, and of different religious backgrounds [Latip-Yusoph 2014]. MSU-Main Campus was chosen as the research setting because of its fairly diverse student population, which provides better accuracy in gauging the PE awareness of Filipino undergraduate students.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The respondents of this study were 216 undergraduate students from Mindanao State University-Main Campus, Marawi City. The respondents had to be enrolled in the second semester of the academic year 2020-2021 and be from any of the fifteen undergraduate colleges of the campus and of any year level.

These undergraduate students of the university were chosen because they were the most available respondents for the researcher. The availability of the respondents and the researcher's convenience were prioritized to assure the feasibility of the study during the COVID-19 pandemic at the time this research was being conducted.

2.4 Instrument of the Study

The instrument of this study was a survey questionnaire. According to Young [2016], questionnaires are commonly used to report the respondents' demographic information and their behaviors, attitudes, opinions, and/or knowledge towards a particular topic. Moreover, questionnaires are preferred by student researchers because they can be easily constructed, used to collect large sets of data, and administered online. Also, existing questionnaires are usually available to researchers and can be adapted for their use [Young 2016], which is the case in this study. In particular, a modified version of the questionnaire used in the study of Hernandez [2020] was utilized in this research. The questionnaire was modified to be more appropriate for the respondents of this study, which were undergraduate students of any bachelor's degree in Mindanao State University-Main Campus; whereas the respondents of Hernandez [2020] were graduate students pursuing master's/doctorate degrees in linguistics, English Language Education, or other related programs.

The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part was intended to collect information on the profile of the respondents. Respondents' information, such as age, sex, and ethnicity, may help in the interpretation of the results and determine where the findings generalize [Beins 2009, as cited in Hammer 2011]. The second part contained fifteen statements about the meanings, features, and uses of Philippine English on a Likert scale, following the range used in the study of Hernandez [2020].

2.5 Procedure

This study utilized a convenience sampling. According to Young [2016], this is a type of non-probability sampling that involves the selection of respondents based on the researcher's convenience, such as in terms of physical proximity, the availability of the respondents, and their

willingness to participate in the research. This sampling technique was employed to assure the feasibility of this study amidst social and temporal constraints.

Furthermore, the survey questionnaire was encoded in a Google Form. Afterwards, a link to the form and a letter to the respondents, inviting them to participate in the survey and providing them information about the study, were sent to the undergraduate students of Mindanao State University-Main Campus via email. To assure that only one response per student was recorded, the form was customized to accept only one survey response for each institutional email. After collecting answers from the respondents, analysis and interpretation of data were conducted.

2.6 Methods of Data Analysis

The answers of the respondents were statistically analyzed by calculating the weighted mean and standard deviation of each item. In interpreting the results, the range used in the study of Hernandez [2020] was followed.

In addition, the responses of the undergraduate students were classified according to their age. Then, Spearman rank correlation test was conducted to determine if there is a significant correlation between the respondents' age and their level of PE awareness. The Spearman rank correlation test is the nonparametric version of the Pearson correlation test. This test was used because it measures the strength and direction of the relationship between two variables. The result of this test is a value from -1 to 1, with 1 being a perfect positive correlation, -1 being a perfect negative correlation, and 0 signifying no correlation between ranks [Glen 2013].

3. Results and Discussion

This section presents the results of the survey conducted as well as the discussion on the analysis and interpretation of the data gathered.

3.1 Meanings of Philippine English

Table 1

Results for Items No. 1-4

Items	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1. There is a local English variety called Philippine English (PE).	2.48	1.13	Slightly aware
2. Philippine English has varieties (i.e. educated PE, <i>Colegiala</i> PE, <i>Yaya</i> PE).	1.88	1.01	Slightly aware
3. Philippine English originated from American English.	3.33	1.26	Moderately aware
4. Philippine English is a mark that Filipinos have owned English.	3.21	1.26	Moderately aware
Overall	2.73		Moderately aware

Legend: 5.00-4.51 (Extremely aware); 4.50-3.51 (Very aware); 3.50-2.51 (Moderately aware); 2.50-1.51 (Slightly aware); 1.50-00.51 (Not at all aware)

Table 1 presents the results for items no. 1 to 4. The data show that, generally, the respondents had moderate awareness of the meanings of Philippine English.

At a mean of 2.48, the respondents were only slightly aware of the existence of PE as a local English variety (1). This remarkably contrasts the study of Hernandez [2020] wherein extreme cognizance of Filipino graduate students towards PE was reported. This could be explained by the differences in the profile of the respondents. For this study, undergraduate students of any degree program were surveyed; whereas Hernandez's [2020] research was focused on English teachers pursuing a specialization in linguistics or other related areas. Thus, there are better chances that the graduate students were aware of the local English variety as they might have encountered the topic in their curriculum. Expectedly, the low awareness of the respondents on PE meant poorer consciousness towards its sub-varieties (2, 1.88). This is supported by the claim that even those who are highly familiar with the existence of PE are barely aware of its varieties [Hernandez, 2020].

Despite this, the respondents were moderately informed about the origin of PE (3, 3.33). They were also fairly conscious that PE signifies Filipinos' acceptance and ownership of English (4, 3.21). These items (3 & 4) are two of the highly rated statements on the survey at 2nd and 4th, respectively. These findings may be due to the respondents' knowledge of Philippine history and the status of English as a second language in the country.

3.2 Features of Philippine English

Table 2

Results for Items No. 5-9

Items	Mean	SD	Interpretation
5. Philippine English has its own accent, phonology, vocabulary, and grammar.	3.38	1.22	Moderately aware
6. Philippine English mirrors the national and cultural identity of Filipinos.	3.05	1.17	Moderately aware
7. Philippine English is reflected in Filipino English textbooks and instructional materials.	2.88	1.11	Moderately aware
8. Philippine English has been codified into dictionaries and grammars.	2.84	1.18	Moderately aware
9. Educated PE has acceptable variants (e.g., fill up, result to, based from) from American English (e.g., fill-in, result in, based on).	2.56	1.14	Moderately aware
Overall	2.91		Moderately aware

Legend: 5.00-4.51 (Extremely aware); 4.50-3.51 (Very aware); 3.50-2.51 (Moderately aware); 2.50-1.51 (Slightly aware); 1.50-00.51 (Not at all aware)

Table 2 presents the results for items no. 5 to 9. The data show that the respondents had moderate awareness of the features of Philippine English.

According to their responses, the students were relatively conscious of PE having its own accent, phonology, vocabulary, and grammar. At a mean of 3.38, it (5) is tied with item no. 10 as the highest marked statement by the respondents. To some extent, this may be supported by the claims that WE speakers are aware of their distinct accent [Jindapitak & Teo 2012; Natiladdanon & Thanavisuth 2014] and that Filipino millennials are conscious of PE lexemes [Astrero 2017].

Towards PE mirroring the national and cultural identity of Filipinos (6, 3.05), the respondents show average awareness. This may be linked with their fair cognizance on Filipinos' ownership of the English language (4).

Still, the results of these items (5 & 6) in this survey are low compared to their results in the study of Hernandez [2020]. Again, the differences in the academic background of the respondents may be perceived as probable reasons for the findings.

On the inclusion of PE into textbooks, instructional materials (7, 2.88), dictionaries, and grammars (8, 2.84), and PE having acceptable variants (9, 2.56), the students showed relative consciousness. However, the means of these statements (7, 8, & 9) are within the lower half of the moderate awareness range (2.99-2.51), unlike the previous items (5, 3.38 & 6, 3.05). Also, it is worth noting that statements no. 7, 8, and 9 are concerned with the acceptability of PE vocabulary and grammar. The contrast between the means of these items may imply that the students were fairly conscious of PE features but probably less aware of its acceptability. Such was the case in the study of Hernandez [2020], where respondents showed significantly better cognizance of PE having its own features (5) and reflecting national and cultural identity (6) than it having recognized and accepted vocabulary and grammar (7, 8, & 9).

3.3 Uses of Philippine English

Table 3

Results for Items No. 10-15

Items	Mean	SD	Interpretation
10. Philippine English is the English variety Filipinos often use in intranational communication.	3.38	1.21	Moderately aware
11. Philippine English is the English variety Filipinos often use in local media.	3.24	1.19	Moderately aware
12. Philippine English as the norm in teaching English vocabulary is used by Filipino English teachers.	3.16	1.21	Moderately aware
13. Philippine English as the norm in teaching English grammar is used by Filipino English teachers.	3.05	1.22	Moderately aware
14. Philippine English as the norm in testing the speaking skills of Filipino learners is used by Filipino English teachers.	3.02	1.21	Moderately aware
15. Philippine English as the norm in testing the writing skills of Filipino learners is used by Filipino English teachers.	2.98	1.19	Moderately aware
Overall	3.14		Moderately aware

Legend: 5.00-4.51 (Extremely aware); 4.50-3.51 (Very aware); 3.50-2.51 (Moderately aware); 2.50-1.51 (Slightly aware); 1.50-00.51 (Not at all aware)

Table 3 presents the results for items no. 10 to 15. The data show that the respondents had moderate awareness of the uses of Philippine English.

Among the statements in the survey, those on the uses of PE got the highest overall mean at 3.14. Tied with item no. 5 as the top marked statement, item no. 10 (3.38) reveals that the students are relatively conscious of PE being the variety Filipinos often use in communicating within the country. The data also suggest that the respondents are moderately aware of the frequent use of PE in national media (11, 3.24). These may be attributed to the students' limited use of English in communication and little exposure to Philippine English media since the respondents in Hernandez's [2020] study, who regularly communicated in English and consumed Philippine English media, were reported to be very aware of these items (10 & 11). Moreover, Astrero [2017] linked the consciousness of PE lexemes to exposure to local media.

Since the respondents had average awareness of PE features, such as vocabulary (5), then they could be exposed to local media only to a limited extent.

Lastly, the students showed fair cognizance towards PE being the norm used by Filipino English teachers in vocabulary (12, 3.16) and grammar (13, 3.05) teaching and in speaking (14, 3.02) and writing (15, 2.98) skills testing. This may be related to the findings of Alieto and Torres [2019] that PE lexemes and grammatical variants are only moderately accepted by pre-service Filipino English teachers. The relative awareness of the respondents on these items (12, 13, 14, & 15) could correspond to this recent finding on the acceptability of PE vocabulary and grammar [Alieto & Torres 2019].

3.4 Correlation between Age and Philippine English Awareness

This study aimed to determine the correlation between the age of the respondents and their awareness of PE. The researcher conducted Spearman rank correlation test to investigate the correlation between the two variables. The test resulted to a rho of -0.07, and because this value is closer to 0, this study reports that age is not a factor influencing PE awareness.

4. Conclusion

This study was conducted to address the lack of research on Philippine English (PE) awareness and some limitations on the few extant studies on this topic. The biggest revelation of this study, and perhaps its main contribution, is the finding on the low awareness of its respondents towards the existence of a local English variety in the country. This result could question the validity of some studies on PE due to the assumption that their respondents are aware of PE. For instance, before exploring a group of respondents' attitudes towards PE, the researcher(s) must first make sure that the respondents are conscious enough of the meanings, features, and uses of PE. This strengthens the notion that awareness, in general, is an important area of discussion and should be given due attention in World Englishes (WE) research.

Despite the poor consciousness of the students towards PE being a local variety, they showed moderate awareness on the other statements, especially those referring to the uses of PE. This observation tells us that, perhaps, the students are fairly cognizant of PE but are not aware that it is a legitimate and recognized English variety. In support of this, the data reveal that, among the items, the respondents were most aware of PE having its own features, but then they showed less consciousness towards statements pertaining to the acceptance of PE vocabulary and grammar. These suggest slight awareness of undergraduate students towards the legitimacy and acceptability of PE. As observed, issues and discussions on validity and correctness are common in WE. This study could serve as evidence to support the importance of raising awareness of the legitimacy and acceptability of PE and other English varieties.

This study also aimed at determining the possibility of a correlation between the age of the respondents and their level of PE awareness. The results showed that the two variables are independent of each other, and that age does not influence PE awareness. Still, this study recommends additional research should be conducted to test factors that may influence PE awareness such as one's academic, linguistic, or socio-economic background.

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