

TAGALOG SLANG

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AFTER OBSERVING numerous languages and cultures from a forty plus year vantage point, I can say with assurance that I know of no peoples *more inventive* than Filipinos in injecting both humor and creativity into their everyday vocabulary. This admiration on my part should not be construed to imply that Filipinos are the best players with words. Australian Aboriginal groups have some outstanding and noteworthy idioms, but Filipinos are surely *among the best* in my book.

I may be familiar to some of the readership as an avid etymologist. I take great delight in tracing the origin of words and making educated guesses about how old a particular member of the current lexicon may be. My topic here applies the skills of etymological research, but addresses a very current issue, namely the coinages found in Tagalog that have arisen in the past few decades. In so doing, I have not attempted to trace the origin of the words, e.g. who coined them, or when they were coined. But I would like to hazard some opinions as to *how these coinages got made*, specifically what *ten linguistic processes* were used in their creation.

The first three areas of inventiveness involve loans from various languages, where either the meaning or the grammar has been drastically changed.

1. LOANWORDS FROM SPANISH are very common. Although the Spanish period of contact had lasted several hundred years, these words have become 'Filipino property' and show drastic shifts in meaning or grammar.

abono	pay the difference	[Sp abono 'allowance; manure']
agua de	alcoholic beverage	[Sp agua 'water' + de 'of' +
pataranta		taranta 'impulse' + Tag pa- CAUSATIVE]
antipatiko	wise guy	[Sp antipatico 'displeasing']
asar	upset, angry	[Sp asar 'roast']
atraso	gang war	[Sp atraso 'delay; arrears']
bakero	bum, trouble-maker	[Sp vaquero 'cow-keeper, cowboy']
balasahan	gang fight	[Sp baraja 'deck of cards'; Plural: barajas 'quarrel']
barako	tough guy; tomboy	[Sp barraco 'ancient naval cannon']
bartolina	bad situation	[Mex-Sp bartolina 'dungeon']
bida	star, hero(ine)	[Sp vida 'life, living; behavior']
kontrabida	villain	[Sp contra 'against' + vida 'life']
bomba	pornographic	[Sp bomba 'bomb']
kasta	sexual act	[Sp casta 'breed, caste; lineage']
dinadaga	lovesick	[Sp daga 'dagger']
hembra	sexy (female)	[Sp hembra 'female']

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imberna	be disturbed	[Sp invernar 'to winter']
muher	homosexual (male)	[Sp mujer 'woman, wife, mate']
retaso	child, children	[Sp retazo 'remnant, fragment']
toro	stud, macho man	[Sp toro 'bull']
tsamba	try, take a chance (at/on)	[Sp chamba 'fluke, chance']

2. LOANWORDS FROM ENGLISH would be undecipherable to native speaker of English since they have been so fully assimilated.

abrod	jailed, in prison	[Eng abroad]
alaska	kid around (with), put someone on	
basted	disappointed in love, broken-hearted	[Eng busted]
belib	admire, be impressed (by)	[Eng believe]
bisnis	prostitute, whore	[Eng business]
blowout	treat, pay for (everyone's) food	
chapter	episode in a TV series	[Eng chapter]
chip	nickname used by elders for a friend	[Eng chief]
drowing	dupe, trick	[Eng drawing]
enjoy	join in (the fun, i.e. not be a 'wall-flower')	
estir	kid around, put someone on	[Eng steer]
going streyt	make it in the world	[Eng going straight]
grog	drunk, intoxicated	
hapihapi	drink together	[Eng happy]
hayblad	anger, make (someone) angry	[Eng high blood]
indyan	stand (someone) up, not show up for an appointment	
jaging-jaging	dance (especially rock & roll)	[Eng jogging]
jinggel	urinate, pee	[Eng jingle]
kawboy	good sport	[Eng cowboy]
komiks	heavily tattooed	[Eng comics]
senseyson	orgasm	[Eng sensation]
sermon	scold, lecture someone on their wrongdoings	

3. LOANWORDS FROM OTHER LANGUAGES include numerous words from a variety of other Philippine and oriental language.

asuwang	devil	[Bisayan aswang 'evil spirit']
burot	cocky, boastful	[Bisayan burot 'swelling']
gurang	old, aged	[Bisayan ma-gurang 'old']
hambog	boastful	[Bisayan hambog 'proud']
kuno	fake, artificial	[Bisayan kuno 'it is said']
utol	brother, sister	[Pampango (kap)utul 'sibling']
yabang	proud, boastful	[Pampango yabang 'arrogance']
bakya	poor, tacky	[Hokien bak 'wood' + khiaq 'slippers']
buwisit	unlucky, jinxed	[Hokien bo 'no' + ui 'clothes' + sit 'food']

kura	cellar, storehouse	[Japanese kura 'storehouse']
sondo	peso	[Japanese sondo 'village boy', probably based on the picture of Rizal on the bill]

The second area underscores the inventiveness of Tagalog speakers when playing with the shape of words, no matter which language they may come from.

4. METATHESIS involves switching sounds within a word, either the inversion of syllables or quite a complex re-arrangement of the sounds or letters.

alat	police	[Tag tala 'star', i.e. badge]
arbor	extort, chisel	[Sp robar 'rob, steal, plunder']
atab	girlfriend	[Tag bata 'child, youngster']
atik	money	[Tag kita 'earnings']
botak	run	[Tag takbo 'run']
chokaran	gang-mate	[Tag ka- 'co-' + Sp rancho 'ranch']
damatan	old, elderly	[Tag matanda 'old']
demol	mash (a girl)	[Sp molde 'mold (as clay)']
dihin	no, not	[Tag hindi 'not']
enka	eat	[Tag kain 'eat']
erbi	beer	[Eng beer, with syllable splitting]
ermat	mother	[Eng mother]
erpat	father	[Eng father, also with f > p]
gasti	bum, loafer	[Tag tigas 'hard']
hokbu	hair	[Tag buhok 'hair']
kota	afraid	[Tag takot 'be afraid']
lawanglawaw	nothing at all	[Tag walang-wala 'absolutely none']
lespo	police	[Eng police]
sepa	run	[Sp pase(ar) 'take a walk']
sanpit	cousin	[Tag pinsan 'cousin']
tipar	party	[Eng party]

5. PLAYING WITH WORDS goes even further in the re-arrangement of sounds. It may involve dropping or adding syllables to words from just about any language.

achay	maid, housegirl	[Sp muchacha 'girl']
adidas	dad, pop	[Eng daddy]
amimas	mom, mommy	[Eng mommy]
aw-aw	dog meat	[Onomatopoeia for dog's barking]
bagets	teenager(s)	[Tag bago 'new' + Sp -ito (diminutive) with -s addition]
chokay	okay!, all right!	[Eng okay + ch- addition]
egat	dark/black female	[Tag igat 'black eel']
egot	dark/black male	[Tag igat 'black eel' + Sp -o (masculine)]
haybol	house, home	[Tag bahay with metathesis and association with Eng highball]
jahi	ashamed, shy	[Tag hiya' with metathesis and y > j shift]
jeproks	trying to be 'in'	[Eng projects; pejorative term for

kadilakad kelot	on foot, walking man, male	people living in housing projects] [Eng Cadillac + Tag lakad 'walk'] [Tag lalaki with metathesis, change and shortening (ki ke + la lot)
kispirin tepok	urge for kissing kill	[Eng kiss + aspirin] [Tag patay with metathesis (= tay > te + pa > pok, with -k addition)

6. TAGALOG WORDS WITH RECENT SHIFTS OF MEANING draw upon the large stock of inherited vocabulary, involving a drastic change in meaning. Some of the words can become an established part of the lexicon, like landi' 'flirt' which originally meant 'play in the mud'--that meaning may come as some surprise.

asiwa	uncertain, unsure	[Orig: 'untrained, unskilled']
bagyo	sexually attractive	[Orig: 'storm, typhoon']
bangaw	greedy eater	[Orig: 'bullfly']
banig	well-supplied addict	[Orig: 'sleeping mat' because drugs come in tinfoil sheets]
basag	high on drugs	[Orig: 'broken']
biak	sex, intercourse	[Orig: 'break, split into halves']
bitin	leave (X) hanging	[Orig: 'hang']
buwaya	greedy, graft-ridden	[Orig: 'crocodile']
gaslaw	flirt	[Orig: 'course movements']
kabit	lover, possessed partner in a relationship	[Orig: 'hang on']
kaliwa'	be fooled, duped	[Orig: 'left side']
kayod	hard-working	[Orig: 'scrape']
kunat	stingy	[Orig: 'tough (as meat)']
ibon	military rank	[Orig: 'bird']
laglag	bribe	[Orig: 'fall down']
pasikat	boastful, cocky	[Orig: 'cause the sun to rise']
pikot	shotgun wedding	[Orig: 'cornered, ambushed']
sitaw	stripes on uniform	[Orig: 'stringbeans']
waswas	wife	[Orig: 'rinse']

7. COINAGES OR NEW WORDS are invented for the most part. Although they may be based on other words, the new form is hardly recognizable.

sawang	so what?	[Cf: Tag sayang 'waste' + ewan 'don't know']
spooting walanjut walastik	dressed well no joking! wow!, neat!, cool!	[CF: Tag wala' 'none' + Eng joke]

8. LANGUAGE MIXING is a common occurrence in all Philippine languages. Often called 'MIX-MIX', it represents the blend of two or more languages within any given sentence or phrase.

ander de saya	henpecked	[Eng under the + Tag saya 'skirt']
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anong say mo	What do you think?	[Tag ano -ng 'what?' + Eng say + Tag mo 'you']
bagito	green horn, neophyte	[Tag bago 'new' + Sp -ito diminutive suffix]
biniboy	homosexual male	[Tag bini 'girl' + Eng boy]
kilig to the bones	overjoyed	[Tag kilig 'tremble' + Eng to the bones]
kadiri to death	gross	[Tag kadiri 'loathing' + Eng to death]
pilyo sa girls	playboy	[Sp pillo 'rascal' + Tag sa 'with' + Eng girls]
salitang kanto	street slang	[Tag salita 'language' + -ng (linker) + Sp canto 'corner']

The final two areas involve the shortening of words, in any possible combination, such as getting just a syllable or two from each of several words, or reducing forms to their first letters.

9. TRUNCATION involves the shortening of words.

altanghap	full board	[Tag almusal 'breakfast' + tanghalian 'lunch' + hapunan 'dinner']
amboy	American boy	[Eng Am(eric)an + boy]
bilmoko	buy me (that)!	[Tag bili 'buy' + mo 'you' + (a)ko 'I']
Jun	Junior (nickname for a boy with his father's name)	[Eng jun(ior)]
kana'	American female	[Sp (ameri)cana 'American (female)']
kano'	American male	[Sp (ameri)cano 'American (male)']
lonta	pants, trousers	[Sp (pan)talon 'trousers' + metathesis]
munti	prison, jail	[Tag Munti(nglupa), name of a prison]
salem	girl in every port	[Eng sailor's love in every port]
syano	provincial, hick	[Sp (provin)ciano]
urig	made to order clothing	[Eng orig(inal)]
yosi	cigarette(s)	[Sp ci(garri)llo, with metathesis]

10. ABBREVIATIONS can only be understood by an insider. Some of these are brilliant puns based on well-known acronyms (like 'CIA' or 'KGB').

a.b.s.	vice-ridden male	[Tag alak 'liquor' + babae 'woman' + sugal 'gambling' + sigarilyo 'cigarettes']
b.f.	boy friend	[Eng boy friend]
b.i.r.	rich crony	[Eng bureau of Imelda Romualdez]
b.y.o.b.	bring your own	[Eng bring your own + Tag baon 'provisions, supplies']
c.i.a.	Imelda Marcos sycophant	[Eng certified Imelda admirer]
c.r.	bathroom, toilet	[Eng comfort room]

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d.o.m.	dirty old man	[Eng dirty old man]
g.i.	genuine Ilocano	[Eng genuine Ilocano]
k.d.l.	going on foot	[Tag ka 'you' + Sp de 'by' + Tag lakad 'walk']
k.g.b.	closet queen	[Tag kon gabi bakla 'gay at night']
k.j.	kill joy	[Eng kill joy]
k.k.k.	buffet	[Tag kanyang-kanyang 'each' + kuha 'get, take']
n.p.a.	illegal immigrant	[Eng non-permanent alien]
o.a.	over-reaction	[Eng over-acting]
p.w.u.	dumb, ignorant	[Tag puro 'thoroughly' + walang 'without' + utak 'brains']
t.n.t.	illegal immigrant	[Tag takbo nang takbo 'running']
t.y.	free of charge	[Eng thank you]
u.s.t.	debt-dodger	[Tag utang 'debt' + sabay 'along with' + takbo 'running']

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Eng	English
Hokien	Hokien Chinese
Mex-Sp	Mexican Spanish
Orig:	Originally
Sp	Spanish
Tag	Tagalog