Concept paper - salvage

Albert Daniel E. Aligato February 13, 2013 English 10 - WFX-3 Final Draft of Concept Paper (1, 059 words) Salvage the People A phrase easy to understand, though a bit grammatically off — " Salvage the People" would just mean ' saving people from a wreck' to the normal English reader, but somehow the phrase's meaning would be different here in the Philippines. Ask around and you will get the same 'saving people" definition, still once in a while you would get a reaction of shock with a tinge of disgust, but why? According to Dictionary. com, ' salvage' means ' to save or rescue', more specifically to wrecks on water (" Salvage"). But in the Philippines, ' salvage' somehow became an autoantonym, which is a word that formed a definition that's the opposite of the original. Double-Tongued Dictionary defined ' salvage' as " to kill or assassinate" (Barrett). How did this evolve to be and why is it still in use? It is hard to pinpoint exactly when and why this meaning came to be here in the country, although there are some theories as to how. Some say it is rooted in our mixed Spanish and American colonial backgrounds. The Filipino language is notably accented with Spanish words, a side effect of being a Spanish colony for more than three centuries. The word in question is salvaje, which, according to Merriam-Webster Spanish Dictionary, is Spanish for ' wild' or ' savage' (" Salvaje"). Afterwards, the Americans came and standardized English, another big step away from the Austronesian-based Filipino languages. Ambeth R. Ocampo, Chairman of the Department of History at Ateneo de Manila University, says as English was introduced after the Americans took over, salvage was incorrectly matched with salvaje (or salbahe in Tagalog) since the two words looks and sounds alike, and it stuck ever since (1). A more popular belief is that the gruesome

meaning evolved during the dark Martial Law era in the 1970's. Benjamin Pimentel, a columnist for the Inquirer: Global Nation, chronicled the events that led up to the present day. Then-president Ferdinand Marcos declared Martial Law on the 21st of September in 1972. To many people, it was a good change. They were relieved and contented by the sudden peace brought by the end of the demonstrations and rallies that once congested the streets of the city. It was peaceful, until the body count started climbing. Marcos's ' peace and order' did not come without a price — a price paid by the people of this country. The country's quietness and peace was said to be due to the forced silencing of the people who braved to speak up. Bodies started popping up in riverbanks and canals, they were victims of summary executions performed to maintain the false impression of peace and order (1). Worse, someone has to clear the waterways of corpses. In their coverage of these stories, the media used the word ' salvage' in reference to the retrieval of the bodies from the rivers and canals. This is how the confusion, and the subsequent evolution of the Philippine definition, started. For example, take the sentence " Two dead bodies were salvaged from Pasig River", which would plainly mean that bodies were retrieved from the river. But as most Filipinos did not learn English as a first language, we would translate the sentence to Tagalog in our heads and end up with " Dalawang bankay ay na-salvage sa Pasig River. " Based on context, the sentence could mean two things depending on the chosen definition of the Tagalog preposition ' sa': 1) Two dead bodies were salvaged from the Pasig River 2) Two dead bodies were salvaged at the Pasig River ; this would prove to be a problem to those who doesn't know what ' salvage' means as the second

translation would say that the corpse became a corpse because it was ' salvaged'. And the Philippine definition was born. Today, though, the word ' salvage' is rarely used for its homicidal definition in casual conversations. Kevin Castro, a student at the University of the Philippines Diliman, conducted a survey entitled ' To Salvage the Salvaged Impressions' asking students at the campus definitions of Philippine English words, including ' salvage'. It implied that people in the younger generations are more acquainted with the British/American definition of the word (5). But when asked, Filipinos still know the double meaning behind the word ' salvage'. News in TV and paper are still being headlined using the word in quotation. For example, " 2 cops tagged in ' salvage' try dismissed" (Amoroso), and " 5 QC cops tried to kill him, says ' salvage' victim" (Aurelio). They are letting the viewers or readers know that, for one — they aren't using the correct definition and two — there is something more to this misconception that lies just beneath the Filipino mind. For one, why would we keep using a word that is not only grammatically incorrect, but also of a horrible background? Aside from it being a good wordplay for writers and a novel piece of trivia, it's a way of reminding us of our history. To be perfectly frank, Martial Law was instated and bad things happened. People died doing what they thought was right. As an outsider looking in, it was about dethroning the tyrant running our country, and they won — the Filipinos won. But why is this out-of-date definition still in circulation and why can't it change? English, a major language spoken around the world, would eventually split up in brackets as the people in a specific sector would share events and experiences that would change the definitions of words, phrases, and even whole sentences.

That's how dialects are formed, and ' correcting' them would be hard. Even the two base languages of English — American English and British English, have differences that would not reconcile. It is not hard to think it is easy to change a word's definition. And as of this time, ' salvage' can even morph in smaller brackets of society, like how a person can ' salvage' a shirt to a nearby ukay-ukay. The Philippine definition of ' salvage' is set in stone, whether that stone is being used to pound bigger rocks to create the great tools of man, or hidden in a cavern away from the eyes of dictionary publishers and lexical bullies. It is still a stone the Filipinos created. ' Salvage' is undeniably something born out of our history, a quirk embedded in our collective minds, and probably something very hard to make go away. And come to think of it, have we tried salvaging the definition of the word?

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