The Intelligibility of Philippine English to a Selected ASEAN Country – Thailand

Kristine D. de Leon  
*Sohar University, Oman*  
Kdacia@su.edu.om

Jose Cristina M. Parina  
*De La Salle University, Manila*  
jose.cristina.parina@dlsu.edu.ph

Jay Mark M. Panopio  
*Thaksin University Phatthalung Campus, Thailand*  
jmark.ph@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper is a sequence to a bigger research project that attempts to document the intelligibility of Philippine English (PE) to its neighbouring countries, specifically those included in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) partnership. From this perspective, the study attempted to identify and demonstrate how intelligible PE is to Thais. The study examined acrolectal, mesolectal, and basilectal speakers of PE, and they underwent two tests, the pronunciation task, and the stress task. The listeners were given six tests, three cloze tests, one intelligibility questionnaire, one perception of PE, and one English proficiency self-assessment. These tests were to confirm that they really belong to the lectal category. The results revealed that PE is about 50% intelligible for Thais. The factors that have strongly affected this intelligibility rate are listeners’ familiarity with the variety and the speakers’ effort, choice of words, rate, and pronunciation. It has to be noted that English in Thailand is a foreign language, but then the listeners’ perceived language proficiency did not significantly affect the intelligibility of PE. Moreover, their perception of PE did not affect their understanding of the utterances of the speakers.

*Keywords*: World Englishes; Philippine English; Acrolectal; Mesolectal; Basilectal

Introduction

Globalization and the English language co-exist when the ASEAN integration was discussed during the economic and academic reforms as it has been deemed one of the most important aspects in attaining a more fluid partnership between nations. However, this is not to say that other Asian countries are not active in their campaign to learn the language. According to Mizusawa, (2020) “Japan’s Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology has focused on communicative skills in teaching English to improve Japanese EFL students’
English proficiency” (p. 105). This is also recognized in China where “English has become a compulsory subject from Primary Three in China since 2003” (Qi, 2016, p.1). All of these countries recognize globalization as an opportunity to facilitate free trade or technology, which are carried out mostly in English.

Historically, the United States and United Kingdom were two of the most powerful countries, which prompted people to learn their language. However, this is not anymore the case today, as English is not only used because it is the customers’ language or the language of powerful countries. As mentioned, the ASEAN, which is composed of 10 countries, namely Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam – all claim English as their second language. Hunt (2014) notes that English will become the language of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) once it was introduced in the latter part of 2015. Since English has been the working language of ASEAN, it has strengthened its presence in these regions. In addition, “Improving English skills (drive) up salaries, which in turn give governments and individuals more money to invest in English training,” thus, people from around the world are investing a huge amount to learn it (British Council, 2013, p. 10).

This establishment of World Englishes started with the concept of three (3) concentric circle models, the Inner Circle, Outer Circle, and Expanding Circle (see Kachru, 1985). However, time changes, and with the current state of English, according to Canagarajah (2012), these three concentric circle models are leaking, thus making speakers of the inner circle “to negotiate outer circle varieties in everyday communication” (Canagarajah, 2006, p.1). In addition, with the growing number of varieties of English, one concern is the meaning such language represents. According to Mahboob (2010), varieties of English may be represented differently by their users, thus construing its [English Language] meaning due to the user’s linguistic choice.

The concept of World Englishes was originally not totally accepted by everyone. A quick scan of the earlier statements shows that Prator (1968) argued against Halliday et al. (1964) and claimed that it is intellectually unwarranted and does not contribute best possible results to use a local variety of English as a model in learning the language. Quirk (1990), additionally, strongly disagrees with the teaching of World Englishes. He asserts in his paper titled, “Language Varieties and Standard Language”, that there are two standards of English, the British English, and American English, and that there are one or two which standards are unofficially established, probably Australian English. In addition, he posits, “native-English speakers have never lost their respect for Standard English, and it needs to be understood abroad too” (p. 10). With more people learning English, more varieties of the language have developed, and these variations have features of their own. According to Hu (2004), non-native speakers of English believe that they have contributed to the enrichment of the said language. With the rise of the varieties of English, which are the new Englishes, World Englishes is now an established concept.

**Philippine English**

In the 1960s, Llamzon became interested in finding out the differences between Americans and Filipinos in terms of how they speak English. It was claimed that “there is a standard variety of English which has arisen in the Philippines [and it] stands or falls short on the premise that there is a sizeable number of native and near-native speakers of English in the country” (p. 84). This statement was dismissed by Professor Emeritus of De La Salle University Philippines, Ma. Lourdes Baustista, who stated that the claim of Llamzon was “truly radical at that time”
(p.6), and indeed Philippine English does exist and that, undoubtedly, it is already standardized. She further argued that English is already functionally native to the Philippines having a wide range of usage, thus, penetrating the different societal levels of Filipinos. Hence, she commented that “30 years after Llamzon proclaimed the existence of a Standard Filipino English, such a claim now has a basis in reality” (p. 17). Gustilo (2011) also attempted to identify if there are “features in the use of modals in the Philippine context that do not conform to the current usage taught in the textbooks that conform to the American and British usage” (p. 81). Her study led to the impression that certain PE features are “divergent from the currently prescribed usage of native English variety” (p.105). However, today, it could not be denied that English in the Philippines is a variety of the language. Even though English is not the Filipinos’ first language, they are able to nativize it. As what Bautista (2000, p. 20) claimed, “Philippine English is not English that falls short of the norms of Standard American English, it is not badly learned English as a second language; its distinctive features are not errors committed by users who have not mastered the American standard.” Based on this, English should be considered as one of the Philippine languages and not a language of imperialism. Thus, English must be treated as how other genetically native languages of the Philippines are treated.

Phonological Features of Philippine English.

One linguistic aspect that makes PE different from the so-called standardized English is its phonological features. The lectal approach is classified as the phonological features of PE where the acrolect is prominent in the speech of highly educated or rich and powerful Filipinos, and it is like General American [GenAm] English. The mesolect, however, resembles the Filipino language. The basilect, which is the third classification, has more substitutions in phonemes or sounds, and ethnic tongue interferes with the production of sounds. These classifications of LLamzon (1969) are the varieties of Philippine English phonology.

Grammatical Features of Philippine English.

As for the grammatical features of PE, Bautista (2008) contends that there are distinct features of PE which is distinct from other varieties of English. One of the features is the usage which is equivalent to other varieties of English, and this usage is not found in other varieties such as Hong Kong English and Singapore English. Another feature of PE that can be found in other Asian varieties, but not as frequently occurring as in PE, is the majority not headed by an article (∅majority), such +∅ singular noun, assure+∅ indirect object, and one of the+singular noun. However, these features are not set in stone as Gustilo et al. (2019) pointed out how malleable PE can be in the highly digitized era and that it is expected to “develop conventions which are different from the traditional conventions we know several decades ago” (p. 84).

Vocabulary of Philippine English.

Aside from phonology and grammar, some words used in PE cannot be found in other varieties of English. Bautista (1997) analyzed the PE vocabulary items and categorized them into four: normal expansion, preservation of items, coinage, and borrowings. The first category is normal expansion. This can be extensions, or adaptations of meanings such as brand names like Colgate referring to toothpaste and Pampers for diapers, or this can be a shift of part of speech. An example of this is the word manualize, which refers to preparing manuals for administrative positions. The next one is the preservation of items. Examples of these words are the usage of folk, solon, wherein, and by and by. The other category is coinage. Some of the examples from this category are the words carnap referring to carjack, Amboy referring to American boy, DI
referring to dance instructor, Taglish referring to Tagalog and English used in the same utterance, dirty kitchen which is the second kitchen of some Filipino houses. The last one is borrowing, and examples of these are despedida (Spanish), and feng shui (Chinese). These words, according to Bautista, are “obviously English and are being used in the Standard English way. It is surprising to find out they are not words in recognized English” (p.69). As what Anvil-Macquarie (2000, p.2, as cited in Bolton & Butler, 2008) stated regarding Philippine English:

‘the words that are peculiar to a particular variety of English are developed from the contexts, both physical and social, of that language community. They are significant because they go to the heart of the local culture and mark out that community as different from others in its history, its way of life, its attitudes and its traditions”.

These features of PE can be seen as “errors” to the so-called standard English, but these “errors” reflect the culture and identity of Filipinos. Gonzalez (1983, as cited in Bautista, 1997) claimed that an error becomes a feature of PE if it does not cause misunderstanding, and an “error” is an error when it can cause miscommunication.

Intelligibility

For this present study, the researchers followed Smith and Nelson’s (1985) definition of intelligibility. However, this study did not cover all the dimensions and only covered intelligibility, the first dimension, which is recognizing a word/utterance. Additionally, since this is the first section of a bigger possible project, this paper started with Thailand before it proceeded to study other ASEAN countries. It also must be noted that intelligibility here does not mean that both speakers understand each other. A particular utterance may be intelligible to Listener A, but it does not necessarily mean that it will be intelligible to Listener B. Given these, the authors sought to answer the question:

How intelligible is Philippine English (PE) to the speakers of English from Thailand?

Methods

Research Design

This study dealt with PE’s intelligibility and the factors affecting its intelligibility. Therefore, both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed. The quantitative method was utilized in obtaining the intelligibility of PE and other factors affecting intelligibility through a set of questionnaires. The qualitative method, on the other hand, was employed to validate PE’s intelligibility and other factors affecting intelligibility by having open-ended questions in the set of questionnaires given to the participants.

Participants

This study had two sets of participants, the speakers, and the listeners. The speakers were Filipinos with different levels of English proficiency, and the listeners were from Thailand. For the speakers, they are Filipino professionals who were born, raised, and educated in the Philippines, and who use English as a crucial part of their profession. The three speakers were classified using the lectal approach, which are acrolectal speakers, mesolectal speakers, and basilectal speakers. There was a preconceived notion in which lectal group the speakers belong,
and this notion is based on Tayao’s (2004) and Dayag’s (2007) description of lectal speakers in the Philippines, but then, to test this preconceived notion, the speakers had to undergo two types of tasks: the pronunciation task and the stress task.

The following criteria for the listeners were set in choosing them: they must be born and raised in their home countries, they should not have a mixed nationality, and they should be 18 years old and above. In addition, the participants must be university students. Aside from these, the English proficiency of the listeners must be intermediate to advanced level as listeners with low-level English might have difficulty understanding some of the words employed in the tests even if these words were used in an everyday conversation.

Materials and Procedure

There were eight (8) sets of tests utilized in this study (See Appendix). The speakers were given two tests, the pronunciation task and the stress task, and the listeners were given six tests—three cloze tests, one intelligibility questionnaire, one perception of Philippine English, and one English proficiency self-assessment. There were two main procedures in this study. The first was on the speakers’ recording for the intelligibility test, and the second were the procedures on how the listeners underwent the different tests. As for the speakers, they were classified based on their pronunciation and stress of some select words which were culled from Tayao (2004, 2008). The speakers’ pronunciation task and stress task were recorded for analysis. In analysing their pronunciation and word stress, Tayao’s (2004; 2008) description of different lectal varieties' pronunciation and word stress was followed.

As for the listeners, the participants were divided into three groups: group A for acrolectal speaker, group B for mesolectal speaker, and group C for basilectal speaker. First, the listeners of each group were given an English Proficiency Self-assessment test. Next, the listeners were given a copy of a cloze test for Listening 1, and each group had to listen to the first recording, which was semantically correct. The listeners had to answer the cloze test while listening to the recording, and they had to listen to the recording only once. After the groups had performed the Cloze Test, they were given the Intelligibility Questionnaire. Answering this questionnaire was not time-pressured since there were open-ended questions. On the next (or succeeding) days, the same participants listened to the second recording, which was semantically anomalous, and they had to answer Cloze Test 2. Same procedures on the previous day were followed. Afterward, the same participants listened to the third recording, which had novel words, and still, the same procedures were followed.

Data Analysis

In assessing the acceptable answer or correct words in the cloze test, a minimal discrepancy in the spelling was allowed, as long as the word provided did not mean another thing. Capitalization was not also a basis for a wrong answer. The greater the number of correct words in their tests, the higher the intelligibility scores of the participant. This intelligibility scoring was based on the previous studies on intelligibility.

For the intelligibility questionnaire, there were three parts: 1) demographics, 2) questions, and 3) Likert scale questionnaire. Part 1, which is the demographics, was used to identify the nationality, gender, and age of the participants. Part 2 has several questions where questions 1 and 2 were answered by assigning corresponding numbers, and the total score was divided by the number of participants to get the mean. For questions 3 and 4, the participants had to rank the factors from 1-6, and the answers of the participants for each factor were added then divided by the number of the participants to get the mean score of each factor included in
the study. For questions 5 and 6, the answers of the participants may vary, for these were open-ended questions. Thus, the researcher had to find the common denominator of the participants’ answers. These answers were to support the discussion of this study. For part 3, the participants were asked to check if they strongly disagree, disagree, agree, or strongly agree to the statements regarding the recording and the speaker. This was used to check if there was consistency with the participants’ answers. Again, the mean of each statement was computed to know the stance of the participants. For this questionnaire, all of the answers of the participants were encoded in MS Excel for easy computation and analysis.

To get the perception of the participants towards PE, this study made use of a 4-point Likert scale. The participants had to check if they strongly disagree, disagree, agree, or strongly agree to the statements regarding PE. Again, the mean of the participants' answers were computed to quantify the participants' perception towards PE. As mentioned, the English Proficiency Self-assessment (Can-Do Statements) was derived from NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements. The participants had to answer either YES or NO, and these answers had corresponding scores. For YES, the score is 1 and for NO, the score is 0. This self-assessment covered five language skills, namely interpersonal communication, presentational speaking, presentational writing, interpretive listening, and interpretive reading and these were computed where each language skills had five questions. To get the mean of the English proficiency, the answers of each of the participants were added then divided by the number of participants.

Results and Discussion

Intelligibility of Philippine English to Thais

The intelligibility of PE to Thais was distributed according to the three types of speakers, and the figure below illustrates that of the three types, the mesolectal speaker has the highest intelligibility rate, which is almost 50%. The listeners of this speaker stated that the speaker tried to be understood, and the speaker’s rate affects their understanding of the speaker's utterances. However, they also stated that they were confused with the speaker’s pronunciation, and the speaker’s English was not so easy to understand. After the mesolectal speaker is theacrolectal speaker. This speaker has an intelligibility rate of 3% lower than the mesolectal speaker. The difference of the intelligibility between the two is not that wide, and the reasons for this are the speaker’s English being understood easily compared to the mesolectal speaker, and most of the listeners of the speaker have used strategies to recognize the speaker’s words. However, the pace of the speaker has negatively affected their understanding, for the speaker spoke too fast for the listeners. In addition, the listeners found the words used by the speaker unfamiliar to them.
Thus, aside from the rate of speaking, it seems that the listener’s vocabulary knowledge affected their understanding of the speaker’s utterances. The least intelligible speaker among the three speakers was the basilectal speaker, with an intelligibility rate of merely above 30%. The listeners again found the speaker to have tried his best to be understood by the listener and have used not-so-unfamiliar words, but the speaker’s English was still difficult to understand. The listeners further observed that the speaker’s pronunciation confused them. This confusion of the speaker’s pronunciation could have greatly influenced the speaker’s intelligibility.

One of the factors that influence the intelligibility of the speakers is the strategies used while listening. As mentioned above, listeners used strategies in order to understand their speakers’ utterances, and when they were asked on what strategies they used, they mentioned that they tried to predict the words by reading the sentences of the text. Thus, they used context clues in order to further understand the listeners. This was supported in the study of Ong and Padilla who claimed that explicit instruction, which includes the use of context clues, is an effective method for language development (Ong & Padilla, 2020), in this case, being able to understand the speaker’s utterances. In addition, they mentioned that when a speaker uttered a word, they try to associate the sounds of that word to the words that they already know. Thus, they were tapping their vocabulary knowledge in order to understand the speakers.

Table 1

| Thai’s level of Ease or Difficulty in Understanding the Speaker | Acrolect | Mesolect | Basilect | Mean |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|------|
| Understanding what the speaker said                          | 2.20     | 2.20     | 2.70     | 2.37 |

Note: 1 = “with ease”, 2 = “with some difficulty”, 3 = “with great difficulty” and 4 = “not at all”

Table 1 presents the level of ease or difficulty in understanding the three speakers—acrolect, mesolect, and basilect. As presented in the table, the listener of the acrolectal speaker and mesolectal speaker has the same value, which falls under the category of “with some difficulty.” Thus, the listeners found the speakers to be tolerable and, in a way, easy to
understand. This could have explained the intelligibility of the speakers. The acrolectal speaker and the mesolectal speaker have almost the same intelligibility rate. This table shows that the listeners of the acrolectal speakers and mesolectal speakers have the same level of ease or difficulty in understanding the speaker. Also, when one is to look at the listeners’ level of ease or difficulty in understanding the basilectal speaker, the value is leaning towards the level “with great difficulty,” and the intelligibility of this speaker is way lower than the other two speakers. It appears that the level of ease or difficulty in understanding the speaker, in some way, correlates with intelligibility.

**Semantically Anomalous Texts**

The mesolectal speaker has the highest intelligibility, and the reason for this was her rate of speaking—not so fast. Aside from this, the listeners did not mention anything regarding the speaker’s manner of delivery. However, they stated that the recording was difficult, and this may be due to the nature of the text. The acrolectal speaker is merely a few percent lower that the mesolectal speaker and the contributing factor of the speaker’s intelligibility is the speaker’s delivery rate. Similar with the listeners of the mesolectal speakers where the listeners of the acrolectal speakers found the recording difficult and confusing. The listeners of the basilectal speaker also had the same comment as the other listeners, except that they also commented on the speaker’s pronunciation—it was unclear. Thus, if the listeners cannot rely on the text’s context or linguistic environment, most likely, the speaker’s intelligibility will be lower compared to the normal text. Lastly, if the pronunciation is not that comprehensible, then intelligibility gets much lower.

**Texts with Novel Words**

Figure 7 additionally presents the intelligibility rates of the different speakers using text with novel words. As presented in the figure, the mesolectal speaker has the highest intelligibility rate, with more than 50% higher than the mesolectal speaker’s rate when the normal text was used. The mesolectal speaker is then followed by the acrolectal speaker with a slight difference in the percentage; lastly, the basilectal speaker with less than 40% intelligibility. When the listeners were asked about the recording/speaker, the listeners had one common answer and that is the rate of speaking of the speaker. The only thing that varies is the speed of their speech delivery. The listeners of the mesolectal speaker found their speaker to be a little bit fast, whereas the listeners of the acrolectal speaker and basilectal speaker found their speaker to be fast in speaking rate. Again, no comments were made regarding the speaker’s speech production. This stresses that the rate of speaking plays an important role in intelligibility.

**Overall Intelligibility of PE to Thais**

The table below presents the overall intelligibility of PE to Thais.
As can be seen in the table, the mesolectal speaker has the highest mean rate with almost 50% rate. It is followed by the acrolectal speaker with a rate of 4% lesser than the mesolectal speaker, and the acrolectal speaker is then followed by the basilectal speaker with a rate 20% lower than the mesolectal speaker. The listeners of these speakers have pointed out the contributing factors that led to intelligibility, and these were speaker’s rate, speaker’s effort to be understood, and speaker’s pronunciation. In addition, the listeners noted that context clues or the linguistic environment aided them in understanding the speaker, and their unfamiliarity of the words used by the speaker hindered them in fully understanding the speaker.

Another reason that could affect the intelligibility scores could be familiarity with a particular variety of English. Speaker 1 pronounced words like margarine as [mahr-jer-in] and hectare as [hek-tair], which follows the Standard American English variety, whereas Speaker 2 pronounced the words margarine as [mahr-gar-in] and hectare as [hek-tar], which can be said as the usual pronunciation of most Filipinos. The difference in the speakers’ pronunciation of the words could be one of the factors that made the least proficient speaker, speaker 2, more intelligible than speaker 1. According to Jenkins (2003), the variations of pronunciation could lead to miscommunication. Therefore, listeners of Speaker 1 could have misunderstood the words that were uttered for the cloze test.

The table also shows the intelligibility rates of the speakers when they used different types of text, and it can be observed that the speakers are the most intelligible when they used the text with novel words. These speakers are 5% more intelligible compared to the time when they used normal text. The reason for this could be that the listeners did not have to depend on their vocabulary knowledge since the words were made up. Thus, they just had to listen to the groups of sounds or the words that the speakers produced. The next text in which the speakers were more intelligible was when the normal text was used. Here, the listeners were able to use strategies, as mentioned, which assisted them in understanding the speaker’s utterances. The semantically anomalous text was the text in which the speakers had a low intelligibility rate. One of the reasons for this is that the listeners were confused about how the words were used by the speaker, for they did not match the sentences in the text. Also, this was the text in which the listeners could not use the linguistic environment to guide them. With this, it seems that familiarity of the words that the speaker used, and the linguistic environment were of great assistance in achieving intelligibility.

Factors Influencing the Intelligibility of PE

The intelligibility rate of PE is below 40%, which is low, for it means that the Thais had difficulty in understanding the speakers. To know the reasons of this low intelligibility rate of PE, the factors that influenced intelligibility were discussed in the next sub-sections.
Table 3
Factors Affecting Thais’ ease in Understanding the Speaker

| Factors                              | Mean | Overall Rank |
|--------------------------------------|------|--------------|
| Speaker Factors                      |      |              |
| Good pronunciation                   | 2.83 | 1            |
| Speaker’s effort                     | 2.87 | 2            |
| Slow pace                            | 3.90 | 5            |
| Listener Factors                     |      |              |
| Familiarity of the Filipino accent   | 2.97 | 3            |
| Simple and Familiar words            | 3.10 | 4            |
| OTHERS                               | 3.50 | 6            |

As provided in Table 3 above, the factor that aided the listeners to understand the speaker is the pronunciation. It seems that the Thais did not find the pronunciation of the speaker problematic even if there were words that were mispronounced by the speakers. This means that they can understand the speakers’ pronunciation. Examples of these are words such as intestine and diabetes, in which the Filipino speakers replaced /i/ to /e/ or vice versa. Another example is salmon, in which the speakers, except for the acrolectal speaker, articulated all the sounds in this word, when in fact /l/ in salmon is a silent sound. Even if the pronunciations of the speakers were not perfect compared to the GenAm pronunciation, the pronunciation of the speakers might be acceptable to the listeners, for they were able to understand the speakers’ pronunciation. This also shows that following GenAm pronunciation was not very important, for listeners like Thais can just understand the words. Another factor that contributed to their ease in understanding the speaker is the speaker’s effort, and this factor is somewhat related to pronunciation. As mentioned, some words were mispronounced by the speakers, but if there was an effort, then the words become understandable.

Factors that Impeded PE’S Intelligibility

The next to be discussed are the factors that impeded the intelligibility of PE to Thais. Below is the table of factors that contributed to Thais’ difficulty in understanding the speaker.

Table 4
Factors Affecting Thais’ Difficulty in Understanding the Speaker

| Factors                              | Mean | Overall Rank |
|--------------------------------------|------|--------------|
| Speaker Factors                      |      |              |
| Mispronounced words                  | 4.10 | 5            |
| No effort from the speaker           | 3.77 | 4            |
| Fast Pace                            | 2.27 | 1            |
| Listener Factors                     |      |              |
| Not familiar with the Filipino Accent| 2.33 | 2            |
| Complex and Unfamiliar words         | 3.10 | 3            |

As can be seen in the table, the factor that greatly impeded the intelligibility of PE was the rate of the speaker. Thais found the rate of the speaker to be fast, and according to some studies,
the rate of speaking can influence intelligibility (Dayag, 2007; Saito & van Poeteren, 2012). In the case of Thais, the rate of speaking negatively affected intelligibility, for the rate was fast. Thus, if the speakers had a slower delivery pace, then there is a possibility that the intelligibility rate of PE will be higher. The next factor that affected intelligibility was the familiarity of the Filipino accent. Since this a listener factor, this suggests that as a listener, one must be familiar with the different English accents, so that it would be easier to understand other speakers of the said language. Another factor was the complexity and unfamiliarity of the words used. This factor was also a listener factor, and this reveals that the listeners had vocabulary issues since the words used were for an intermediate level or 8th to 9th graders. Therefore, most of the top factors affecting intelligibility were listener factors since the listeners were expected to be more familiar with the accents of the different varieties. They were also expected to spruce up their vocabulary, for these do not only affect the PE’s intelligibility but also other varieties intelligibility.

**Other Factors that Influenced Intelligibility**

There are other factors that can influence the intelligibility of PE, and these factors can be the proficiency of the listeners and the strategies that they use while listening.

Table 5

**Thais’ Perceived Language Proficiency**

|                | Acrolect | Mesolect | Basilect | MEAN   |
|----------------|----------|----------|----------|--------|
| **Thailand**   |          |          |          |        |
| **Interpersonal** | 72%      | 66%      | 64%      | 67%    |
| **Presentational Speaking** | 66%      | 64%      | 60%      | 63%    |
| **Presentational Writing** | 48%      | 56%      | 54%      | 53%    |
| **Interpretive Listening** | 80%      | 74%      | 72%      | 75%    |
| **Interpretive Reading** | 50%      | 62%      | 58%      | 57%    |
| **MEAN**       | 63.20%   | 64.40%   | 61.60%   | 63.07% |

Novice—1-20%; Intermediate—20-40%; Advanced—40-60%; Superior—60-80%; Distinguished—80-100%

Table 6

**Intelligibility Rate of PE to Thais**

|                | Acrolect | Mesolect | Basilect | MEAN   |
|----------------|----------|----------|----------|--------|
| **Thailand**   |          |          |          |        |
| **Overall Intelligibility of PE** | **42.43%** | **46.50%** | **30.00%** | **39.64%** |

Table 5 shows the overall language proficiency of Thais, while Table 6 shows the intelligibility rate of PE. As can be seen in the tables, the language proficiency of the Thais is at the superior level, but the intelligibility rate of PE is below 40%. This means that the proficiency level of the listeners and the intelligibility rate of PE did not match. It can be deduced from these numbers that language proficiency does not affect intelligibility. As aforementioned, proficiency seems an unreliable factor of intelligibility.
As regards perception, Table 7 presents Thais’ perception towards PE and how it could be one of the factors that influence intelligibility.

Table 7

Perception of Thais to PE

| Perception | MEAN |
|------------|------|
| International Standard | 2.48 |
| Easy to understand | 2.52 |
| Prestigious variety | 2.85 |
| Positive | 2.61 |
| Used by most professionals | 2.55 |
| Good English | 2.85 |
| Mindfulness in learning English in the Philippines | 2.36 |
| Love listening to PE | 2.67 |
| Sounds funny | 2.39 |
| Negative | 2.27 |
| Difficult to understand | 2.15 |
| Sounds uneducated | 2.27 |

Note: strongly disagree-1; disagree-2; agree-3; strongly agree-4

As presented in the table, Thais had a positive perception of PE. However, they think that PE is not of international standards, which could have resulted in their hesitation to learn English in the Philippines, even if they find PE to be a good variety prestigious variety of English. One reason for this is that they believed that American English or British English is the standard English, which must be followed or imitated. Despite their positive perception, Thais have found PE to be not so intelligible. Regarding the strategies used by the listeners, a few mentioned that they tried to understand the sentences to predict the words, and the rest stated that they just listened carefully. It appears that the lesser strategies the listeners used, the lower the intelligibility. Hence, it can be said that listening strategies are essential in achieving high intelligibility.

The overall intelligibility of PE is around 40%, which is still a little bit low, for this means that more than half of what the speakers said were unintelligible to the listeners. There are many factors that have influenced the intelligibility of PE to Thais, and these factors can be speaker factors and listener factors. In the case of Thai listeners, it was evident that as a speaker, one must adjust his or her speech, so that the listener will not have much difficulty in understanding the utterances. However, as a listener, one needs to use listening strategies to fully understand the speaker. On top of that, one must have enough vocabulary knowledge, for this would guide the listener when he or she starts comparing the words that he or she listened to the words that he or she knows.

Conclusion

The following conclusions were drawn from the study:

- Listeners from countries whose English is a foreign language find PE to be less than 50% intelligible. This suggests that the language environment of the listeners affects intelligibility, for the listeners may have limited exposure to English; therefore, there is an immense possibility that any varieties of English will have a lower intelligibility rate if the same types of listeners are to be employed.
The overall intelligibility rate of PE is less than 50%, whereas some studies showed a higher intelligibility rate (see Dayag 2007). This suggests that intelligibility rates may vary depending on the types of listeners employed.

Among the PE speakers—acrolectal, mesolectal and basilectal, the mesolectal speaker has the highest intelligibility rate, even if his/her proficiency is not that high compared to an acrolectal speaker. In the case of this study, the mesolectal speaker had a higher intelligibility rate, since s/he used a syllable-time rhythm, exerted an effort to be clear, had an acceptable text delivery pace, and had tolerable pronunciation. Consequently, these factors made a big difference in the intelligibility of PE.

The choice of words and rate of speaking were the factors that enhanced PE’s intelligibility. Thus, Filipino speakers must use simple and familiar words, and must adjust their rate of speaking, especially if they are talking to speakers of English in the expanding circle. In addition, pronunciation can enhance or hinder intelligibility, but it still depends on how tolerable the pronunciation of the speaker is. As mentioned, the mesolectal speaker has many mispronounced words, but still the listener found the speaker more intelligible.

Lastly, when considering the listener factors, familiarity of the accent and strategies used have to be attended to by the listeners. Also, the listeners must be more familiar with different accents of different English varieties and must know how to use strategies such as context clues for them to increase their understanding of the speakers’ utterances. Moreover, it appears that language proficiency was not a predicting factor of intelligibility. The listeners from countries whose English is a foreign language have a proficiency level of at least superior based on their can-do statement, but they were not able to find PE to be highly intelligible. Thus, this implies that familiarity with the accent and strategies outweigh language proficiency.

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### Appendices

**Appendix A: Pronunciation Task**

| partner | tomorrow | kilogram | Fireplace | vineyard | thin | this |
|---------|----------|----------|------------|----------|------|------|
| parent  | tasty     | karat    | Proofread  | loveable | three| thee |
| paper   | telephone| kinship  | Fiery      | bravery  | both | bother |
| promise | terrace  | kangaroo | Loft       | grave    | breath | breathe |

**Appendix B: Stress Task**

| adolescence | colleague | formidable | menu |
|-------------|-----------|------------|------|
| ancestors   | committee | govern     | paraphernalia |
| antecedent  | commentary| government | participate |
| bamboo      | complimentary | hazardous | pedestal |
| baptism     | despicable | hereditary | percentage |
| cartoon     | dioxide   | ingredient | precinct |
| cemetery    | direct    | interpretive | preparatory |
| centenary   | documentary | itinerary | pronunciation |
| centennial  | economic  | kilometer  | rehabilitate |
| certificate | economical | lieutenant | rescue |

**Appendix C: Script for Listening for the three Cloze Tests**

Kristy felt like the whole world is on her shoulders. After the death of her father due to intestine problems, she was left to take care of her two younger siblings who were still in the adolescence stage and attending school. Their usual breakfast every morning would just consist of omelet and rice which is not good for her younger brother who got diabetes. This was something which her younger brothers did not appreciate. She knew she needed to do something and be a more responsible adult for her family. After a few days, her prayers had been answered.

While running an errand in the southern part of the city, she came across a tarpaulin which called for aspiring chefs to join a cooking contest posted by the Association of Young Chefs. Kristy was really excited and was so interested in this announcement as she was quite talented in cooking. She was used to receiving compliments for the delicious dishes that she whipped in the kitchen.

The cooking showdown was slated to start after a week and so Kristy practiced. She borrowed some money and bought some salmon from the grocery store. The ingredients included
margarine in order to create a special, yet affordable delicacy. Her siblings taste-tested the dish and shared it with their colleagues.

The winner of this cooking contest would be awarded a scholarship to study in a world-renowned culinary school and an opportunity to work in a prestigious restaurant in the city as well. Kristy prayed hard to win as she knew that this would lead the way to a comfortable life.

And so the moment she had been waiting for finally arrived. She concentrated on her specialty and did as she practiced. In the end, she was chosen as the most eligible of the prestigious title as she got the most satisfactory mark for her delectable dish. She got the award and received the prizes in a well-attended ceremony which changed her and her siblings’ life forever.

The winner of this cooking contest would be awarded a scholarship to study in a world-renowned culinary school and an opportunity to work in a prestigious restaurant in the city as well. Kristy prayed hard to win as she knew that this would lead the way to a comfortable life.

And so the moment she had been waiting for finally arrived. She concentrated on her specialty and did as she practiced. In the end, she was chosen as the most eligible of the prestigious title as she got the most satisfactory mark for her delectable dish. She got the award and received the prizes in a well-attended ceremony which changed her and her siblings’ life forever.

Cloze Test

Appendix E: Intelligibility Questionnaire

Directions: Answer the following questions by putting an X mark in the appropriate space provided, according to how you feel about the taped material that you have just heard.

A. Demographics:
Gender: _____ Male _____ Female Nationality: ___________________________
Age: __________

B. Please put an X before the appropriate space provided.

1. Could you understand what the speaker said?
   ___ A. easily   ___ B. with some difficulty  ___ C. with great difficulty   ___ D. not at all

2. How much of the voice recording did you understand?
   ___ A. More than 75%   ___ B. Approximately 50 - 74%   ___ C. Approx. 26–49%   ___ D. Less than 25%

3. What reasons contributed to your ‘easy’ understanding of SOME parts of the recording? (Rate the following from 1-6, 1 being the most evident or persistent factor)
   ______ I am FAMILIAR with the accent of Filipinos.
   ______ The words are properly PRONOUNCED.
   ______ The speaker consciously EXERTS effort to make her/himself ‘easy-to-understand’.
   ______ The speaker’s pace is rather SLOW, hence, easier to understand.
   ______ The speaker used SIMPLE and FAMILIAR words.
   ______ Others (please write)

4. What reasons contributed to your ‘difficult’ understanding SOME parts of the recording? (Rate the following from 1-6, 1 being the most evident or persistent factor)
   ______ I am NOT FAMILIAR with the accent of Filipinos.
   ______ Some words are MISPRONOUNCED.
   ______ The speaker DOES NOT EXERT effort to make her/himself ‘easy-to-understand’.
   ______ The speaker’s pace is rather FAST, hence, more difficult to understand.
   ______ The speaker used COMPLEX and UNFAMILIAR words.
5. If some parts of the passage are not clear to you, what strategies did you use to understand what you heard?

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

6. Do you think it would be helpful to clarify with the speaker some parts that were not clear to you? Say, ask him/her to repeat a word or two? Why or why not?

___________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________

B. Please put an X to the column that corresponds to your opinion.

|                                                                 | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|----------|-------|---------------|
| 1. The words used in the passage are easy to understand.        |                   |          |       |               |
| 2. I am confused with the way the words are pronounced.         |                   |          |       |               |
| 3. If the words were enunciated well, it would have been easier for me to understand the passage. |                   |          |       |               |
| 4. Even if some words are mispronounced, I still understood the passage. |                   |          |       |               |
| 5. It would have been easier to understand the passage if I could ask questions from the speaker along the way. |                   |          |       |               |
| 6. The pace of the speaker, either slow or fast, affects my understanding of the passage. |                   |          |       |               |
| 7. Some words are unfamiliar and technical to me.               |                   |          |       |               |
| 8. The speaker tried his/her best to speak clearly.             |                   |          |       |               |
| 9. I use other strategies to understand the passage, and not just base completely on the speaker. |                   |          |       |               |
| 10. Generally, the English of the speaker is easy to understand. |                   |          |       |               |

Appendix F: Perception of Philippine English Questionnaire
### Appendix G: English Proficiency Self-Assessment

**Instruction:** Please check (√) the box that corresponds to your answer.

| Yes | No |
|-----|----|
| 1. I can introduce myself and others |   |
| 2. I can talk about my daily activities and personal preferences. |   |
| 3. I can discuss future plans, such as where I want to live and what I will be doing in the next few years. |   |
| 4. I can discuss complex information in debates or meetings. |   |
| 5. I can use my language persuasively to advocate a point of view that is not necessarily my own. |   |
| 6. I can express my likes and dislikes using words, phrases, and memorized expressions. |   |
| 7. I can make a presentation about my personal and social experiences. |   |
| 8. I can describe in detail a social event or a local celebration. |   |
| 9. I can use both informal to formal speech when speaking to a mixed group. |   |
|   |   |
|---|---|
| 10. | I can deliver a speech fluently and with ease when speaking to a variety of audiences. |
| 11. | I can write about what I do on the weekends. |
| 12. | I can post an entry to a blog or a discussion forum. |
| 13. | I can write a project proposal or a report. |
| 14. | I can write an academic thesis. |
| 15. | I can write creatively. |
| 16. | I can understand when people introduce themselves. |
| 17. | I can understand a short YouTube clip. |
| 18. | I can understand an interview with a famous person, such as a rock star, politician, or actor. |
| 19. | I can understand a lecture on my favorite subject. |
| 20. | I can understand shades of meaning when watching a movie or listening to a song. |
| 21. | I can identify the names of classes and instructors in a school schedule. |
| 22. | I can understand updates in entertainment magazines. |
| 23. | I can understand the details of an article about a sporting or cultural event. |
| 24. | I can understand a journal article in my field. |
| 25. | I can understand technical manuals. |

Adapted from NCSSFL-ACTFL Can-Do Statements. Retrieved from http://www.actfl.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/Can-Do_Statements.pdf

**About the Authors**

**Kristine D. de Leon** finished her PhD degree in Applied Linguistics at De La Salle University Manila. She is currently an Assistant Professor and a Program Coordinator at the Faculty of Language Studies, Sohar University. Her research interests and publications include World Englishes with a particular focus on Philippine English and intelligibility of Englishes, Sociolinguistics, and Second Language Writing.

**Jose Cristina M. Pariña** is a full-time Associate Professor in the Department of English and Applied Linguistics at De La Salle University Manila where she also finished her doctorate in Applied Linguistics. She has published research articles in the field of Language Teaching and Writing, Sociolinguistics, and Second Language Acquisition and has been invited in numerous international paper presentations in the said fields.

**Jay Mark M. Panopio** has been handling ESL students for almost 15 years at ‘English Line Phatthalung’, a language center in the Phatthalung province. He was invited to teach at Thaksin University Phatthalung Campus, Thailand for a year in 2016.