

“CONYO TALK”: THE AFFIRMATION OF HYBRID IDENTITY AND POWER IN CONTEMPORARY PHILIPPINE DISCOURSE

MIGNETTE MARCOS GARVIDA
RYERSON UNIVERSITY

Abstract – The Philippine linguistic and cultural phenomenon “coño talk” (a mix of predominantly Spanish and English with tagalog) is a type of discourse that purportedly identifies and differentiates people of ‘power’ from the common masses, and arose from the impact of Spanish and American colonization. This paper examines how web discussion forums embody these social tensions through ethnomethodological discourse analysis (Tate 2007) and Bhabha’s (1990) third space to demonstrate the patent cultural hybridity in the Philippine society. Analysis demonstrates how participants as conyo speakers position themselves, and discusses the socio-cultural implications of these presentations. Results show participants instinctively and/or intentionally use this type of discourse and position themselves to construct or establish their own identities. Implications for cultural hybridity and the constraining, facilitating or subjectification effects of this type of discourse on Philippine society are discussed.

Keywords: cultural hybridism, ethnomethodology, discourse analysis, coño talk, 21st century
Philippine society

1. The origins of ‘Conyo’ talk

Due to steady linguistic influences, resulting from contacts with different peoples and cultures, a word or a phrase may take on another meaning among a given group of people, entirely different from its original significance, where “a meeting of cultures in the *intercultural* sphere results in irreversible *intracultural* changes” (Mey 2007, p. 171). This phenomenon is commonly observed among multilinguals who usually “develop functions of linguistic heterogeneity which go beyond the expressive possibilities available in a single code” (Southworth and Daswani 1977, p. 224 as cited in Fasold 1991, p. 8), and in most cases, their translations or interpretations signify only its figurative fate (Bhabha 1990).

‘Conyo’ (from the Spanish *coño* meaning cunt) is one of the many words and phrases that had taken on new meaning in the Philippines. Aside from its original meaning, *coño* is also an interjection, and according to several anecdotes told through time, Spaniards used to finish their sentences with this word. Indeed, in some former Spanish colonies, *coño* became as well a synonym of Spaniard, as exclaimed by a Chilean patron when he heard the Peninsular Spanish accent in Delibes’ (1995) *Diario de un emigrante*: “¡Pucha, un coño! ... que había querido decir español! (p. 71)” (Darn, a coño! ...that he had wanted to say a Spaniard.). This typical Spanish exclamation has been picked up as well by Filipinos to refer to Spaniards, and eventually used to signify a person who belongs to upper middle class, fair skin (that is, of Caucasian background), and is living in an exclusive neighborhood; indeed, very reminiscent of the colonial times. As a result, in Philippine context ‘conyo’ has no natural connection with the signified, that is, the object it is understood to represent originally.

In the last decade, it has become the solution to problems of intercommunication where some Filipinos draw on the languages they know and tailor them for their specific shifting communicative needs. ‘Conyo’ talk became an emulation of how English and/or Spanish speakers talked to native Filipinos: a sentence in English and/or Spanish with some Filipino words. In time, it has become a stance among the middle class and the preferred means of communicating with others and establishing potential relationships.

The present study is based on an analysis of randomly selected web-based discussions in ‘conyo’ talk, that is, a *mélange* of English, Filipino and Spanish in one sentence or paragraph with its distinctive grammar and syntax. I analysed these web discussion forums since they generated threads and sequences of talk in which the participants’ identity, despite taking on pseudonyms, was being constructed using discourses of being or not being ‘conyo’. Following the discourse analysis approach developed by Tate (2007), termed ‘ethnomethodologically inclined’, and Bhabha’s (1990) third space, I asked the following questions: How does ‘conyo’ talk shape consciousness, and how does it shape or influence the speaker participants’ response? What are the circumstances in which socially constructed identities change, that is, which language/s serve better the participants’ intention? What are the common grounds and/or linguistic features in their talk?

2. Ethnomethodology, discourse analysis and blogs: the creation and recreation of identities, difference and power

Discourse analysis has come a long way from being politically motivated scrutinizing the disproportionate balance of power (Fairclough 2004; van Dijk 1993) to more pragmatic approaches (Levinson 1983; Brown and Yule 1983). Ethnomethodology, an approach originally proposed by Garfinkel in his work *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (1967), analyzes language from its users’ point of view. He argues that individuals in any type of discourse relate words with the images they may represent, and if clarification is needed, they negotiate meanings using synonyms or metaphors. It is through these practical and situated actions that individuals create and maintain social order.

Traditionally, many scholars paired ethnomethodology with conversation analysis (Coulthard 1985; Garfinkel 1967; see also Marcon and Gopal 2008), that is, the practices involved in talking and reacting, and it focuses mainly on how people, through their discourse, get along with others in their everyday life. For the same reason, in discourse analysis, ethnomethodology sees language as an integral part of social reality and interprets how a group of people uses discourse to make sense of the world. Ethnomethodology focuses mainly on everyday routine interactions to understand the participants’ behavior, their attitude towards others, and it is important the analysis be done within its social context in order to identify the key elements persistent in the interaction and those, despite generally ignored, that play a decisive role in preserving the status quo (Hammersley 1997). How do participants position themselves to draw attention to their identities, difference and/or power?

Tate (2007) proposed an approach that tries to answer this question, pairing ethnomethodology with discourse analysis: ethnomethodologically-inclined discourse analysis (*eda*); and like in pragmatic analyses, it takes “into account the content of speakers’ utterances, as well as their (inferred) intentions” (Ariel 2010, p. 219). It involves identifying the subjects’ intention, locating their positions, looking at the chronological organization of

subject positioning and re-positioning. Participants may take on one identity at the beginning of an exchange, and may take on another as reaction to what is said. Her approach brought together Bhabha’s third space where the speaker can have in real-time the same and different identities, Bakhtin’s dialogism: the construction of self and others, and Foucault’s subject power/knowledge relation during discourse.

According to Bhabha, each individual occupies a third space where s/he identifies “with and through another object, an object of otherness” (1990, p. 211 as cited in Tate 2007). From this arose the idea of hybridity-of-the-everyday where she concluded that one can grasp an array of voices from an individual’s talk from which eventually his/her identity position emerges. Conversely, Bakhtin (1981) considered that we learn about the world through others and that identity or identities are revealed in the course of exchanges, giving us a “concrete heteroglot conception of the world” (p. 293). Participants continually negotiates their identities in exchanges that are “structured and conceptualized in the context of the dialogue as a whole, which consists of its utterances (“own” from the point of view of the speaker) and of alien utterances (those of the partner)” (ibid, p. 284). On the other hand, Foucault saw discourse as a “system of representation” that “influences how ideas are put into practice and used to regulate the conduct of others” (Hall 2006, p. 72). He explained further that the power individuals or subjects have in their everyday life is what makes them unique, it is attached to their identity (Foucault 2000). Each participant plays a role in the production of dialogic exchanges where one may let the other person dominate the conversation, or s/he maintains consciously her or his identity and self-knowledge. Notwithstanding, they are all constrained to operate within the limits of how others think, talk and the truthfulness of what they are saying.

In this Age of Information, *eda* and the idea of a third space, in my opinion, can likewise be applied to blogs and web-based discussions. They are an alternative form of conversation where participants have open access to what is being discussed and can react to them creating threads similar to sequences of talk. Participants write their opinions and reactions on the different threads posted displaying as well their emotions through emoticons. They may constantly change their position according to what is being discusses; and since they are permitted to use pseudonyms, they can create their own identities.

3. Analysis

3.1. *Data: Web discussion forums*

In this study, I have selected web-discussions where the opening threads raised the question on the existence and legitimacy of coño talk and its speakers vis-à-vis the society in general. These discussions were written from 2000 to 2009 mainly from three popular Philippine websites (*PinoyExchange.com*, *AsiaFinest.com* and *Candymag.com*), and had generated 448 threads, 108 threads and 44 threads, respectively. The text-based discussions selected randomly during the data collection were mostly in ‘conyo’; however, some participants preferred to express their opinion only in English or Tagalog.

Several researchers (Dorleijn and Nortier 2009, Herring et al. 2006, Zappen 2005) concur that the participants’ texts or threads, though written, are like spontaneous speech. Participants can post their comments at any given time, follow the threads that they prefer to

respond to, and create their identities ‘Conyo’ talk participants constantly identify with or distinguish themselves from others. They can position themselves more easily without fear of retaliation or ridicule as well as express solidarity, difference and/or power similar to everyday interactions or the hybridity-of-the-everyday. Participants use a more informal language, colloquial forms and other features that are usually associated with spoken language. In this case, hybridity occurs in the responses to the threads posted in reaction to positioning within the ambiguity of what is a Filipino. Are Filipinos only Asians, Hispanics, or Anglophones, or all of these? At the same time, in their continual accommodations of positions and power differences the idea of otherness may haunt the possibility of identification, for in many multiethnic societies such as the Philippines, “discourse is bounded by the essentialism of social status” (Tate 2007).

Factors independent of specific speakers and circumstances, such as economic forces, power relation as well as factors directly related to speakers’ social networks and relationships, their attitudes and their self-perception and perception of others, influence their use of one or another language, or both. In virtual interactions, due to anonymity, member participants have more freedom to create identities to reflect their thoughts and belief. Pseudonyms chosen by member participants, such as ‘Dakilang Kabayo’ or ‘opinoynated’, seem to reflect their self-perception and social identity while discussing the idea of ‘conyo’.

3.2. Web-based discussions on “What is conyo ba?” and other forums where participants discuss “coño talk” and its speakers

3.2.1. How does conyo talk shape consciousness, and how does it shape or influence the speaker participants’ response?

The Filipinos of today still strive to be identified with past ruling social groups. Hence, it is not surprising to note that the majority of members’ identities on-line are in English: ‘somuchmore’, ‘rodent slayer’, ‘cyber funk’, ‘reconnaissance’, ‘dark archer’, etc. On the other hand, some chose a Spanish identity such as ‘yo soy guapo’ (I am handsome) or ‘unicohijo’ (only son), etc. Similarly, some preferred hybrid names, that is, words of English or Spanish origins but which have become part of the vernaculars’ everyday lexicon: ‘Qubetha’ (from Spanish *cubeta*, and in Filipino, bathroom), or ‘Dakilang Kabayo’ (from Spanish *caballo*, Heroic Horse), ‘opinoynated’ (a play of words, *pinoy* from Pilipino and from English opinionated), etc. Despite the participants’ chosen identities, it can be observed that their positions vary in response to the threads posted on-line.

In the opening thread from *pinoyexchange.com* on 09/01/2008, “*Why ba may conyo?* (Why does conyo exist anyway?), ‘jpmalpass’ who has never heard of the term before, asks why does the term exists, when did people start using it, where does it come from, and does this type of phenomenon exist in other countries.

(1)

Guys/Gals, why ba may conyo? What decade ba sila nauso, nakakairita ba them? Where ba sila nanggaling? Kasi nung child pakoparang d ko naman sila nahehear eh. How can you tell na conyo ang isang human? May conyo ba in other bansa? (Guys/Gals, why does conyo exist anyway? In which decade did they begin using it? Because when I was a child, I never heard about it. When can you tell when someone is conyo? Are there conyos in other countries?)

Everyone has an opinion on what ‘conyo’ talk is and who is a ‘conyo’ speaker. According to a number of participants, ‘conyo’ talk is the use of what is already known as ‘Taglish’, a mixture of Tagalog (the most spoken Philippine language) and English, and according to Bautista (2004), and has been used for decades as familiar language among the middle and upper classes, college-educated and urbanized Filipinos, to distinguish themselves from others. However, when did ‘Taglish’ become ‘conyo’ talk? Participant ‘sومuchmore’ hypothesizes that the origins of ‘conyo’ must have been “an attempt by younger members of the affluent and highly prestigious Manila’s Insular Spaniards¹ to assimilate or integrate.” In the same manner, participant ‘rodent_slayer’ writes that this discourse exists and is commonly used in schools because “old-rich families used to mix their tagalog dialect with english words when speaking at home” (09/08/2008, pinoyexchange.com).

Another participant agrees that ‘conyo’ speakers indeed come from “middle to upper class”, and they mingle only with people from their own social class, own a car and “speak half tagalog, half english, or in short taglish” (Qubetha). On the other hand, quoting ‘rodent_slayer’, participant ‘sanamanagan’ (09/08/2008, pinoyexchange.com) refutes that nannies from Manila, who were not fluent in English nor Spanish, created the ‘conyo’ talk to communicate to their employer’s family: “actually when the old-rich hired nannies who speak broken english... that’s the preference in manila. the old rich in davao and cebu prefer to speak straight spanish or ... english.”

Participant ‘deejay23’ (09/09/2008, pinoyexchange.com) thinks that this “dialect” must have arisen because of too many movies about rich families who spoke Taglish, and it caught on with the public.

(2)

I think it originated nga ata with the movies... always anak mayaman who speaks in taglish...I think since then, duon na lalo naging uso ang mag speak ng conyo dialect, like you know, so everybody else can sound mayaman, even if they’re not (I think it originated with the movies... a rich child always speaks Taglish... I think since then, especially it has become fashionable to speak conyo dialect, like you know, so everybody else can sound rich, even if they’re not.)

3.2.2. *What are the circumstances in which socially constructed identities change, that is, which language/s serve better the participants’ intention?*

Participant ‘mindweaver’ agrees with ‘deejay23’ and adds that this phenomenon exists due to colonial mentality. He adds that it is the type of discourse used by a minor group of people claiming cultural and social “supremacy”. Participant ‘Kostijn’ writes that ‘conyo’ speakers seek to differentiate themselves from others: “Displaying themselves as conyos is like drawing a line between ‘they’ and the impoverished society. It’s a way to express ‘i m not among them’.” This strategy creates space between the speaker and the receiver of the discourse. Just like in a mind game, the speaker, as aptly phrased by Foucault (2000), “acts with regard to what he thinks the others’ action of the others is and what he considers others think to be his own; it is the way in which one seeks to have the advantage over others” (p. 346).

¹ In the Philippines, Spaniards born in the islands are called “Insular” to differentiate them from the “Peninsular” or born in the Iberian Peninsula.

As to who are the real ‘conyo’ speakers today, ‘Sanmanagan’ opines that they are “the rich who behave like jerks and *****es - very much unlike the prim, proper, and polished aristocratic scions of the good old days.” Nevertheless, many consider ‘conyo’ speakers as mostly social climbers. Participant ‘Dredd0’ admits that every now and then s/he speaks it, but in the right place. S/He writes that it does not offend his/her ears, especially if somebody is making fun of those who speak it pretending to be classy, and yet they do things that people from lower social class typically do.

(3)

dude, why ba may conyo. pero its kind of ok naman to my ears lalo na when people make fun of it. But some people talaga, they really speak konyo and they are so much like pa-sosyal but they are like making tusok tusok some calamares along the kanto and... pretending that it was their first time to make sakay sa jeepney... Me, i sometimes speak conyo pero nasa lugar naman. (yeah there are places na okay lang mag-conyo talk 😊) sometimes pa there are people who are so pa-sosyal... (w/c is so cheap)..., geez, good thing i have a car so i don't have to try hard climbing up the social ladder. (09/04/2008, pinoyexchange.com) (Dude, why is there conyo anyway. But it's kind of okay to my ears especially when people make fun of it. But really some people, they really speak conyo and they pretend to be classy but they buy squids on the street corners and... pretend that it is their first time to take the public transport... Me, I sometimes speak conyo but in the right place. (Yeah, there are places where conyo talk is okay.) Sometimes there are people who pretend to be rich... (which is so cheap)..., geez, good thing I have a car so I don't have to try hard climbing up the social ladder.)

Similarly, from earlier discussions on “Why Filipinos like to mix languages?” in AsianFinest.com participant ‘liquidskies’ confesses that s/he speaks conyo, especially when used in jokes.

(4)

😊 Yu-uck, that's sooo s-q-H2o!
(meaning squatter get it? SQ-water) 😊
Even though I laugh at all of these I'm pretty prone to conyo speak myself though (09/19/2000)

Conversely, participant ‘Gusay’ (Oct. 2, 2008, pinoyexchange.com) expresses annoyance and displeasure, through fuming red-faced emoticons, to people who speak it as they clearly are pretending to be from the upper middle class: “*nakakainis ang mga Conio 😡 why can't they speak straight ENGLISH no? dagdagan pa ng mga pa-CUTE ng TWANG! buseettt!!! 😡 Mga pa-sosyal! grabe!!!*” (The Conios are so annoying why can't they speak straight English no? adding a CUTE TWANG! such a pain!!!) Participant ‘caryatid kitten’ shares the same opinion: “I find what you call the “conyo” annoying, but what I dislike even more are people who try so hard to speak this way on the premise they think it sounds “sosyal!”” (09/17/2008, pinoyexchange.com). Participant ‘Ravegr10315’, in another discussion “*Conyo ka ba?*” (Are you conyo?), expresses her frustration as this type of talk does not help anybody.

(5)

😡 If they really want to speak english why dont they just say it in plain english?? Its not an excuse being conio or whatever, doing that practice will not improve us. It is really irritating in the ear. 🙄 (02/03/2006, pinoyexchange.com)

In another web discussion in Candymag.com participant ‘purpleiscool’ defends ‘conyo’ speakers who are discriminated because there is a perception that they are from the lower

class: *"i don't like it some filipinos think some conyos are from a lower class. they have no right to discriminate and judge based on the language they speak."* (04/21/2009, candymag.com)

Then again, discourse moved to its real meaning in Spanish and discussions turned from 'conyo' to Spanish. At this point, some members created and assigned themselves the position of culturally superior, as the holder of the true knowledge, writing in Spanish. As Foucault stated, "relationships of communication imply goal-directed activities and, by modifying the field of information between partners, produce effects of power" (Foucault 2000, p. 338). Thus, participant 'ubermensch' writes: *"¿porque hay conyo? para el pene puede lo entre."* (Why is there conyo? so the penis can enter it.), and 'sanamanagan', who in earlier discussions has criticized the "conyos", apparently knows the real meaning of the word and concurs: *"exactamente, Una mujer tiene un conyo así que puedo utilizar mi pene será malo que una mujer tenga"* (Exactly, A woman has conyo so that I can use my penis it would be bad that a woman had it). In the following exchanges of what the word really means, participant 'clawed out' seemed oblivious to what are the previous discussions all about, and insists "why nga ba guys?" (Why is it anyway?). S/he, like others who are confronted with a foreign language, treats the foreignness of the language as silence marking a shifting boundary that distances him/her from others (Bhabha 1990). On the other hand, participant 'unicohijo' confesses that he is enjoying the thread, while participant 'TriNa-Bee' claims ignorance on what it really means but ended the thread with a big green grin emoticon giving away what s/he really thinks.

As the discussion went on, discourse shifted to the nation's colonial past, as participants try to understand why 'conyo' talk exists. Each participant's subjective history and discourse are parts of the assemblage of the nation, and that collective history or memory is consequently the resource they can draw on to express and justify their behavior (Harrè and van Langenhove 1999). Some members think it is the Spaniards' fault that this type of discourse is perpetuated. Participant 'Fenix' accuses Spanish colonizers of being vicious, and Indians, then and now, of being stupid not to know what "coño" means.

(6)

Salbahe talaga yang mga spanish colonizers natin dati. Siguro yung mga hampas lupang social-climber na mna indio dati tinanong kung ano ang maaring itawag sa kanila- in spanish, sabi sa kanila "coño" daw ang tawag sa kanila. Hahaha! mukhang hanggang ngayon di pa din alam ng mga estupidong indio kung ano ibig sabihin ng salitang yun! (10.26.2008, pinoyexchange.com)(Our Spanish colonizers before were vicious. Surely those pitiable social climber Indians asked them how they could address them in Spanish, they were told they were called "coño". Hahaha! it seems that until now the stupid Indians still do not know what the word means!)

'Kostijn', reiterating what s/he has written previously, insists that it is a tactic in order not to be identified as "poor".

(7)

May conyo kasi Philippines ay 3rd world: may rich, midclass, and poor. (There are 'conyos' because Philippines is a third world country: there are rich, middle class and poor.) Some conyos are rle rich while some are posers from the midclass or worse, frm the poor. Displaying themselves as conyos is like drawing a line between they and the impoverishd society. It's a way to express "im not among them." (10/26/2008, pinoyexchange.com)

Participant ‘Dakilang Kabayo’ agrees with ‘Kostijn’ and adds that this is the result of either the disappearing middle class, who has become a part of the lower class.

(8)
wala na yatang middle class sa pinas
its either
extremely poor
poor
lamang nang isang ligo from poor poor
mayaman
super rich

(It seems that there is no more middle class in the Philippines, it’s either extremely poor, poor, –just-a-bath-away-from-poor poor-, rich and super rich)

Participant ‘cyberfunk’, on the other hand, tries to summarize this inclination to imitate the country’s former ruling powers and laconically writes (Sep. 20, 2009), “*Kase indio daw tayo...*” (Because we are Indians.)

3.2.3. What are the common grounds and/or linguistic features in their talk?

The antagonism manifested towards ‘conyo’ speakers is understandable. Its speakers have developed a list of vocabulary and sentence structures that are incomprehensible, even outrageous, for those who do not speak in this manner, but serve the speakers’ communicative purposes and intentions. To identify and differentiate Taglish from ‘conyo’ talk, the suffixes to form the plural in English or Spanish -s/-es are added to Tagalog nouns² (“yayas” - nannies), and the English verb *make* is added to vernacular verbs (“*make pila*”- to queue). ‘Conyo’ speakers also use excessively, as if on a whim, “so”, “like”, “noh” (no?), “di ba” (Isn’t it?), “eh”, “you know” as well as dude, “tsong” (from Spanish *tío*) or “pare” (from Spanish *compadre*). In addition, ‘conyo’ speakers translate needlessly some words to give the impression of knowing different languages, for example, “masa people”. Lastly, like in chat rooms and text messages, abbreviations (*OMG*, *rotfl*, etc.) and emoticons are commonly used to describe what the speakers feel.

Thus, in another web discussion “Only for conyos” in *pinoyexchange.com* ‘LabuyoXVIII’ writes:

(9)
I went out and partied last night. So funny nga, there were a lot of people *making pila* outside Emba and Ascend last night. I mean, *hullo* people!!! These establishments don't like *masa people* inside. *Sheesh...* it was raining pa naman last night. I almost didn't go out cos Yaya also went out with your yayas and manongs last night. :rotfl mao: Like WTF!!! (*My emphases.*)

To which ‘BadAssGoddess’, mimicking the former’s manner of speaking, replies:

² Tagalog nouns are not inflected. Instead, it uses markers “ang” *yaya* to mark singular common nouns and “mga” *yaya* to indicate plural.

(10)

OMGeesshh dude pare bro labuyo! you're here na rin ha! **beso-beso** and super duper to the maximum level close na rin kayo ng aking *dude pare bro* na si clawed out.. matutuwa si yaya.. madadagdagan na naman ang soul *sistahs* friendships nya kasi I'll introduce your coolest yaya to her na rin. DUH. (*My emphases.*)

In these two examples, the participants want to be perceived as ‘conyos’ who are able to hang out in “cool” places, have nannies and domestic employees, and use the distinct markers of ‘conyo’ talk. Participants use words or phrases that are familiar to them but are incomprehensible to others due to the peculiarity of the language used. ‘Conyo’ speakers intend to play a role and position themselves “to send out a message to the other with a minimum of interference from the otherness constituted by pre-existing meanings and the otherness of the intentions present in the other person in the dialogue” (Bakhtin 1981, p. xx).

4. Implications for cultural hybridity: the constraining, facilitating or subjectification effects of this type of discourse on Philippine society

The common ground that unites all ‘conyo’ speakers is their cultural peculiarity and historical memory. In the Philippines, despite being a colony of Spain for more than 300 years (1521-1898), Spanish has remained an exclusive language. It continues to be reserved only for the upper/middle class and university-educated people. Later, when the islands as a nation was transferred to the Americans through the Treaty of Paris in 1898, English – spoken by the educated, upper/middle class – was accorded the same privileged status. Social structures are the determining factors on how speakers behave, their particular ways of speaking, choices of words and rules for conversing. Filipinos who speak fluently Spanish and/or English are perceived to be from upper/middle class and are treated with more respect. On the other hand, Philippine languages are considered inferior and the languages of the poor and illiterates. And because of the continuous disregard for Philippine languages and the high esteem held for Spanish and English, some Filipinos who have not come to terms with their perception of themselves as the ‘other’ created a hybrid language where they persistently identify with their former colonizers.

Consequently, ‘conyo’ talk has become the response for many Filipinos who, constrained by their background and having been deprived, at one point, of ‘power’ - economic as well as social - , are constantly subjected to the idea of being ‘the other’. ‘Conyo’ talk has become a metaphor of what they have been denied – the Spanish language, and an affirmation of their existence and the power that should be theirs and should continually flow to them. Its representation, as Blumenberg (2010) aptly wrote, “indicates the fundamental certainties, conjectures, and judgments in relation to which the attitudes and expectations, actions and inactions, longings and disappointments, interests and indifferences, of an epoch” (p. 14). ‘Conyo’ talk has become a social-cultural default for many who want to be perceived as coming from upper-middle class, or simply an individual with ‘power’.

The advent of Internet and Web discussions has opened new venues for people to discuss matters that affect society without being prejudiced. The opening threads of “*What is conyo ba?*”, “*Why do Filipinos love to mix languages?*” and “*Why are conyos discriminated?*” shed light on the need to comprehend how this discourse came into being, why speakers have

chosen to speak it, what it represents to them. Participants facilitate, and even guide the flow of conversations – from discussing its possible origins, their position towards its speakers or the discourse itself to expressing themselves in ‘conyo’. It is evident, from the examples cited, that its speakers endeavor to assert their identity as Filipino, Hispanic and Anglophone. They have created among themselves a type of jargon that is textually mediated where norms and rules are flexible, subject to interlocutors’ interpretations, and as in many social practices, they facilitate “perceived anomalies to pass, in order to make sense of the rules and make the coding categories ‘fit’ the data” (Firth 2009, p. 69). Thus, when two participants wrote in Spanish: “¿porque hay conyo? para el pene puede lo entre.” and “exactamente, Una mujer tiene un conyo así que puedo utilizar mi pene será malo que una mujer tenga”, no one seemed to mind the faulty grammar; on the contrary, the intention was accurately understood by some and were amused by these remarks. ‘Conyo’ talk’s unwritten rules of conduct are multifunctional and reflexively relate to its context of use. It is like a language game where the interactants position themselves intersubjectively. Thus, when one reads “Yu-uck, that’s sooo s-q-H2o!” or “OMGeesshh dude pare bro labuyo!”, only a person familiar with this type of discourse can understand and infer the utterances’ meanings and allow themselves to be subjected to it. In this case, comprehension is achieved “procedurally and contextually in what is said is invariably assessed in a particular, local context, by particular persons, at particular moment” (Ibid., p. 71).

5. Conclusion

‘Conyo’ talk is a cultural identification where its speakers can be described as having a profound cultural ambivalence. ‘Conyo’ speakers use it not spontaneously, like in situations of code switching, but intentionally to demarcate their own space. This type of discourse is clearly used as a strategy to give the impression of being privileged socially and economically. The switching between languages clearly conveys the multiple and complementary identities its speakers create for themselves. They have created a ‘social community’ taking on the role of stereotype images of Spaniards or Americans that exist in the Philippine popular imagination adding “local color” to their everyday discourse. They communicate with other ‘conyo’ speakers directly, without the need of explanations.

Discussions on why ‘conyo’ talk exists have gone beyond face-to-face everyday conversation. ‘Conyo’ speakers have created an effective space through the help of Internet where anyone from anywhere can join in. And “space is fundamental in any form of power of communal life” (Foucault 2000, p. 361).

In conclusion, this study reflects the contradictory and shifting positions and boundaries of some Filipinos due to lack of confidence in their language fluency, social and economic status. The participants of the web discussions analyzed are searching for a comfortable position to show societal identification. On one hand, they want to affirm their right to be different and highlight their individuality, and on the other hand, they criticize everything that separates them from other individuals or threaten their individuality. Philippines is a hybridized society, and many Filipinos want to preserve the double cultural standard, maintaining the dominance of English and Spanish as languages of power, but embracing as well their complex identities manifesting openly the hybridity of their identity as Filipino, Hispanic and Anglophone.

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Appendix A

List of emoticons used in the text and its corresponding meanings:

1.  *Wink*
2.  Smile
3.  Glee
4.  Roll eyes (sarcastic)
5.  Bash
6.  Grr, pissed
7.  Angry