Tag Questions in Philippine English

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The general aim of this study is to characterize the use of tag questions in Philippine English. Corpus findings reveal a relatively low frequency of tag questions in Philippine English compared with American, British, and Hong Kong Englishes. Isn't it records the highest frequency of occurrence in ICE-PHI. On polarity types, Philippine English also seems to follow American and British Englishes in their preferences, with the positive-negative polarity the most prevalent in the three Englishes. Tag questions in Philippine English are used mainly to emphasize what the speaker says without expecting any involvement or and to confirm the speaker's knowledge about information. Lastly, in Philippine English, positive-negative tag questions are usually attitudinal tag questions but may sometimes also be peremptory tag questions while confirmatory tag questions usually take the form of positive-positive, positive-negative, and negative-positive tag questions.

Key words: Philippine English and world Englishes, English grammar, corpus linguistics, language variation, tag questions

Tag questions are a type of yes-no questions which communicates a positive or negative orientation through an appended short question at the end of a statement (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, & Svartvik, 1985).

1. Historical development of tag questions in English

The earliest recorded use of tag questions, according to Hoffmann (2006) who analyzed a large corpus of English drama in an attempt to trace the historical development of tag questions from its earliest use to present-day English, is in the play *Fulgens and Lucrece* dated 1497. The tag question from the said play is as follows:

> Than thay have some maner gettynge By some occupacione, *have thay*?

Hoffmann (2006) continues: Tag questions then became fairly common by the end of the sixteenth century and then dramatically increased in frequency from about 1750 onwards. However, a closer look at their use with reference to genre would reveal that their use in tragedies remained fairly stable, recording not more than a hundred instances per one million words from the sixteenth century to the twentieth century. It is its use in comedies that recorded an increase from 67 instances per one million words in the sixteenth century to 1,293 instances per one million words in the twentieth century and this finding may confirm their being a feature of colloquial or conversational language. But only little change can be observed on the most common forms of tag questions used. Seven of the most frequent forms in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century are also the most frequent in the nineteenth and twentieth century data. It is polarity type that exhibits significant changes; positive-positive tag constructions became more frequent towards the end of the eighteenth century but less frequent in present-day

English, due to changes in their pragmatic functions, perhaps. On the other hand, contracted tag questions steadily increased from the sixteenth century to the twentieth century

2. Tag questions in English today

Based on Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, and Svartvik's landmark reference work *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* published in 1985, the general rules in present-day English in forming the most common types of tag questions are the following: (1) They consist of operator and subject in that order, with the enclitic *'nt* attached to the operator or, most especially in formal English, the negative particle placed after the subject, when necessary, with the dummy auxiliary *do* used if there is no operator; (2) The subject of the tag question is a pronoun which repeats or agrees with the subject in the statement in terms of gender and number; (3) The tag question is generally negative if the statement is positive, and vice-versa; and, (4) On the tag's nuclear tone, it should occur on the auxiliary and is either rising or falling.

Comparing the use of tag questions in British and American Englishes, Tottie and Hoffmann (2006) found that tag questions are nine times more frequent in British English than in American English. As regards polarity type, positive-negative is the most common polarity type for both Englishes, but British English records moderately more instances of this polarity type than American English. British English uses more tags involving *have*, while American English uses more tags involving *do*. In addition, confirmatory and attitudinal tag questions appear to be the most frequent in British English, while facilitating tag questions the most frequent in American English. No direct relationship was established between forms of tag questions and their pragmatic functions. Lastly, in both Englishes, older speakers use more canonical tag questions than younger ones.

The forms of tag questions used by Malaysian users of English were the focus of the studies of Cheng (1995) and Razali (1995); however, they ended up with rather divergent findings. While Cheng assumes that the tag questions of Malaysian users of English are more often than not confined to the forms *is it* and *isn't it*, Razali supposes four: *right*, *is it*, *isn't it*, *aaa*. The differences in their findings should not be surprising though, as they used different methodologies. Data for Cheng's study were obtained through a linguistic manipulation task, a natural communication task, and a cloze test. Razali, on the other hand, used recordings and transcriptions of natural and unelicited conversations, hence the surfacing of *right* and *aaa* – tag questions that are rather highly conversational in nature. But among their other assumptions worthy of reiteration is Cheng's reasoning that the confinement to the two forms she had earlier identified was influenced by the users' genetically native language since, in Bahasa Malaysia, only one question tag is utilized and that is *bukan* and, in Cantonese, *ah*. Malaysian users of English might have therefore assumed that a similar (simple, straightforward) rule existed in the formation of tag questions in English. Torn between nativization and pidginization, Cheng (1995) chose to see these emerging patterns in the use of tag questions by Malaysian users of English as part of the process of the nativization of English in Malaysia, hence Malaysian English.

Hong Kong English and tag questions in the variety have likewise been studied. Wong (2007) analyzed the Hong Kong component of the International Corpus of English (ICE-HK), compiled by Bolt and

Bolton (2006), and found that tag questions are nine times more frequent in speech than in writing. *Is it* appears to be the all-purpose tag question for Hong Kong English speakers. Furthermore, the distribution of polarity is leaning towards positive-positive, while instances of confirmatory tag questions are recorded to be the most frequent in use.

Kortmann (2006) looked at syntactic variation in English on a global scale – in other words, across Englishes – and he classifies invariant tag questions *isn't it* and *innit* (as in these examples that he provided: They had them in their hair, isn't it? They are quite a couple, innit?) as supraregional syntactic feature of ("non-standard"[1] [p. 615]) English operating below consciousness. He predicts that, including pervasive features on a global scale and other supraregional features operating below consciousness of the users of English (though with some stigma associated with them),[2] the two invariant tag questions mentioned are among the candidates of being considered part of (spoken) Standard English, at least in some Englishes. Both pervasive features and supraregional features operating below consciousness have the widest regional and social spread.

3. The present study: Objectives and methods

The general aim of this study is to characterize the use of tag questions in Philippine English. First, the forms and operator-subject combinations of tag questions found in Philippine English are identified. Second, the tag questions are associated with their pragmatic functions. Third, a relationship between their polarity types and pragmatic functions is sought to be established. Then, the characteristics of tag questions in Philippine English are compared vis-à-vis those of other Englishes.

Data came from the Philippine component of the International Corpus of English (ICE-PHI), compiled by Bautista, Lising and Dayag (2004). In a 2004 paper, Bautista provides an overview of ICE-PHI, as well as the methodology of its compilation. ICE-PHI, as with all the other components of the International Corpus of English (ICE), follows the common International Corpus of English design, as outlined by Nelson (1996). The corpus is composed of about one million words distributed almost evenly across 500 texts with specified categories; therefore, there are approximately 2000 words per text with some being composite to reach the 2000-word minimum. Further, the texts were sampled from the English spoken or written by adults aged 18 and above and who received formal education through the medium of English up to the postsecondary level. The texts are divided into spoken and written texts – the major text categories. All in all, the texts included private and public dialogues, unscripted and scripted monologues, and non-printed and printed written materials. Bautista, however, makes no claim with regard to the representativeness of the data; in spite of this, the corpus is a solid basis for future studies on Philippine English, she adds.

Following the suggestion of Hoffmann (personal communication, 2007, December), the following forms were then searched in the corpus: *is*, *isn't*, *are*, *aren't*, *was*, *wasn't*, *were*, *weren't*, *has*, *hasn't*, *have*, *haven't*, *had*, *hadn't*, *can*, *can't*, *could*, *couldn't*, *will*, *won't*, *would*, *wouldn't*, *shall*, *shan't*, *sha'n't*, *should*, *shouldn't*, *do*, *don't*, *does*, *doesn't*, *did*, *didn't*, *may*, *mayn't*, *might*, *mightn't*, *must*, *mustn't*, *ought*, *oughtn't*, *used to*, *usen't to*, *usedn't to*, *aint't*. A constraint was added in the search of these words; that is, the search words must also be immediately followed

by any of the following: I, we, you, he, she, it, they, there, one. Also, for *used to*, *usen't to*, and *usedn't to*, the pronoun must be before *to*. The invariant tag questions *innit* and *i'n'it* were also searched.

4. Results and discussion

4.1 Frequency

The search over the corpus yielded 46 instances of tag questions. Table 1 displays the distribution of the frequency of tag questions per text category of ICE-PHI:

Table 1. Frequency of tag questions per text category of ICE-PHI

Text Category	Approximate Number of Words	*f*	%
Spoken			
Dialogue: Private			
Face-to-Face Conversations	180,000	18	39.1
Telephone Calls	20,000	3	6.5
Dialogue: Public			
Class Lessons	40,000	9	19.6
Broadcast Discussions	40,000	2	4.4
Broadcast Interviews	20,000	0	0.0
Parliamentary Debates	20,000	0	0.0
Legal Cross-Examinations	20,000	6	13.0
Business Transactions	20,000	1	2.2
Monologue: Unscripted			
Spontaneous Commentaries	40,000	0	0.0
Unscripted Speeches	60,000	1	2.2
Demonstrations	20,000	0	0.0
Legal Presentations	20,000	0	0.0
Monologue: Scripted			
Broadcast News	40,000	0	0.0
Broadcast Talks	40,000	0	0.0
Non-Broadcast Speeches	20,000	0	0.0
Written			
Non-Printed		0	0.0
Students' Untimed Essays	20,000	0	0.0
Students' Examination Essays	20,000	0	0.0
Social Letters	30,000	3	6.5
Business Letters	30,000	0	0.0
Printed: Informational (Learned)			
Humanities	20,000	0	0.0
Social Sciences	20,000	0	0.0
Natural Sciences	20,000	0	0.0
Technology	20,000	0	0.0
Printed: Informational (Popular)			
Humanities	20,000	0	0.0
Social Sciences	20,000	0	0.0
Natural Sciences	20,000	0	0.0
Technology	20,000	0	0.0
Informational (Reportage)			
Press News Reports	40,000	0	0.0
Instructional			
Administrative/Regulatory	20,000	0	0.0
Skills/Hobbies	20,000	0	0.0
Persuasive			
Press Editorials	20,000	0	0.0
Creative			
Novels/Stories	40,000	3	6.5

As can be seen from Table 1, the concentration of occurrence of tag questions is in spoken texts where almost 90% of all the occurrences of tag questions in the data of Philippine English occurred. More specifically in face-to-face conversations – the text category where tag questions most frequently occurred in the data – the structure in question figured in around 20 or close to 40% of all the tag questions in the data. Class lessons follow face-to-face conversations in terms of the text category having the most number of tag questions in the corpus; there were nine occurrences of tag questions in the category or almost than 21% of the total tag questions retrieved from the data.

Tag questions also appeared in two written text categories – social letters and novels/stories. Their occurrences in these text categories are not too surprising though, as their context of occurrence were still highly conversational in nature. Understandably, social letters enjoy some relative degree of casualness and even intimacy when composed; hence, the following appear in the data[3]:

1. <ICE-PHI:W1B-004#136:1>
   I know that both of you have visited Europe, but you never mentioned anything about having gone to Switzerland.

   <ICE-PHI:W1B-004#137:1>
   Have you?

2. <ICE-PHI:W1B-009#119:2>
   My advanced birthday greetings - it is February, *is it not?*

3. <ICE-PHI:W1B-015#184:10>
   Even the word <mention> 'Amen' </mention> used by Christians to conclude a prayer seems to be akin to <mention> <foreign> Om </foreign> </mention> .

   <ICE-PHI:W1B-015#185:10>
   Interesting *isn't it...*

Even for those tag questions appearing in novels/stories, the context is still conversational – the tag questions are included in the utterances of the characters. These tag questions are reproduced below:

4. <ICE-PHI:W2F-002#70:1>
   Coya said nothing, avoiding looking into anyone 's eyes.

   <ICE-PHI:W2F-002#71:1>
   <quote> <indig> Oy </indig> !

   <ICE-PHI:W2F-002#72:1>

Are you listening? </quote> the man nearest him nudged on.

<ICE-PHI:W2F-002#73:1>
<quote> Oy!

<ICE-PHI:W2F-002#74:1>
Dance, *will you*?

<ICE-PHI:W2F-002#75:1>
Don't you like to wear the colors, like a butterfly

<ICE-PHI:W2F-002#76:1>
And to be the <indig> Alay </indig> , that--that is the honor!
</quote> </p>

5. <ICE-PHI:W2F-006#70:1>
He cannot bring himself to say the amount; he merely points at the number in the newspaper.

<ICE-PHI:W2F-006#71:1>
<quote> “ We can afford that, *can't we*? ” </quote> </p>

It is not surprising to see the distribution reported. As was habituated in their development, tag questions are more a feature of colloquial or conversational than formal language. The distribution of tag questions in ICE-PHI is higher in spoken text categories than the written ones (though the distribution of the number of words per category is obviously uneven, in the first place). What makes the frequency meaningful is when it is put side by side with the frequency of tag questions in the Longman Spoken American Corpus (LSAC) and the British National Corpus (BNC), as reported by Tottie and Hoffmann (2006), as well as in ICE- HK, as reported by Wong (2007). The differences between the frequencies are overwhelming, as can be seen in Table 2:

Table 2. Comparison of the frequencies of tag questions across four corpora of different Englishes

Corpora	*f*
ICE-PHI	46
LSAC[4]	455 (per one million words)
BNC	2,376 (per one million words)
ICE-HK	197

ICE-PHI undoubtedly recorded the lowest frequency of tag questions – less than 50 – while BNC recorded the greatest frequency at least 2,300 per one million words. LSAC and ICE-HK are somewhere in between, but still closer to ICE-PHI than to BNC. LSAC has almost 500 per one million words and ICE-HK has close to 200. If these corpora are indeed representative of the English they are

documenting, it might be that Philippine English has the least tendency to use tag questions while British English has the greatest tendency to use it. American and Hong Kong Englishes tend to be in between. The frequencies of tag questions in the new Englishes are just roughly a tenth of their parent Englishes: The frequency for Philippine English is 10.1% of that of American English while the frequency for Hong Kong English is 8.3% of that of British English. The pattern that could be derived from these frequencies is, it seems, that the new Englishes are still following their parent Englishes, but to a lesser degree in terms of frequency as British English uses more tag questions than American and Hong Kong English uses more tag questions than Philippine English, taking into account that American English is parent to Philippine English and British English is parent to Hong Kong English.

The phenomenon is rather difficult to explain though. It may seem probable though that it is another manifestation of what Alberca (1978), Gonzalez and Alberca (1978), and Gonzalez (1982, 1983, 1985, 1991) repeatedly called as stylistic underdifferentiation: The typically colloquial construction may have been avoided by Filipinos, once again, in over-observance of prescriptive rules – that the "more appropriate" way of using English is by avoiding colloquialisms. This phenomenon also necessitates considering how the substrate languages interact with English in the Philippines. It has to be noted here that a search of Tagalog[5] tag questions such as *ano* or *'no* and *hindi ba* or *'di ba* in ICE-PHI will actually yield more instances than all the instances of English tag questions. A hypothesis could be offered here that should be further verified in future studies: Tagalog tag questions are a more optimum choice instead of English tag questions for users of Philippine English and that the number of Tagalog tag questions complements the deficiency in their English counterparts. The choice of Tagalog tag questions over English ones may be because of the former's being phonetically less obtrusive than the latter which is morphosyntactically more complex. It is difficult to ascertain if this may also explain the figures for Hong Kong English as Wong (2007) did not look into substrate language influence in the patterns derived for Hong Kong English.

4.2 Forms

The frequencies of the various forms of tag questions in Philippine English are displayed in Table 3:

Table 3. Frequency of the forms of tag questions in ICE-PHI

Form	*f*	%
isn't it	19	41.3
is it	8	17.4
do you	3	6.5
have you	3	6.5
isn't it	2	4.4
are we	1	2.2
are you	1	2.2
aren't they	1	2.2
aren't you	1	2.2
can you	1	2.2
can't we	1	2.2
did you	1	2.2
do you	1	2.2
don't they	1	2.2
was it	1	2.2
wasn't it	1	2.2
will it	1	2.2

As shown in Table 3, *isn't it* is the most frequent of the 17 forms of tag questions extracted from the data. It occurred almost 20 times or more than 40% of the total number of tag questions in the data. Here are some of its occurrences in the data:

6. <ICE-PHI:S1A-051#4:1:B>
   Hamburg is not being represented

   <$A>
   <ICE-PHI:S1A-051#5:1:A>
   Yes it is in north of Germany

   <$B>
   <ICE-PHI:S1A-051#6:1:B>
   Very near Denmark *isn't it*

7. <ICE-PHI:S1A-062#24:1:A>
   I think it 's a very deep or enriching kind of book *isn't it*

8. <$A>
   <ICE-PHI:S1B-033#95:1:A>
   <[> Well maybe </[> </{> that that is not although that is not the main objective it might in a way incidentally validate that without meaning to but uh if it does validate then that 's alright *isn't it*

Of the total number of times it appeared in the data, 13 times it did not agree with either the subject or the operator or both in the statement. Given these patterns in ICE-PHI, *isn't it* seems to be positioning itself as and may likely be a strong candidate for being an invariant tag question in Philippine English.

Is it is the second most frequent tag question in Philippine English. It has almost ten occurrences or about 20% of all the tag questions found in the data. Here are its two occurrences in the data when it is not negated:

9. <$B>
   <ICE-PHI:S1A-030#302:1:B>
   <[> How about <mention> Battlefield </[> </{> Earth </mention>

   <$A>
   <ICE-PHI:S1A-030#303:1:A>
   Which one is that

   <$B>
   <ICE-PHI:S1A-030#304:1:B>
   Starring I 'm not sure starring Arnold is it

10. <ICE-PHI:S1B-002#64:1:A>
    It 's not really a circle *is it*

But negated *is it* occurs 75% of the time in the data. The extracts below are some samples of this phenomenon:

11. ICE-PHI:W1B-009#119:2>
    My advanced birthday greetings - it is February, *is it not?*

12. <ICE-PHI:S1B-069#144:1:F>
    And that when the client uh decides to utilize that corporation all of the members of the firm who were designated incorporators and members of the Board uh execute deeds of assignment in favor of the nominees of the client *is it not*

Is it not may be considered a stylistically-marked form (versus *isn't it*) because it is not contracted. However, the marked form aptly used with reference to context – it is only the first example above that appeared in a less formal context, i.e., a social letter, to be more specific – while the other five occurrences such as the last one given, appeared in a legal cross-examination. The genre of the text therefore might have triggered the uncontracted form.

Samples of some of the other, less frequent tag questions in the data are reproduced below:

13. <ICE-PHI:S1B-032#40:1:B>
Let 's not fail to mention the Media Assistance Quick Count <,> uh you 're aware of this of course and uh you know how massive uh this uh <?> agrupment </?> is

<ICE-PHI:S1B-032#41:1:B>
Aren't you General

14. <ICE-PHI:S1A-026#26:1:B>
Hey what can you do you know exactly you can't please them all *can you*

15. <ICE-PHI:S1A-096#188:1:A>
You don't have time tomorrow *do you*

16. <ICE-PHI:S1A-030#150:1:A>
She 's a good actress yeah but <,> the story of <mention> Erin Brockovich </mention> was for me uh you know boring

<$B>
<ICE-PHI:S1A-030#151:1:B>
As in boring

<$A>
<ICE-PHI:S1A-030#152:1:A>
Because they featured

<$B>
<ICE-PHI:S1A-030#153:1:B>
So bland *was it*

<$A>
<ICE-PHI:S1A-030#154:1:A>
No it was too detailed

17. <ICE-PHI:W2F-002#74:1>
Dance, *will you*?

Needless to say, the mentioned combinations above are the only combinations of operators and pronouns in the data and the frequencies are presented in Table 4:

Table 4. Frequencies of operators and subjects in ICE-PHI

Operator	*f*	%	Subject	*f*	%
be	33	71.7	it	30	65.2
do	6	13.0	you	11	23.9
have	3	6.5	they	2	4.3
can	3	6.5	we	2	4.3
will	1	2.2			

The high frequency of BE as operator in tag questions in the data is actually determined by the frequency of *isn't it*, *is it*, and *are* combined with various pronouns. For subjects in the tag questions, the most common choice has been *it* also because of the frequency of *isn't it* and *is it*.

A comparison of the frequencies of the most frequent forms of tag questions across the four corpora earlier mentioned is shown in Table 5 below, again with frequencies as they are reported by Tottie and Hoffmann (2006) for LSAC and BNC-SDEM and Wong (2007) for ICE-HK. Only percentages are available for ICE-HK:

Table 5. Comparison of the most frequent forms of tag questions across four corpora of different Englishes

ICE-PHI			LSAC			BNC-SDEM[6]			ICE-HK	
Form	*f*	%	Form	*f*	%	Form	*f*	%	Form	%
isn't it	19	41.3	isn't it	429	18.6	isn't it	760	20.4	is it	38.4
is it	8	17.4	don't you	124	5.4	is it	227	6.1	isn't it	31.6
do you	3	6.5	do you	123	5.3	aren't they	133	3.6	aren't they	3.7
have you	3	6.5	is it	115	5	don't you	99	2.7	isn't he	2.6
isn't it	2	4.4	doesn't it	101	4.4	do you	89	2.4	aren't you, wasn't it, wouldn't it	2.1

The comparison reveals which Englishes have similar patterns, and which English is divergent – to some extent: In terms of the one most frequent form of tag question per English, Philippine English seems to follow more closely patterns in American and British Englishes with *isn't it* as their most frequent form, whereas Hong Kong English has *is it* as its most frequent form. These findings resulting from the comparison across corpora echo Bautista's (2008) observation, after comparing several of the available components of ICE, that Philippine English is much closer to British English (or to older Englishes), while Hong Kong English might be a little farther away. (Singapore English was located in between British English and Philippine English.)

However, in terms of the variety of forms each English has at its disposal, Philippine English is once again manifesting its being conservative, or – as it was previously described – prescriptive (Alberca, 1978; Gonzalez & Alberca, 1978; Gonzalez 1982, 1983, 1985, 1991). Philippine English has only a little over 15

forms, with a dozen of these fifteen occurring only once in the Philippine English data. Tottie and Hoffmann (2006) mention that there are fifteen most frequent forms in British and American Englishes and that there are 200 different forms but their frequencies are very few as well. On a similar note, Wong (2007) lists around 30 forms in the Hong Kong English data.

4.3 Polarity types

Aside from their forms, tag questions are also categorized with reference to their polarity. As Quirk, et al. (1985) put it, the canonical patterning is that the tag question is of different polarity from its statement but this is not always the case. Table 5 shows the frequencies of the polarity types of the tag questions retrieved from ICE-PHI:

Table 5. Frequency of polarity types of tag questions in ICE-PHI

Polarity Type	*f*	%
Positive-Negative	28	70.0
Negative-Positive	8	20.0
Positive-Positive	3	7.5
Negative-Negative	1	2.5

It has to be noted here first that not all statements where tag questions are appended are full statements. Sometimes, some arguments are missing, particularly subjects and sometimes the verb itself, as in:

18. <$A>
<ICE-PHI:S1A-088#57:1:A>
Strange *aren't they*

There were six of this case where the polarity type cannot be determined as the statement does not carry polarity, at least "explicitly." Therefore, the frequencies presented in Table 5 above have a total of only 40, not 46.

Positive-negative polarity is the most frequently occurring polarity type of tag questions in Philippine English and it accounts for almost three-fourths of all the tag questions in ICE-PHI. The sentences below are samples of the polarity types found in the data:

19. Positive-Negative

<$B>
<ICE-PHI:S1A-034#243:1:B>
Uhm well <,> it 's Christmas season I mean it 's so fast *isn't it*

20. Negative-Positive

<p>
<ICE-PHI:W1B-004#136:1>
I know that both of you have visited Europe, but you never mentioned anything about having gone to Switzerland.

<ICE-PHI:W1B-004#137:1>
Have you?

21. Positive-Positive

<ICE-PHI:S1B-014#123:1:A>
Maybe at this point you have made a decision already *have you*

22. Negative-Negative

<ICE-PHI:S1B-005#144:1:A>
You can easily go to McDonald and eat <.> your </.> yourself away but that will not give you peace *isn't it*

As Table 5 demonstrates, there is just but one occurrence of negative-negative polarity. This is indeed rare (even in other Englishes, as will be shown later). In fact, its one and only occurrence in ICE-PHI reproduced above is somehow blurry, vague, and even indeterminate. The statement on which the tag question is based in the negative-negative polarity analysis is on the statement *that will not give you peace*. Of course, it is also possible that the statement could be *You can easily go to McDonald and eat <.> your </.> yourself away*.

The frequencies of the polarity types in Philippine English are once again similar to American and British Englishes. In fact, when the frequencies of polarity types of the four Englishes, that is including Hong Kong English now, Philippine English comes closer to British and American Englishes compared to Hong Kong English. A comparison is given in Table 6 of the frequency of polarity types of the corpora of Englishes compared earlier; however, only percentages could be provided since the figures provided by Tottie and Hoffmann (2006) and Wong (2007) are only in percentages, rounded off to the nearest whole number:

Table 6. Comparison of the percentages of polarity types of tag questions across four corpora of different Englishes

Corpora	Positive-Positive	Positive-Negative	Negative-Positive	Negative-Negative
ICE-PHI	7.5	70	20	2.5
LSAC	4	69	27	0
BNC-SDEM	8	75	17	0
ICE-HK	40	56	3	1

Again, percentages in Philippine English approximate the perentages of parent Englishes – British and American – with positive-negative polarity as the most common polarity type in the Englishes mentioned. Though Hong Kong English also has positive-negative polarity as its most common polarity type, its percentages for the said polarity type are much less than the other Englishes and its percentages for positive-positive polarity are much more than the other Englishes. This resemblance between the frequency of polarity types of tag questions in Philippine English and the older Englishes, as in the earlier finding that *isn't it* might also be the generic tag question for Philippine English, is again consistent with the observation of Bautista (2008) that Philippine English stands closer to the so-called Inner Circle Englishes than Hong Kong English.

4.4 Pragmatic functions

Tottie and Hoffmann (2006) propose an integration of the classifications of the pragmatic functions of tag questions earlier proposed by Holmes (1983, 1984, 1986, 1995) and Algeo (1988, 1990, 2006). They identify six key functions:

(1)Informational – genuine request for information

(2)Confirmatory – attempt to verify what the speaker is unsure of

(3)Attitudinal – an added emphasis to the statement but does not necessarily expect a response on the part of the listener

(4)Facilitating – strategy directed at involving the listener in the progression of the discourse

(5)Peremptory – a point in the discourse that closes a debate on a generally-acknowledged truth

(6)Aggressive – insult or provocation

Table 7 distinguishes the pragmatic functions of tag questions in ICE-PHI, following the classification of Tottie and Hoffmann (2006) described above:

Table 7. Frequency of the functions of tag questions in ICE-PHI

Function	*f*	%
Attitudinal	18	39.1
Confirmatory	14	30.4
Peremptory	7	15.2
Facilitating	5	10.9
Aggressive	1	2.2
Informational	1	2.2

From Table 7, it can be seen that the majority of tag questions in ICE-PHI perform the function of highlighting what the speaker has just said, with the speaker not expecting any involvement or reply. In these cases, the tag question is definitely attitudinal in function. Attitudinal tag questions comprise almost 40% of all the tag questions in the data. Some examples are given below:

29. <ICE-PHI:S1B-014#39:1:A>
    Uh primary and foremost is appearance *isn't it*

30. <$B>
    <ICE-PHI:S1B-080#166:2:B>
    But this is just cronyism *isn't it*

31.
    <ICE-PHI:W1B-015#185:10>
    Interesting *isn't it...*

The sentences above are relatively simple sentences, and the function of the tag question is to boost the proposition of the statement.

This extract from the text category Novels/Stories may also be considered as confirmatory tag question:

32. <ICE-PHI:W2F-007#10:1>
    But you never knew about Horacio and myself, *did you*?

But there is logic to ultimately categorize it as an attitudinal tag question because it was followed by this sentence where the writer who sounded to be simply conversing with her readers has assured herself of her belief that her reader is unaware of the things that she has been talking about:

33. <ICE-PHI:W2F-007#11:1>
    I am sure that the stories you have been hearing are quite a surprise.

The second most frequent pragmatic function of tag questions in the Philippine English data is confirmatory tag questions. This pragmatic function is a little over 30% of the tag questions in ICE-PHI. As mentioned, speakers or writers making use of confirmatory tag questions have some knowledge of his/her concern. The tag question is used only to reassure him/her that what s/he knows is correct. In the example below, the speaker of the sentence below verifies if his/her destination is just a ride away from Tanay. S/he seems to have knowledge about how to go to his/her destination but simply wants affirmation. Notice how anxious the speaker is, asking for confirmation twice, first in Tagalog and second in English:

34. <$B>
<ICE-PHI:S1A-032#157:1:B>
That far but my goodness that 's one ride one one ride <indig> di ba </indig> ['isn't it?'] one ride from Tanay *is it*

Below is another occurrence of a confirmatory tag question in Philippine English:

35. <$B>
<ICE-PHI:S1A-093#122:1:B>
You 're already I believe of voting age <,> *are you not*

The speaker is of the conviction that his/her co-interlocutor in the telephone conversation is already of voting age, perhaps because s/he has some knowledge of the approximate age of his/her co-interlocutor. This conviction is signaled by the word *believe* in the sentence. The Philippine English data actually suggests that confirmatory tag questions could be hinted at by the presence of stance expressions like *guess*, *I think*, *I'm not sure*, *maybe*, and *perhaps*. Six of the fourteen confirmatory tag questions in ICE-PHI have the stance expressions enumerated above.

For peremptory function which occurs a little more than 15% of the number of tag questions extracted from ICE-PHI, an example is provided below, which is an extract from a courtroom interrogation, when the questioning done is almost always based on facts previously determined and a definite confirmation is always expected:

36. <ICE-PHI:S1B-032#40:1:B>
Let 's not fail to mention the Media Assistance Quick Count <,> uh you 're aware of this of course and uh you know how massive uh this uh <?> agrupment </?> is

<ICE-PHI:S1B-032#41:1:B>
Aren't you General

Facilitating tag questions account for around 10% of the total number of tag question in ICE-PHI. In an occurrence from the data reproduced below, the speaker tries to share his/her reaction with his/her co-interlocutor and uses a facilitating tag question not really to confirm what s/he is trying to prove but merely to get his/her co-interlocutor to react to what s/he is saying:

37. <ICE-PHI:S1A-026#26:1:B>
Hey what can you do you know exactly you can't please them all *can you*

The remaining two pragmatic functions occurred only once in ICE-PHI. Samples of their occurrences are given below:

38. Informational

<ICE-PHI:W2F-002#74:1>
Dance, will you?

39. Aggressive

<ICE-PHI:W2F-006#71:1>
<quote> “ We can afford that, *can't we?* ” </quote> </p>

Though another suggestion put forward by the Philippine English data is that the pragmatic function encoded by primarily speakers but also writers may not necessarily be the same pragmatic function decoded or interpreted by their listener or reader. Take, for example, the extract from the data reproduced below:

40. <ICE-PHI:S1A-062#21:1:B>
It 's a quite controversial book uhm here uh Fr Fr Spong uh believes that uh most of the dictums or most of the practices of the of the church whether Catholic or Protestant are already outdated and already uhm uh not very useful anymore in modern society

<ICE-PHI:S1A-062#23:1:B>
So he suggests ways in which we can uh revive or uh revive our faith or make the faith more significant and more attuned to the times

<$A>
<ICE-PHI:S1A-062#24:1:A>
I think it 's a very deep or enriching kind of book *isn't it*

<$B>
<ICE-PHI:S1A-062#25:1:B>
Yes I I I should say so

<ICE-PHI:S1A-062#26:1:B>
The language that is used by the author is quite deep but I like books like that they kind of challenge me

Initially, Speaker B encodes a rather attitudinal function to the tag question. It appears more so because he is trying to make a point – s/he is not confirming anything from his/her co-interlocutors (The conversation is among a group of three.) nor is s/he trying to get reactions from his/her co-interlocutors. However, as s/he utters the tag question, it seems that his/her fellow interlocutor interpreted it as a marker to signal

switching of discourse turns and so the latter started giving his/her opinion about what was said.

Table 8 compares the frequencies of the pragmatic functions of tag questions across corpora of different Englishes. Again, frequencies for other corpora are from Tottie and Hoffmann (2006) and Wong (2007). Note that Tottie and Hoffmann only presented frequencies of the pragmatic functions of select 500 tag questions in their corpora and that Wong once again only has percentages:

Table 8. Comparison of the frequencies of pragmatic functions of tag questions across four corpora of different Englishes

Pragmatic Function	ICE-PHI		LSAC		BNC-SDEM		ICE-HK
	f	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	%
Informational	1	2.2	18	4	16	4	5
Confirmatory	14	30.4	151	30	136	37	65
Attitudinal	18	39.1	58	12	65	18	30
Facilitating	5	10.9	248	50	133	36	0
Peremptory	7	15.2	5	1	3	1	0
Aggressive	1	2.2	0	0	4	1	0
Others	-	-	20	<4	14	4	0

On this aspect of tag questions, Philippine English and the other three Englishes seem to have different patterns of their own: Philippine English uses more attitudinal tag questions, American English facilitating tag questions, British English confirmatory and facilitating tag questions, and Hong Kong English confirmatory tag questions. The broadest claim that could be made from Table 8 above is that tag questions mainly function as either confirmatory, attitudinal, or facilitating tag question across the four Englishes compared.

4.5 Relationship between polarity types and pragmatic functions

Tottie and Hoffmann (2006) were not able to establish a relationship between polarity types and pragmatic functions of tag questions in American and British Englishes. The same is the case of Wong (2007) for Hong Kong English. For Philippine English, the frequencies for the four polarity types were counted across the six pragmatic functions of tag questions in ICE-PHI. The cross-tabulation as shown in Table 9 was tested using the chi-square test of independence. The obtained chi-square value is 28.25213774 which is significant, $p<.05$. The chi-square value was converted to a Cramer's V value to determine the strength of relationship. The Cramer's V value is .452466, which indicates a very strong relationship between the polarity type and the pragmatic functions of tag questions in Philippine English.

Table 9. Cross-tabulation of polarity types and pragmatic functions of tag questions in ICE-PHI

Polarity Type	Pragmatic Function											
	Informational		Confirmatory		Attitudinal		Facilitating		Peremptory		Aggressive	
	f	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%	*f*	%
Positive-Positive	1	2.2	4	8.7	0	0.0	1	2.2	0	0.0	0	0.0
Positive-Negative	0	0.0	6	13.0	16	34.9	2	4.3	7	15.2	0	0.0
Negative-Positive	0	0.0	4	8.7	1	2.2	2	4.3	0	0.0	1	2.2
Negative-Negative	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	2.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0

The cross-tabulation shown above further reveals that positive-negative tag questions are usually attitudinal tag questions but may sometimes also be peremptory tag questions. Meanwhile, confirmatory tag questions usually take the form of positive-positive, positive-negative, and negative-positive tag questions. These findings suggest that Philippine English, though relatively less complex, has a neater way system for tag questions. This is another evidence for Kortmann's (2006) claim that there are quite a number of aspects in grammar that are more regular in the less established Englishes and more consistent than in more established Englishes.

5. Summary of findings

This study has attempted to provide a description of the use of tag questions in Philippine English, through an analysis of ICE-PHI. The search over the corpus retrieved only 46 instances of tag questions, the smallest frequency of recorded instances of tag questions compared to three other corpora of different Englishes. *Isn't it* records the highest frequency of occurrence in ICE-PHI and may well be positioning itself as the generic tag question for Philippine English, similar to British English and American Englishes but different from Hong Kong English which has *is it* as its most frequent tag question. On polarity types, Philippine English also seems to follow American and British Englishes in their preferences, with the positive-negative polarity as the most prevalent in the three Englishes. Tag questions in Philippine English are used mainly to emphasize what the speaker says without expecting any involvement or reply (attitudinal function) and to confirm the speaker's knowledge about information (confirmatory function). Philippine English data suggests that confirmatory tag questions could be hinted at by the presence of stance expressions. Another suggestion put forward by the data is that the pragmatic function encoded primarily by speakers but also writers may not necessarily be the same pragmatic function decoded or interpreted by their listener or reader. Lastly, a relationship between polarity types and pragmatic functions of tag questions in Philippine English was established: Positive-negative tag questions are usually attitudinal tag questions but may sometimes be peremptory tag questions, while confirmatory tag questions usually take the form of positive-positive, positive-negative, and negative-positive tag questions.

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Notes

[1] By non-standard, Kortmann (2006) means English-based pidgins and creoles and spoken Standard English (and its sociolinguistic varieties). He also makes it clear that he veered away from American and British Englishes.

[2] Other examples, still according to Kortmann (2006), of pervasive features included the development of the progressive into an imperfective, use of would in *if*-conditionals, weakening and ultimately disappearance of the grammaticalized opposition between the present perfect and the simple past, *never* as past tense negator, *there's* + plural noun phrase, further spread of *that* as relativizer, non-reflexive *myself, she/her* used for inanimate referents, and the reintroduction of a distinct second person plural pronoun. As to pervasive features on a global scale operating above consciousness, they include multiple negation, *ain't*, relativizer *what*, copula deletion, and most of the phenomena leading to the loss of subject-verb agreement.

[3] Information on the markup symbols and the text unit numbering of ICE-PHI (in particular and the International Corpus of English in general) are reproduced verbatim from the manual accompanying ICE-PHI in the appendices.

[4] LSAC has five million words and the BNC has a total of 10.36 million words.

[5] Tagalog because the corpus is principally Manila-centric, as Bautista (2004) confesses, and Tagalog is the lingua franca of the Greater Manila Area.

[6] Percentages are based on proportional distribution in two subsets of 1,000 words from the Spoken Demographic Subpart of BNC (BNC-SDEM) and LSAC.

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Appendix A

Markup Symbols in the Written Texts

<I>...</I>	Subtext marker - marks the beginning and end of each individual sample.
<#>	Text unit marker. Marks the beginning of every sentence and heading. See Text Unit Numbering.
** ... **	Paragraph
<h>...</h>	Heading
<bold>...</bold>	Bold print
<it>...</it>	Italics
** ... **	Underlined text
<smallcaps>...</smallcaps>	Small capitals
<X>... </X>	Extra-corpus text
<quote>...</quote>	Quotation
<foreign>...</foreign>	Foreign word(s)
<indig>...</indig>	Indigenous word(s)
<O>...</O>	Untranscribed material, eg. <O> diagram</O>
<&>...</&>	Editorial comment
<->...</-> <+>...</+>	Misspelled word, followed by its correct spelling, eg. <->goverment</-> <+>government</+>
<mention>...</mention>	Mention, eg, "the word <mention> *of* </mention>"

Appendix B

Markup Symbols in the Spoken Texts

<$A>, <$B>, *etc*	Speaker identification
<I>…</I>	Subtext marker
<#>	Text unit marker: marks the beginning of each utterance and speaker turn.
<O>…</O>	Untranscribed text, eg, <O> speech by George Bush </O>
<?>…</?>	Uncertain transcription
<.>…</.>	Incomplete word(s)
<|>…</|>	Overlapping string
<{>…</{>	Overlapping string set
<,>	Short pause
<„>	Long pause
<X>…</X>	Extra-corpus text
<&>…</&>	Editorial comment, eg <&> break in recording </&>
<@>…</@>	Changed name or word
<quote>…</quote>	Quotation
<mention>…</mention>	Mention
<foreign>…</foreign>	Foreign word(s)
<indig>…</indig>	Indigenous word(s)
<unclear>…</unclear>	Unclear word(s)

Appendix C

Text Unit Numbering

In written texts, a text unit corresponds to an orthographic sentence. Headings, sub-headings, addresses, and captions are also designated as text units.

In spoken texts, a text unit corresponds loosely to the orthographic sentence, though many of them are syntactically incomplete. A change of speaker turn always corresponds to a new text unit.

Each text unit in the corpus has been numbered as shown in this extract:

<ICE-PHI:W2A-002#3:1>
<h> <bold> PRAGMATIC PRINCIPLES AND LANGUAGE </bold>
</h>

<p>
<ICE-PHI:W2A-002#4:1>
All credit for showing the place of mind in the process of acquiring knowledge goes to Kant.

<ICE-PHI:W2A-002#5:1>
After Kant, it is Wittgenstein who takes a revolutionary position in his approach to the theory of knowledge.

The numbering scheme is as follows:

ICE-PHI The corpus name, ICE Philippines.

W2A-002 The Text Category, in this case Academic Writing: Humanities. See Text Categories and Filenames.

#3:1, #4:1, #5:1 The text units are numbered in a continuous sequence throughout each text. This is denoted by the *first* number following #.

Some texts are composite (ie they consist of two or more different samples). We refer to these samples as "subtexts". The number following the colon denotes the subtext number. By convention, every text has at least one subtext, so the subtext number is always at least 1.

In spoken texts, the text unit number additionally includes the speaker identification (A, B, C, etc.), e.g.

<ICE-PHI:S1A-002#2:3:A>

This refers to text unit 2, in subtext 3, uttered by speaker A.