

Taglish: A Mixed-Code Language of English and Tagalog

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Introduction

Taglish: a mixture of two languages consisting of English and Tagalog, is a convenient way of speaking both languages, especially in Luzon. It was first introduced in the early 20th century when Americans brought English into Metro Manila, bringing Filipinos together to speak such a mixed language that was easier to converse in on a daily basis. For instance, Taglish sentences can be like *may nag-te-text ba diyan*, which means “is there anyone texting there?”. Notice how half of the word *text*, i.e. “te” is copied and is inserted between the Tagalog transitive affix *nag* and the English verb *text*. This is known as reduplication, where a part or whole of a base is copied and inserted into the right or left of it. In addition, Tagalog is a gender-neutral language with a VSO order (Verb-Subject-Object), unlike English which is an SVO language. Attaching Tagalog inflectional/derivational morpheme(s) into an English sentence or vice versa is what this research paper is going to explain the phenomenon of what happens to the morphological structure of Taglish. Investigating the Taglish phenomenon will not only help us in understanding the sociolinguistic background on why and how a bilingual Filipino code switches all the time, it will also help in determining how the morphological structure of Taglish influences their proficiency in either languages.

Literature Review

Before we get into explaining the morphological structure of Taglish, we must take into account previous relevant research:

1. Taglish in Metro Manila: An analysis of Tagalog-English Code Switching by Joseph Lesada

There are multiple methods of code-switching strategies. One common strategy is the insertion of Tagalog enclitics into English sentences. These are “words and phrases that occur only in certain fixed word-order relations to other sentence elements” (Lesada 48), and they illustrate important grammatical

meanings. For example, *kasi*, *naman*, and *pala* ('because', 'on the other hand', and 'so', respectively) are examples of Tagalog enclitics. These enclitics are usually inserted in the postverbal position in Tagalog/Taglish syntax. Look at this Taglish phrase: *Parang I slept lang*, which means "seems I only slept". The enclitic *lang* has to be inserted after a Tagalog or English verb, which in this case is */slept/*. It wouldn't make sense grammatically to have */lang/* before *slept*, e.g. **Parang I lang slept*. Another common insertion is the use of Tagalog conjunctions, such as */kasi/* (because) and */pero/* (although). Bilingual Filipinos often use this process because it might be the speaker's intention to raise attention to one part of their Taglish sentence. For example, "There's a lot of people there *pero* don't go there.". Here, the speaker wants to emphasize their warning to avoid the area. The difference between *pero* and *but* is the intensification of each word; hence if they said *but* instead of *pero*, it wouldn't be as semantically strong unlike *pero*.

2. Tagalog or Taglish: the Lingua Franca of Filipino Urban Factory Workers by Gustilo and Go

They interviewed 28 factory workers to see whether they would speak Taglish or Tagalog given their livelihood circumstances. The workers could understand basic English and many of them had failed to reach secondary education. When the researchers interviewed them in Taglish, the workers responded in full Tagalog sentences. They answered in Taglish only when there was no alternative Tagalog translation for a word or they wanted to converse in a sarcastic way. Overall, the workers chose Tagalog because they can express themselves and they lived in an environment where all their friends and family have been immersed in the Philippine culture their entire lives

3. The Morphosyntax of Tagalog Verbs and Rules by Anna Maclachlan

This paper explains the function of the morpheme */-pag/* which connects to a lot of Tagalog verbs, making the verbs transitive and assigning them an accusative case. Intransitive verbs, on the other hand, have */-um/* in them instead of */-pag/*, although such rare cases can happen, like *pag-kumaway* meaning if they waved back at them. Also, note that one can support the view that */-pag/* is derivational because it is used to derive nouns from verbs, e.g. *usap* (talk) → *pagusap* (conversation). However, it is actually inflectional because it operates closely with its other inflectional morphemes, such as *-in*, *-an*. Another

researcher named Ria Rafael introduced Tagalog morphosyntactic rules on how to build a Tagalog root with different affixes. There are 3 kinds of affixes grouped into a syllabic structure: monosyllabic (pa-, ka-, mag-, nag-), disyllabic (paka-, magka-, pala-), and trisyllabic (pala- ... -an, paki- ... -an). These affixes mostly turn a Tagalog root word into a new, derived word form. For example, pakiusap means to ask someone to request something. Its root usap is talk. It has two affixes or morphemes that attach to usap, expanding the meaning of the word to ask someone to request something

4. Tagalog-English code-switching: Issues in the nominal domain by Ramon Labitigan

There are 4 arguments that's marked with a default nominal marker, ang, in each nominal sentence in Tagalog: Agent, Patient, Direction, and Benefactive – these can be referred to as AT, PT, DT, and BT when glossing Taglish/Tagalog sentences. The Tagalog sentences that have these arguments generally have the same semantic meanings except for the specificity requirement for the “ang”-marked phase. So, when English is the main language, the insertion of the nominal marker */-ang-/* takes place that of English's demonstratives, i.e. ‘that’, ‘this’, ‘these’, ‘the’, etc. An example could look like this: “My family is going to discuss *itong mga* details”. Here, *itong*'s gloss is ANG-these RESP PL, where it is referring to discuss those details.

Of course, there's always going to be gaps in these literature research. For example, it's pretty difficult to pinpoint the reasoning behind bilingual Filipinos' code switching. Or the Tagalog enclitic rule may not always work in some scenarios. In either case, I will try, to the best of my ability, to investigate Taglish in my own way and answer my research questions.

Research Questions:

This paper will address the following questions:

- a. How would the morphological differences between Tagalog and English influence that of person's proficiency in Taglish? That is, how would it affect a person's way of speaking Taglish if one of their proficiency in either language is low?
- b. How would a non-bilingual/bilingual Filipino code switch in a given situation? That is, what are the underlying/primary sociolinguistics factors to code switch?

These research questions are at the forefront of this paper because Filipinos code switch all the time. This might be due to how they were born, wanting to better express themselves, or trying to indulge with the culture around them. Whatever the case might be, understanding these morphological and sociolinguistic factors can help us understand more about Filipinos and their way of speaking.

Data Collection Methods:

The way I have been collecting data is through informal conversations that my family have on a daily basis. We usually speak in Taglish most of the time, if not Tagalog, depending on the situation/feeling to express ourselves. Also note that my dad is proficient in both languages while my mom is roughly more fluent in Tagalog than English. We usually communicate over Viber, a text-messaging app, so most, if not some of our texts will be in a shorthanded manner meaning some words/phrases will be cut off in order to communicate faster and get to the point quicker. This is slightly intentional so that I can analyze the morphological process over the shorthanded texts to investigate my first research question. In addition, I've been utilizing a linguistic resource called TerraLing as a way to analyze several linguistic properties of Tagalog, as well as English, and see if the corresponding property has a value or not, e.g., Tagalog has P NP (Phrase then noun phrase) but not other way around (NP P). For example, Tagalog has the word order demonstrative adjective noun, as well as demonstrative noun adjective:

Ito-ng maganda-ng babae.

ANG-NOM-this-lk beautiful-lk woman

“This beautiful woman”

“Lk” for ng is a linker that occurs between the modifier (beautiful) and the modified head (woman). Therefore, I chose to investigate the Taglish communication between me and my parents to demonstrate their language abilities in both languages and the demographics of why they choose to speak this way.

Data Presentation and Discussion:

Here, I'll present a few examples based on a Viber conversation my mom and I had. The context is that I went to Griffith Observatory this past weekend and my mom was checking in on how I was doing:

Buti	nag-uber	n (na)-lng (lang)-kau (kayo)
Good	AT.TRANS-uber	PST.NOM.ENC-only-them.3PRS

“It’s a good thing that you guys uberred.”

Send-mo	sakin	later-mga-pics-mo
Send-ACC.you.2PRS	ACC.your.2PRS	FUT-ACC-pictures-you

“Send me your pictures later.”

Then, my dad asked me about financial stuff:

Na-try-mo	na ba kausapin	financial department nyo
PRS.ACC.ENC-try-you.	2PS PRS.ACC.DAT.converse	ACC.DAT.financial department.2PRS

“Did you try to talk to your financial department?”

Note that when I say ENC, it means enclitics, specifically Tagalog enclitics. On the first gloss, the Tagalog enclitic, *na*, is after the main verb (*uber*). This would not make sense grammatically if *na* is before the verb, e.g. *buti na nag-uber kayo*. However, this sentence will likely make sense to a mediocre Tagalog proficiency. One can fix this by adding another *na* after *uber* to follow the Tagalog enclitic rule. On the third gloss, notice how there’s a *na* before *try*. These are one of the rare instances where the enclitics are before the verb, but only if they are hyphenated. So, if you put *na* after *try*, i.e. *try na mo*, this still doesn’t make sense semantically or morphologically.

Now, these following glosses are between me and my dad:

Clyde,	ano-ulit	login-mo	sa-Southwest-app.
Clyde	what-repeat	ACC-login-you	LOC-Southwest-app

“Clyde, what’s your login in Southwest app again?”

Clyde,	na-alala mo	mag-kano yung	total na-donate mo
Clyde	PST.ACC.ENC-alala-you	ACC.how-much-your.2PRS	PST.ACC.ENC-total-donate-you

PST.DAT.trip-your.2PRS LOC-Missouri

“Clyde, do you remember how much total you already donated during your trip to Missouri?”

Based on these two glosses, no matter how fluent you are in either language, especially Tagalog, there will always be an English word that doesn't have a Tagalog counterpart. Such as "Southwest app" or "login". Again, in the 2nd gloss, there's the enclitic *\na* again before the main verb "alala" (remember), and before "donate". Additionally since my dad is fluent in both languages, these glosses follow the morphosyntax of Tagalog and when inserting English onto the Tagalog sentences the Taglish structure is grammatically correct and it flows. Here's another interesting example:

So far, wala p(pa) k(ka) p(pa) rin nman(naman) loan di ba?

So far PRS.ACC.ADV.ENC.ENC-none-you-too-otherhand loan-right

“So far, you don’t have any loans right?”

In this glossing, there are two Tagalog enclitics, i.e., /rin/ and /naman/. Also note that this Taglish sentence is not grammatically correct, but it gets its meaning across to the listener. The accurate way of saying this is: “So far, wala pa rin naman loan di ba?”. My dad typed this way because he wants to get his point across quickly, types too fast, or lazy to fix his sentences. On the other hand, the two enclitics were inserted after the accusative case, “ka pa” and before a noun “loan”. This also happens because multiple enclitics can occur only if they follow the Tagalog VSO rule. In this case, the verb can be the “so far” (adverb), “ka pa” (you-subject), and “loan” (object).

Data Analysis:

The data that I have shown are mostly consistent with the literature research because of how the inflectional/derivational morphemes were attached properly to the Taglish sentences. There was some unexpected data that arose when I was analyzing the Viber conversation me and my parents had. Enclitics can sometimes be placed before Tagalog/English verbs or adjectives, however, based on previous research there has not been any evidence on why this works, but it makes intuitive sense. Based on my data, this phenomenon works primarily because it would not make sense grammatically, semantically, and

morphologically if enclitics are placed after the verb/adjective. So, accurately answering my first research question, inserting more Tagalog inflectional morphemes or phrases, as well as enclitics, onto an English sentence strengthens one's proficiency in Taglish. However, inserting more English inflectional morphemes or phrases than Tagalog ones onto a Tagalog sentence doesn't necessarily mean the same because Tagalog are much more semantically stronger than English. For example, the English phrase "on the other hand" has 4 words, whereas the Tagalog enclitic /naman/ only has 1 morpheme, /na/, attached to /man/. Bilinguals usually do this to express a much more succinct and cleaner way to get your message across faster. So your proficiency in Taglish fluctuates if you use more English inflectional morphemes or phrases. As for the 2nd research question, it is pretty difficult to pinpoint what is exactly the reason why Filipinos code switch all the time due to various sociolinguistic factors. Previous research has shown that it can depend on where Filipinos mainly grew up with, their education, provinces, and how they associate with their fellow peers, as well as social media trends. However, what I can accurately say is that based on my data, a couple of the reasons we code switch is due to convenience and how we want to get our messages across in a quick time. The convenience part is also partially due to the shortening of words and phrases over online-text messaging; you can't really shorten words/phrases in real life conversations but your message

Conclusion:

Filipinos use Taglish to communicate quicker, faster, and emphasize their thoughts better than just using full Tagalog or full English sentences. When English and Tagalog are intertwined, an interesting phenomenon occurs, such as placing enclitics before a verb/adjective. So, two research questions arise from this investigation of Taglish: how would inflectional/derivational Taglish morphemes or phrases influence a bilingual Filipino and two, why and how bilingual Filipinos code switch all the time? When Filipinos use a lot of Tagalog inflectional/derivational morphemes or phrases, their proficiency towards Taglish is significantly higher than those who use otherwise, i.e., English inflectional/derivational morphemes or phrases. This is essentially due to Tagalog being more semantically "stronger" and more succinct than English. People generally don't want to say more phrases than it is needed. On the other

hand, linguists don't really delve into a Taglish short-handed conversation between text-messaging applications so I think if many of them start a deep research and analysis on this topic, it would be really great for future linguistics students and researchers to understand more about the morphological structure of Tagalog. There are a whole lot of undiscovered phenomenon(s) and morphological differences out there in Taglish, whether it be in person or online. Ultimately, I believe this linguistic work could be a great addition for people studying Tagalog and English and want to investigate not just in person conversations, but as well as online conversations.

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