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## SWARD SPEAK (GAY LINGO) IN THE PHILIPPINE CONTEXT: A MORPHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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**Abstract:** *This study assessed the word formation of sward speak used in the Philippines. Specifically, it determined the gay slang used, its formation and the reasons for using it. The descriptive method was used to conduct the study. A total of 100 gay respondents conveniently chosen were used in the study. A questionnaire and an informal interview were used to gather information. The library technique was also used to gather relevant data and literature to support the findings of the study. In analysing, the strategies and processes in the formation of Tagalog slang used by Zorc and Celce-Murcia were used. The gays love to play with words; however, they follow a process or use a strategy in deriving or creating words like other languages do. They use the following strategies or processes: loanwords or borrowing, metathesis either by syllable switching or full reversal, affixation, substitution, acronymy, duplication or repetition, clipping / reduction, blending, using names of popular persons or places, using figures of speech (onomatopoeia and metaphor), and mix-mix. The gays' major reasons for creating words of their own are to become unique/different from other people, to serve as their identity, to belong or accepted in a group, to give them pleasure, and to make them inventive.*

**Keywords:** *swardspeak, morphological analysis, word formation*

### INTRODUCTION

#### Study Background

Swardspeak uses elements from Tagalog, English, Spanish, and some from Japanese, as well as celebrities' names and trademark brands, giving them new meanings in different contexts. It is largely localized within gay communities, making use of words derived from the local languages or dialects, including Cebuano, Hiligaynon, Waray, Bicolano, and other places (Hudson, 1987).

In most parts of the world, discrimination is very much common and felt among gays due to their ways of dressing, physical looks, actions, etc. and most importantly their way of



speaking or talking. Due to the various intimidations and/or embarrassing situations they have experienced, they have thought of creating words / language of their own.

By using swardspeak, Filipino gays are able to resist the dominant culture of their area and create a space of their own. The language is constantly changing, with old phrases becoming obsolete and new phrases frequently entering everyday usage, reflecting changes in their culture and also maintaining exclusivity. (Garcia, 1996). The dynamic nature of the language refuses to cement itself in a single culture and allows for more freedom of expression among its speakers. Words and phrases can be created to react to popular trends and create alternatives to a strictly defined lifestyle. By these characteristics, swardspeak creates a dissident group without any ties to geographical, linguistic, or cultural restrictions, thus allowing its speakers to shape the language as appropriate to the times. In this way, the language is not only "mobile" and part of a larger community, but also open to more specific or local meanings.

### **Objectives of the Study**

This study determined the morphology of gay slang. Specifically, it determined the speakers of gay slang, the words most commonly used by gays in their daily conversation, the method or strategy used in the formation of gay slang and the reasons for using it.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Research Design**

The study utilized the descriptive design. It described the gay slang speakers, the gay slang commonly used in daily conversations, how the gay slang were formed and their reasons for using gay slang.

### **Respondents**

There were 100 respondents used in the study. The purposive sampling technique was used since only those gays enrolled in Cagayan State University, those gays working in beauty parlors, the "gay women" and/or others who know how to speak the language were considered.

### **Instrument**

A questionnaire and an informal interview among the respondents were used to gather information. The library technique was also used to gather relevant data and literature to support the findings of the study.



### **Collection of Data**

A survey of all the gays enrolled at the Cagayan State University Lal-lo campus, including their friends in the beauty parlors in the municipality of Lal-lo was done. A letter to conduct the study in the campus was addressed to the Campus Executive Officer for approval. Immediately, questionnaires were distributed to the respondents as soon as permission was granted. Retrieval of questionnaires was done immediately since they were personally distributed by the researcher.

### **Analysis of Data**

In analysing data, the descriptive statistics like frequency count and percentage were used in determining the respondents, weighted mean for their reasons in using gay lingo and the strategies and processes in the formation of Tagalog slang used by Zorc as cited by Bautista (1993), and the strategies used by Celce, et al (2010) were used.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **Gay Language Speakers**

Among the 100 respondents, 75 or 75 percent were gays and the remaining 25 or 25 percent were the gay women, "babaengbakla". The gay women refer to those women who use and understand gay language. They learned the language through their constant exposure with the gays while working in their beauty parlors and elsewhere.

### **Words Commonly Used by Gays in their Daily Conversations**

Gays commonly used various gay words in their daily conversations. The words used are formed in different ways. Borrowing is commonly used like the following: cash and carry (alright/okay), balay (house), chaka (gossip), chipangga (cheap), dyutay (small), dugyot (dirty), fly (leave), gurang (old), kuning (deceitful), lafang (to eat), jowa/dyowa/jowabelles (girl/boyfriend), karir (to flirt), mujer/murat (woman), noches (male sex organ), otoki (boy), sayt (to see), takeshi (afraid), anik (what), bet/betsung (like), bobaret (dumb), booking (one night stand), gandacious (beautiful), getsung (to get), girlash (woman), girlalu (girl), igets (to get), givsung (to give), paysung (to pay), preggy (pregnant), becky/bekimon (gay), chimini (maid/servant), chova (a lie), clasmarrurut (classmate), echozera (a liar), enlababo (in love) fez/fezlak (face), ites/itey (this), mahalia (expensive), patty (fat/chubby), payola/payus (pay). Moreover, they also use words by playing with words like in the following examples: bahoma (odorous), batsi (to leave), bogmali (blow job), alaws (none), damatan (old man/woman), jinit (warm), jirap (difficult), mashonda (beautiful), borlog (sleep), bobita



(dumb), shuhok (hair), shutik (mud), aning-aning (crazy), chika-chika/chuchu (to gossip), badet (gay cadet), bayut (gay), dedma (doesn't care), dinglet (young gay), bupa (rotten foot), jumboobs/sulay/suhod (large bust), ma (I don't know), pa (I don't care), pal (palamunin/dependent), CI (check-in), FO (friendship over), GL (gandalang), OPM (oh promise me), PG (pa girl), agamulach (early), alma moreno (sick with almoranas), baliwag (crazy), ethelbooba (big bust), cathysantillan (itchy), geli de belen (jealous), jannogibbs (to give), luz valdez (lose), eskualalumpur (squatter), dead hungry (poor), hipon (sexy), kumokokak (talkative), pak (wow), boylet (young boy), buko juice (blow job), on diet datang (no money), epal (to gain attention), etc.

The gays are very creative in the formation of their words. The words are products of combinations of morphemes borrowed from different languages.

### **Strategies of Word Formation Adopted**

Sward speak uses various strategies in forming words. Among these are **loanwords or borrowing** like otoki (Japanese) meaning boy, mujer (Spanish) meaning girl, sight (English) to see, gurang (Bicol) meaning old, dako (Hiligaynon) meaning big and many others; **metathesis either by syllable switching or full reversal** like batsi from the Tagalog word sibat meaning to leave, damatan (matanda) meaning old – syllable switching and itits (titi) meaning testes and alaws (wala) meaning none with the addition of “s” to appear foreign or unique, **affixation**, gays use suffixes like ‘sung’, ‘ever’, ‘chickles’ etc. added to the words, but such affixes do not change the meaning of the word like in sayt from the English word sight spelled in Filipino + the suffix sung to form saytsung, tumanders ever which came from the Filipino word tanda meaning old (Celce, 2010).

Other ways used are **substitution**, changing a sound or segment of a word to another sound or segment usually in consonant sound, like k and h changed to j (kili-kili – jili-jili (armpit), hirap – jirap (difficulty); p and b to sh like in maputik – mashutik (muddy) and buhok – shuhok (hair); and the first syllable of a word is changed to ju, bo, sho, kyo and nyo like in anak – junak (son/daughter), tao – boo (person), damo – kyomo (grass), tanda – shonda (old) and asawa – nyosawa (husband/wife).

**Acronymy** involves the use the initial letters of words like in GL for gandalang (free), OPM (Oh Promise Me) for liar, PG (pagirl) means to act like a woman etc. **Duplication or repetition** means to repeat a word or a part of a word like in chika-chika meaning to converse or gossip, chuchu and cheneschenes for meaningless. **Clipping / reduction** is done



by adapting the first syllable of a word like in ma for malayko (I don't know) and pa for pakialamko (I don't care). **Blending** is combining the first syllable of the first word and the last syllable of the second word) like in suhod from suso and tuhod meaning susohanggangtuhod (big bust) and badaf from bakladapat where p is changed to f (Fromkin, 2010).

Further, **using names of popular persons or places** like in Baliwag (name of place) meaning baliw (crazy), Luz Valdez meaning talo (lose). **Using figure of speech** like onomatopoeia, involves the use of sounds to mean something like in kumukokak (sound of a frog) meaning nagsasalita (talking) and metaphor meaning to use figurative expressions like in bukasnakarinderya for someone sitting carelessly. **Mix-mix** involves mixing words from two or more languages like in buko juice (coconut milk) meaning blow job and "on diet datung" meaning no money.

### **Reasons for Creating Gay Lingo**

The gays' major reasons for creating words of their own are varied: to become unique/different from other people, to serve as their identity, to belong or accepted in a group, to give them pleasure, and to make them inventive.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

Man lives in a sophisticated world; hence, man become more open to changes and gays are accepted in the community. Consequently, gay language begins to flourish and used in TV shows and read in tabloids. Non-gays are exposed to sward speak and use them as part of their vocabulary. One day sward speak would be incorporated in the Filipino dictionaries sold in bookstores. Finally, sward speak is formed following rules of word formation which is also used by standard Filipino and English languages.

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