Philippine English: Initial Observations on Child Language

This paper examines the conversation transcripts of 60 parent-child dyads in an attempt to identify and characterize Philippine English from a developmental acquisition perspective.

The children come from the middle socio-economic background and predominantly speak in English, especially in the domains that are related to learning and education. The choice of the socio-economic status was guided by the fact that low socio-economic status children in Manila would tend to speak in Filipino more rather than in English. The annual tuition fees paid by parents guided the choice on which children belonged to the middle socio-economic status.

The 60 parent-child pairs were initially provided with a picture album each, (chosen given a certain set of criteria) which was used as a springboard for their conversation and was instructed to speak in any language they were comfortable with. The picture album contained 10 pictures each where the pictures were accessible in both English and Filipino.

The conversations were then recorded and transcribed. The utterances were then identified following Crookes (1990). English utterances were then separated and analysed to reveal features of child language that characterize Philippine English.

Although children's language acquisition is at a developmental stage, it is interesting to be able to see how much of the characteristics in adult language (as reflected in the different literature on Philippine English) are also reflected in children's language. Moreover, as English varieties evolve and develop, an examination of that variety in the developmental stage is important in understanding how the variety establishes roots.