

Linguistic Identity and Global Fluidity: Filipino Gen Z Attitudes Toward World Englishes

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Abstract:

This qualitative study explores the attitudes of Filipino Generation Z toward global varieties of English, framed within the context of the Philippines' unique linguistic landscape. As a nation in the "Outer Circle," the Philippines has long balanced the influence of American English with the development of Philippine English (PhE). Drawing on Saraceni's (2010) Space, Culture, Ideology, and Psychology (SCIP) model, the research investigates how digital globalization and social media exposure shape the linguistic preferences and identity of young Filipino learners. Through semi-structured interviews with university students in urban hubs, the study examines the relocation of English from a Western-centric standard to a personalized tool for local and digital expression. Preliminary findings suggest a dualistic perspective: while participants demonstrate a growing acceptance of World Englishes and pride in local identity, they continue to navigate internalized ideological hierarchies that favor "native-like" proficiency for professional advancement. The study concludes that the "relocation" of English in the Philippines is a complex psychological process where the language is simultaneously a symbol of global mobility and a medium for indigenous cultural assertion. These insights call for a more inclusive pedagogical approach that validates regional variations within the Philippine educational system.

Keywords: World Englishes, Generation Z, SCIP Model, Philippine English, Linguistic Identity, Relocation of English.

Introduction:

The evolution of English into a global lingua franca has moved it beyond a single, monolithic standard toward a plurality of localized and socially embedded varieties. Scholars of World Englishes argue that English now functions as a flexible linguistic resource shaped by historical, cultural, and ideological forces across contexts. In the Philippines classified within Kachru's Outer Circle English holds official status and has been deeply influenced by American colonization, resulting in the emergence of Philippine English (PhE) as a distinct and systematic variety.

Recent scholarship has increasingly emphasized the legitimacy and functional adequacy of Philippine English across local and international domains. Studies have shown that PhE is intelligible and acceptable among diverse audiences, including Filipino-Americans, challenging deficit-based views of non-Inner Circle Englishes (Gustilo, Dumanig, & Jubilado, 2025). Moreover, the Filipinization of English has been accelerated by digital communication, where linguistic borrowing, code-mixing, and localized expressions reflect evolving identities, particularly among younger speakers (Esquivel, 2019; Sales, 2022). Despite these developments, a persistent hierarchy of English varieties remains evident in educational and professional settings.

Standard American English (SAE) continues to be perceived as the benchmark for correctness, competence, and upward mobility, a perception reinforced through language testing, classroom practices, and institutional norms (Acobo, n.d.). This tension between the institutional recognition of PhE and the privileging of native-speaker norms places Filipino learners in a complex position, where linguistic confidence is often mediated by external standards rather than local legitimacy.

This tension is especially pronounced among Filipino Generation Z, a cohort uniquely positioned at the intersection of globalization and digital media. As active consumers of content on platforms such as TikTok and YouTube, Gen Z Filipinos are exposed to a wide range of English varieties, including Inner, Outer, and Expanding Circle Englishes. At the same time, research suggests that linguistic identity remains closely tied to perceptions of professionalism and authority, even among educators and English users operating in global and transnational contexts (Jung & Choe, 2024).

Against this backdrop, this study examines how Filipino Gen Z students navigate their linguistic identities amid competing English varieties. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following questions: (1) which varieties of English Filipino Gen Z students are most interested in, (2) how social, educational, and digital factors shape their preferences for particular English varieties, and (3) how they perceive the relocation of English from a Western-centric standard to a medium of self-expression. By foregrounding Gen Z voices, this study contributes to ongoing discussions on linguistic ownership, identity, and the evolving role of English in postcolonial and digitally mediated contexts.

Literature Review:

World Englishes and the Decentering of Linguistic Norms

The global spread of English has fundamentally altered traditional notions of linguistic authority, ownership, and standardization. Early conceptions of English as a unitary and monolithic system centered on British or American norms have been increasingly challenged by the World Englishes (WE) paradigm, which recognizes the plurality of English varieties shaped by historical, sociocultural, and political forces (Kachru, 1992).

Within this framework, English is no longer viewed solely as the property of Inner Circle nations but as a global resource localized by speakers across Outer and Expanding Circle contexts. This reconceptualization is particularly relevant in postcolonial societies such as the Philippines, where English functions both as an institutional language and a medium of identity formation.

Scholars argue that the continued privileging of native-speaker norms perpetuates linguistic inequities and reinforces colonial power relations. Fang (2019) emphasizes that accent attitudes remain one of the most persistent sites of discrimination within global English use, with speakers of localized varieties often evaluated against unattainable native benchmarks.

This ideological imbalance is further intensified in educational systems that implicitly reward conformity to Inner Circle standards through assessment, hiring, and curriculum design. As a result, English users in Outer Circle contexts frequently experience tension between functional communicative competence and perceived linguistic legitimacy.

Recent studies have highlighted how globalization and digital media accelerate the diversification of English use while simultaneously reinforcing existing hierarchies. Zia and Fatima (2025) note that global language exposure fosters hybrid cultural identities, where speakers selectively appropriate global linguistic forms while maintaining local cultural meanings.

However, this hybridity does not necessarily dismantle dominant ideologies; instead, it often coexists with internalized beliefs about linguistic superiority. This contradiction underscores the need for analytical frameworks that account for spatial, cultural, ideological, and psychological dimensions of English use such as Saraceni's SCIP model.

The SCIP Model as an Analytical Framework

Saraceni's (2010) Space, Culture, Ideology, and Psychology (SCIP) model offers a comprehensive lens for examining how English is relocated and reinterpreted across contexts. Rather than treating English varieties as static or geographically bound, the SCIP model conceptualizes English as a dynamic resource shaped by mobility, identity, and speaker agency. Each dimension of the model captures a distinct yet interrelated aspect of English use in globalized settings.

The Space dimension highlights the relocation of English from its historical centers in the Anglophone West to diverse global contexts. English is no longer confined to specific territories but circulates through transnational flows of people, media, and technology. The Culture dimension emphasizes how speakers adapt English to express local identities, values, and social realities, challenging assumptions that English necessarily carries Western cultural meanings. The Ideology dimension interrogates power relations embedded in language norms, particularly the dominance of British and American standards. Finally, the Psychology dimension focuses on speaker subjectivity, examining how individuals perceive English in relation to their sense of self, belonging, and legitimacy.

Together, these dimensions provide a nuanced framework for understanding how English functions not only as a communicative tool but also as a symbolic resource. The SCIP model is particularly suited to examining Generation Z learners, whose linguistic practices are deeply embedded in digital spaces where exposure to multiple English varieties is constant and normalized.

Space: Digital Relocation and the Global Circulation of English

The spatial relocation of English has been dramatically accelerated by digital technologies. Platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram expose users to a wide range of English varieties that transcend national boundaries.

For Generation Z, English acquisition and usage increasingly occur outside formal classrooms, shaped instead by algorithm-driven content and peer-mediated interactions. This shift challenges traditional notions of linguistic authority rooted in educational institutions.

Esquivel (2019) argues that the Filipinization of English in the digital age represents a distinct identity formation process, separate from other World Englishes. Filipino users actively reshape English through localized expressions, humor, and pragmatic norms, particularly in online spaces. These practices reflect the relocation of English into domains of everyday life, where communicative effectiveness and relatability often take precedence over grammatical conformity.

Similar patterns are observed in other postcolonial and multilingual contexts. Fang's (2019) study in China demonstrates that exposure to multiple English accents through global media reshapes learners' perceptions of what constitutes "good English," even as institutional preferences remain conservative. These findings suggest that while digital spaces democratize access to linguistic diversity, they do not automatically dismantle entrenched hierarchies.

In the Philippine context, this spatial relocation is evident in the coexistence of Philippine English, American English, and other global varieties within the same communicative ecology. Generation Z speakers navigate these overlapping spaces fluidly, yet their choices are often constrained by perceived expectations in academic and professional domains.

Culture: English as a Medium of Local and Hybrid Identity

The cultural dimension of the SCIP model foregrounds the role of English in expressing non-Western identities. Contrary to earlier assumptions that English necessarily erodes local cultures, contemporary research illustrates how speakers appropriate English to articulate localized meanings. In the Philippines, linguistic practices such as Conyo—a hybrid of English and Tagalog—serve as markers of urban youth identity and social positioning.

Sales (2022) documents extensive linguistic borrowing among Cebuano Visayan Gen Z speakers, demonstrating how English words and structures are integrated into local languages without displacing them. This hybridity reflects

cultural agency rather than linguistic deficiency. Similarly, Salvador et al. (2024) highlight how slang and informal English usage in higher education settings function as tools for peer bonding and identity negotiation, even as they are sometimes stigmatized by institutional norms.

Cross-cultural studies further support the view that hybrid language practices are central to youth identity formation. Leon Guerrero's (2020) work on non-fluent CHamoru Millennials and Gen Z illustrates how language choice intersects with activism, indigeneity, and belonging. While the linguistic context differs, the underlying dynamics of negotiating identity through dominant and local languages resonate strongly with Filipino experiences.

These findings challenge deficit-oriented views of localized English use and underscore the importance of recognizing cultural expression as a legitimate function of language. For Gen Z Filipinos, English is not merely a borrowed code but a resource for constructing hybrid identities that reflect both global connectivity and local rootedness.

Ideology: Native-Speakerism and Linguistic Hierarchies

Despite increased recognition of World Englishes, ideological hierarchies persist. Native-speakerism—the belief that Inner Circle English varieties are inherently superior—continues to shape language attitudes, policies, and assessment practices. Acobo's investigation into teachers' perceptions of World Englishes reveals a tension between theoretical acceptance and practical implementation, particularly in language testing. While educators may acknowledge the legitimacy of localized varieties, assessment criteria often remain aligned with native-speaker norms.

This ideological inconsistency reinforces linguistic insecurity among learners. Jung and Choe (2024) demonstrate that even Filipino English teachers working in global cities internalize expectations tied to American or British standards, particularly when teaching international students. Professional identity, in this context, becomes entangled with accent performance and perceived global acceptability.

Gustilo, Dumanig, and Jubilado (2025) provide a contrasting perspective by examining how Philippine English is perceived by Filipino-Americans. Their findings indicate high levels of intelligibility and acceptability, suggesting that negative attitudes toward PhE may be more locally constructed than globally justified. This disparity highlights the role of ideology in shaping self-perception, often independent of actual communicative effectiveness.

Ideological dominance thus operates not only through external evaluation but also through internalized beliefs. For Generation Z learners, this creates a paradoxical environment where exposure to diverse Englishes coexists with pressure to conform to a narrow standard of legitimacy.

Psychology: English, Selfhood, and Linguistic Validation

The psychological dimension of the SCIP model focuses on how individuals relate English to their sense of self. For many Gen Z speakers, English is no longer perceived as a foreign language but as an integral part of daily life, thought, and identity. Adalia et al. (2025) note that Gen Z college students often prioritize communicative clarity and social relevance over strict grammatical accuracy, reflecting a shift in language attitudes shaped by peer interaction and digital learning environments.

However, this sense of ownership is often accompanied by a desire for external validation. Fang (2019) observes that learners may embrace pluralistic views of English while simultaneously seeking approval from native speakers or institutional authorities. This duality reflects the psychological impact of long-standing linguistic hierarchies, where confidence is contingent upon external recognition.

In the Philippine context, this psychological tension is evident in learners' ambivalent attitudes toward their own accents. While many express pride in localized forms, they may still perceive these forms as inappropriate in formal or professional settings. Such internal conflicts underscore the need to examine not only observable language practices but also the emotional and cognitive dimensions of language use.

The reviewed literature demonstrates that English in the Philippines operates within a complex interplay of spatial relocation, cultural expression, ideological constraint, and psychological negotiation. While studies have examined Philippine English, World Englishes awareness, and Gen Z linguistic practices independently, limited research integrates these perspectives through a unified analytical framework. Moreover, few qualitative studies foreground the lived experiences of Filipino Gen Z learners navigating multiple English varieties in digitally mediated environments.

By employing the SCIP model, the present study addresses this gap by examining how Filipino Gen Z students interpret, evaluate, and embody English varieties across social, educational, and digital spaces. In doing so, it contributes to ongoing debates on linguistic ownership, identity, and the future of English in postcolonial and globalized contexts.

Research Methodology:

This study adopts a qualitative phenomenological research design to examine the lived experiences and subjective meanings Filipino Generation Z students attach to their use of English.

Phenomenology is particularly appropriate for investigating linguistic identity, as it prioritizes participants' personal interpretations, emotions, and sense-making processes rather than measurable language outcomes. By focusing on how individuals experience and negotiate multiple English varieties, this approach allows for an in-depth understanding of attitudes that may not be fully captured through quantitative methods.

The study will be conducted in a major university located in either Metro Manila or Cebu City, both of which function as urban and linguistic hubs for Filipino Gen Z. These settings are characterized by high levels of linguistic diversity, widespread English use, and strong digital connectivity, making them ideal contexts for examining exposure to and interaction with global English varieties. The urban setting also reflects environments where English is frequently associated with academic, professional, and social mobility.

Participants will consist of six (6) undergraduate students aged 18 to 24, selected through purposive sampling. This sampling strategy ensures that participants possess characteristics directly relevant to the research objectives. Specifically, participants must be active users of social media platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, or Instagram, as sustained digital engagement increases exposure to Inner, Outer, and Expanding Circle Englishes. A small sample size is appropriate for phenomenological research, as it allows for rich, detailed accounts of individual experiences and facilitates deeper thematic analysis of linguistic identity formation.

Data for this study were collected through semi-structured interviews, a method well suited for eliciting rich, reflective accounts of participants' linguistic experiences and attitudes. The interview process was conducted in two phases. The initial phase focused on participants' understandings of English variation, including their awareness of Inner, Outer, and Expanding Circle Englishes.

The second phase involved follow-up interviews aimed at clarifying participants' motivations behind specific accent preferences, such as aspirations for professional credibility or influences from digital and social media. To facilitate authentic expression and minimize linguistic anxiety, interviews were conducted in Taglish when appropriate, allowing participants to articulate nuanced emotions and identity-related reflections more comfortably.

Data analysis followed Thematic Analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006), providing a systematic yet flexible framework for identifying patterns within qualitative data. The analysis began with familiarization through careful transcription and repeated reading of the interview data. Initial coding was then conducted to capture salient concepts related to linguistic identity, such as "accent identity," "digital exposure," and "perceived legitimacy." These codes were subsequently clustered into broader themes aligned with the four dimensions of the SCIP model—Space, Culture, Ideology, and Psychology—allowing for an interpretive analysis that connected individual experiences to wider sociolinguistic processes.

Findings and Discussion:

Space (Relocation)

The findings indicate that Filipino Generation Z participants largely perceived English not as a classroom-bound subject but as a mobile and digitally mediated linguistic resource. Rather than associating English primarily with formal instruction, participants described their engagement with the language as occurring most frequently through online platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, gaming communities, and streaming services. This supports the notion of spatial relocation within the SCIP framework, wherein English is displaced from institutional settings and re-embedded in everyday digital environments shaped by global media flows.

Participants demonstrated high familiarity with multiple English varieties encountered online, particularly Australian, British, and Singaporean English. British English exposure was often linked to popular media franchises such as Harry Potter and British YouTubers, while Singaporean English emerged through lifestyle content, vlogs, and regional influencers. These findings echo research on technology-driven language contact, which emphasizes that digital platforms function as primary sites of linguistic exposure and acquisition in contemporary contexts (Tutova et al., 2025; Shar, Amur, & Ujan, 2025). English, in this sense, is no longer spatially anchored to native-speaking nations but circulates fluidly across digital spaces.

Consistent with social learning perspectives, participants reported acquiring linguistic features through observation, imitation, and peer interaction rather than formal grammar instruction. Adalia et al. (2025) similarly found that Gen Z learners prioritize communicative relevance and social usability over grammatical prescriptivism. This shift suggests that spatial relocation is accompanied by a redefinition of linguistic authority, where influencers, peers, and online communities increasingly shape norms of acceptable English use.

However, the findings also revealed that increased exposure to diverse English varieties did not necessarily translate into equal acceptance of all accents. While participants expressed familiarity with global Englishes, many continued to rank accents implicitly, often placing American or “neutral” accents above others in perceived professionalism. This aligns with Fang’s (2019) argument that accent attitudes remain ideologically constrained even within pluralistic English environments. Thus, spatial relocation through digital exposure coexists with lingering hierarchies shaped by global power relations.

The role of informal and non-standard language practices further highlighted the relocation of English into peer-oriented digital spaces. Participants frequently cited the use of slang, abbreviated forms, and hybrid expressions in online communication, particularly in gaming and social media contexts. Studies on slang and digital discourse in higher education contexts suggest that such practices serve pragmatic and identity-related functions rather than indicating linguistic decline (Salvador et al., 2024; Cabiles, Samilo, & Magallanes, 2025). These findings reinforce the view that English in digital spaces is adapted to fit communicative efficiency and social belonging.

Importantly, the Philippine context adds another layer to this spatial relocation. While participants navigated global English varieties online, they remained aware of local accent stereotypes. Mendoza’s (2020) study on language stereotypes toward Philippine lectal speakers provides a critical backdrop, as participants’ comments reflected an awareness that localized accents may be judged negatively in formal or evaluative contexts. This awareness often influenced when and where participants felt comfortable using certain varieties, suggesting that spatial relocation is situationally regulated rather than entirely liberating.

Thus, the findings suggest that the relocation of English among Filipino Gen Z is characterized by fluid exposure but selective adoption. Digital environments expand linguistic repertoires and normalize global variation, yet participants continue to navigate these spaces strategically, adjusting their language use according to perceived expectations and evaluative contexts. This pattern reflects broader global trends in hybrid cultural identity formation, where global linguistic resources are embraced without fully displacing entrenched hierarchies of legitimacy (Zia & Fatima, 2025; Bozkir Elmali & Tutunis, 2025).

Culture (Local Expression):

The findings reveal that participants often perceived their Filipino accent as a form of cultural differentiation, signaling belonging to a shared local and national identity. Rather than viewing accent variation as merely a phonological feature, participants associated their manner of speaking with Filipino values such as sociability, humor, and relational warmth. This supports sociolinguistic views that language functions as a carrier of cultural meaning, where localized English use enables speakers to assert identity within global communicative spaces (Sadigzade, 2025).

At the same time, participants expressed ambivalence toward the overt display of localized accents, particularly in formal or evaluative contexts. While Filipino-accented English was embraced in peer interactions and online environments, several participants indicated a tendency to moderate or “neutralize” their accent in academic presentations or professional simulations. This tension reflects broader patterns of hybrid cultural identity formation, where speakers selectively foreground or suppress linguistic features depending on perceived expectations and power relations (Zia & Fatima, 2025; Gonzales, 2021).

Digital environments emerged as critical spaces for negotiating this cultural tension. Social media platforms and online gaming communities provided participants with opportunities to experiment with hybrid linguistic practices, including code-switching, slang, and creative lexical borrowing. Research on technology-driven language contact suggests that such environments accelerate linguistic innovation while fostering new norms of acceptability rooted in peer interaction rather than institutional authority (Tutova et al., 2025; Shar, Amur, & Ujan, 2025). In these spaces, localized English was often perceived as authentic and expressive rather than deficient.

However, participants’ narratives also reflected the persistence of accent-related stigma. Findings resonate with Mendoza’s (2020) matched-guise study, which demonstrated that Philippine lectal speakers are frequently evaluated less favorably in terms of competence and professionalism. Participants’ awareness of these stereotypes influenced their linguistic self-monitoring, reinforcing the idea that cultural expression through language remains constrained by socially embedded judgments. This aligns with Kubota’s (2019) critique of unexamined beliefs in language education that equate legitimacy with conformity to dominant norms.

The cultural function of localized English was further evident in participants’ references to niche linguistic communities, including gaming culture, queer spaces, and youth subcultures. Studies on Filipino queer language and online gaming discourse illustrate how English is creatively reshaped to signal solidarity, resistance, and identity play (Ulla, Macaraeg, & Ferrera, 2024; Cabiles, Samilo, & Magallanes, 2025). These practices underscore the role of English as a flexible semiotic resource rather than a fixed cultural artifact.

Hence, Filipino Gen Z speakers engage in strategic cultural positioning through English. While they value localized expression as a marker of authenticity and belonging, their linguistic choices are often mediated by concerns over social evaluation and professional legitimacy. This dynamic mirrors international findings on multilingual identity negotiation, where speakers continuously recalibrate language use in response to shifting cultural and institutional contexts (Zhang & Lütge, 2025; Nigar & Kostogriz, 2025). Within the SCIP framework, the cultural dimension thus reveals English as a site of ongoing negotiation between self-expression and social constraint.

Ideology and Psychology

The findings reveal the persistence of a dominant ideological framework that positions American English as a “standard of truth” against which other English varieties are evaluated. Despite increased exposure to global Englishes through digital media, many participants continued to associate academic credibility, intelligence, and professionalism with American-accented English. This reflects a deeply internalized Western-centric ideology that privileges Inner Circle norms, echoing Kubota’s (2019) critique of entrenched beliefs in language education that equate linguistic legitimacy with native-speaker conformity.

Participants’ narratives further indicated that Philippine English was often perceived as contextually acceptable yet academically inferior. While localized forms were embraced in informal interactions, participants expressed hesitation

in using Philippine English in classroom presentations or evaluative settings. Similar patterns have been observed in studies on China English and other localized varieties, where speakers recognize functional legitimacy but remain constrained by institutional ideologies that favor dominant norms (Meng & Ambele, 2023). These findings suggest that ideological power operates subtly, shaping not only external evaluations but also speakers' internal judgments.

Digital environments played an ambivalent role in this ideological landscape. On one hand, social media platforms exposed participants to diverse English varieties and normalized linguistic plurality. On the other hand, algorithm-driven content often amplified prestige accents and influencer norms, reinforcing existing hierarchies of desirability (Shar, Amur, & Ujan, 2025). As a result, digital exposure did not uniformly lead to ideological liberation but instead produced layered and sometimes contradictory language attitudes.

The psychological dimension of the findings highlights how these ideological pressures influence participants' sense of self and linguistic confidence. Many participants described English as an integral part of their identity rather than a foreign language; however, this sense of ownership was frequently accompanied by self-monitoring and anxiety over perceived correctness. This mirrors narrative inquiries in multilingual contexts, where speakers' identities are continually negotiated in response to institutional and social expectations (Zhang & Lütge, 2025; Nigar & Kostogriz, 2025).

Notably, participants who engaged in marginalized or hybrid linguistic communities—such as queer spaces or multilingual peer groups—demonstrated greater resistance to dominant ideologies. Research on Filipino queer language illustrates how English is creatively appropriated to challenge normative standards and assert alternative identities (Ulla, Macaraeg, & Ferrera, 2024). Similar resistance has been documented among multilingual speakers who use language as a tool for social justice and identity affirmation rather than mere conformity (Leow, Chau, & Kheovichai, 2025; Vargas, 2025).

Therefore, Filipino Gen Z speakers occupy a psychologically complex position, balancing linguistic ownership with a desire for validation from dominant authorities. While they increasingly view English as part of the self, ideological hierarchies continue to shape how confidently that self can be expressed. This tension aligns with broader sociolinguistic observations that language identity is not merely individual but socially regulated, evolving through continuous interaction with power, culture, and institutional norms (Sadigzade, 2025; Gonzales, 2021; Nazri & Kassim, 2023).

Psychology (The Self):

The findings indicate that for many participants, English was no longer perceived as a foreign or externally imposed language but as an integral component of personal identity. Participants described thinking, socializing, and expressing emotions in English alongside Filipino languages, suggesting a shift from instrumental use toward internalized linguistic ownership. This aligns with sociolinguistic perspectives that conceptualize language as a core element of selfhood rather than merely a communicative tool (Sadigzade, 2025; McKinney, Makoe, & Zavala, 2024).

However, this sense of ownership was often accompanied by a continued search for external validation, particularly from perceived authorities such as native speakers, educators, or online “experts.” Similar to the Indonesian respondent “Maya” described in prior studies, participants reported feeling more confident when their English was affirmed by figures associated with Inner Circle norms. Research on China English and other localized varieties suggests that such validation-seeking reflects not linguistic insecurity alone but the psychological impact of long-standing hierarchies embedded in global English use (Meng & Ambele, 2023).

Participants' narratives further revealed that linguistic identity was deeply intertwined with broader ethnic, cultural, and social identities. Gonzales' (2021) examination of Lannang identity highlights how language choice becomes a site of negotiation between belonging and differentiation—a dynamic echoed in participants' reflections. English functioned simultaneously as a bridge to global participation and a marker that could complicate perceptions of authenticity within local communities.

The psychological negotiation of English use was particularly salient in contexts involving professional or academic self-presentation. Participants described heightened self-awareness and anxiety in formal settings, where they felt compelled to “sound right” to be taken seriously. Such experiences resonate with hermeneutic and narrative inquiries that emphasize how professional identity develops through repeated encounters with institutional expectations over time (Nigar & Kostogriz, 2025; Salayo, 2021). English competence, in this sense, was not merely linguistic but affective and relational.

At the same time, participants involved in marginalized or hybrid identity spaces—such as multilingual peer groups, queer communities, or online fandoms—demonstrated greater psychological flexibility in their language use. Studies on multilingual speakers and social justice-oriented identity work illustrate how English can be reclaimed as a medium for empowerment rather than evaluation (Leow, Chau, & Kheovichai, 2025; Adams et al., 2022). Code-switching and linguistic hybridity, often stigmatized in formal contexts, were instead experienced as affirming and liberating (Nazri & Kassim, 2023).

The psychological dimension of English use among Filipino Gen Z is characterized by simultaneous ownership and vulnerability. While participants increasingly viewed English as part of the self, their confidence remained contingent on recognition from dominant linguistic authorities. This tension reflects broader patterns observed among multilingual and second-generation speakers navigating globalized language environments, where identity formation is ongoing, relational, and emotionally charged (Vargas, 2025; Abd Elrahman, 2024; Ramazanov, 2025). Within the SCIP framework, the psychology of English thus emerges as a deeply personal yet socially mediated process.

Conclusion:

This study highlights the complex and sometimes contradictory attitudes of Filipino Generation Z toward English. On one hand, participants expressed pride in their local linguistic identity, viewing Philippine English and Filipino-accented English as markers of culture, community, and authenticity. On the other hand, exposure to global media and the perceived prestige of American or “neutral” accents led many to aspire toward international standards, particularly in professional and academic contexts. This tension between local expression and global conformity reflects a broader negotiation of identity, where English functions simultaneously as a tool for self-expression, social mobility, and digital engagement.

From an educational perspective, these findings suggest the need to move beyond the entrenched ideology of “native-speakerism” in language teaching. Curricula that integrate World Englishes and emphasize functional communication over prescriptive correctness can reduce student anxiety and reinforce the legitimacy of diverse English varieties. Embracing pluralistic approaches to English instruction also aligns with contemporary digital realities, where learners interact with multiple accents, slang, and hybrid forms of language in authentic communicative contexts (Tutova et al., 2025; Shar, Amur, & Ujan, 2025).

Socially, recognizing Philippine English as a valid and intelligible variety empowers students to claim ownership of their linguistic practices rather than internalize hierarchies that privilege foreign norms. Such recognition encourages learners to participate confidently in global conversations while maintaining connections to local roots, cultural values, and community identity (Zia & Fatima, 2025; Gonzales, 2021).

In reflection, shifting the focus from “correctness” to intelligibility and identity allows educators, policymakers, and learners to reconceptualize English as a flexible, hybrid, and personally meaningful resource. Supporting this mindset fosters a generation of Filipino speakers who can navigate both local and global spaces with linguistic confidence, cultural awareness, and a sense of authentic ownership, effectively bridging their heritage with the demands of an interconnected world.

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