

# The Spanish-American Lexicons in Filipino

## 1. Introduction:

Many scholars dedicated to the study of Philippine-American relations confirmed the presence of Spanish-American lexicons in the Filipino language. I myself dedicated a special section on this topic, in my doctoral dissertation that I submitted at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid, for my Ph.D. in Spanish Philology. We call those lexicons *americanismos*. They entered Filipino together with the *hispanismos* or Hispanic terms, during the Spanish colonial period. According to a study made by Llamzon and Thorpe (1973: 131), based on the Tesaurus Filipino of Jose Villa Panganiban of the defunct Institute of National Language, the *hispanismos* comprise 33% of our national language. However, on our findings, this 33% they claim are not pure *hispanismos*. Some percent of them are *americanismos*. It's just that up to now, we cannot determine yet how many percent of them are present in our language, for it needs further study.

On the other hand, the scholars only pointed out those Spanish-American terms but they failed to explain how they were *philipinized*, to the extent that they could hardly be noticed now as borrowed terms. To support our scholar's findings, let us consult the field of Linguistics. This is the study that will give us the scientific explanations of all the adjustments that the Spanish-American lexicons underwent, in order to blend perfectly with our native tongue. The adjustments happen, when a certain language comes in contact with another language. Many linguistic processes occur so that the foreign language can penetrate smoothly to the autochthonous language. Let us examine those *americanismos* in the different linguistic levels such as: orthographical, phonological, lexical, semantic and morphological, in order to find scientific answers to our queries. For this study we will use familiar lexicons from various fields like flora and fauna, toponymy, religion, food, customs and traditions.

## 2. The Americanismos

Based from our sources, the following are the native languages in Latin America and the countries where they are spoken:

<u>language</u>	<u>country</u>
Araucano	Chile, Argentina
Arahuaco	Dominican Republic
Caribe	Venezuela
Chibcha	Colombia, Ecuador
Guarani	Paraguay, Brazil
Imara	Bolivia Perú

Maya	Mexico, Central America
Nahuatl	Mexico
Quechua	Perú, Northern Argentina

Our Filipino language borrowed terms from these languages. However, Spanish scholar Pilar Albalá (2003: 128) pointed out that:

*Among the American languages that gave words to the languages of the Philippines, **Nahuatl** stands out. It was the “general language” (lengua general) of Mexico from where many of the expeditions towards the Pacific departed, and from where the Philippine Galleon set sail.*

This phenomenon is not surprising for us, for we all know that Spain ruled us through Mexico. We may add too that the lexicons from any of those languages mentioned above, entered our language through Nahuatl and from there to Spanish and later to Filipino.

### 3. The Linguistic Adjustments Done

#### 3.1. Orthographical Adjustments

The old Filipino alphabet was called the *abakada* and had 30 letters. They are: A, B, K, D, E, G, H, I, L, M, N, NG, O, P, R, S, T, U, W, Y. The Spanish language on the other hand used to have 30. They are: A, B, C, CH, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, LL, M, N, Ñ, O, P, Q, R, RR, S, T, U, V, W, X, Y, Z. Compared to Filipino, we lacked 11 letters such as: *c, ch, f, j, ll, ñ, q, rr, v, x, z*. According to Santiago (1985: 25-26), *those 11 letters that we lacked were given equivalents that are found in the 20 letters of our alphabet. They are:*

<i>C</i> = <i>k / s</i>	<i>Q</i> = <i>k</i>
<i>Ch</i> = <i>ts / s</i>	<i>RR</i> = <i>r</i>
<i>F</i> = <i>p</i>	<i>V</i> = <i>b</i>
<i>J</i> = <i>h / s</i>	<i>X</i> = <i>ks / s / h</i>
<i>LL</i> = <i>ly / y</i>	<i>Z</i> = <i>s</i>
<i>Ñ</i> = <i>ny</i>	

The *hispanismos* underwent those adjustments, and so were the *americanismos*. This is what happened:

##### 3.1.1. c > k

cacao > kakaw ; camote > kamote ; cocoa > kokwa

3.1.2. ch > s / ts

chayote > sayote ; chili > sili ; chocolate > tsokolate ; chongo > tsonggo

3.1.3. n (as last letter of a syllable) > ng

banqueta > bangketa ; chongo > tsonggo ; tianguis > tiyangge

3.1.4. f > p

café > kapé

3.1.5. j > h

jamaca > hamaca

3.1.6. ll > ly

parilla > parilya

3.1.7. li > ly

sandalias > sandalyas

3.1.8. h > Ø

habano > abano

The lost of H here is due to Spanish influence. The Spaniards conserve the **h** in the orthography for historical reasons, but it lost its equivalent phoneme with the evolution of the language. That is why they do not pronounce it. On the other hand, the Filipino spells the word according to its pronunciation: *kung ano ang bigkas siyang baybay*. Because the Spaniards said [a<sup>h</sup>áno] and not [ha<sup>h</sup>áno], that is where we based our spelling. Therefore, any hispanismo or americanismo with the consonant *h* orthographically, entered our language without it, unless that word entered during the earlier period of colonization where the phoneme **h** still existed.

3.1.9. q > k

quinina > kinina

3.1.10. z > s

zacate &gt; sacate

3.1.11. vvc > cvc

Both the *hispanismos* and the *americanismos* admit the pattern VVC. In the old Filipino, this was not possible because its pattern then was CVC. That is why, the *hispanismos* or the *americanismos* with the pattern VVC and wanted to enter the old Filipino had to insert a consonant between two vowels, in order to follow the Filipino syllable pattern of CVC. For example:

caimito &gt; kayumito ; achuete &gt; atsuwete

## 3.2. Lexical Adjustments

Only simple form of lexicons of *americanismos* entered the Filipino language, unlike the *hispanismos* where various types entered. From our data, we gathered different adjustments done by the Spanish-American lexicons in order to penetrate the Filipino language smoothly. Here they are:

3.2.1. autochthonous form > Spanish > Filipino

<u>autochthonous</u>		<u>Spanish</u>		<u>Filipino</u>
achiotl	>	achiote	>	atsuwete
cacahuatl	>	cacao - cocoa	>	kakaw - kokwa
camotli	>	camote	>	kamote
chayotli	>	chayote	>	sayote
chilli	>	chili	>	sili / sile
petlacalli	>	petaca	>	pitaka
petlatl	>	petate	>	petate
tamalli	>	tamal / tamale	>	tamales
tatl	>	tata	>	tatay
tianquiztl	>	tianguis	>	tiyangge
tzapotl	>	zapote	>	zapote
tzictli	>	chicle	>	chiclet
xicamatl	>	jicama	>	singkamás
xocolatl	>	chocolate	>	tsokolate / sikulate
zacatl	>	zacate	>	sakate

3.2.2. Spanish form to Filipino

<u>Spanish</u>	>	<u>Filipino</u>
Abocado	>	abokado
Acapulco	>	akapulko
alpaca	>	alpaka
anona	>	anonas
banqueta	>	bangketa
bejuco	>	behuko
butaca	>	butaka
cabuya	>	kabuyá
cacahuate	>	kakawate
cacique	>	kasike
café	>	kapé
caimito	>	kayumito / kaimito
calosúchil	>	kalasutsi
camachile	>	kamatsilé
caníbal	>	kánibal
carí	>	karé
caribú	>	karibu
cazabe	>	kasabâ
ciruelas	>	sinigwelas
coca	>	koka
condor	>	kondor
coyote	>	koyote
chicha	>	sitsa
chichigua	>	sisiwa
chichirica	>	sitsirika
chico	>	tsiko
chongo	>	tsonggo
enaguas	>	enagwas / nagwas
epazote	>	alpasote/ alpasotis /aposotis /pasotis
guachinango	>	guwatsinanggo
guanábana	>	guyabano
guano	>	guwano
guayaba	>	bayabas
guayacol	>	guwayakol
habano	>	abano
hamaca	>	hamaca
hule	>	ule / uli
jaguar	>	haguwar
jalapa	>	halapa
aguey	>	magey
maíz	>	maís
mocasín	>	mókasín
papalote	>	paruparó

parilla	>	parilya
patata	>	patatas
quinina	>	kinina
sandalias	>	sandalyas
tabaco	>	tabako
tabasco	>	tabasko
tapanco	>	tapangko
tapioca	>	tapyoka
tequila	>	tekila
tiza	>	tisa
tocayo	>	tocayo / tukayo
tomate	>	kamatis
tulis	>	tulisan

The lexicon enaguas got two forms: *enagwas* and *nagwas*, while epazote has four: *alpasote*, *alpasotis*, *aposotis*, *pasotis*. These variations happened because the *americanismos* and the *hispanismos* penetrated not only the Tagalog language (which is the basis of the national language – Filipino), but also other languages of the Philippines. There are 100 principal languages in the country, aside from hundreds of dialects and variations.

### 3.1.3. Spanish > Filipino = No change

<u>Spanish</u>		<u>Filipino</u>
atole	>	atole
cinchona	>	<i>cinchona</i>
loro	>	loro
maní	>	manî
papaya	>	papaya
sabana	>	sabana
torta	>	torta
totem	>	totem

The case of *cinchona* where the letters c and ch were retained, could be a sample of the late entry of this *hispanismo* and *americanismo* in Filipino. By *late entry* I mean, it was already modern times when that lexicon arrived here and therefore was able to enter our language without any change.

### 3.1.4. Modern americanismos

At present, Spanish-American lexicons continue to enter in our language. But probably, our countrymen do not notice this. Lately, we can hear on radio broadcast the following words or new products being advertised here:

taheebo	lapacho
hierba/yerba mate	yacón

The first three products are tea which they say are very good anti-oxidants, while the fourth, the *yacón*, looks like our “kamote” but once peeled and eaten is like our “singkamás”.

### 3.3. Phonological Adjustments

#### 3.3.1. vowels

##### 3.3.1.1. e > i

petaca > pitaka

Generally, among the *hispanismos* that entered Filipino, if the first vowel of a word is an *e*, it is changed to *i*. This linguistic behavior also happened to the *americanismos* during the process of adjustment. This occurred because in the old, old Filipino language, there were only three (3) vowels, namely: *A*, *I*, *U*. The *E* and the *O* vowels were borrowed from Spanish. That is why up to now, any foreign lexicon that enters our language carrying a vowel *E*, has the tendency to fall to the vowel *I*. The same thing happen to those with the vowel *O*, it falls to *U*.

##### 3.3.1.2. variation of e / i

chili > sile / sili

In some regions the vowel *E* was well acquired while in the others, no. The vowel *I* remained stronger than the *E*, thus a variation occurred.

##### 3.3.1.3. final vowel plus glottal

When a Filipino vowel is found at the final position of a word, it is always followed by a glottal ? or **h**. This is because the syllable pattern of Filipino is always cvc. The glottal is considered a consonant. So, the *hispanismos* and the *americanismos* ending in a vowel, got a glottal when they entered Filipino. Examples are:

maní [māní] > [maní?] ‘maní’

torta [tórtah] > [tórtah] ‘torta’

#### 3.3.1.4. rising diphthongs oa / ua > wa

The Spanish and Spanish–American diphthongs *oa* and *ua* both adjusted to our own diphthongs *wa*, like in :

guano > guwano                      guayacol > guwayakol

#### 3.3.1.5. declining diphthong ao > aw

Just like the rising diphthong, declining diphthongs also adjusted to Filipino  
Example:

cacao > kakaw

#### 3.3.1.5. simplification of diphthong

The diphthong ua was simplified in the lexicons :

guanábano > guyabano  
guayaba > bayabas

#### 3.3.2. consonants :

##### 3.3.2.1. /tS/ ‘ch’ > /t/ ‘t’ + /s/ ‘s’ & /s/ ‘s’

The Spanish linguo-palatal affricate graphically ch has no exact equivalent in Filipino. So, it made use of our phonemes /t/ + /s/ to be able to enter smoothly in our language. Example:

‘chocolate’ [tSokoláte] > [tsokoláte] ‘tsokolate’

and in another occasion, it adjusted simply to /s/ as in :

‘chayote’ [tSaǵóte] > [sayóte] ‘sayote’  
‘chili’ [tSili] > [sili] ‘sili’

##### 3.3.2.2. /g/ ‘g’ > /b/ ‘b’

The linguo-velar /g/ adjusted to the bilabial /b/ because they are both “oclusivos”. This happened to :

‘guayaba’ [guaǵáβa] > [bayábas] ‘bayabas’



### 3.3.2.3. /ŋ/ ‘n + q, k, g, j’ > /ŋ/ ‘ng’

In Spanish, when the nasal **n** is followed by the consonants q, k, g, j, it becomes linguo-velar /ŋ/. Fortunately, we have this phoneme in Filipino but graphically written as “ng”. We call this *diagrafía*, meaning two letters with only one phoneme. So the *americanismos* also adjusted to this. For example :

tianguis	>	tiyanggé	chongo	>	tsonggo
banqueta	>	bangketa	guachinango	>	guwatsinanggo
tapanco	>	tapanggko			

### 3.3.2.4. addition of the nasal /ŋ/ ‘n’ linguo-velar

The lexicon **jicama** must have been pronounced more or less like [xiŋkamá] by the Spaniards or Latinos who introduced this word here. So, in the process of adjustment, the nasal linguo-velar /ŋ/ found the equivalent graphic ng in our language. That is why, *jicama* became *singkamás* in Filipino. To explain further this particular adjustment, Trubetzkoy ( 1973: 46) said:

*El sistema fonológico de una lengua es comparable a una **criba** a través de la cual pasa todo lo que se dice (...). Las personas se apropian del sistema de su lengua materna, y cuando oyen hablar otra lengua emplean involuntariamente para el análisis de lo que oyen, la “criba” fonológica que les es habitual, es decir de su lengua materna. Pero como esta criba no se adapta a la lengua extranjera, surgen numerosos errores e incomprensiones. Los sonidos de la lengua extranjera reciben una interpretación fonológica de la propia lengua.*

### 3.3.2.5. /λ/ ‘li / ll’ > /ly/ ‘ly’

This Spanish lateral /λ/ graphically ‘li’ and ‘ll’ respectively both adjusted to the Filipino /ly/ ‘ly’ like in :

‘calle’ [kále] > [kálye] ‘kalye’ ; ‘familia’ [famílja] > [pamilya] ‘pamilya’

The *americanismos* followed this pattern. Examples are:

‘sandalias’ [sandáljas] > [sandályas] ‘sandalyas’

‘parilla’ [paríla] > [parílya] ‘parilya’

### 3.3.2.6. /θ/ ‘z’ > /s/ ‘s’

The letter **z** has the phoneme /θ/ in Spanish which is fricative, linguo-interdental. However, this phoneme did not enter in Spanish-America, and instead, it adjusted to the phoneme /s/ which is also fricative but linguo-alveolar. That is why we say that in Spain they use the *ceceo* like in [θíne] (cine), while in Spanish America they use the *seseo* [síne]. The same thing happened to the *hispanismos* and the *americanismos* in the Philippines. We use the *seseo* and not the *ceceo* because the letter **z** with the phoneme /θ/ adjusted to our /s/ like in:

‘zacate’ [θakáte] > [sakáte] ‘sakate’

### 3.3.2.7. addición of the dental /t/, graphically t.

The lexicon *chiclé* got a consonant-dental **t** in final position when it entered Filipino. It became *tsíklet*. This happened because the said lexicon entered our language, not together with the *hispanismos* but with the *anglicismos* or English terms which are also present in our language, due to the 50 years rule of the United States in the Philippines. Therefore, although it is an *americanismo*, its source was not the Spanish-American ‘chiclé’, but the *anglicismo* ‘chiclet’.

### 3.3.3. Change of Accent

Filipinos did not have much problem with the pronunciation of *hispanismos* and *americanismos* that entered our language. However, the change of accent could not be avoided because, no two languages are exactly the same. According to Sapir (1921: 210),

*The borrowing of foreign words always entails their phonetic modification. There are sure to be foreign sounds or accentual peculiarities that do not fit the native phonetic habits.*

This happened to the case of: ‘piña’ [píŋa] > [pinyá] ‘pinya’.

On the other hand, the *anglicismos* influenced the change of accent in two Spanish-American lexicons that entered our language. They are:

‘caníbal’ [kaníbal] > [kánibal] ‘kanibal’

‘chiclé’ [tSiklé] > [tsíklet] ‘chiclet’

They obviously acquired the English accents and also, this is a sample of late entry of *americanismo*.

### 3.4. Semantic Adjustments

The following semantic adjustments were done by the *americanismos* to enter the Filipino language.

#### 3.4.1. Enlargement

By enlargement we mean that aside from the meaning of the word in the original language, it gains new meaning (s) in the language that it penetrates. According to Ullmann (1959: 174), this phenomenon happens because *a word may retain its previous sense or senses and at the same time acquire on or several new senses*. For example, **Guadalupe** is a term better known in Mexico to be referring to the Virgin Mary, (patron saint of Mexico). This image was brought here and got devotees, but aside from its term referring to the Virgin Mary, the word “Guadalupe” got more meanings here. It is also 1) the name of a place in Makati City, 2) the name of a shopping center in the same place and likewise 3) name of a Metro Rail Transit Station. And sometimes, some Filipinos do not know anymore that “Guadalupe” refers to the Virgin. For them it’s just the name of those places mentioned.

The name **Mexico** refers to a country in Latin America. In the Philippines, aside from that, it also refers to a town in the province of Pampanga. That is why we have the theory that may be, the said town was founded by a Mexican and not by a Spaniard. It is because, the usual practice is, when a person finds a new place and wants to give it a name, he usually names it after his place of origin.

The words **zapote** and **anonas** are both names of trees in Spanish-America. These trees were brought here and aside from referring to trees, they were also used as names of places like **Zapote** in Las Piñas and **Anonas** in Quezon City. Not only that, the term **Anonas** now also refers to a station of the Light Rail Transit.

#### 3.4.2. Change of Reference

Some *americanismos* that entered our language changed reference. According to Ullmann (1991: 219) :

*Mientras una palabra permanezca firmemente vinculada a su raíz y a otros miembros de la misma familia, conservaría su significado dentro de ciertos límites. Una vez que se han roto estos lazos (...), el sentido puede evolucionar sin trabas y alejarse de sus orígenes.*

This linguistic behavior also happened to the *americanismos* in Filipino. For example, the word **Guagua** refers to a *bus* in Venezuela. In the Philippines, this term refers to a town, again in the province of Pampanga.

The word **atole** refers to a drink made of flour in Spanish-America. In the Philippines, “atole” refers to a *paste* or cola made from flour.

### 3.4.3. Retention of practices but their term is translated to Filipino

The Philippines was Christianized by Spain. But two of our religious practices came from Mexico and not from Spain. We practice them here every Christmas season, but their names were translated to Filipino. First is the **posadas**, translated to Filipino as **panawagan** or **panuluyan**. The term *posadas* here is use as family name. Its use as a religious practice is unknown here. This is done every Christmas eve before the mid-night mass. It is a re-enactment of the search of St. Joseph and St. Mary for a place where St. Mary could give birth to the baby Jesus.

Another practice we inherited from Mexico is the **Misa de Gallo**. This is a nine day dawn mass novena that is done from December 16 to the 24<sup>th</sup>. During the time of our grandparents, this is the term they used to refer to it. But as time goes by, this was translated to **simbang gabi**. And as the time continues to evolve, the Filipino term is getting more appropriate because the practice now is to celebrate this Christmas novena not only during the dawn but also at night at about 8:00 or 9:00 p.m., depending on the different parish schedule. The term “misa de gallo” is now disappearing little by little in the modern Filipino and is being replaced by the word “simbang gabi”.

## 3.5. Morphological Adjustments

### 3.5.1. s > plural > lexicalized

A group of *hispanismos* entered the Filipino language in the plural form. That is, the singular form is unknown here. For example, *uvas*, *botones*, *barriles*, *tomates*, *castañas*, all penetrated our Filipino, underwent orthographical and phonological changes and became lexicalized. By *lexicalized* we mean they lost their value as plural while ending in *s*. In Filipino, whether singular or plural we say *ubas*, *butones*, *bariles*, *kamatis*, *kastanyas*, etc. Some times we add the Filipino morpheme for plural “mga”. Since the *americanismos* entered our language with the *hispanismos*, they suffered the same phenomenon. Their singular form did not enter, only the plural forms were able to penetrate and became lexicalized. Some of them are:

guayaba	>	bayabas
jicama	>	singkamas
tamal / tamale	>	tamales
patata	>	patatas

### 3.5.2. tata + y

Another term we found in our data is the lexicon *tata*. According to the dictionary of the RAE (1992: 1381),

*tata* (del lat. *tata*) f. fam. *niñera y por ext. muchacha de servicio*  
 2. *cariñosamente en algunas regiones, hermana.* 3. *Murcia y América*  
*Padre, Papá. Es voz de cariño, y en algunas partes de América se usa*  
*también como tratamiento de respeto.*

So, the word “tata” is not an autochthonous term of Spanish-America. It is Spanish, which it inherited from its mother language, Latin. However, when this term entered America, it was used to refer to father, which in turn was inherited by the Filipinos, although, it underwent a morphological change here. The morpheme *y* was added to it, making it *tatay*, to refer to father. This is because, this morpheme *y* is one of the Filipino morphemes for *affection*. We use it for proper nouns use as nicknames like Ninoy, Noynoy, Tinay, Kikay, Juday or in some regions to refer to family relations like *papay*, *Mamay*, *manay*, *manoy*, *bunsoy*. Up to this time, we use the term “Tatay” to call our father, although lately, the borrowed terms *mama*, *papa*, *mommy*, *daddy* have gained grounds. Before, only rich people and mostly urban used those terms. Now, even people from the lower class of society, whether urban or rural, prefer those borrowed terms. The lexicon “Tatay” is little by little becoming a term of the old and conservative people.

#### 4. Conclusions

To conclude this brief study, now we can explain how the *americanismos* adjusted to our Filipino language. Orthographically, they had to adjust to our old alphabet with only 20 letters. Lexically, we found only simple lexicons, but it is interesting to note that up to now, American lexicons still enter our Filipino. Phonologically, of course they adjusted to Filipino sounds, some underwent change of accent, while others got the glottal, a final consonant found in languages belonging to the Malayo-Polynesian family of languages. Semantically, we found three adjustments such as: enlargement of meanings, change of reference and retention of practice but the term for them were translated to Filipino. In the morphological level, just like the *hispanismos*, some *americanismos* entered only in the plural form and became lexicalized. Their singular forms are unknown here.

With those linguistic changes that the Spanish-American lexicons underwent, they were able to blend perfectly to the Filipino language, to the extent that they have become beyond recognition as *americanismos*. Are they still loan words ? For us, no more. They are already ours, an American legacy to us, a living witness to our historical link with Spanish-America. As Pilar Albalá (2003: 126) puts it :

*... those words of Indo-American origin – transmitted in Spanish –*  
*that have taken their place in the lexicon of the Philippine languages, is an*  
*an eloquent proof of centuries long historical relationships.*

When we talk about this topic in our graduate classes in the university, we tell our students that, if only we could lift and transfer the Philippines geographically, we would place it beside Cuba and Puerto Rico because that is where we rightly belong.

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