

Filipino Words One Needs To Learn

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Learning the following words is important as they reflect a lot about the Filipinos' personality:

Food to Filipinos



Food is very very very important to Filipinos. It's like they always fear of running short of food, and everywhere he goes the Filipino must have, as a security blanket, abundant provisions to reassure him that he will not starve to death. There is no gathering of Filipinos without food. The usual greeting, "*Kumain ka na ba?*" ("*Have you eaten?*") is very normal and acceptable. It is standard hospitality to offer visitors not just a drink but food, be it only biscuits or rice cakes. Eating in front of others and not offering to share is rude. The most constant and visible growth in everywhere in the Philippines has been in restaurants. A sojourn to the beach which consists of a safari of food bundles will not seem sufficient unless there are stops at fruit shops for more supplies. Even a trip to see a film will require provisions. Office workers would eat on their desks at lunch and take constant coffee breaks. In some schools "recess time" is included in a student's daily schedules. Youngsters bring food to school for their recess time (this is different from lunch). Most Filipinos feel bad not eat somewhere when they go out. A meeting or even just window shopping always entails eating.

Bayanihan



*** *bayanihan* (walking house)

Now this would sound funny to a Westerner, but once in a while, along highways in the provinces at night, drivers may come across a "*walking house*". This is literally a whole house being transferred to another place on the shoulders of several of men in what Filipinos call "*bayanihan*". It is a Filipino custom, a reflection of community cooperation. This practice has sadly died in a lot of areas in the Philippines near the cities. Bayanihan is not only limited to moving houses but also to other activities like planting and harvesting rice. Farmers from nearby rice fields would come and help farmers whose crops are ready for sowing or harvesting. Bayanihan is the Filipinos' spirit of cooperation and mutual help for a better purpose. Usually people who participate in a Bayanihan do not expect monetary payment. Refreshments and snacks are served after the job is done and this is considered by the participants as a way of saying "*thank you*".

Bakla and Tomboy (Homosexual)

In the Philippines, homosexuals are given much tolerance by society. Although there are still some people who are a bit biased with them, majority of the population has developed a respect for members of the third sex. A lot of homosexuals have established themselves in the world of fashion, beauty and movies. Homosexuals, however, are required to consider public censure in their daily conduct. Unlike in the West, Filipino gays are not allowed to be too flamboyant. Cross-dressing is still looked upon with disfavor as well as open relationship and public displays of affection with the same sex. Distinction would however be made between a man and a member of the third sex especially in their demeanor; for example, a male with arms on another man's shoulders, and males holding hands, are not considered gay. In the Philippines, the word gay or "*bakla*" is only used to refer to the male member of the third sex. Their female counterparts are called "*tomboy*".

Mukha

"Mukha" is a word rich in literary connotation, is the Tagalog word for face. Mukha means face or mask or even maw. For the Filipino, our pagmumukha, how our face presents itself to the world, is as important, if not more than crucial than it's physical contour or beauty. One may not have an attractive face, but has a magaan (light and pleasant), maaliwalas (refreshing), or Masaya (smiling or happy) face that more than compensates for the lack of actual beauty, and woe to those who may have good looks but mabigat (heavy), maasim (sour) and problemado (problem-ridden) ang mukha.

Filipinos emphasize appearances. They make a clear distinction between public face and inner face. A lot of Filipino men would not confide on anyone about wives failings because doing the same is like revealing their own weakness. This is the reason why unhappy marriages are kept to last a long time or even to a lifetime for appearances' sake. For a lot of Filipinos, appearances is all that matters, foisting illusions as the substance of real accomplishments refer to as "*balat-kayo*" (hypocrisy), "*pabalat bunga*" (fruit skin), "*pakitang-tao*" (just for show). Consequently, they value a person for his "*loob*" (inner self) and assess his character by his it. This is related to the Filipino trait "*hiya*" and "*amor proprio*".

Amok and Juramentado

Amok, in the contemporary sense is defined as a psychological state of unprovoked, extremely destructive behavior followed by amnesia, exhaustion, or even suicide. It is said to have been acquired by Filipinos from their Malaysian ancestors. This phenomenon, as explained by psychologists is rooted from the Filipinos' banking of resentment, "*pagtatanim ng galit*" meaning "*seeding anger*". When a Filipino who has been wronged several times keeps all of his his anger on himself, the same builds up and reaches a tipping point. It bursts and unleashes uncontrollably and this is where a person becomes violent and starts to go on a "killing spree". When the initial anger subsides, he revives logic and only then does he realize the extent of what he has done. The remorse is too heavy that could cause an "*amocus*" to take his own life. It has been explained by psychologists as well that one big factor for a person to turn "*amok*" is the repressive society of the Philippines towards hostility. To distinguish "*amok*" from a person who goes berserk in the West, in the former, the doer is unaware of his actions.

Juramentado is a Spanish word which means one who has taken a solemn oath or violence until death for religious reasons. Juramentado has been known to be observed in the Muslim areas in the some areas in the South of the Philippines. As opposed to an "*amok*", a person who does "*juramentado*" performs a ritual before doing the act. They shave their hairs, pray, say his goodbye to their families and asks for blessings from the imam (Muslim priest). The same was prevalent during the Spanish and American colonization of the country. The Muslims in the south resent the colonization and some of them would do "*juramentado*" in places frequented by the colonizers and kill as many of them as they can until they get killed. A "*juramentado*" always ends up dead as this is an oath till death. Muslims call this act "*parrang sabbil*" meaning "*a war in the path of Allah*".

Balato

When a Filipino receives an unexpected reward in the form of cash like in a lottery or has won in a game, people will cajole him ("*balato naman dyan*") into sharing a portion of the winning with his friends and family. This is called "balato". Some will not even wait to be cajoled but feels compelled to give and share his blessings.

Bangungot

A person is said to die from "*bangungot*" if he is found dead in his sleep. This usually presupposes that the person suffered a violent nightmare and was unable to wake himself up from it. It is a rare disease which is prevalent among male Filipinos between 25 to 40 years of age.

Blow-out

"*Blow-out*" is related to "*balato*". If "*balato*" means sharing a monetary gain with family and friends by someone in receipt of unexpected blessing, "*blow-out*" is a treat to the same people. Blow-out can be in the form of snacks or a "night out" for the youngsters. The same does not involve giving of money but the person who has received a blessing (monetary or otherwise) takes care of the bill during the "*blow-out*".

Debate: Balagtasan

This is the traditional verbal jousts done in a flowery, imaginary and rhythmic use of words. This is the Filipino counterpart of Europe's Shakespeare lit. It is an art as the same requires wit and logic not to mention the rhyming words in the delivery in order to topple the opponent's ideas. This poetic debate does not appear too much on the younger generations of the Filipinos.

Kurakot

"Kurakot" is a Filipino word that refers to the raking of wealth through graft and corruption. The rampancy of graft and corruption started in the Marcos regime, where the government's officials greed lever to maximum, making the amassing of ill-gotten wealth a nearly institutionalized industry among the favored few who were called cronies. The legacy of the Marcos years remains very much in the country and it would seem that people who get into position cannot resist the temptation of money. If one wants to understand more about the root of this negative practice, all they have to do is to re-examine the values (and I don't mean the negative values but the good ones) that makes the Filipinos.

Despedida

One who is leaving for a long period is given a special feast called a "*despedida*" (Spanish word for farewell) party. The *despedida* is usually organized by the family of the departing person. Close friends are all invited. Well-wishes are given, hugs and goodbyes.

Faithhealer

Faith healers, taken generally, are those who practice unorthodox forms of healing, and they include the herb doctors (herbolarios), the bone-healers (*manghihilot* or "*hilot*"), psychic healers, magnetic healers, mystical healers, or those who heal by means of prayer and medication, and others. It is estimated that there are a thousand of them in the country. They are said to operate without instruments, close wounds and leave no scars, and cure through divine aid. When a healer loses his powers, it is allegedly due to exhaustion of energy or his having become mercenary. The tradition goes back several centuries and is being believed by most Filipinos and some foreigners.

Micro-retail- "*Tingi*"

The "*tingi*" system of retail is a uniquely Filipino way of selling things. In this practice, a person can buy cigarettes by the stick, shampoo on a sachet, or even medicines per tablet/capsule. Where contemporary retail markets emphasize bulk purchase, the Filipino consumer seems inclined to purchase the minimum. "*Sari sari stores*" or what you call in the west as "corner shops" are everywhere in the Philippines, it is mostly here that one can buy a piece (1 mean 1 piece) of candy to 1/4 kilo of sugar or just a little portion of vinegar for cooking. This practice caters to the less affluent members of the society who cannot afford to buy more. Also, Filipinos are very conscientious that they try, as much as possible, to avoid wasting almost anything.

Motels

In the Philippines, the motels doesn't mean exactly as it is in the west but one that has a really negative connotation. It means a place for discreet trysts. This is why motels in the Philippines have high walls to allow individuals to enter and exit the building with minimum visibility. A single-car garage also has stairs which lead directly to a room. Motels are essentially for love trysts and the charged by the hour. Female passengers leaving motels who are extremely literate tries to hide their identity by wearing dark sunglasses or reads large newspapers close to their face on the way out. Because of the conservatism of the Filipino culture, no respectable girl would be caught dead getting in or out a motel.

Nangangaliwa

"Pangangaliwa" means marital infidelity. The world is equated with the metaphor *"a busy left hand which the right hand is unaware of"*. While "left-handed" husbands are tolerated, society is intolerant of ladies who turn left (infidels).

Wan, Tu, Tri (One, Two, Three)

Filipino con-games, popularly called *"one, two, three"*, thrive in the cities. It uses deceit to take advantage of the naive. An example is the use of a device that can duplicate peso bills. Burglars gain entry to homes when owners are away by telling the housekeep they are there to pick up the television set or some other appliance for repairs. Another modus operandi is to call up the housekeep or kin while the owner is away to report that the owner has just had a serious car accident and urgently needs money (for blood or emergency treatment), which they must frantically search for in safe boxes or locked drawers in the house and give to the caller who will meet them at a designated place immediately. A foreigner must always be aware of strangers of these things in order to get cheated. Oh in addition, one, two, three, also means buying or ordering something without paying for it by running away (as in one, two, three, run!).

Pabaon

This is the Filipino practice of giving *"send off"* gifts. Most "send-off" gifts these days are food. An old Filipino custom is to give departing guests a small parcel of food as they leave the occasion. Some would give gifts to

Pasalubong



"Pasalubong"

is a Tagalog word meaning "souvenir". In the Philippines it has acquired the meaning of a small gift or souvenir from someone travelling either whilst visiting or upon returning home. The literal meaning of pasalubong is to "greet", "surprise" or "meet with". Travellers or holiday-makers bring back gifts for kin and friends, even if the trip is just to a nearby town: some special food the place is noted for-strawberries from Baguio, pineapple from Tagaytay, Ojaldres biscuits from the Visayas, pastilles from Bulacan, turrón from Pampanga. Travelling abroad is often a shopping chore when you are required to buy relatives and friends *"pasalubong"*-(a greeting gift).

Pasalubong is very popular among Filipinos if good relations are to be maintained. The gesture of handing out *"pasalubong"* conveys that loved ones or friends are being remembered. Pasalubong can range from food items such as fruits, imported confectionery goods and other sweets. Pasalubong can also be other items such as shirts, novelty items, knives and toys etc. If it is something that can be bought or wrapped, it's a pasalubong. Pasalubong is also used in daily or frequent interactions or greetings with family members commonly when coming home from work. Fastfood, toys, snacks or fruits are given to family members as a sign of thoughtfulness and care.

People Power

People power started as a historic event which led to the fall of Marcos and the restoration of democracy is attributed to non-violent public demonstrations that pressured Marcos to hold a snap election resulting in the events which pitted unarmed civilians against armored carriers and marines in full battle gear along the thoroughfare known as EDSA. In the history of the Philippines, 3 people powers have occurred:

People Power Revolution of 1986 that toppled the administration of President Ferdinand Marcos after allegations of widespread cheating in the 1986 presidential elections.

EDSA Revolution of 2001 that toppled the administration of President Joseph Estrada after an aborted impeachment trial where prosecutors walked out after failing on a motion.

2001's EDSA III (*"EDSA Tres"* or "EDSA Three") that climaxed in the siege of the presidential palace while Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo remaining in office after the arrest of President Joseph Estrada.

Point of no Return; "*Napasubo*"

Refers to a situation where a Filipino commits himself to something and cannot back out anymore. This situation is brought about by the Filipino trait "*hiya*" and "*amor propio*". To most Filipinos, a promise is a promise and someone who does not live up to feels a deep shame on himself. *Napasubo* covers instances where a person inadvertently falls into a trap he accidentally made for himself when he opens his big mouth without thinking.

Propriety: "*Delicadeza*"

Delicadeza is a Spanish term which when translated in English means daintiness. It is defined as an act of being refined or delicate in tastes or manners. But in simple terms, it is commonly referred to as a sense of propriety or how to behave rightly in all circumstances. It is an etiquette that was passed on to us as a legacy of the Spanish culture. *Delicadeza* is a Spanish loan word, popular among the genteel class of Filipinos as a built-in self-imposed sense of proper decorum like the European *noblesse oblige*, controlling behavior. For example, a politician who gets involved in an investigation for an anomaly by virtue of his office is expected to resign out of *delicadeza* or out of decency.

The Querida system

Querida is a Spanish word which means "loved one". In the Filipino society the word *querida* denotes a lady who is kept as a second wife although not strictly married. Because of the macho image a lot of Filipino males try to project, keeping a woman apart from his real wife is one way of satisfying this macho image. Although society frowns upon this practice, the same is widespread all over the country. *Queridas* or "number twos" are not socially accepted by society and are considered "*walang delicadeza*" or without a sense of decency. Rumors of illicit relationship is everywhere but people talk about only in hushed/whispered tones. Men however talk about it openly but only among themselves because Filipino men condone this practice as a sign of masculinity. A Filipino man for whom this secret is shared will never dare tell the latter's wife of the same as he would be branded "*tsismoso*" (male who gossips) which is equated to being a sissy thereby decreasing his macho image. *Queridas* are often a cause of family break ups because keeping a *querida* presupposes that a wife is not good enough for a man. A wife who learns about a husband's infidelity will have her "*amor propio*" (ego) wounded and would feel "*hiya*" (shamed) so she leaves her husband even if she loves him.

The *Querida* system is an underground life. A mistress has no social acceptance, no matter how powerful her lover and how brazenly she flaunts her status; people may be civil, but she enjoys no public esteem. When you consider how important "*amor propio*", "*hiya*" and public acceptance are to the Filipino, the mistress does not exist as a person in the society. She has been given various appellations: "*querida*" (Spanish for "loved one") has been corrupted to "*kiri*"; she is also "*kulasisi*", a small green parrot people keep for amusement, and "*kalapating mababa ang lipad*", a low-flying dove.

The Queue: "*Pila*"

Filipinos do not like to queue. In World War II, the Japanese tried to get them to queue up for direly needed rice rations and they regard queuing as the pits of wartime days. The water shortage in post-war Manila created queues for water in congested areas, again the depths of despair. The "*pila*" (queue) is something you try to avoid. An American explained a technique Filipinos use to get through a crowd when no queue is visible. He thrusts himself, elbow first, through an opening, making sure he is not looking at the person he is nudging, and then swings his body and thrusts the other elbow through, this time looking in the other direction, and so on down.

Salvage

As used in the Philippines, the verb "*salvage*" and the noun "*salvaging*" are the slang equivalents of the terms "to execute extrajudicially, to assassinate" and "extrajudicial execution", terms used by human-rights organizations such as Amnesty International. It is the English translation of the Tagalog word "*salbahe*", whose meaning ranges from mischievous to abusive and a notoriously abusive person (noun). "Salbahe", in turn, is derived from the Spanish word "*salvaje*" wild, undomesticated, savage.

Salvage is the death squad term for the assassination committed by the military during the martial law years under President Marcos to exterminate troublesome activists and oppositionists, mostly peasant and labor leaders.

Scoring Freebies: "*Lista sa Tubig*"

Kinship sharing is a rule. One measure of closeness to someone is willingness to share. To have to pay for a book, a painting, or a candy bar from an author, painter or shop-owner friend, would mean one is like other mortals, not a special kin or friend. Filipinos are inclined to help themselves with the expectation they will not be charged or you will not object if you are a close relative or friend. Some expressions used for this are: "*T.Y.*" (thank you), "*ambush*", "*lista sa tubig*" (write the credit account on water) and "*dilihensiya*".

"*Suki*"

In the commercial context, suki relationships (market- exchange partnerships) may develop between two people who agree to become regular customer and supplier. In the marketplace, Filipinos will regularly buy from certain specific suppliers who will give them, in return, reduced prices, good quality, and, often, credit. Suki relationships often apply in other contexts as well. For example, regular patrons of restaurants and small neighborhood retail shops and tailoring shops often receive special treatment in return for their patronage. Suki does more than help develop economic exchange relationships. Because trust is such a vital aspect, it creates a platform for personal relationships that can blossom into genuine friendship between individuals.

Patron-client bonds also are very much a part of prescribed patterns of appropriate behavior. These may be formed between tenant farmers and their landlords or between any patron who provides resources and influence in return for the client's personal services and general support. The reciprocal arrangement typically involves the patron giving a means of earning a living or of help, protection, and influence and the client giving labor and personal favors, ranging from household tasks to political support. These relationships often evolve into ritual kinship ties, as the tenant or worker may ask the landlord to be a child's godparent. Similarly, when favors are extended, they tend to bind patron and client together in a network of mutual obligation or a long-term interdependency.

Tao

Tao, meaning person, is used in various forms, all stressing human dignity or frailty. Human weakness is justified by "We are only tao". Tao is also used to refer to the common man, the peasant, the worker. Someone announcing his presence in someone else's house will knock and say "*Tao po*" meaning "A person is here, sir".

Trapo

Trapo is a blend word or fusion, combining the first syllables of TRA-ditional PO-litician. In the beginning, Philippine journalists and "street parliamentarians" (that is, activists) used "tradpol" to refer to traditional politicians. At some point, someone must have noticed that "trapo" was a better combination because it's also the Spanish-derived Tagalog word for a rag. Trapo refers directly to public officials who returned after the Marcos dictatorship to restore the discredited political system that Marcos used to justify military rule. Indeed, while there is, unhappily, an abundance of trapos no real alternative type of public official has emerged who can be classified as different from any other traps.

"Under the Saya"

The Filipino macho cult is checkmated by strong-willed wives who keep their husbands humble, and these hen-pecked husbands are teased as living under their wives'skirts (under the saya).

"Vigilante"

Vigilante refers to an anti-communist group or movement with quasi-official links who employ death-squad tactics against alleged communists and corrupt government officials. These are people who does summary executions of publicly-known corrupt officials and businessmen.

Superstitions and Mythology

Kulam: Unexplained maladies are commonly attributed to kulam a form of sorcery. It is believed psychic people can cause illness by a stare. The mangkukulam apparently does his evil deed because of some trivial offence real or imagined or purely out of whim.

Aswang: A creature of the netherworld, the aswang is evil, at times taking the form of a pig, a dog or a nocturnal bird called tik-tik. While capable of doing harm to anyone, the aswangs's favourite prey is the pregnant woman because he eats live human fetuses.

Manananggal: This is a female vampire who can disengage the top half of her body and fly at night to the beds Of unsuspecting sleeping men, her usual victims. Place salt on the severed half-torso to slay her should you learn your wife is really a manananggal.

Nuno sa Punso: Nuno sa punso is a tiny old man who squats on an anthill and has magic powers that could cause you good or ill fortune. You should always ask his permission when passing

"Anting-anting": Belief in "*anting-anting*" (amulets or talismans) was noted by Spanish chroniclers. Today it is widespread. "*Anting-anting*" of Christian Filipinos may have Christian symbols and Latin names in corrupt form. It can make one invincible or invisible.

"*Anting-anting*" also refers to lucky charms for prosperity or fertility. It is the warrior's secret weapon; notorious bandits were believed to own especially potent "*anting-anting*". Religious folk cults carry "*anting-anting*". The former President's biographer, Hartzell Spence, claims Marcos had one inserted in his back by Bishop Aglipay.

Gayuma: Love charms may help win the affections of one's object of desire. One who acts lovesick or is attracted to an unexpected "mismatch" is said to have been under a love spell called a "*nagayuma*".

To stop rain: If you are giving a garden party and it looks like it is going to rain, send some eggs to Santa Clara. The Sisters of Saint Claire are happy to receive the eggs, but make no guarantee of sunshine.