

**ENGLISH, SPANISH AND TAGALOG: A STUDY OF GRAMMATICAL, LEXICAL CULTURAL INTERFERENCE**, by Rosalina Morales Goulet. Special Monograph of the Linguistic Society of the Philippines, No. 1. Manila: Linguistic Society of the Philippines, 1971. iv + 102 pp.

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What Rosalina M. Goulet has succeeded in doing, in this monograph, is to organize available data into a most readable, albeit not too ambitious, study. Almost every educated Filipino has made observations similar to those of Goulet's, but not every Filipino has attempted to systematize the study of the various types of interference occurring in the Tagalog speaker's written and spoken language.

The educated Filipino is a bilingual, more or less equally proficient in at least two languages, and sometimes even more. His bilingualism, however, often proves to be a mixed blessing as evidenced in his enviable (to non-Filipinos) command of English and, perhaps, Spanish, too — a command which is, however, tainted with interference phenomena resulting in non-native constructions and pronunciations. We have all heard or read, and been amused by, some of the English constructions recurring in Tagalog speech and writing, such as the following: "Then we went out to drink to the nearest restaurant" (p. 60); "Sir, do you know if the American Embassy is where?" (p. 62); "Meanwhile he has gone home last Saturday" (p. 67); "I'm afraid I'm keeping up most of your precious time so I'll just close up here" (p. 72).

We all are familiar with certain linguistic irritants brought about by cultural differences. The Filipino's response "I'll try" instead of a plain "Yes" or "No" has left many an American with feelings of bewilderment and frustration. Another example of cultural clash is found in the Filipino's well-intentioned greeting "Saan ka pupunta?" ("Where are you going?") which is interpreted by an American as impertinent nosiness.

This study, which was originally the author's doctoral thesis, is organized as follows: Chapter I — The Contact Situation: Geographical, Historical and Cultural Factors Affecting Bilingualism; Chapter II — The Tagalog Language: Phonological, Morphological and Semantic Borrowings; Chapter III — Interference: Grammatical, Lexical and Cultural; and Chapter IV — The Tagalog Bilingual and Language Behavior: Factors Influencing Borrowings, Mixing and Language Choice. There is a final section: Summary and Conclusions.

Chapter I presents mostly historical information as necessary background to the understanding of the contact situation obtaining in the Philippines, brought about by the coming of, first, the Spaniards and then the Americans. Despite its title, little is said in this chapter about the geographical and cultural factors affecting bilingualism in the Philippines.

The main body of the study is found in Chapters II and III which contain the author's systematization of the interference types mainly occurring in the Tagalog speaker's use of English and Tagalog, and relatively little in his use of Spanish. The author's debt to Weinreich's classic study *Languages in Contact* is clearly evident throughout these two chapters. For her Tagalog data, she utilized (1) "printed material produced by educated Tagalog bilinguals" (p. 11), and (2) "a fairly considerable body of personal correspondence" (p. 11). Without doubt, these sources, as well as the specific methodology of

extracting pertinent, usable data from the unwieldy mass of material, were explicitly described in the thesis itself. One could wish, however, that an equally explicit presentation had been given to readers of the present study. The advantage of spelling out one's procedures, needless to say, is that future researchers wishing to undertake parallel investigations would thus find a clear guide to follow and would avoid time-wasting and energy-depleting exercises in futility. Relevant questions to ask would be: Was there a review of all the material with painstaking selection of examples of interference, and a classification of the different types of interference? Or was there an initial setting up of categories of interference, such as phonological, lexical, grammatical, and then pigeonholing the examples drawn from the corpus into one or more of these categories? In these days of efficiency experts intent on eliminating wasteful motions, such detailed information regarding the procedure found to be most productive and economical would prove most useful and highly welcome.

Questions about methodology aside, the results are presented in a highly systematic fashion, ordering the chapter sections into phonological, morphological and semantic borrowings. Goulet reserves the term "borrowing" to refer to interference occurring on the word and phrase levels (p. 55), but uses the term "interference" for types occurring on the clause, sentence and discourse levels (p. 56). In addition, the author extends the term "interference" to "connote something undesirable; e.g. erroneous usage on the part of a foreign learner attempting to speak or write a language not his own" (p. 57). On the other hand, "borrowing" is used to "connote something neutral as to its correctness/incorrectness . . ." (p. 57).

In the section on phonological borrowings, some mistakes (probably typographical) demand attention. For example, the medial /s/ in Spanish *mismo* and *desde* is pronounced [s] and not [z] (p. 18). In the Spanish words *cabeza* and *juzgado*, the letter z is not pronounced [z] but [θ] (p. 19). Spanish *garantiá* does not have a *u* between *g* and *a* (misspelled *garantiá* on p. 21).

Chapter III discusses types of interference occurring on the clause, sentence and discourse levels. Under each type of interference (grammatical, lexical and cultural), illustrations are enumerated after a brief attempt to give a theoretical (linguistic and sociological) explanation of the causes of interference. Most of these examples were culled from the letters of educated bilingual speakers of English and Tagalog. Unfortunately for the study, which could have been enhanced by their inclusion, there were practically no examples, except a very few, of Spanish-English, Spanish-Tagalog, or Spanish-English-Tagalog interference. As pointed out by the author, the corpus on which her study was based contained very few Spanish constructions. The result was a very meager Spanish section mostly falling under idiomatic expressions; e.g., Spanish *No tiene abuela* which means 'He is a braggart' is literally translated by a Tagalog speaker into *He does not have a grandmother* (p. 71).

On the whole, Goulet has achieved the major purpose of this study which was the "description of the phonological, morphological and lexical (semantic) borrowings from Spanish and English as well as the resulting types of confusion and mixing of patterns on the word, phrase and discourse levels . . ." (p. 10). Her principal conclusion is that Tagalog, in spite of Spanish and English influences on its phonological, morphological, lexical and cultural systems, has retained its independent character as a language. In other words, Tagalog is still Tagalog.

Finally, it would be well, perhaps, to add a comment here in regard to current views on the notion of interference. Recently, studies have begun to appear indicating a shift in emphasis from interlanguage errors to intralingual ones. More and more frequently the following question is being asked: Are second-language errors always caused by interference between the learner's native language and his second language? A recent study by Richards<sup>1</sup> seems to disagree. His article investigates several types of errors in English which do not seem to be caused by interference but whose "origins are found within the structure of English itself . . ." <sup>2</sup> To reinforce his position, he cites Smith's study of Spanish-English bilingualism, and he quotes her as saying:

Many people assume, following logic that is easy to understand, that the errors made by bilinguals are caused by their mixing Spanish and English. One of the most important conclusions this writer draws from the research in this project is that interference from Spanish is not a major factor in the way bilinguals construct sentences and use the language.<sup>3</sup>

For as long as the Filipino remains a bilingual, problems of interference will continue to be of paramount interest to language teachers and researchers in their strivings toward the goal of language-teaching improvement in the Philippines. This study by Goulet is a significant contribution toward this end.

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<sup>1</sup>Jack C. Richards, "A Non-Contrastive Approach to Error Analysis," *English Language Teaching*, XXV (June, 1971), 204-19.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 205.

<sup>3</sup>Gail McBride Smith, "Some Comments on the English of Eight Bilinguals," in *A Brief Study of Spanish-English Bilingualism*, ed. Donald M. Lance (College Station, Texas: Texas A & M University, 1969), cited by Jack C. Richards, "A Non-Contrastive Approach to Error Analysis," *English Language Teaching*, XXV (June, 1971), p. 204.