 **ENGLISCHES SEMINAR**

**Guest Lecture**



**Wednesday, 18 March 2020, 2:15 pm**

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**Filipino Domestic Worker English**

Filipino domestic workers (FDWs) have become a common feature in many middle- to upper-class households in East Asia, Middle East, and Southeast Asia, particularly towards the end of twentieth century. While “[b]y and large, domestic work, which can include child and elderly care, cleaning, cooking and other tasks connected to taking care of the family, is lowly paid, devalued and considered to be unskilled work” (Lorente, 2018: 13), households which have FDWs have been largely dependent on them and, specially, children in these households receive substantial amount of care and spend an inordinate amount of time with FDWs, which even rival the amount of care and time they receive from their parents (Vilog & Borlongan, in press for 2020). Aside from having comparatively higher educational attainment than domestic workers of other nationalities, Filipinos working as domestic workers, owing largely to English being a dominant language in the Philippines, have higher levels of English language proficiency in comparison with their peers, and, as such, are often more preferred by employers (Lorente, 2018). And it has been asked whether the English language input FDWs provide their employers’ children have an (negative) effect on the latter’s English language proficiency. Quite a number of developmental psycholinguistic studies (Leung, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2014; Leung & Young-Scholten, 2013) have sought to answer that question and they found that FDWs do not affect the English language use of their employers’ children. If at all, these children are afforded more exposure to English by these FDWs, and even made aware of Englishes beyond theirs (Vilog & Borlongan, in press for 2020).

The aim of this lecture is to provide a (socio)linguistic description of the English used by FDWs, or, quite possibly, ‘Filipino domestic worker English’. First, it details the rearing practices of FDHs have with their employers’ children, with special focus on their verbal interactions. Second, it discusses the attitudes of their employers in relation to the English language input these helpers provide employers’ children. Employers’ attitudes are ascertained also through surveys and individual interviews. And most importantly, this lecture describes the distinctive phonological, lexical, and grammatical features of this sociolect of interest. Data for the linguistic description are an expansion of the initial four-hours worth recordings of interactions between FDWs and their employers’ children from Hong Kong and Singapore Vilog and Borlongan (in press for 2020) collected. An addition of recordings two hours longer than the earlier dataset should make the linguistic description contained in this article richer. Needless to say, FDWs constitute what in social research is called ‘special population’ or ‘potentially vulnerable groups’, and data relating to them are not only hard to come by but immensely confidential and sensitive in nature that any piece of (additional) data from them is always valuable and worthwhile research-wise. Linguistically, but most specially sociolinguistically, it is encouraging to dwell on the possible emergence of this sociolect of Philippine English, a fairly established and standardizing English, among these transnational laborers as they negotiate their own English with the equally stable and norm-developing Englishes of their host territories (in the case of the FDWs serving as informants for the description given in this article, Hong Kong and Singapore). Language data from FDWs represent new and unique data different from the canonical data used in the study of Englishes which are usually the English of non-migrant population, sedentary, as it were, in the territory in question.

Dpt. of English, Nadelberg 6, Great Lecture Hall