

**Ano ba talaga ang “ano”?:  
Exploring the meanings of “ano” in conversations**

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**Abstract**

The study explores the different functions of the Tagalog word “ano” in conversations. Results show that “ano”, though conventionally means the interrogative pronoun “what” in English, serves other functions, which further supports the multifunctionality view of any language behavior (Condon, 2001). The study found out that “ano” functions frequently as a gap filler in conversations, followed by the use of the interrogative pronoun “what”, then by substitution, expression of hesitation, tag questions and , finally, expression of irritation. The gap-filling function of “ano” may provide insights on the different factors involved in conversations and could be seen as an effect of the speaker’s effort to make the message clearer. Implications for language teaching and learning and second language research have then been drawn.

Keywords: conversational context, Philippine English, co-operative principle, conversational implicature, semantic primitives

**Introduction**

The relationship between meaning and context has long been established in the field of semantics and pragmatics. For instance, Grice (1968) has made a distinction between *what was said* which he treated as artificial to some extent, and *what is implicated* which he treated as something that is suggested or implied in an utterance. He further distinguished conventional implicature which arises from the meaning of some word or phrase used, and nonconventional implicature which springs from “outside the specification of the conventional meaning of the words used” (Grice, 1968, p. 65).

Perhaps what is of importance is Grice’s conversational implicatures in which contexts provide certain information or

assumptions to the participants (Grice, as cited in Recanati, 1989, p. 97). While these implicatures “are part of what the utterance communicates...they are not conventionally determined” (p. 97) and, therefore, are more determined by pragmatics rather than by semantics. Recanati (1989) cautions though, that while an expression may yield various interpretations, semantic ambiguity may not be the source for a variety of interpretation. This is because meaning can be accounted for by both semantics (and the literal level) and pragmatics (contextual level). Of these two, pragmatic interpretation is more preferred because the “principles and assumptions they appeal to are very general and independently motivated” (Recanati, 1989, p. 98). However, Recanati asserts that the gap between semantics and pragmatics has become wider in the sense that “what is said” can no longer be distinguished from other pragmatic aspects that yield other possible interpretations.

Grice (1968, as cited in Recanati, 1989) believes that the meaning of an utterance does not rely solely on the conventional meaning of the words, but rather the meaning resides in a number of factors in a specific context. Recanati (1989), however, argues that the division between semantics and pragmatics are not clear because there are other aspects in communication that need to be considered other than the context of knowing the who, what, and the when. Recanati further asserts that the relationship between and among the words must be accounted for to yield a more specific interpretation.

This paper then attempts to further establish the relationship between meaning and context in conversations in the Philippine setting. It is hoped that the results of the study would provide additional literature that recognizes the complementary relationship between semantics and pragmatics and that they work together to make communication and interpretation somewhat clearer for the participants. Furthermore, it is hoped that this study would provide support to the argument that the “particular uses of the forms must be examined to understand their functions and their orientation to the talk” (Condon, 2001, p. 494).

This study looks into what happens in conversations in the use of Philippine English by Filipino speakers. It has been observed that certain expressions in the native language turn up in conversations carried out in English. Particularly, this paper is concerned with the Tagalog word “ano”.

The word “ano” is the Filipino equivalent of the interrogative pronoun “what” in English and is the conventional meaning of the word; that is, the traditional and most common meaning in Filipino. However, “ano” is used in a variety of contexts specifically in conversations, and the instances of the use of “ano” do not seem to fit or conform to the conventional meaning of the word. In other words, “ano” seemingly has different functions other than asking about an incident, entity, or a person. For instance, in Baron’s (2008) dictionary of Filipino slang words and idioms, when “ano” is used in combination with strings of words, “ano”’s definition may slightly differ in connotation. For example, the expression “ano ba yan” which literally means, “what is that?” is defined by Baron as an expression indicating “shock, disgust, or disapproval” and that its meaning can become different by adding the word “ba”. She also included the expression “ano ka ba?” to mean “what’s the matter with you?” or “what the heck are you doing?” addressed to “already confused people doing something dumb”. The third entry of “ano” in Baron’s dictionary is “anong nakain mo?”. Here “ng” is attached to “ano” as ligature. This expression is literally translated as “what have you eaten?”, though this conveys sarcasm in the sense that it is the same as the expression “what has gotten into you?”. Lastly, the expression “anong say mo?” is asking for an opinion and is the slang for “what do you think?”. This last entry seems to function as the conventional meaning of “ano” as this is intended for someone who is asked of his/ her opinion.

While studies have been conducted on the meanings of discourse markers such as *ok*, and *well*, there seems to be limited studies conducted in Philippine English which accounts for the use of Filipino words or expressions incorporated in English conversations by Filipino speakers. For instance, in her study on the use of ‘no in Philippine English, Bautista (in press), categorized ‘no as a kind of pragmatic particle that serves either as fillers or discourse markers. She found that, ‘no is used in any part of a sentence, and its functions include as a completion marker, as a continuation marker, as a filler which may be equivalent to *uh* and *y’know* and in informal settings, the contraction of the word *ano* as either as confirmation question or as a substituted word for another word not recalled by the speaker.

To account for the kind of context this paper addresses, a slight modification of Karttunen's (1974) conversational context is used. According to him, conversational context is

...what...[the] common set of background assumptions contains depends on what has been said previously and other aspects of the communicative situation. In a fully explicit discourse, the presuppositions of the next sentence uttered are satisfied by the current context...Once the new sentence has been uttered, the context will be incremented to include the new information (p. 190).

This paper, however, is limited to the shared background assumptions between the interlocutors as suggested by their previous utterances, which in turn, enriches the current context in which the word "ano" is used; therefore, the topic of the discourse becomes the primary point of analysis. Topic here is treated as the subject matter of the conversation or what is being talked about. This topic then becomes enriched throughout the course of the conversation and the relationship between the interlocutors is inferred using the background assumptions. The "other aspects of the communicative situation" such as the physical setting when the conversation took place, suprasegmental features, noise, and emotional or physiological conditions of the interlocutors have not been accounted for in the study. Furthermore, this study only explores the functions of the word "ano", and not its contracted form 'no since Bautista (in press) found that there was a variety of functions of 'no that behaves differently from "ano" which may not be necessarily the contracted form of "ano" and that 'no cannot substitute for "ano" in some cases.

Hence, this paper aims to fill the gap in such area. Specifically, this study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are the functions of "ano" in Filipino conversations?
2. Which of these functions are the most frequently used in conversations?

## **Method**

### **The Corpus**

The International Corpus of English- Philippines (ICE-PHI) compiled by Bautista, Lising, and Dayag (1999) was used as the

database for this study. Consisting of spoken, manuscript, and printed samples of English discourses, ICE includes corpora from countries where English is treated either as a native language or as an officially recognized additional language (Bautista, 2000). Categorized into two divisions, the spoken and the written, a corpus has about one million words having 500 texts with about 2, 000 words. In spoken texts, dialogues and monologues are both included. Since ICE considers the 'educated' English, sample texts are based on adult English users (18 years old and above) who have received formal education through the English language. The texts included in ICE-PHI are based on English speakers who have reached at least some level of education in college since the number of years of schooling in the Philippines is fewer compared to other countries.

Only the spoken discourses, specifically conversations, were included in the study since "ano" seems to be a characteristic of Filipino conversations. The study did not include other spoken discourses such as legal, and academic since the assumption is that these settings have specific jargons, registers, or levels of formality that somehow lessen the occurrence of "ano".

ICE has a specific system in marking spoken texts to indicate hesitation, pause, and repetition, among others. The symbol <indig> is used to indicate that the word enclosed by that symbol is indigenous, i.e. it is a word specific to the native speakers of the language. Hence, instances of the word "ano" is enclosed in this symbol.

## **Procedure**

The word "ano" was searched in the ICE-PHI program which generated transcribed conversations. Of these conversations, only 32 were used in the study since only the first 100 occurrences of "ano" were subjected to analysis. Based on the analysis, categories for the uses of "ano" were made. The analyses were then validated by an English faculty and a doctoral student of Philippine Studies. There was 96% agreement in the categorizing of the uses of "ano" between the researcher and the validator, and they arrived at an agreement in case of discrepancies in the coding.

## Results and Discussion

To answer the first objective of the study, categories were made for the occurrences of “ano”. There were six functions of “ano” that came up in the corpus: 1) as an interrogative pronoun equivalent to “what”, 2) as a gap filler, 3) as a tag question, 4) as an expression of hesitation, 5) as an expression of irritation, and 6) as a form of substitution.

Before each category is discussed, it is important to note here that although there were 100 instances of “ano” which were analyzed, 109 cases of “ano” were categorized. This means that in some utterances, “ano” seems to serve more than one function, and that the distinction of the functions are not clear cut, especially since textual analysis had been employed by the study, and therefore, it did not account for other factors such as the suprasegmental features of the utterances. This particular finding of the study seems to lend support to the view that “all language behavior is multifunctional [since]...it simultaneously performs more than one function” (Condon, 2001, p. 494). For example, in a study by Beach (1995, as cited in Condon, 2001) on the use of the discourse marker *ok* in medical interviews, *ok* simultaneously served as a signal for the patient’s adequacy in his/her response and as a tool for bridging the next question.

Having explained this, examples for each category of “ano” will then be given to further illustrate the uses of “ano”.

In the first 100 occurrences of “ano” examined, six categories were identified: 1) interrogative pronoun, 2) gap filler, 3) tag question, 4) expression of hesitation, 5) expression of irritation, and 6) substitution. Each category is discussed below.

### Interrogative pronoun

The first category of “ano” is that of an interrogative pronoun to mean “what”. In most instances, this kind of “ano” can clearly be identified as exemplified in the following utterances:

- a. D: *Anong* oras ka uuwi Me-Ann  
A: Oh my gosh Oh yeah I have a class
  
- b. A: She doesn't need to have a visa 'cause she has this green

*ano* what do you call that  
B: Yeah green card

In such instances, the interrogative “what” can replace the word “ano”. Speaker D in the first example wanted to know what time speaker A would leave, and although speaker A did not directly answer D’s question, A was reminded of the time and that she still had a class to go to. In the second example, a direct question “ano” which was followed by its direct question counterpart in English was asked by speaker A as she seemed to forget a particular term (“green card”), to which speaker B replied. This instance may further support that there is a shared understanding between the two speakers (Condon, 2000).

### Gap filler

The second category of “ano” is gap filler which is similar with a verbalized pause. The word “ano” in this category may be substituted by the filler *um*. This category can be further classified into two: 1) gap filler as a result of groping for the right word, and 2) gap filler as a marker of a false start. The second classification means that the speaker has started to say something and then backtracks and reformulates, rephrases, or self corrects the previous word, phrase, or idea mentioned. The first two examples illustrate the first classification, while the last three examples show the second classification of “ano” in this category.

- c. A: Because the ball is on her *ano* na hand e
- d. B: And then another advantage of a full-load uhm compared with *ano* compared with full with a part-time
- e. C: And the *ano* and another problem is *ano* yong underemployment
- f. B: Whe where did you where was it *ano* </indig> I mean uhm where did it take place
- g. A: So you mean your gowns are not  
B: No everything actually has been basically mapped out for

the *ano* I mean we 're just wai we 're just working kasi  
with you know suppositions

The gap fillers may have a predictable pattern, that is, usually the gap filler in the first classification has the formula “ano” + the word intended by the speaker, while the second classification has the pattern “ano” + “I mean” or any self-correction made.

### Tag Question

The next category is “ano” as a tag question which is a yes-no question in relation to something that was previously said. Here, there is an intention to ask someone’s opinion or confirm or affirm one’s opinion by asking a question to the listener, although this does not necessarily mean that a tag question can always be expected to be answered. The two examples below exemplify this function.

h. A: Different pa yan because she's lots of telas these are all  
what do you call this

B: Fabric Yeah furniture *ano*

A: Di ba washable

B: Yeah

i. B: I enjoyed it very much when she went to England to see  
(unclear words)

A: Oo nga daw *ano*

B: Yeah that was very nice

In the first example, speaker A seems to be asking B to affirm or agree with A’s idea that the fabric was washable, to which B answered in the affirmative. In the second example, B was talking about how much she enjoyed that the dean went to England when B was also in England at that time. A was asking B to affirm whether the information A got that B indeed enjoyed the dean’s visit to England, and to which B responded “yeah”. The word “ano” in such utterances may be replaced by the English equivalent tag questions, *is it?*, *isn't it*, *does it?*, or *doesn't it?*

This category seems to correspond to Tottie and Hoffmann’s (2006 in Borlongan, 2008) confirmatory function of tag questions



which means that it is an “attempt to verify what the speaker is unsure of” (p. 122). Borlongan also observed that the Tagalog tag questions such as *ano*, *'no*, *hindi ba*, and *di ba* were more frequently used than English tag questions, and offered a hypothesis that this was probably because these Tagalog tag questions were morphologically and phonetically simpler than their English counterpart.

### Expression of Hesitation

The fourth category of “*ano*” is expression of hesitation which may be brought about by either a sensitivity of the topic and character appraisal. In this case, “*ano*” seems to be functioning as a mitigating device, considering that sensitivity of the topic is very personal and that judging or evaluating someone’s character can be a face threatening act to the person being appraised. The first example shows hesitation due to a sensitive topic, pornography, while the second example shows hesitation due to character appraisal.

j. A: *Ano* ba 'yon 'cause I can't I was like twelve years old when he looked at my uh drawer and he saw some pornographic materials inside Then he said hey this is this is really not what it 's uh uh meant to be or meant for it 's not what it 's meant for

k. A: You uh have you found anybody interesting here  
 B: Well not really I guess they 're just *ano* nice to look at  
 (laughter)  
 A: Nice to look at that 's all

The utterance above (k) is B’s answer to A’s query whether B had found any guy that she liked in their school. This is character appraisal in the sense that instead of directly saying that she did not find such person, she replied indirectly and perhaps tried to mitigate her response by saying that is somewhat positive and following it up by laughter.

The last example in this category shows a possible combination of sensitivity of topic and character appraisal. Speaker B is describing

his father and what happened to his son after his grandfather (that is B's father) passed away.

- l. B: Uh so *ano* he he took he really took it very badly because he viewed my father I would say uhm not so much as a lolo I mean both as a lolo because he was spoiled rotten really (laughter) Uh but also he but my Dad was his father image So when my Dad died he he he he his studies were you know he just didn't wanna study anymore

Here, what might be the cause of speaker B's hesitation is that he was talking about two people he cared about: his father and his son and the effect of the grandfather's death on the speaker's son.

It is noticeable too from the two examples in character appraisal, the utterance with the "ano" is usually followed by laughter. This is probably to lighten up somehow a sensitive matter and the mood of the conversation.

### Expression of Irritation

The fifth function of "ano" in the corpus under study is expressing irritation toward a person or a situation. Two examples are given below to demonstrate this function. Speaker A seems to be upset about a person who borrowed money from her and had not paid her yet. The first example perhaps illustrates Baron's (2008) observation that, when "ano" is used in combination with the word *ba*, "ano"'s definition may slightly differ in connotation and may be interpreted as an expression indicating "shock, disgust, or disapproval".

- m. A: *Ano* ba naman yung every month she 'll save up a hundred instead of texting all her she she spends around four thousand pesos for cell phone usage And I don't like her reasoning na she doesn't wanna pay me because it 's not her priority because I have money Because she doesn't know what I 'm going through
- n. A: I 've given her so much leeway already I mean I 'm so *ano*

## Substitution

The last category is that of substitution. “Ano” in this situation resembles the second function (gap filler) in that the speaker could not think of the word at that moment to express his/ her idea; this function is different, however, in the sense that it is characterized by never having said the actual word that speakers are trying to think of or the listener never having supplied the appropriate word, yet both are able to understand what “ano” stands for.

Two examples are given to further illustrate this function.

o. A: Computerized so in their compu *ano* they had laptops with them

B: That small thing uhh I think they were equipped so that in case they have to ask questions

p. B: Yes so I just wanna *ano* I just

A: No I think you know the the highest number that they can give you that's how much they can fit

In the first example, the speakers were talking about teaching in a specific school and that speaker A was trying to describe the situation to B. Here, the word “ano” seemed to be a substitute for the word “classroom” but notice that neither A nor B supplied the exact word. With B’s response to A’s utterance, without having to supply what the word “ano” means may indicate that both interlocutors have the shared knowledge provided by the context of their conversation.

The speakers in the second example were talking about B’s plans for her wedding reception, commenting on the number of guests a venue can accommodate. “Ano” in this instance can be inferred as “limiting the number of guests or changing the venue”. Speaker A disagrees with B but, again, both seem to understand what the word “ano” stands for despite not having articulated its exact word or meaning.

This category is also somewhat similar with Bautista’s (in press) classification of “ano” as an “indefinite substitute” for a specific word the speaker could not recall and which is equivalent to “thingamabob, and “thingamajig”. Furthermore, such examples further reinforce the default verification i.e. participants in an

exchange have “similar ideas of ‘what is going on’” and that they “rarely specify the understandings they establish” (Condon, 2001, p. 493).

### Combination of the Functions

As mentioned, there are some instances where “ano” has more than one function. For example, “ano” in the example below has three possible interpretations:

A: You like my shades

B: Huh (laughter)

A: *Ano* ba

B: Nice

A: They 're nice 'no

The first possible interpretation here is the function of an interrogative pronoun since speaker A seems to be asking speaker B’s opinion on the shades speaker A bought; another possibility is that “ano” may be functioning as a tag question as speaker A wanted B to confirm A’s opinion about her own shade, i.e. that if indeed they are really nice. Lastly, this can be interpreted as an expression of irritation by A towards B’s reaction of laughing and refusal to respond to the question of A.

Another example of a duality in the function of “ano” is shown below. In this utterance, San Miguel refers to the name of the person who borrowed money from A and did not pay.

B: Grabe itong *ano* uh San Mig nakakatakot (noticing a vehicle swerving into their lane)

A: Yeah yeah San Miguel

B: Huwag ka na lang lumapit diyan (talking to the driver)

Speaker B is commenting on San Miguel. “Ano” here can either be a gap filler that is B may be trying to remember the name of the person or may be uncertain of the name of the person being talked about, or it can also function as an expression of hesitation, considering that the topic of financial matter may be sensitive and that it may be a kind of hesitation brought about by character

appraisal of an individual. The hesitation marker “uh” could further strengthen both assumptions.

A: I 've given her so much leeway already I mean I 'm so *ano*

In the above example which illustrated the function of “ano” as an expression of irritation, “ano” may also be functioning as a substitution since none of the speakers supplied what the word “ano” is, yet it could be interpreted as something that is understood by both the participants. Here, “ano” might mean “mad”, or “upset” to describe what A was feeling about the incident. Because there is no way of confirming which of the two interpretations (irritation and substitution) is more accurate since this is the last utterance in the text, both interpretations may be acceptable.

The last example for the duality of the function of the word “ano” can be seen in the example below. Here, speaker B is describing his father who died.

B: He was not uh he was not *ano* I mean at least with us 'no with us kids very (foreign word) And then uhm I don't think he had much of a sense of humor

“Ano” can be interpreted either as gap filler or as expression of hesitation. B’s utterance may indicate both as a false start and as probably a way of thinking the appropriate word for what he wanted to say. The second interpretation may be “ano” as a form of hesitation because it seems that B is appraising the characteristics of his deceased father, and may make it more difficult for B considering his relationship with his father and the fact that his father was already dead made the topic more serious and more sensitive.

To answer the second question of the research, the categorized functions of “ano” were tallied and a simple frequency count was used to determine how often a kind of function of “ano” occurs. Table 1 presents the functions of “ano” vis-à-vis the frequency and percentage of each type.

Table 1  
*Functions and frequency of “ano”*

Function	f	%
1: interrogative pronoun “what”	18	16.67
2: gap filler		
a. groping for words	61	55.96
b. false start	10	9.17
3: tag question	4	3.67
4: hesitation	6	5.50
5: irritation	3	2.75
6: substitution	7	6.42

As can be seen, majority of the instances of “ano” are used as a gap filler specifically to signal that the speaker is looking for an appropriate word. It is surprising that there seems to be a huge difference in terms of the occurrences of “ano” as a gap filler (55.96%) and its more conventional function as an interrogative question (16.67%).

It is important to note that gap fillers are a natural occurrence in speech. However, one probable explanation for the frequency of “ano” as a gap filler is the speaker’s intention of making the message clearer for the listener by using more accurate words or terms to express themselves. Grice’s Co-operative Principle perhaps is called to mind by this explanation. This principle is summed up in the statement “Make your contribution such as required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged” (Grice, 1975, as cited in Davies, 2000), of which there are four maxims: Quantity, Quality, Relation, and Manner. Of the four, perhaps, it is the maxim of manner which could somehow explain the instances of “ano” in this context; that is, it is conceivable that in the speaker’s effort to avoid obscurity and ambiguity, he or she may be groping for words to help them articulate his or her thoughts as accurate as possible. Such idea is closely associated with the interaction effect. The context of meaning negotiation entails speakers to consider some discourse constraints such as the what to speak about, the how to speak, the when to speak (Brown, 1994).

It may also be attributed to affective factors since the knowledge of the speakers that their conversations were being recorded may have affected their performance due to anxiety. According to Brown (1994), one of the main difficulties of language learners is overcoming their anxiety especially in speaking situations brought about by the thought of “blurting things out that are wrong, stupid, or incomprehensible” (p. 255), and therefore results in reluctance to take risks. This idea is associated with language ego that becomes threatened due to the perception that speakers are judged by their listeners (Brown, 1994). Another possibility that could explain this occurrence is the “interlocutor’s effect” put forth by Nunan (1991, as cited in Brown, 1994) which looks into the characteristics of the interlocutor that could affect the performance of the speaker. This means that one’s “performance is always colored by that of the person he or she is talking with” (Brown, 1994, p. 255).

Moreover, the frequent use of “ano’ as a gap filler may suggest that Filipino speakers may not be that fluent in expressing their thoughts or feelings in English. Fluency in this case refers to the smoothness of flow of ideas in natural talk. This might be traced from lack of practice in the English language and/or limited vocabulary.

“Ano” as an expression of irritation, on the other hand, yielded the least number of occurrence in the corpus. This may be attributed to the knowledge of the speakers that their conversations were being recorded and although anonymity had been ensured, the speakers may have inadvertently chosen a topic that would not require them to talk about matters that may upset or annoy them. The same reason of the nature of the data may also somehow provide an explanation why, perhaps, expression of hesitation regarding a sensitive subject or a character appraisal has yielded fewer occurrences in the corpus. Since the corpus would be eventually used for future consumption, the speakers may have unconsciously chosen topics that are less personal.

Another caution perhaps that needs to be noted here is the limitation on the coding of other prosodic or suprasegmental features in conversations. Such speech features carry additional meaning other than the conventional meaning of an utterance since the tone, pitch, and stress are essential elements that convey the speaker’s attitude. As other researchers noted, (e.g. Adell, Bonafonte, & Escudero, 2005; Braga & Marquez, 2004), emotions, prosody, and pragmatics tend to

be correlated and, therefore, yield to a somewhat more accurate interpretation of a speaker's intent or emotion.

The uses of false start, hesitation, tag question and substitution have almost the same percentage in terms of occurrences in the corpus. The use of false starts is similar with the gap filling function of "ano", but the speaker tries to reformulate his/ her utterance and this may have been the reason why "ano" is used for groping for words; that is, there is an intention on the speaker's part to clarify the message he/ she wants to convey. On the other hand, the occurrence of a few instances of using "ano" as a tag question may be partially ascribed to the use of an alternative tag question in Filipino which is "di ba". It might be suspected that "di ba" could be an unmarked form of Filipino tag questions while "ano" may be its marked form. Lastly, the use of "ano" as substitution might provide further support to the assumption that when expectations are satisfied, "ano" can help facilitate shared knowledge.

As the result of the study, the Tagalog word "ano" can then be defined using its functions which would then further strengthen the relationship between semantics and pragmatics (i.e. the contextual meanings). Having identified the functions of "ano", semantic primitives may be arrived at to define what is "ano". "Ano" in this study can have any one or more interpretation given in a particular context:

(function 1: as an interrogative pronoun)

X said "ano" to Y =

X wants to know something  
that X thinks Y knows  
and X believes that Y can say that to X

(function 2: as a gap filler)

X said "ano" to Y =

X wants to say something to Y  
but X cannot think of the word X wants to say for some  
time

after some time, X thinks of the word and X says the  
word (groping for words)

or

X wants to say something to Y  
but X cannot think of the word X wants to say for some  
time



after some time, X thinks of the word and X says the word

X thinks of other words to say to Y (false start)

(function 3: tag question)

X said “ano” to Y =

X wants to ask something to Y

and X thinks that Y may have the same or different idea with X,

X wants to know what Y thinks about it

Y may or may not say what Y thinks

(function 4: hesitation)

X said “ano” to Y =

X thinks of something that may be bad

or X thinks of something bad about someone,

X wants to say it to Y

but X thinks Y may think bad of X

so X falters to say what X thinks

(function 5: irritation)

X said “ano” to Y =

X thinks of something that may be bad

or X thinks of something bad about someone,

X wants to say it to Y

(function 6: substitution)

X said “ano” to Y=

X wants to say something to Y

but X cannot think of the word X wants to say

but Y knows what X wants to say

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

The different uses of “ano” may be a mark of an identity of Filipinos and may be a common feature of Philippine English, at least as far as conversations are concerned. Since the conversations in the study used the English language, the Filipino speakers still have traces of expressions in their first language. A characteristic of natural talk includes gap fillers and can support shared knowledge, indicate hesitation and express irritation. Such uses help signal that the speaker still has something to say and can therefore become a facilitating tool for the interlocutors’ conversation.

The study has looked into “ano” which yielded multiple meanings based on the functions. The meanings (semantics) of a particular word cannot be restricted to the semantics domain alone but that exploration of possible meanings of a word can only be seen in the light of the function it serves as dictated by the context. While it may be impossible to account for all uses of a particular word, the assumption that a word’s meaning can be fully understood when in context may be further validated by the results of the study. It also strengthens the position that a particular expression may have multifunctional interpretation depending on how it is used by considering both the semantic and pragmatic aspects of the conversation. Therefore, the importance and relevance of contextual meaning cannot be disregarded.

### **Implications for Second Language Learning, Teaching**

The following implications for second language learning and teaching may be drawn from the present study.

1. While a characteristic of natural talk includes gap fillers which can help facilitate shared knowledge, gap fillers can be distractors if they frequently occur. English language learners (ELL) therefore, would benefit from explicit teaching of other expressions or conversation gambits to substitute for their verbalized pauses.
2. Since the use of too many gap fillers may also be traced from limited vocabulary, strategies to widen one’s vocabulary should then be taught to ELL so that they will have a wide range of vocabulary that they can call anytime they need a particular word.
3. ELL should also be given opportunities to practice speaking in the English language to further improve their fluency.
4. Since speaking is considered a face-threatening act, especially for ELL because of the notion that they are being judged by the way they speak, affective factors must then be considered by teachers by providing a positive classroom atmosphere to help students become comfortable with the spoken language.

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## Recommendations for Future Research

In the light of the findings of the current study, the following recommendations may be drawn:

1. that factors such as prosodic or suprasegmental features be accounted for to further see the contextual meaning of an utterance as such features carry other implications such as the speaker's attitude or mood that were not fully accounted for by this study; especially considering that "ano" is described by Baron (2008) as having the effect of incredulity and surprise depending on the tone of the speaker;
2. that other possible Filipino features of Philippine language be explored such as "di ba", "kasi" among others to further establish the relationship between meaning and function;
3. that studies investigate the nonverbal aspects of communication such as gestures, facial expressions, and body language and how such factors can help in interpreting the speaker's intention.

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