

## A B S T R A C T

### APPLYING ETYMOLOGICAL ANALYSIS TO A SYNCHRONIC PROBLEM -- DECIPHERING TAGALOG SLANG

A database of over 5,000 slang terms and neologisms was gathered during field work in Manila in the summer of 1989. In preparing the *Tagalog Slang Dictionary* for publication by Dunwoody Press, I thought it would be helpful to the user if the provenance of such forms were indicated. In so doing, I applied the same sort of procedures I have been using in the *Core Etymological Dictionary of Filipino* and my other work in comparative Austronesian linguistics.

Slang is by nature a form of **innovation**. Twenty-five categories of coinage have so far been isolated and these will be treated in this paper. Some examples include:

- (1) **Borrowing**, although often with sharp differences in meaning, e.g., Eng *abroad* -> Tag *abród jailed, in prison*. Donor languages include Spanish, Japanese, Indonesian, Chinese, and other Philippine languages (such as Bisayan, Ilokano, Kapampangan). Most of these enter into all of the following in a complex and often amusing pattern of grammatical and lexical usage.
- (2) **Loan translation**, e.g., Eng *grass* -> *marijuana* = Tag *damó* [both meanings]
- (3) **Semantic shift**, e.g., Tag *bitín hanging, hung* -> *leave someone hanging*
- (4) **Metathesis** (partial reversal), e.g., Eng *father* -> Tag *erpat*
- (5) **Full reversal**, e.g., Tag *kíta earnings* -> *atík money*
- (6) **Coinage**, e.g., Tag *wátot wife*.
- (7) **Language mixture**, e.g., Tag *pilyo sa girls playboy* [ <- Spanish *pillo rascal* + Tag *sa* locative or oblique marker + Eng *girls*]
- (8) **Abbreviation** is not a historically old device since writing was introduced during the last few centuries, however modern slang usage often involves a **pun** on pre-existing forms, e.g., Tag *c.p.a. chicken-pork adobo*.

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Tagalog slang is a collection of Philippine argots, a highly-encoded group-specific speech consisting of generally pre-existing (sometimes new) forms given significant changes in meaning or grammar, involving shared common experiences decipherable (or explained) to fellow members of the group. For example, **k.g.b. closet queer** < Tag **kon gabí baklá'** *at night homosexual*; **Taco Beach toilet** < M Sp **cubeta pail** + **-ts**, but spelled like a place with an English name; **oto san** *servant* < Tag **utusan** *be commanded*, but spelled as if a Japanese phrase.

## 01 ENGLISH [788 = 35.1%]

**bred money** < Eng-slang **bread**

**flip not oneself; silly; happy go lucky** < Eng-slang **flipped**

**istír joke, kid around, mislead** < Eng **stir**

**jinggel urinate** < Eng **jingle**

**promdi hick, unsophisticated person** < Eng **from the** (province, rural)

**tayp like, want; fondness for** < Eng **type**

**tikól masturbate** < Eng **tickle**

**trip like, want** < Eng-slang **trip**

**tsaw food; eat** < Eng-slang **chow**

**wheels car, transportation** < Eng-slang **wheels**

## 02 SPANISH [484 = 21.6%]

**basyó caught in the act; arrested** < Sp **vacio empty**

**burgís upper class, wealthy** < Sp **burgués bourgeois, middle class**

**bóso peeping tom** < Sp-slang **buzo alert thief**

**tsitsa foot; eat** < Sp **chicha meat** (children's term)

## 03 NEW MEANING [374 = 16.7%]

**ambón give a share from one's winning (in gambling)** < NEW Tag **ambón light rain, drizzle**

**atát excited, impatient** < NEW Tag **atát stutter**

**balimbíng traitor; turn coat; political chameleon** < NEW Tag **balimbíng star fruit** (five-cornered fruit; i.e., worse than "two faced")

**bató boring, uninteresting** < NEW Tag **bató stone**

**bogá gun, shotgun** < NEW Tag **bugá puff, blow out of the mouth**

**manhíd take for granted, have no feelings about** < NEW Tag **manhíd numb**

**pokpók prostitute; flirt, loose girl** < NEW Tag **pukpók beat (with an implement)**

**putók body odor; bad smell** < NEW Tag **putók explode; explosion**

**sibát scam, "split", leave** < NEW Tag **sibát strike, pierce with a spear**

**sisíw easy; piece of cake** < NEW Tag **sisíw chick, baby chicken**

## 04 COIN [040 = 01.8%]

**badáp ~ badáf homosexual male, gay**; Cf: Tag **baklá'**

**bópol stupid, "not very sharp"**; Cf: Sp **bobó simpleton** + Tag **pulpól dull**

**chékwa Chinese**; Cf: Tag **intsík Chinese** + Hok Ch **tokwa bean curd**

**ébak excrement, shit**; Cf: Tag **tá'e** *evacuate*

**pablíng playboy**; Cf: Eng **playboy**

**palpák failure; s.t. thwarted that did not work out as expected**; Cf: Sp **falso false, wrong** + Tag **lagpák fall, fail**

**tópak deranged, mad**; Cf: Tag **katók**

## 05 BISAYAN [036 = 01.6%]

~~**datúng money; rich** < Ceb **dátu'** *rich, wealthy* + **-ng** (ligature)~~

**guráng old; parents, elders** < War **guráng aged, old**

**parák police** < Ceb **parák hulk, bulge**; Ceb-slang **policeman**

*dakú' large penis*  
*tambók large vagina*

## 06 CHINESE [022]

**bakyá'** *poor, tacky, no class* < Hok-Ch **bak** *wood* + **khiaq** *slippers*

**buwisít** *unlucky, jinxed* < Hok-Ch **bo** *none* + **ui** *clothes* + **sít** *food*

**tong** *bribe; illegal collection* < Ch **tong** *money put up in game of Mahjong*

**tóyo'** *cause of irrational or demented behavior* < Ch **soy sauce**; chiefly in expression:  
 May **tóyo'** sa **úlo** *crazy, irrational* (lit: *has soy sauce in the head*)

## 07 JAPANESE [017]

**asúka** *yes* < Jap **a soo ka** *I see*

**doróbo** *pickpocket; bum, trouble maker* < Jap **dorobo** *thief, robber*

**moshi-moshi** *hello* < Jap **moshi moshi** *hello*; Alt: **mishi-mishi**

**sondo** *one peso bill* < Jap **sondo** *village boy*

## 08 ILOKANO [007]

**awánti** *none, have no X* < Ilk **awán** *none* + **ti** *of* (case marker)

**basét** *girl* < Ilk **bassít** *small, little*

**s.s.b.** *sycophant, panderer* < AB Ilk-slang **sipsíp búto** *suck penis*

## 09 KAPAMPANGAN [005]

**alá'** *none, nothing* < Kpm **alá'** *none, nothing*

**útol** *brother, sister* < RED Kpm (**kap**)**utul**

## 10 MALAY [001]

**dúsa** *suffer (the consequences)* < Mal **dosa** *sin* < Sanskrit

## PROCESSES AFFECTING THESE FORMS

## 11 WORD PLAY [431 = 19.2%]

**bábayu** *goodbye* = PLAY Eng **bye-bye** + **-u** (Eng **you**)

**syóta** *girl ~ boy friend, steady* < PLAY Tag **si(n)ta** + **-o-**

**taté'** *America, the U.S.A.* = PLAY Eng **states** (dropping the **s's**)

**yóyo'** *wrist watch* = PLAY Sp **reloj**

## \*\* METATHESIS / SOUND-SWITCHING [238 = 10.6%]

## 12 FULL REVERSAL (binaliktád)

**adarit** *woman lover* < M Sp **tirada** *aimed at*

**adnagam** *beautiful* < M Tag **magandá** *beautiful*

**álat** *police, cop* < M Tag **tala'** *star* (i.e., *policeman's badge*)

**atík** *money* < M Tag **kita** *earnings*

**étneb** *twenty pesos* < M Sp **veinte** *twenty*

**na'ás** *where?* < M Tag **sa'án** *where?*

**nito** *penis* < M Tag **útin** *penis*

**otab** *stoned* < M Tag **bató** *stone*

## 13 SYLLABLE REVERSAL

**astígma** *tough, unfeeling; proud; shameless* < SYL REV Tag **ma-tigás** *hard*

**begtu** *water* < SYL REV Tag **túbig** *water*

**bokál** *bald* < SYL REV Sp **calvo** *bald*

**góli** *bathe, shower* < SYL REV Tag **lígo'** *take a bath*

**modta** *semen* < SYL REV Tag **tamód** *semen*

**Oblo** *Bilibid prison* < SYL REV Tag **lo'ób** *inside*

**siták** *taxi* < SYL REV Eng **taxi**

**tipár** *party* < SYL REV Eng **party**

## 14 ALTERNATION METATHESIS

*árbor extort, chisel* < M Sp *robar rob, plunder, steal*

## 15 REDUCTION [206 = 09.2%]

*brad pal, buddy, male friend* < RED Eng *broth(er)*

*éma mother, mom* < RED Tag-slang *ermat mother*

*épa father, pop* < RED Tag-slang *erpat father*

*kanó' American (male)* < RED Sp (ameri)cano *American*

*sikyó security guard* < RED Eng *secu(rity)*

## 16 ABBREVIATION [121 = 05.4%]

*k.j. kill joy* < AB Eng *kill joy*

*o.a. tending to over react* < AB Eng *over-acting*

*s.t. promiscuous sexual activity* < AB Eng *sex trip(ping)*

*t.l. true love* < AB Eng *true love*

## 17 MIX-MIX [111 = 04.9%]

*bagíto teenager, young adult* < Tag *bágo new* + Sp *-ito* DIMINUTIVE

## 18 NUMBER PLAY [017 = 00.7%]

7 = *syéte gossip* < PLAY Sp *siete seven*; Cf: Sp *hablar mas que siete talk fast and continuously*

## 19 SPELLING [005 = 00.2%]

*b.b.10.b.10 left hanging, dissatisfied* < spelling of Tag *bibitin-bitín*

*b.o.b.o. stupid, dumb* < spelling of Sp *bobo stupid*

*oks okay, good* < Eng *o.k.* with spelling pronunciation + *-s*

*vagína vagina* < Spelling pronunciation of Eng *vagina*

## 20 S ADDITION

*bagéts teenagers, young adults* < RED Tag-slang *bagít(o)* + *-s*

*déhins no, not* < SYL REV Tag *hindí' not* + *-s*

## 21 REDUCTION AND CONSONANT ADDITION

*chong pal, buddy* < RED Tag-slang *cho(karan)* + *-ng*

*pards male friend, peer, mate* < RED Eng *part(ner)* + *-s*

*pinóy Filipino male* < RED Tag (pili) *píno* + *-y*

*tisáy fair-skinned (female)* < RED Sp (mes) *tiza of mixed blood* + *-y*

*tisóy fair-skinned (male)* < RED Sp (mes) *tizo of mixed blood* + *-y*

## 22 METATHESIS AND CONSONANT ADDITION

*aláws none, nothing* < M Tag *walá' none* + *-s*

*tódits here* < M Tag *dító* + *-ts*

## 23 REDUCTION AND METATHESIS

*lóna pants, trousers* < RED + SYL REV Sp (pan) *talón*

*tóga shoes* < RED + SYL REV Sp (alpar) *gato sandals*

*wáswit wife, better half; spouse, husband* < RED + M Tag (a) *sáw(a) spouse* + RED Eng *sweet(heart)*

*yósi cigarettes* < RED + SYL REV Sp *ci(garri)llo*

## 24 METATHESIS AND PLAY

*háybol house* < M Tag *báhay house* + PLAY Eng *high ball*

*tápwe fifty pesos* < RED + SYL REV Sp (sing) *cue(n)ta fifty* with shift of *k > p*

## 25 LOAN TRANSLATION or CALQUE

**damó** *marijuana* < NEW Tag **damó** *grass, weed*; Cf: Eng **grass**  
**túlak** *pusher of illegal drugs* < NEW Tag **túlak** *push, shove*; Cf: Eng **pusher**

DEMOGRAPHY -- data gathered so far is predominantly male-oriented

## DRUG CULTURE

**bangág** *high on drugs* < NEW Tag **bangág** *stupid, slow-minded*  
**iskór** *obtain drugs; get high, load up* < Eng-slang **score**  
**sabóg** *high on drugs* < NEW Tag **sabóg** *scattered, dispersed*

## GOVERNMENT

**lagáy** *bribe* < NEW Tag **lagáy** *put (down)*

## MOVIES

**t-bird** *female homosexual, tomboy* = Title of a Tagalog movie in which the lead character is a very masculine woman

## STUDENTS

**bókya'** *zero; fail an examination*

## GENERAL SEXUAL REFERENCE

**macho** *sexy man, he-man* < Sp **macho** *male, masculine, robust*; Also: English

## MALE SPEECH

**cats** (*us*) *men, young or handsome guys* < Eng-slang **cat** + -s (pl)  
**chicks** *gals, pretty girls* < Eng-slang **chick** + -s (pl)

## FEMALE SPEECH

**4-m** *perfect man for marriage* < NUM + AB Tag **matandá** *old* + **mayáman** *rich* + **madalìng mamatáy** *will die soon*  
**k.p.r.** *sexy man, handsome* < AB + MIX Tag **katawán** *body* + **pang-** *useful for* (prefix) + Sp **romanza** *romance*  
**makalaglág pánti** *handsome* < MIX Tag **maka-** *can* + **laglág** *drop* + Eng **panty**

## GAY COMMUNITY

**bóngga** *good-looking; grand; outstanding* = COIN  
**nóta** *male sexual organ* < Sp **nota** *musical note* (based on shape)  
**wis** *no; none, nothing* < PLAY + RED Tag **wa(lá')** *none*, with a > i + -s

74 WORDS for *homosexual*: a.c.d.c., ablabs, acheng, aklab, aklabs, alangánin, apír, b.q., babá'eng may lawít, badáf, badáp, badàpdidáp, badapsíng, badápski, badásh, badésh, badíng, badínglets, baklá', baklàng bubuwít (young), baklé', baklíta, balalaika, bayot, binabae, biniboy, bokslí, chaplok, charíng, charot, cheng, closeta, dadang, dingga, Donya Clara, double blade (bi), echeng, echos (= etsos), Facifica Falayfay, fag, faggot, flip, gay, hechos, homo, hormonáda, jaggot, jokla, k.g.b., klabaks, klabel, klabíng, lalakwe, lanak, lubing, mana, manay, muher, nikya, pabuko, plabíng, shoki (= syoki), siláhis (bi), sissy, sister, sward, swardíng, swards, syoyot, T'so Pablo, tsa bon thoy, tumitikwás ang balakáng, v-jay (= v.j.), yangyáng