Acceptability of lexical and syntactic features of Philippine English (PhE) among speakers from the rural areas in Northern Philippines.

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ABSTRACT

In this study, we investigated the status of Philippine English (PhE) in one of the rural areas in the Northern Philippines. We have taken into consideration the emerging dichotomy of Philippine English, primarily the disparities between rural PhE and urban PhE; we have taken the account in the provincial areas where the use of English is different from that of the urbanized settings and that there is Rural Philippine English which could be described in terms of geographical locations, use of English in daily interactions, proficiency of the language among the speakers, lectal classification, and the ideologies on the use of the existing features of PhE. Using the Grammatical and Lexical Acceptability questionnaire (GLAQ) of Torres and Alieto (2019), we described the acceptability of the lexical and syntactic features of PhE among the public secondary school teachers from a rural area in terms of profile variables such as age, sex, specialization, years of teaching experience, and number of spoken languages. In general, the participants showed a low extent of acceptance probably because they still see these features of PhE as deviations. The variable specialization (participants' major) could also be a differing factor of acceptability towards these features.

Keywords: *Endonormative model, exonormative model*, f*eatures of Philippine English, language attitude theory, urban and rural English*

INTRODUCTION

English has become the mediator of international understanding in today's globalized context. It is widely used as a medium not only in the Philippines but also in a large group of non-native speech communities around the world like in Asia. Biermeier (2017) asserts that there is a significant number of Southeast Asian English speakers; thus, it is also noteworthy to know that varieties emerging from that part of the globe are the Englishes in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand and the Philippines. When Kachru's (1985) revolutionary model was introduced, the non-native varieties of English have earned great attention, both positive and negative; in his model, there are three concentric circles which represents the evolution of Englishes; namely, the inner circle (in which speakers are considered native), the outer circle (in which the speakers' English is considered as a second language, and lastly the expanding circle (in which the speakers' English is considered as a foreign language). Due to this evolution, new varieties emerged as the three circles expanded and as the language dispersed across the globe, one of which is Philippine English as a result of colonization and subjugation of the Americans whose native language is English and regarded as one of the native speakers. And through language contact between the Americans and the Filipinos, Philippine English developed distinctive features in various levels such in phonology, syntax, morphology and lexis through a series of innovation thus taking its place as one of the Englishes in the outer circle.

In Llamzon's (1969) paper, he claims that there exists a variety of English in the Philippines that is different from American and British Englishes and that by the time of writing, it had become standardized. Furthermore, the communicative trends in the Philippine context dictate a register that has developed for intimacy and rapport which depends on switching from Filipino to English or English to Filipino. This has been the trend largely in the Metro and other urban centers that produce content on television and on radio as well as in newspapers and magazines (Cabansag, 2013). Bautista (2004) also posits that Taglish, or the code-switching of Tagalog and English, is the language of casual or informal relations among middle-class, college-educated, and urbanized Filipinos. English alone is also spoken in the home by a small number of Filipinos, especially among the upper class in Metro Manila (Gonzalez 1989, 1983, as cited in Lesho, 2018) and other urban areas (Lesho, 2018). Bautista's (1998) preliminary study on lexical items of Philippine English (PhE) indicates the occurrence of Tagalog lexical items in English constructions as a product of coinages. Similar studies have also identified the emerging features of Philippine English in lexical level, grammatical and phonological level which concentrates on urban settings (Gustilo, Tocalo & Calingasan, 2019; Gonzales and Dita, 2017; Borlongan, 2009; Collins, 2009; Mardunio, 2004; Baustista, 2004, 2001, 1998). These features of Philippine variety of English could be true among the urbanized Filipinos, but little evidence is shown among the English speakers in the provincial areas to indicate similar circumstances. Matsuda and Matsuda (2010) opine that in Japan, the sociolinguistic context of an urban metropolis like Tokyo is unlike the situation in farming communities in Hokkaido, where the number of English users may be small or non-existent.

Despite these efforts to describe Philippine English on a larger scale, there has been little focus on describing the existing variety in a specific locale, particularly in the rural or provincial areas in which the existing substrate variety of English in the country could also be developing. Bautista (2001) cite differences among social classes as well as a dichotomy of urban and rural areas. Gonzales (2017) contends in his model of Philippine 'Englishes' that the stratification particularly in the educational level, lectal differences, the conflict between the rich and the poor, as well as the differences between the provincial and urban areas contributes to 'recursivity'. Irvine and Gal (2000, as cited in Gonzales, 2017), posits the idea of fractal 'recursivity' which is described as the projection of an opposition salient at one level onto some other level. The dichotomizing and partitioning process, in other words, would also be observable at other levels, creating subcategories on each side of contrast or supercategories that include both contrast but oppose them to some other category (p.9). It can thus be argued that in the Philippines, there are emerging substrate varieties of Philippine English that can be attributed to factors such as geographical location, culture, and existing indigenous languages. For example, in the provincial areas where the use of English is different from the urbanized settings, there is Rural Philippine English. Moreover, Go and Gustilo (2013) argue that there are also those who continue using Tagalog as their preferred language of interaction among Tagalog-speaking communities who are non-fluent bilinguals, especially those who live outside the capital, more specifically in rural areas; thus, innovation of features with regard to the use of Philippine English is less likely to happen. It

can be then assumed that the codified features of Philippine English, specifically, the Tagalog-English lexical items, and coinages which were more likely based on 'urban' English, are less familiar among the speakers of English in the rural areas. 'Urban' English, as referred to by Dita (2015), is the English of educated circles in the Metro, characterized by average proficiency to high proficiency in speaking. It could be classified into mesolectal (English phonology that resembles Filipino language) and acrolectal (English phonology used by educated, elites and powerful people that resembles General American English) classification in terms of phonology (Tayao, 2004), and it was marked with neologism which was largely based on code-switching and the occurrence of Tagalog lexical items in English conversation. In terms of its locale, the population density in the Metro is heavy which implies a large number of PhE speakers.

Although there is a dearth in literature on Philippine English in rural contexts, in this study, we proposed possible definitions and parameters of 'Rural' Philippine English which are discussed based on the users and in contrast with its counterpart – 'urban' Philippine English (Gonzales, 2017; Dita, 2015; Go & Gustilo, 2013; Tayao, 2004; Bautista, 2001). As regards the English speakers in the provinces, the 'rural' Philippine English speakers are described in terms of their: 1) geographical locations, 2) use of English in daily interactions, 3) proficiency of the language, 4) lectal classification, and 5) the use of the existing features of PhE. In terms of geographical location, 'rural' PhE speakers reside in provincial areas in the country, which is characterized by low population density. Agriculture is one of the primary industries, and the use of local language is preferred instead of English in daily conversations. In terms of speaking proficiency, the speakers could be less fluent compared with the 'urban' English speakers and their English is affected by their local languages, and could be classified under basilect (English marked with more substitutions in phonemes as ethnic tongue interferes with speech sounds production) or mesolect. The existing features of Philippine variety of English could be representative of Filipinos residing in urban areas such as in Metro Manila, but little evidence is shown among the English speakers in the provincial areas to indicate similar circumstances.

Moreover, a majority of research on the acceptability of Philippine English, particularly its lexical and grammatical features, was focused on urban and highly urbanized settings and only a minority of studies were conducted in rural contexts. Thus, in this study, we focused on the acceptability of Philippine English (PhE), specifically its lexical and syntactic features among rural PhE speakers. It is hoped that the findings in this study can contribute to the growing literature on the acceptability of PhE, and, in particular, address gaps in terms of the PhE speakers' geographical location.

Theoretical Framework

To describe the acceptability of Philippine English (PhE) among the respondents, Kachru's (1985) revolutionary model on World Englishes (WE) was used as the basis of describing the phenomenon in which the emergence of PhE and its lexical and grammatical features was anchored

on. Alongside Kachru's (1985) model was Greenbaum's (1975) framework on language variation and acceptability of emerging ungrammatical alternatives.

Greenbaum (1975) posits that variation is inherent in language, since languages are constantly changing and developing, and the changes are not homogeneously or simultaneously adopted by speakers of a language. In language contact, the interlocutors exchange meanings using varied English constructions which may be acceptable to a particular group, but not to the other group.

To explore the acceptability of lexical and grammatical features of Philippine English (Bautista, 1998: 2004; Mardunio, 2004; Collin, 2014; Gonzales & Dita, 2017), the aforementioned frameworks were utilized in describing the extent of acceptability of PhE among rural English speakers. Furthermore, we sought to answer the following research questions:

1) What is the extent of acceptability of the grammatical and lexical features of Philippine English among rural PhE speakers in general and in terms of: age, gender, specialization, years of teaching experience and number of spoken languages?
2) Is there a significant relationship in the perceived acceptability of the grammatical and lexical features of Philippine English when the respondents are grouped according to: attitude, age, gender, specialization, years of teaching experience, number of spoken languages?

Alternative Hypothesis:

1. There is a significant relationship on the acceptability of Philippine English when the respondents are grouped according to: attitude towards grammatical and lexical features of PhE, age, sex, specialization, years of teaching experience, and number of spoken languages.

METHODOLOGY

We investigated the extent of acceptability of lexical and syntactic features of Philippine English (one of the outer circle Englishes) among rural PhE speakers through the use of descriptive-correlational research design in the light of the World Englishes (Kachru, 1985) paradigm, language variation and acceptability (Greenbaum, 1975). We requested the participation of secondary school teachers in San Guillermo District, San Guillermo, Isabela, the Philippines (one of the fourth-class municipalities in Isabela, the Philippines, which classification was based on the average annual income of 40 million pesos to 60 million pesos; the municipality class determines also the extent of industrialization) upon the approval and consent of the administration.

Also, we utilized the population of those teachers who gave their consent to the conduct of the study. The respondents were required to be secondary teachers in the public schools; profile variables such as age, gender, years of teaching experience, specialization and number of spoken languages were also sought to provide insight on differences and relationships.

Furthermore, the respondents should also be born and raised in the northern part of the Philippines, should not have lived outside the country, should be an English speaker, and must have taught in secondary education. In identifying the extent of acceptability and attitudes towards PhE, we adopted a research instrument from Torres and Alieto's (2019) study on the acceptability of the grammatical and lexical features of Philippine English. Permission to use the questionnaire from the corresponding authors was sought via email; both authors responded positively and gave their consent to the use of the instrument. Pilot testing was also administered to ensure reliability of test items. After informing and obtaining consent from the respondents, we administered the test using Google Forms in two hours to give ample time to the respondents to answer the questionnaire during their free time or after class hours to avoid class disruptions.

Since the survey-questionnaire we used was a four-point Likert scale, data were analyzed using mean and mode to identify the average responses as well as the most commonly occurring response from the respondents. Qualitative description that corresponds to the descriptors in the Likert scale was also used (e.g. 3.50 – 4.00 = Most acceptable, 2.50 – 3.49 = somewhat acceptable, somewhat unacceptable and not acceptable) in describing the extent of acceptability of Philippine English and attitude towards lexical and grammatical features of Philippine English.

To answer the second research question, we used Spearman-rho to identify the relationship among the variables which are ordinal; since the data were not normal, a non-parametric correlational test should be used. In terms of the nominal data, we utilized Fisher's exact test since the data did not meet the minimum number of items in the spearman rho correlation test while the conditions of Fisher's exact test were met and satisfied.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. *Respondents' General Acceptability of Lexical and Syntactic Features of PhE.*

Extent of Acceptability	F	%
Most Acceptable	1	2.27
Somewhat Acceptable	25	56.81
Somewhat Unacceptable	18	40.90
Unacceptable	0	0
Total	**44**	

Table 1 presents the findings of the Grammatical and Lexical Acceptability Questionnaire (GLAQ) in relation to the general acceptability of the research respondents on the lexical and syntactic features of PhE. Out of 44 items in the acceptability questionnaire, the table shows that more than half of the respondents indicated some acceptance of the lexical and syntactic features of Philippine English. It can be seen in the extent of acceptability scale that the participants

accepted these features to a limited extent (59.08%). Although the finding suggests a sign of acceptance, it can also be noted that almost a half of the respondents indicated a sign of unacceptance of the lexical and syntactic features of PhE (40.90%). This finding could be attributed to various variables in the study which might be rooted in their language ideologies, culture and even their locale in which some of the lexical and syntactic items are rarely used.

Table 2. *Extent of Acceptance of Lexical and Syntactic features of PhE (Most Acceptable)*

Item(s)	Mean	Std. Dev.	Interpretation
11. *Majority* of students nowadays use online references to do their papers.	3.564	0.739	Most Acceptable

Legend: 1.00-1.49= Unacceptable; 1.50-2.49=Somewhat unacceptable; 2.50-3.49=Somewhat acceptable; 3.50-4.00=Most Acceptable.

Table 2 presents the result on the extent of acceptance of lexical and syntactic features of PhE among speakers from the rural areas of Northern Philippines. Among all the lexical and syntactic features of Philippine English in the GLAQ, only item 11 on the use of majority earned a high sign of acceptance (M=3.563, SD=0.739), signifying that the item was most acceptable to the respondents. This finding could be attributed to the use of articles among Filipino speakers. In terms of the use of *majority* without an article, it is common among ESL learners since they find it problematic (Bautista, 2008); Trenkic (2009, as cited in Torres and Alieto, 2019) explains that adding an article to the lexical item seems awkward since *majority* is seen as a plural noun, which explains its acceptance even without an article. This finding corroborates the findings of Torres and Alieto (2019) on the acceptability of lexical and grammatical features of Philippine English despite the current study having a different locale. It can be presumed that the use of *majority* without an article is deeply rooted in the English of Filipino speakers where similarities in their local languages could be found. For example, in Tagalog, the article system is quite different than that of in the English articles; Bautista (2000) further argues that the article system of Philippine languages has a different basis, which could be based on whether a noun is in focus or not. There is also the use of plural marking particle *mga* in Tagalog to indicate the plurality of a noun, while there is none in English which rather uses affixations.

Table 3. *Extent of Acceptance of Lexical and Syntactic Features of PhE (Somewhat Acceptable)*

Item(s)	Mean	Std. Dev.	Interpretation
1. Failure to return borrowed books from the library on time can *result to* fines and other penalties.	**3.436**	0.764	Somewhat Acceptable
2. Many classic movies are ***based from*** popular novels.	**3.382**	0.850	Somewhat Acceptable
5. Students should learn to ***cope up with*** the challenges in their studies.	3.145	1.161	Somewhat Acceptable
6. Students have different views ***with regards*** success.	2.818	1.124	Somewhat Acceptable

Item(s)	Mean	Std. Dev.	Interpretation
7. There are a number of organizations *wherein* students can join.	3.000	1.036	Somewhat Acceptable
9. Students should *get involved* to extra-curricular activities.	3.109	1.066	Somewhat Acceptable
10. The secretary attended the meeting *in behalf* of her boss.	**3.364**	0.847	Somewhat Acceptable
12. It must be enacted to a law whatever the political *cost.*	2.982	0.991	Somewhat Acceptable
13. They *left* the Philippines before their children entered college	3.200	0.869	Somewhat Acceptable
15. The use of social media *have been* the most significant change in the last decade.	2.855	1.193	Somewhat Acceptable
16. *The number* of students enrolled last term have increased.	2.927	1.168	Somewhat Acceptable
17. A number of different teaching techniques *has* emerged.	2.964	1.122	Somewhat Acceptable
18. Either the students or the teacher *know* how to open the presentation.	2.800	1.193	Somewhat Acceptable
19. One-third of the test items *was* asked during the review	2.855	1.096	Somewhat Acceptable
20. This method, along with other methods, *are* applicable now.	2.964	1.122	Somewhat Acceptable
21. I, together with my other classmate, *are* attending the symposium.	2.964	1.247	Somewhat Acceptable
22. That is *one of the reason* why I chose to pursue my education.	2.764	1.232	Somewhat Acceptable
23. The president *assured* free tuition to all State Universities and Colleges.	3.345	0.865	Somewhat Acceptable
24. In schools, students are *taken cared of* by their teachers.	2.600	1.099	Somewhat Acceptable
35. *I will* return next week.	3.309	0.920	Somewhat Acceptable
36. The *celebrant* did not expect the kind of party given to him during his 45th birthday.	3.218	0.994	Somewhat Acceptable
37. This is *necessarily needed* to pass the course.	2.509	1.215	Somewhat Acceptable

Item(s)	Mean	Std. Dev.	Interpretation
41. My doctor advised me to have *less* doughnut for my immediate recovery.	2.582	1.134	Somewhat Acceptable
42. He will *bring* his father to Tagaytay this summer.	3.073	1.016	Somewhat Acceptable
43. Faculty members are engaged in their respective *researches*.	3.345	0.886	Somewhat Acceptable
Total Acceptability Mean	**2.634**		**Somewhat Acceptable**

Legend: 1.00-1.49= Unacceptable; 1.50-2.49=Somewhat unacceptable; 2.50-3.49=Somewhat acceptable; 3.50-4.00=Most Acceptable.

Table 3 presents the items that were somewhat acceptable to the respondents in terms of the lexical and syntactic features of Philippine English. The findings suggest a low sign of acceptance as reflected in the total mean of the acceptability questionnaire (M=2.634).

Similar to the findings of Torres and Alieto (2019), the items which received the highest means of acceptance among the items rated somewhat acceptable were item 1 (M=3.436, SD=0.764), item 2 (M=3.382, SD=0.850) and item 10 (M=3.364, SD=0.847). All these items pertain to preposition usage with verbs such as *result, base*, and with nouns like *behalf* indicating meaning. This finding suggests that *result to, based from* and *in behalf* features of PhE are deeply embedded in the English used by Filipino speakers today. Bautista (2000) explains that "for Filipinos learning English, prepositions constitute a bigger problem because there are far fewer preposition-like items in Filipino, such that Filipino preposition *sa*, for example, can mean *'in, on, at, to, towards'"* (p.44). This suggests that the features *result to* and *based from* are rooted in the Filipino structure of indicating a meaning that is intelligible and socially acceptable. Hence, these items are somewhat acceptable for the respondents. In the case of *in behalf*, this prepositional phrase is sometimes interchanged with *on behalf*. But fluent writers suggest that these two have differences. For instance, *in behalf* means helping someone or something while *on behalf* is used to mean representing someone or something (grammarbook.com). In item 10, *The secretary attended the meeting **in behalf** of her boss*, semantically speaking, the preposition to be used to reflect the meaning of the sentence is *on behalf*. The respondents might not be aware of the difference of the two and they cannot decide whether this item is acceptable or not; thereby, they chose somewhat acceptable.

It might be interesting to point out that some items that were somewhat acceptable to the respondents pertain to subject-verb agreement such as items 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, and 21. As Bautista (2000) states, subject-verb agreement is one of the features of Philippine English. In the present study, the respondents demonstrated an ambivalent acceptance of these items in which case opposes the study of Tolentino and Asuncion (2023) where English teachers somewhat unaccepted similar items on subject-verb agreement. In the case of the respondents in the present study, they might have rated these items somewhat acceptable because for them, the meaning of the sentence

was not greatly affected by the deviant forms of the verbs that do not agree with the subject, following grammar rules. The findings additionally imply the challenge that Filipinos have as regard subject-verb agreement. As posited by Bautista (2000, cited in Asuncion, 2010)), the plural marking of the verb is optional for Filipinos, and this is usually done in formal writing and speaking (p.16). Moreover, the low acceptance of the items might be attributed to what Bautista (2001) states that English teachers, being trained as such, would find it difficult to accept such grammatical items.

One glaring item that was somewhat acceptable to the respondents was item 43, *Faculty members are engaged in their respective researches*. In the study of Bautista (2000), the respondents fully accepted the plural form of the lexical item *research*. Following the traditional grammar rule, *research* is a non-countable noun; hence, this should not be pluralized by adding *-es* to the singular noun. But based on observation, Filipinos tend to pluralize the noun in spoken or in written communication, making it not a deviation, but a feature of Philippine English. Bautista (2000) explains that Filipinos lack awareness as regards countable and countable nouns and that non-countable nouns are often considered countable.

Table 4. *Extent of Acceptance of Lexical and Syntactic Features of PhE (Somewhat Unacceptable)*

Item(s)	Mean	Std. Dev.	Interpretation
3. My perspective is sometimes different *for* your perspective.	1.964	1.186	Somewhat Unacceptable
4. During quizzes, students are asked to *fill* the blanks.	**2.309**	1.069	Somewhat Unacceptable
8. It's *a more correct* answer.	1.855	1.026	Somewhat Unacceptable
14. Students are required to attend the symposium which *would* be held in May.	**2.236**	1.170	Somewhat Unacceptable
25. Due to the requirements, *me* and my group mates are staying in the hostel over the weekend.	2.164	1.183	Somewhat Unacceptable
26. In pair work, choose the person *who* you think you could work well with.	**2.400**	1.164	Somewhat Unacceptable
27. Since its *very traffic* in Metro Manila, I don't want to study there.	2.127	1.123	Somewhat Unacceptable
28. Thank you for the *invite* you sent last week.	1.927	1.086	Somewhat Unacceptable
29. My teacher has that fascination in *vintagy* items.	**2.364**	1.025	Somewhat Unacceptable

Item(s)	Mean	Std. Dev.	Interpretation
30. Since I was not responding to his message, he *unfriended* me in Facebook.	**2.200**	1.145	Somewhat Unacceptable
31. He would *unsmile* whenever that person passes by.	1.764	0.999	Somewhat Unacceptable
32. I have *PMed* to you the proposal.	**1.727**	0.870	Somewhat Unacceptable
33. When he heard the news, he *OMGed.*	**1.673**	0.883	Somewhat Unacceptable
34. The materials were already *xeroxed* yesterday.	1.745	0.966	Somewhat Unacceptable
38. The five members divided the task *between* themselves.	2.273	1.193	Somewhat Unacceptable
39. She tried *to quickly finish* the book before she had to leave.	2.436	1.102	Somewhat Unacceptable
40. I should drink *fewer* coffee.	2.018	0.991	Somewhat Unacceptable
44. Last February 14, I did a not so *valentiney* undertaking.	**1.636**	0.802	Somewhat Unacceptable
Total Acceptability Mean	**2.634**		**Somewhat Acceptable**

Legend: 1.00-1.49= Unacceptable; 1.50-2.49=Somewhat unacceptable; 2.50-3.49=Somewhat acceptable; 3.50-4.00=Most Acceptable.

Table 4 indicates that there are lexical and syntactic items which were unaccepted to a certain extent. Item 44 (M=1.636, SD=0.795), item 33 (M=1.673, SD=0.875) and item 32 (M=1.727, SD=0.862) reflecting the use of the lexical items *valentiney, OMGed* and *PMed* respectively, were some examples of lexical and syntactic items which were not accepted by the respondents. It can be gleaned in the table that these three features had the lowest acceptability mean. The unacceptability of these features could be attributed to sociolinguistic factors such as language use and the geographical location (urban or rural) of the speakers. These items might be rare or absent in the rural context but evident in urban context.   Thus, it might be a good idea to study acceptability of Philippine English features in rural context to triangulate the previously conducted acceptability studies in urban settings. Furthermore, Dimaculangan (2018) argues that "a big number of Filipino speakers of English, particularly the ESL/EFL teachers in the provinces are either incognizant or still unopen to the thought of celebrating Philippine English" (p. 17). This suggests that some of the lexical and syntactic features of Philippine English are still considered as deviations from the standard norms of English language as evidenced by the non-acceptance of the respondents in the lexical and syntactic items in Table 4.

Table 5. Acceptability of Philippine English in Terms of Profile Variables

Profile	Categories	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Qualitative Description
Age	30 years old and below	17	2.79	.398	Somehow accepted
	31-35 years old	12	2.68	.397	Somehow accepted
	36-40 years old	10	2.58	.588	Somehow accepted
	41 years old and above	16	2.47	.533	Somehow unaccepted
	N	55	2.63	.482	Somehow accepted
Sex	Male	14	2.56	.589	Somehow accepted
	Female	41	2.66	.446	Somehow accepted
Specialization	non-English major	44	2.70	.460	Somehow accepted
	English major	11	2.36	.493	Somehow unaccepted
Years of Teaching	0-5 years	12	2.83	.580	Somehow accepted
	6-10 years	20	2.69	.385	Somehow accepted
	11-15 years	10	2.65	.290	Somehow accepted
	16 years and above	9	2.25	.525	Somehow unaccepted
	N	51	2.64	.476	Somehow accepted
Number of Spoken Language	2.0	22	2.56	.445	Somehow accepted
	3-4	33	2.68	.506	Somehow accepted

Legend: 1.00-1.49= Unacceptable; 1.50-2.49=Somewhat unacceptable; 2.50-3.49=Somewhat acceptable; 3.50-4.00=Most Acceptable.

Table 5 presents the acceptability of PhE among the respondents in terms of their profile variables such as age, sex, specialization, years of teaching experience, and number of spoken languages. In terms of age, three age groups showed signs of acceptance towards the lexical and syntactic features of Philippine English (PhE) variety. The age group 30 years and below, indicated a mean of 2.79 signifying that PhE is somehow accepted; however, older age group seems to indicate non-acceptance of the existing variety. It can be gleaned from the table that the age group 41 years old and above somehow does not accept the lexical and syntactic features of PhE *(mean = 2.47)*. Meek (2007) posits that there is a gap between generations of speakers where the younger generation speak differently than the older generations. Royle, Steinhauer, Dessureault, Herbay and Brambati (2019) also state that age could also be a factor in some aspects of language processing, specifically, lexical access. It could also be presumed that the semantic aspects of word representations are preserved in older adults. Thus, older age groups find the lexical and syntactic features of Philippine English unacceptable which somehow does not coincide with their knowledge of the language. This implies that older generations are still not aware of the existing variety of English in the country and feel that only the American counterpart, which they learned in school, is acceptable and correct. After all, they had been educated and exposed to situations where American English was used.

In terms of gender, both the male and female groups indicated a weak sign of acceptance on the lexical and syntactic features of PhE. As indicated in the table, the mean acceptability of female group was 2.66 (n=41) which is a 0.11 higher than the base scale (1.50 - 2.49) for unacceptance, while the male group yielded a mean average of 2.56 (n=14) which is a 0.07 higher than the base scale for unacceptance; although, both groups had a qualitative description of somewhat accepted, both groups also leans toward somehow unaccepted with just a low point difference.

Signs of acceptance and unacceptance of the lexical and syntactic features of PhE variety can also be seen in the same table. A group of non-English majors somehow accepted the features of PhE in terms of its lexical items and syntax (mean=2.70), while the English majors indicated a sign of non-acceptance towards the lexical and syntactic features of PhE (mean=2.36). In the study, the non-English major teachers were those who specialized in other subjects like Science, Mathematics, Social Science, etc., while those teachers classified under English majors were those who specialized in English and taught English subjects. It can be presumed that linguistic knowledge could be a differing factor which influences the acceptability of PhE features which describes why the English majors did not accept the Philippine variants. This finding, moreover, corroborates Jenkins (2011) that most English speakers have a notion that American English or those varieties that are in the Inner Circle are the only correct and acceptable varieties. Similar to the findings of Mangalus (2021), English majors in the public schools showed signs of unfamiliarity with Philippine English and its lexical and grammatical features. This implies that having grammatical knowledge based on the standard norms (in our case, American English) among English teachers could be a factor of non-acceptance of some existing features on a variety of English. They tend to be leaning towards more on the exonormative and monolithic model of

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English language when it comes to academic writing as the context. However, the study did not include contexts where these features are acceptable (e.g. these features used in spoken discourse, academic writing, etc. in relation to its acceptability). Thus, contrary to the findings of Torres and Alieto (2019) which states that language proficiency has no relationship with acceptability, in this study, it can then be subsumed that language proficiency is one of the predictors in the acceptance and nonacceptance of a distinct variety of English as seen in the respondents' grammatical knowledge.

In terms of the length of teaching experience, teachers who have served the longest indicated signs of non-acceptance on the lexical and syntactic features of Philippine English (M=2.25). Schiffman (1996) explores linguistic culture which has similarities with language ideology. He describes the concepts of cultural baggage where individuals carry their culture through their linguistic orientation. This implies that teachers who have a longer teaching experience carry a wide range of cultural baggage ranging from their behaviors, assumptions, prejudices, folk belief systems, attitudes and ways of thinking about language. It could be presumed that the non-acceptance of teachers whose teaching experience ranges from 16 years and above might still be adhering to the exonormative model which entails the monolithic belief about the English language. Aside from that, it could also be attributed to their age since a majority of those who have longer years in service belong to the older age-group; although in the present study, age and years in service are not correlated.

Table 6. Relationship Between Respondents' Acceptability of PhE and Profile Variables

Variables		
Attitude	Correlation Coefficient	.698[**]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	Total	55
Age	Correlation Coefficient	-.179
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.191
	Total	55
Major	Correlation Coefficient	-.249
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.066
	Total	55
Number of spoken languages	Correlation Coefficient	.150
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.275
	Total	55
Years of teaching experience	Correlation Coefficient	-.316[*]
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.019
	Total	55
Sex	Correlation Coefficient	.070
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.613
	Total	55

Legend: *p* value=0.05

Table 6 presents the findings on the correlational analysis of the following variables: attitude, age, sex, major, number of spoken languages, and years of teaching experience. Two tests of correlation were used since the data can be classified into two categories – nominal and ordinal. Ordinal data has undergone *spearman rho* correlation while nominal data were analyzed using *Fisher's exact test*. It can be seen in Table 6 that only the attitude of the participants towards the features of PhE and their years of teaching experience had a very strong positive and strong negative correlation, respectively. It can also be seen in the *p* values which were lesser than the alpha= 0.05.

In terms of the attitude of the participants towards the lexical and syntactic features of Philippine English and their acceptability of the variety, the study shows promising finding where it indicates strong correlation (ρ=0.698**; Sig.=0.000). This implies that the respondents' extent of acceptance of the features of PhE can be influenced by their attitudes towards Philippine English. Hence, this finding accepts the alternative hypothesis of the study that there is a strong relationship between the attitudes of respondents towards the features and the extent of acceptance of these features. It could also be pointed out that the extent of acceptability is dependent on the level of attitude of the speakers toward the lexical and syntactic features of PhE since there is a strong correlation between the two variables. Further, it can be implied that respondents with positive attitudes are those who readily accept the lexical and grammatical features of Philippine English. Hence, the acceptability of the features of Philippine English can be dependent on the attitude of the respondents.

In the study of Ting and Wong (2019), acceptability, which comprises the attitudes of users and non-users towards a feature, is vital for the status of a feature; only when a feature is recognized and accepted can it dissociate itself from the label of being an error and continue to exist in the community (Li, 2010; Bamgbose, 1998). This further suggests that positive attitude could be a determining factor of the extent of acceptability of PhE lexical and syntactic features.

Another key finding in the study was the correlation between the respondents' years of teaching experience and their acceptance of PhE features (ρ=-0.316; Sig=0.19). In the study, teachers with shorter teaching experience showed sign of acceptance while those with longer teaching experience indicated non-acceptance of the lexical and syntactic features of PhE. This finding suggests that years of teaching experience influence the extent of acceptance of the respondents of Philippine English in general. This also implies that the teachers who have served the longest tend to be more unaccepting while those teachers who have shorter years in service tend to be more accepting. This could be attributed to the traditionalist perspective of the participants that comes with age where the older generation were educated in the framework of American English as the standard English in the country.

The study has promising findings in this aspect; however, aside from Tolentino and Asuncion (2023), there were no studies conducted that explored the relationship between attitude and acceptability of Philippine English. This, therefore, is a contribution of the present study to the growing literature on Philippine English.

Although the respondents showed a positive sign of acceptance of and attitude towards the PhE features in terms of the variables age, sex, specialization, years of teaching experience and number of spoken languages, the data indicate that these features were still considered as deviations; thus, based on these salient findings revealed in the study, a learning and development program in a form of a seminar could be proposed to raise the awareness of secondary school teachers on the existing lexical and syntactic features of Philippine English. Although awareness is not directly proportional with the attitudes of the participants (Martin, 2014), language awareness activities could contribute to the development of endonormative ideologies in language where language variation and its variants are accepted.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section presents the conclusion and recommendations for future direction of the study. Some conclusions drawn from the study are the following:

Firstly, the respondents still do not consider the lexical and syntactic features of Philippine English as legitimate features of the existing variety, but deviations as reflected in their low acceptance of these features; secondly, the acceptability of lexical and syntactic features of PhE in terms of the profile variables of rural English speakers are varied; and the respondents' years of teaching experience and attitude could be a significant factor of acceptability.

For future directions of the study, since the number of participants was limited to the number of secondary teachers who participated in the study, it is a good idea to increase the sample size for a more conclusive findings, especially as regards conducting the study in rural contexts since most of the studies were conducted in urban setting.

We also recommend the inclusion of the context and triangulation through interviews in investigating the acceptability of PhE features.

We also recommend that another study with a wider scope would be conducted to triangulate and verify the findings of the current study.

This study could also serve as a basis of future research concerning Philippine English in the rural areas.

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