

TRANSLATING FILIPINO SLANGS: LOCALIZATION OF NEOLOGISMS

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Slang or neologism can be considered as playful words that are being construed as something that defines the current generation's set-up, culture, or background. It may also be considered the language of the current times but may differ depending on the projected culture to where it will be used. The study is about how, from a regular expression, a possible slang/neologism may be formed/constructed. The way that slang/neologism is being idealized as something new reflects how words are so dynamic and how, through their coinage, a word can signify a new meaning, a new perspective, and a new appreciation of culture and standards.

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Filipino creativity is reflected not only through its different cultural indicators such as foods, clothing, tradition, arts, and the like. In the prolific society endowed with colorful influences, Filipinos are enthusiastic about coining terms and words that eventually become part of regular expressions.

Filipino slang or neologisms have already emerged ever since. Some are no longer used; some are being revived, and some are still part of the daily conversations. Filipino slang is already part of society's linguistic utterances to connect to society. Slang may be considered a neologism also. It is the parochial way to understand the meaning of a word and how it becomes significant in society. Its mechanics of creating new words remain the same: adding or subtracting suffixes or prefixes, transposing syllables so words are read backward, and borrowing words from foreign languages.¹

Slang language/neologism in the Filipino context may tickle the minds as it plays with semantics and semiotics uttered in a word. Currently, there are lots of so-called slang words or neologisms that are still part of the daily conversations of Filipino vocabulary. Slang words are being executed in formal or informal discourses, especially since we are already transmigrating into digitalization and considering the current generation set-up. Thus, language varies through the use of slang/ neologism.

Language change is affected by many factors, such as social interaction, technology, and lifestyle. For instance, technology and innovations can lead to emergence of new words. Constant communications within and across boundaries can cause language alterations or borrowing. Language change is also affected by the lifestyle in which people live. 2

The study will focus on some of the current Filipino slang and neologisms and how they are translated from their original expressions to contextually local expressions. It may be defined as regular phrasing or sentences that are taken from the original language and may be translated linguistically, semantically, or semiotically. However, this discussion will use the source text and its source language as a tool to frame a slang/neologism and establish how it becomes as it is and can be understood by the currentt generation.

From the table below, the following are the sentences where the slang expressions/ neologisms can be taken.

Sentence	Slang/Neologistic Translation
I hope I could have it too.	Sana all.
He don't mind and he doesn't even care.	Nonchalant.
My sister loves to plant.	Plantita ang kapatid ko.
Can you send the message to all those who are involved?	Send mo sa GC.
I am proud owner of this dogs and cats.	Masaya akong maging fur parents.
You did it just like that? Unbelievable!	Petmalu!
She is the source of all the information that I heard.	Marites siya.
You have all the talents, the wit and the guts.	Lodi!
This is a painful experience.	Awit!
You're on point.	Omsim!

THE ROLE OF TRANSLATION IN FORMING A SLANG/ NEOLOGISTIC WORD

Translation serves as a mechanism for finding an equivalence for the context/meaning of a word as well as its expression. The best way to ideally understand this process of translation is through localization. Localization may be considered a domestic way of translating. It touches the level of what you are translating.

¹ Limos, Mario Alvaro, "Filipino Slang: Decoding Street Words from the 70's through the 90's in https://www.esquiremag.ph/long-reads/features/filipino-slang-through-the-decades-a00293-20191214-lfrm. Published December 14, 2019.

2 Jeresano, Elisa M. & Carretero, Marigrace D. "Digital Culture and Social Media Slang of GenZ". United International Journal for Research and Technology. Vol. 03, Issue 4 (2022), p. 11.

Localization adapts different forms of content or products to a specific locale and culture. Context plays a key role in localization. It also considers formal and informal settings. Making sense and conveying the right meaning with the intended emotion in that particular locale and cultural setting enhances the effectiveness of communication.³

However, others are claiming that translation and localization are different. Translation focuses on the language, while localization is centered on culture.

They, in turn, seem to have translated into "just a language problem," at a moment when a whole academic discipline can demonstrate that translation is one of the main processes by which cultures develop and regulate their identities. This is why many translation scholars now ask whether there is anything new in localization.⁴

There are also three clear distinctions between the two: ⁵

Translation	Localization
1. It bridges language barriers.	It is for regional specificity.
2. It is neutral to cultural differences.	It meets cultural and functional requirements.
3. It suits technical subjects.	It is apt for highly emotive content.

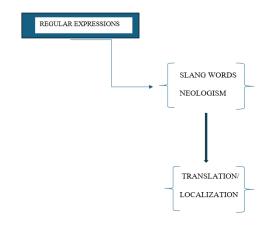
In this discussion, it will accept localization as a mere form of translation, for after all, it is still a procedure of translation and of relaying messages from the source language to the target language. The main point is that there is an interaction and how the message is being contextualized based on the background of the target text/language. This is the very essence of translating, which is to put into context the message that you want to emphasize.

Translators enable communication to take place between members of different cultural communities. They bridge the gap between situations where differences in verbal and non-verbal behavior, expectations, knowledge, and perspectives are such that there is not enough common ground for the sender and receiver to communicate effectively by themselves.⁶

In this regard, localization may be an ideal way to understand the generic procedure of translation. As they both aim to understand fully what meaning should be understood.

Nida builds his theory on the premise that the message of the original text can not only be determined but also be translated so that its receptions will be the same as those perceived by the original receptors. His theory also emphasizes not formal correspondences but functional equivalence, not literal meaning but dynamic equivalence, not *what* language communicates but *how* it communicates.⁷

From therein, this study will investigate the usage of localization as a translation procedure and how it helps to resurface Filipino slang/neologism and its communicability nowadays. Referring to the table, from the simple statements, slang or neologism may be produced.



³ https://blog.commlabindia.com/elearning-translations/ translation-and-localization-differences. Retrieved May 23, 2024. 4 Pym, Anthony. Localization from the Perspective of Translation



⁴ Pym, Anthony. Localization from the Perspective of Translation Studies: Overlaps in the Digital Divide? (Intercultural Studies Group, January 2024), p. 2.

⁵ https://blog.commlabindia.com/elearning-translations/translation-and-localization-differences. Retrieved May 27, 2024.

⁶ Nord, Christiane. Translation Theories Explored. (St. Jerome Publishing, Manchester, 1997), 17.

⁷ Gentzler, Edwin. Contemporary Translation Theory. (Routledge, New York, 2001). 54.

There is a proper way of translating words that can be defined as slang/neologism. Neologism may be defined as newly coined lexical units or existing lexical units that acquire a new sense.⁸ Words evolve through time. Its existence may last for a time; it may be revived, it may be respelled, or somehow put into a different context. This is the main argument for understanding slang or neologism. The *situationality* of an incident is the ultimate basis for coining a word that will be considered slang.

The evolution of Filipino slang or neologism may be considered in different approaches, as this was all taken from the lexical point of view that led to the cultural understanding of the word that will be established.

DIFFERENT FORMS OF LOCALIZATION

First, there's this *tadbalik*. The idea is to make a jumbled letter or its syllable and come up with a meaning that may stick to its etymology or give a new perception based on its context.

Filipino tadbalik or reverse tagalog, is no longer new from our ancestors because, since the 1930s to the 1940s, words like *damatan* (matanda/old) and *ermat/erpat* (mother/father) are already widely used. As a matter of fact, during 1980's there's this song from the famous local group Sampaguita entitled NoSiBalasi (Sino Ba Sila/Who are They?), Laki sa Layaw (Spoiled or Brat) and Jeprox (Projects) by Mike Hanopol.⁹ (trans.)

Tadbalik may be an indicator that Filipino words ever since are already subject to play with and thus may lead to having a new meaning whether in local or foreign context.

8 Newmark, Peter. A Textbook of Translation. (International Book Distributors Ltd., 1995). 140. 9 Deyto, Nilda H. & Marbella, Felisa D. Filipino Tadbalik: Wika Second, some Filipino slang/neologisms are taken from onomatopoeia. ¹⁰As sound itself already depict an audio meaning. Such examples are tsugi (taken off, passed-away, eliminated), kabog (astonishing, outdoing, or surpassing) and toink (an emphasis on a point, mark of a failure, or punctuation). Third, Filipinos love to abbreviate or cut a word. They find ease and convenience in segmenting or cutting words and making them appear as a new form of expressions. The reasons behind it are, first, for efficiency so that the communications will be at ease. Second, memory aid because the shorter the word, the easier it is to comprehend. Third, cultural influence, there is an influential impact from colonization to Westernization of this generation. Fourth, informal communications, as Filipinos love to shorten messages, especially with the aid of technology (texting, Messenger, etc.). Fifth, there is a community bonding wherein shared experience and thought are the basis of some expressions, and lastly, creativity and humor, as Filipinos find wisdom in wit and simplification.¹¹ Examples of which are par (for pare meaning a male brother, friend), sosi (for sosyal meaning belonging to a high society) and sis (for sister meaning a female friend or sister) Sixth, there is also sward speak or gay language that somehow became a milieu in everyday conversation because of its accessibility and humor. Before, it was only used by gay people, but now, almost all genders are fond of using it.

Gayspeak observes no rules as far as its structure is concerned, but its "evolution is rapid like the 'queens' who have started to break the walls of the subculture." He cited the word *chaka* (meaning cheap) and how it evolved from "*chapter*, *champaka*, *chapacola*, *or chararat to champorado*, *chapluk*, *chapa*, *chop suey*, *and champola*. ¹²

⁹ Deyto, Nilda H. & Marbella, Felisa D. Filipino Tadbalik: Wika ng Milenyal. (Asia Pacific Journal of Management and Sustainable Development, Vol. 9, No. 1, March 2021). 99.

¹⁰ De Guzman, Nicai. The Fascinating Story Behind Filipino Slang. (November 7, 2017) https://www.esquiremag.ph/culture/the-fascinating-history-behind-pinoy-slang--a1729-20171107-lfrm. Retrieved May 28, 2024.

¹¹ https://www.quora.com/Why-do-Filipinos-make-acronymsfor-almost-everything. Retrieved May 28, 2024. 12 Alba, Reinerio A. In Focus: The Filipino Gayspeak (Filipino

¹² Alba, Reinerio A. In Focus: The Filipino Gayspeak (Filipino Gay Lingo). https://ncca.gov.ph/about-culture-and-arts/in-focus/the-filipino-gayspeak-filipino-gay-lingo/ (June 05, 2006). Retrieved May 28, 2024.



Some of the classic examples aside from those mentioned above are chuvanes (meaning anything that is, emotion/feeling, up to you), eklavu (meaning etcetera), and plangak (meaning, of course, I agree). These words are designed to simply define that language varies and evolves no matter what gender or cultural background it comes from.

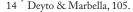
Last, the characteristics of Filipino slang/ neologism are derived from foreign terms/ expressions. Due to colonialism's impact, there are foreign words that may naturally be used as part of Filipino diction and conversation. Sometimes, these words have the same meaning in the foreign context or may have the same usage but already be in context with the background of their Filipino counterpart. Examples of these are Jusko (My God!), Dasurv (an expression of how justice has been served), and Momsh (Mother, a very dear girlfriend). From therein comes the concept of localization and the translation of slang/neologism that the selected expressions have been translated and derived from.

Localization may serve as a key to deeply understand the context from a regular form of expression into something that others could easily understand. A supposed to be slang, but with the help of localizing it or, in a bigger perspective, translating it, can easily be part of a generic discourse. Through this, a situation or background may easily be determined.

Understanding Slang/Neologism

Subjectivity may lead to *localizing* on something. It depends on how a word has been accepted in a specific situation and how that situation is seen by the person who targets to translate it. There are many factors to consider in localizing/ translating a simple expression. Social media, technology, and the generation gap are the major influences on the current generation. Social media plays a crucial role in developing a word. It is the current trend and most likely the most active platform to relay an expression. Words coined through social media are being considered as *netspeak*. Netspeak as a language is neither spoken nor written, it has the features of both speaking and writing to suit the medium, which is the Internet, and has different features that neither speaking nor writing could ever deliver.¹³ In this regard, the internet plays an influential and significant factor in establishing a word as well as its usage in the current times. In the table shown above, the slang/neologism that was used was translated in the context of the use of internet as Send mo sa GC para malaman ng lahat. Filipinos are fond of social media. Once upon a time, the Philippines became the social media capital of the world. Information and messages are much easier to relay using social media platforms. In the local context, a messenger is a major tool for delivering a quick message. In Thailand, they use the app Line, while in Japan they use the app WhatsApp, and so in the Philippines, Messenger is the fastest way to replace SMS. For more effective and accessible delivery of messages, a group chat is used so that members can simultaneously receive the message. To simplify the message, Send mo sa GC (Send it in the group chat), and so with that, the simple expression of asking to relay the message to all those who are involved is done locally. Other translation attempts referring to tables have mainly used the technique of tadbalik which is very common among the millennials nowadays. In a recent study, the tadbalik formula served as a threat to the formal structure of the Filipino language as it became a norm in formal discourse. ¹⁴ However, to accept the practical

¹³ Crystal, David. Language and the Internet. (Cambridge University Press, New York, 2001). 24-26.
14 Deyto & Marbella, 105.





usage of the tadbalik words, they should already be used in general conversations. Looking into the given table, words such as *Petmalu*, *Lodi*, and *Omsim* are all tadbalik taken from the main words *Malupet* (awesome), *Idol* (great, respected), and *Mismo* (on point), respectively. By context, anyone can reverse a word and make it sound *like a new one*. Some may reverse it from its foreign counterpart/meaning. The ease and coolness of its message are what this generation prefers to use.

Slang, a non-standard language used in informal settings, is constantly evolving and particularly popular among Gen Z, considered digital natives. ¹⁵ Gen Z is the most technologically adept generation and is highly connected to the social media web. As Generation Z develops its language, they come up with original slang terms made of phrases and acronyms that help them express themselves and make sense of the complexities of their environment. ¹⁶

This generation's usage of this so-called GenZ slang, or tadbalik, was revived by then Manila Mayor Francisco Moreno when he assumed the post in 2019. The word *Yorme* which pertains to the reverse mayor, depicts how his position can have easy access by the people. Thus, referring to him as the new *maka-masa* (for the public) politician. From therein, he coined other words that are somehow new to the current generation but already an old epoch to the other.¹⁷

Other words that are localized from the mentioned table are Sana All, Ikaw na!, Plantita ang kapatid ko, Nonchalant, and Marites siya.

Sana All may be the most famous and most used slang/neologism as of this date. Some vlogs from foreigners are so amazed at how this term

was being formulated that some of them tend to use and live with it.¹⁸ This is different because its use has a huge impact. It may be applied in different situations and may be expressed in different forms.

Sana all and other common expressions are coined as a millennial language, a rich source of new words and phrases that, as fast as they are created by this generation, are then quickly adopted by the mainstream to be ironic but also to show that they are different from previous generations, where to be cool was to be slightly cynical.¹⁹

If Tadbalik is GenZ-oriented, Sana All caters to the Millennials that have a broader sense to respond or react in a certain situation, putting their level into another's level, and once not achieved, the expression "that I should be in his/her shoes" arises. Sana All may depict a more negative connotation rather than positive as it traces how it is to be someone like them by all means and forms. Sana All conveys jealousy, which is somehow not notable in how a Filipino can project his ideal identity.

Sana all is one of the indirect ways of saying that a person is envious about something or being hopeful in a way that one way or another, that person is also in the same situation. *Sana all* can be a repercussion of diverting the topic directly. It is a word of mouth that slightly strays away from the message of the speaker.

The concept of Sana All might not be an issue with the Millenials as they see it as an opportunity to express what they want to express in the context of jealousy or indirect diversion of a topic. It is also a creative affirmation that they have stated and makes them part of society's way of uttering a language or expression. Sana All may be used throughout until there is a replacement for it.

¹⁵ Grandez, Maessy B. et. al. Forda Ferson: The Morphological Structure of Generation Z Slang in Social Media. (Journal of English as a Foreign Language Teaching and Research, Vol. 3 No. 2 (2023) https://doi.org/10.31098/jefltr.v3i2.1847). Retrieved May 28, 2024. 17.

16 Grandez, 15.

¹⁷ https://politiko.com.ph/2023/01/16/iskonary-a-guide-to-isko-morenos-street-slang/snitch-network/.

¹⁸ https://www.tiktok.com/discover/sana-all-foreign-version 19 Pontillas, Marlon. et.al. Sana All: Filipino Indirectness of Today's Time. (DLSU Research Congress, 2020). 2. 20 Pontillas, 4.

Another most loved word from the table is Marites. To dissect, Marites is the simplification of *Mare Ano ba ang Latest?* (My dear friend, what is the latest gossip?). The combination is a product of Filipino inquisitiveness in receiving fresh and latest information taken from other people's lives. Originally, the word was taken again from former Manila Mayor Isko Moreno. This was referring to the comment of one of his constituents who was being caught during the onslaught of lockdown during the pandemic in 2020.

The iconic "Manahimik ka, Marites" line trended online early in the pandemic in 2020, when Manila Mayor Isko Moreno announced that no liquor ban will be implemented in the city under modified enhanced community quarantine. While most people celebrated the news, a certain Marites opposed such decision, pointing out that liquor is not an essential. A Facebook user drew laughs with his hilarious comment: "Manahimik ka, Marites!!!!" ²¹

Eventually, the posts used by the netizens and other vloggers were then framed as something like someone who earnestly wanted to have the latest gossip from the community. Localizing Marites as the recipient or source of gossip may be a natural characteristic of a Filipino's hunger for the latest development in a society where he or she belongs. Humor can be extracted as it gives a notion that someone can be a Marites to think that you have your own business to attend to. Everybody can be Marites, as everybody's curiosity is always hype, especially if it involves other people's lives.

Other words that have been used in the localization process, as mentioned in the table, are Plantita, Nonchalant and Fur parent. Fur Parents are terms that were already wereintroduced by Merriam-Webster.

When the word *fur* first came into English, it was a verb that meant "to line a person's garment with the soft hair of an animal." The noun developed from the verb. First, the noun referred to the animal hair that was used for lining and trimming a garment. Then it came to refer to the hairy coat on the animal itself. The verb, not much used anymore, was taken from the early French verb *furrer*, meaning "to stuff, fill, line." It was formed from an earlier French word meaning "a sheath." Thus our word *fur* for the hairy coat that covers or encases an animal traces back to a word for a sheath that encases a knife or sword.²²

The explanation has been expounded to associate the characteristics of a domesticated animal as something that has fur and thus can be associated with the owner. Cambridge dictionary already coined the term *fur baby* about the animal itself from its definition: a pet, especially one that treats with a lot of love and kindness, as if it were a baby.²³ The ideal parent-child relationship and the intimacy of their connection are some of the Filipino traits; thus, from the fur baby, naturally there will be a fur parent. Many animal lovers say they are proud fur parents and have established their relationship as the best example of an animal-human relationship made intimate.

Plantita is a term that is a product of the longest seclusion/lockdown during COVID-19 last 2020. Simply, it is a noun referring to a person who loves and has a hand (not necessarily a green thumb) in taking care of domesticated plants. Ever since, Filipinos have already been into farming, as aside from being one of their major sources of income, it's their practice and part of everyday life. But when lockdown was implemented, one of the major habits that some Filipinos are doing is taking care of their plants. Others already had their passion for taking care of the plants even before the lockdown, but most of the plant lovers started just within the period of lockdown.



²¹ Villanueva, Brooke. All about 'Marites': Here's how the famous nickname became an indelible part of social media. (Life, the Philippine Star, October 27, 2021).

²² https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fur. Retrieved May 29, 2024.

²³ https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/furbaby. Retrieved May 29, 2024.

There has been a rising popularity of home gardening in different social media platforms where individuals of different ages and status propagate, post, buy, and sell plants. A Filipino term called "plantito/plantita" was invented by the citizens, which derived from the word plant and Filipino word "tito" (uncle) or "tita" (aunt), combined to form the word. 24

Some of the localized words are being compressed into one that leads to coming up with a new message or meaning. Plantito or plantita nowadays are already a common word being used to connect to the lovers of plants and somehow with the farmers.

The last on the list is nonchalant. The word is already established and has been in the register ever since. Merriam-Webster defined it as unconcern or indifference. 25 The word may be the same even if it is translated locally; however, this generation has put it into context to determine as someone who does not even care at all in a certain situation. The formality of its usage became colloquial and leveled according to the understanding of the current generation, even to the point of using it as part of the social media wordings. Reddit, a social media platform, started to formally use nonchalant as something as if it were a regular social media expression.

Hi, I'm so curious lng kse madami tao sinasabihan ako nonchalant or manhid, dahil raw sa expression ng mukha ko at ung actions ko to them. madami rin nakiki sabay sa trend na nonchalant kse nga yan ung uso. i hope someone will explain to me kse pagkaka alam ko lng sa nonchalant is idgf na person. ²⁶

The same goes for the Chinese platform TikTok²⁷ and with the other social media accounts. That indicates that the word nonchalant is already widely used not only as a regular word but also as part of the social media and language of the netizen.

Translation of Slang/Neologism as LOCALIZATION PROCEDURE

Significantly, linguistic factors and their issues are the main considerations in the translation of this case. Language connects the message to the target culture and its background. Translating slang or neologism is done in different ways.

First, some words are already old but may be given new senses. It is no longer new in Filipino context. From the table mentioned above, tadbalik is a manifestation of these characteristics. This form, in translation, is called *urban renewal*.

Old words with new senses tend to be non-cultural and non-technical. They are usually translated either by a word that already exists in the target language or by a brief functional or descriptive term. Existing collocations with new senses may be cultural or noncultural if the referent (concept or object) exists in the target language, there is usually a recognized translation or through-translation. If the concept does not exist or the target language speakers are not yet aware of it, an economical descriptive equivalent has to be given. 28

Other ways of translating slang and neologisms are through *new coinages*. From the given table, the new coinages are Sana All, Plantita, GC, and Marites. These words by their etymology may denote something that is what makes it as it is. However, due to the localization process, the way to understand them may differ.

Nowadays, the main new coinages are brand or trade names, and these are usually transferred unless the product is marketed in the target language culture under another name, or the proper name may be

²⁴ Sunga, Archie B. The "Plantito/Plantita" Home Gardening during the Pandemic. (Community Psychology in Global Perspective CPGP, Comm. Psych. Glob. Persp. Vol 7, Issue 1, 88, 2021). 89.

25 https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fur. Retrieved

May 29, 2024. 26 https://www.reddit.com/r/studentsph/comments/1ayl3px/what_is_nonchalant_ba_talaga/. Retrieved May 29, 2024.
27 https://www.tiktok.com/@sir.sicat/video/7340239075145714949?lang=en. Retrieved May 29, 2024.

²⁸ Newmark, 141-142.



replaced by a functional or generic term, if the trade name has no cultural or identifying significance, thus it may be translated by a selection of various components. 29

Derived words are also a major form of the translation of slang/neologism. Some of the existing slang/neologism is taken either from another period, time, or a specific situation. The derivation is a natural process in translation and is more in the process of localization. From the given table, words like fur parents and nonchalant are the best samples of this method. Most of the slang/neologism was derived from an analogy and naturalized in the appropriate language. 30 Fur parents are derived from the word fur for the animals, nonchalant is already an existing word that is what makes it as it is.

There are also other ways the translation of slang or neologisms can be applied from the given sample of simple expressions. Some are through Abbreviations, Collocations, Eponyms, Phrasal Words, Transferred Words, Acronyms, Pseudo-Neologisms and The creation of Neologisms. 31 Their methods are the same as the principle mentioned and can be applied in the way the chosen slang/neologisms were explained.

CONCLUSION

Translating slang/neologism is a procedure wherein you play with words, their meanings, and how they will be associated with the target culture of what you are translating. Significantly, its translation that eventually moves into the process of localization is not complicated, and it is as easy as putting the words following the projected culture. This generation's way of constructing words defines not only how creative they are but also reflects how culture influences

words and how it enriches their significance and usage. Eventually, the meaning that these words may vary, change, or put into another context may change from another generation or time. Whatever way it is, it contributes to the idea that language is dynamic and that language signifies more meanings and context.

Newmark, 142-143.

Newmark, 143.

³¹ Newmark, 145-150.

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