

# The Semantic Explication of the Filipino Emotion Word for 'Anger' *Galit*

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This paper attempts to apply the Natural Semantic Metalanguage (NSM) in the description of the Filipino emotion concept *galit* couched in the form of semantic explication. The NSM, using a set of 56 semantic primes or indefinables, a small core of basic lexical terms which are believed to be shared by all the languages of the world, makes possible a more accurate and less ethnocentric description. Using the English language as a tool for analyzing concepts can impose an Anglocentric perspective while NSM provides this language-independent framework as it is carved out of natural language, therefore, it is explanatory and has a direct contact with intuition.

An explication, according to Wierzbicka (1992:551) is a hypothesis about the meaning of a word arrived at by examining the range of a word's use using data such as linguistic evidence or questionnaires and it is verified by checking whether it can account for that range. The claim is made that a culture's emotions are culturally-colored, that is, highly influenced by the existing cognitive concepts constituting a given culture's values and attitudes. Hence, the study of a language, especially its vocabulary, can reveal essential points in a speech community's culture and offer important clues to its distinction from other cultures. Anger words such as the Malay *marah* (Goddard 1998), the Filipino tribal Ifaluk song (Lutz 1982), the English *angry* (Wierzbicka 1996) and the Chinese *nu* (Kornacki 2001) differ considerably especially in view of their causes, management and expression.

In Jose Villa Panganiban's *Diksiyunaryo-Tesaurus Pilipino-Ingles* (1972:422), *galit* means 'anger'; 'rancor'; 'indignation' or 'resentment'. Several phrases involve the use of the word *loob* in referring to anger, such as *ngitngit ng loob*, *sama ng loob*. Conversely, there is no such phrase as *tuwa ng loob* roughly 'joy'. These imply that the venue of anger is internal. There, the Filipino *galit* is perceived, formed, appraised and can reside there unexpressed. There is a relation between anger and silence.

Huwag gambalain ang pananahimik

'Do not disturb the silence'

Ang aking damdaming may kimkim na galit. (Cruz 1991:125)

'Of my heart that is nurturing anger.'

Filipinos put a premium on peace. They avoid conflicts whenever possible and when it exists they try to settle it in a non-confrontational way.

Kung ikaw ay nagagalit

'If you are angry'

Ikaw ay tumahimik. (Esto 1996:124)

'Keep quiet.'

The explication for the concept of *galit* is supported by interview and survey results, and 37 linguistic samples. The first most important

element in the Filipino *galit* is that its source and cause is a person. However, reactions to *galit* vary depending on the in-group or out-group relationship existing between the offender and the *galit*-experiencer. Some of the reasons given why Filipinos delay or withhold the expression of anger are 1. to preserve one's impeccable image or *mukha*, and that 2. anger is a cause of evil things. Instead of an outright expression, Filipinos resort to the following means: withdrawal of customary cheerfulness, use of *parinig*, a go-between, non-verbal means, indirect means or euphemisms, teasing, a change in voice tone or ways of speaking. If, despite these, the person persists in doing the offense, the person affected can do something bad. However, the Filipino anger can also be expressed immediately as a reaction to hurt *amor propio*. The Filipino *galit* can be described as passive-aggressive.