How to Get Away with Saying Too Much: "*Charot!*" as a Deflective Linguistic Armor in Everyday Filipino Talk

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the swardspeak term "charot" – along with its wide morphological family – to show how a seemingly playful queer lexeme has become a highly productive discourse device in contemporary Filipino communication. Drawing on a 700-token anonymized social media corpus and employing semantic, morphological, dependency-syntactic, and pragmatic analyses, it traces the word's queer genealogy, its semantic narrowing from earlier lexicographic meanings, and its integration into Tagalog morphosyntax. Findings reveal that "charot" consistently appears in sentence-final, paratactic positions; it functions less as propositional content and more as a metapragmatic operator that retroactively reframes an utterance as humorous, unserious, or affectively buffered. Beyond signaling "just joking," "charot" performs culturally specific labor: managing face-threats and emotional risk, softening disclosures of vulnerability, and tempering critique within norms of "hiya," "pakikisama," and indirectness – all while allowing Filipinos to say too much, too boldly, or too tenderly.

Keywords: *charot*, swardspeak, Filipino pragmatics, queer linguistics, discourse markers

I. INTRODUCTION

To speak of a language is also to speak of who uses it and who is permitted to "own" it. In the Philippine context, language has long been a terrain of power. During the Spanish colonization, friars deliberately refused to teach the indios Spanish, fearing that access to liberal European texts would cultivate critical consciousness and incite resistance. Under American occupation, the arrival of colonial teachers in 1899 under the project of "benevolent assimilation" confirmed that language was among the softest yet most efficient technologies of empire. In this sense, to colonize people has often meant first colonizing their tongues.

Language can also operate as a mode of resistance. Even when crafted within exclusive social groups, marginalized communities have used language as a means of coping with exclusion and violence. In the 1970s, swardspeak, also known as *badaf* or *bekislang*, emerged from the Philippine gay community as a counter-language to the

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Tagalog-based Filipino privileged in academic and institutional spaces (Dela Cruz et al., 2023). Unlike Taglish, which often obscures class distinctions, swardspeak functions as a crucial marker of "being *bakla*." As narrated by an informant in Manalansan's *Global Divas* (2006): *"Ay mukha siyang macho pero nang ibuka niya ang bunganga niya – oh my – parang paroparo at nagsward language. Isa siya sa atin manash."*

Derived from the Cebuano word for gay, *"sward,"* this sociolect reflects the political economy of marginalized men in a postcolonial setting by creatively appropriating Filipino, American, Spanish, Cebuano, French, Japanese, and Chinese linguistic resources (Manalansan, 2006). Hart and Hart (1990) describe this process as a rearticulation of borrowed forms into new symbolic meanings. It is further noted that gay language follows no fixed formula for word coinage; what remains crucial is delivery, intonation, and the feminization of speech, making swardspeak more performative than textual (Manalansan, 2006).

Bekislang is also perpetually in motion. As one of Manalansan's informants from Global Divas (2006) observes, *"Ay ang lenggwahe ng mga bading ay sing-bilis ng jet, kung hindi matalas ang pandinig mo, maiiwan ka sa biyahe."* He attributes this rapid evolution to two forces: the mirroring of pop culture and the necessity of preserving queer exclusivity; constant innovation also maintains both modernity and in-group secrecy. Over time, however, swardspeak has permeated mainstream consciousness, with non-queer speakers increasingly adopting select lexicons (Alba, 2015). Media circulation through television, radio, print, and social platforms has accelerated this diffusion, thus allowing gay lingo to function as both "conduit" and "progenitor" in mainstream language (Casabal, 2008).

Despite growing scholarly attention to swardspeak, much of the literature remains descriptive rather than analytical, especially regarding how specific lexemes travel across discursive communities. One of the most prominent—and most understudied—of these is the word *charot*. Jeresano (2022) defines *charot* as a gay-lingo-derived expression signaling joking. Laureta (2017) expands this definition, noting its use to mark statements as unserious or to soften truthful utterances, as in *"I love you… char!"* Its clipped form *char* reflects Filipino processes of semantic reworking, diverging from earlier English meanings of *char* as "to burn" or "scorch" (Samifanni, 2010).

Even if the cementing of the expression illustrates the Philippines' dense linguistic ecology, existing studies of swardspeak tend to treat the word as a broad sociolinguistic phenomenon. And as a result, we still lack empirical descriptions of how *charot* functions semantically, structurally, and pragmatically in discourse. To respond to this gap, this study investigates the following research questions:

1.) What is the contemporary semantic range of *charot,* and how has its meaning narrowed from earlier documented forms?
2.) What syntactic positions do *charot* and its morphological family occupy, and how do these positions influence their interpretation?
3.) What discourse functions do *charot* and its variants perform in actual communicative interaction, particularly in digital and pop culture settings?

In this paper, I argue that the semiotic transportability of *charot* has positioned it as a powerful metapragmatic signal. *Charot* comments on the emotional charge and potential social danger of an utterance by reframing it as "only a joke." In doing so, it insulates speakers from accountability while permitting the expression of sentiments that might otherwise be too risky, too intimate, or even too direct.

This paper proceeds as follows. The next section outlines the data sources, corpus construction, and analytic methods used in examining *charot* and its variants. The results section then traces the etymology and semantic narrowing of *charot*, followed by an analysis of its syntactic positions using dependency grammar. This is augmented by a morphological analysis of its contemporary variants. The discussion situates these findings within Filipino pragmatics, linguistic diffusion, and affect and risk management. Finally, the concluding section reflects on *charot* as a culturally distinctive expression for negotiating emotion, power, and indirectness in our social life.

II. METHODS

This study uses a qualitative linguistic analysis of *charot* and its morphological variants as they circulate in contemporary Filipino digital discourse, examining their semantic, syntactic, morphological, and pragmatic behavior. I began with a dictionary sweep using Zorc's Tagalog Slang Dictionary, which served as the semantic baseline for the analysis. Using these meanings as reference points, I generated a digital corpus of 700 naturally occurring tokens gathered from publicly accessible posts on X (formerly Twitter) and Threads between September 2011 and December 2025. Tokens were defined as individual posts or post fragments containing *charot* or its variants, and sampling followed a deliberate, usage-based approach that eliminated metalinguistic explanations or dictionary-style posts to guarantee that all data reflected authentic interaction. Ethical considerations were addressed by anonymizing usernames and removing personal identifiers so that only linguistic content was analyzed. Because the corpus is drawn exclusively from X and Threads, it reflects the practices of digitally active users and platform-specific modes of interaction. The findings, therefore, do not claim full representativeness of offline or private speech; they only focus on recurring pragmatic patterns in contemporary online Filipino discourse.

Each instance was then extracted into a spreadsheet and labeled with metadata (source, date, context) before undergoing systematic coding: every token was coded first for syntactic analysis, which employed Dependency Grammar to determine how *charot* attaches to or governs other elements in the clause. I then employed morphological analysis per word variant, along with semantic analysis to compare each token against the dictionary-established meanings to trace narrowing, extension, and semantic shift. Pragmatic and discourse analyses were also employed to identify how *charot* manages face-threats and affective alignment in online interaction. After the analyses, I identified recurring structural and pragmatic patterns, and finally integrated the semantic, syntactic, and discourse findings to show how these levels reinforce one another.

III. RESULTS

A. Etymology and Semantic Range

Etymologically, *charot* appears as a semantic grave meant to be dug, but with no clear resolution of what might be found. A definitional starting point can be established through Robert Zorc's *Tagalog Slang Dictionary* (1991), which documents four primary meanings of the word: (1) "joke" or "just kidding," (2) a flirtatious woman (used as a term of endearment), (3) a gay man, and (4) an expression of disbelief ("I don't believe you"), typically accompanied by a gestural act in which a person draws a straight line with the index finger, flicks it, and then utters *charot*. A related form, *charing*, carries these same four meanings, with an additional sense glossed as "that's enough."

Despite the richness of these lexicographic meanings, the question of lexical priority remains unresolved. It is unclear whether *charing* preceded *charot*, whether *charot* was formed first, or whether both emerged simultaneously through similar linguistic processes. Various sources provide competing accounts of its genesis. A commonly circulating explanation suggests that *charot* developed from the blending of *charing* and *harot* (flirtation), while other accounts propose that it derives from a consonantal blending process, combining the letter "C" and *harot*, a mechanism characteristic of swardspeak formations (Ulla et al., 2024). Other possible roots link the word to earlier gay slang such as *churva* and *churvahan*, or to English equivalents like *chore* and *charade*. Popular culture also credits the coinage of the term to actor Roderick Paulate, who starred in the 1983 film *Charot!*, in which he played the lead role.

In addition to these circulating accounts, a possible etymology can be traced to Spanish, in line with well-documented patterns of lexical borrowing in Philippine languages during the colonial period. I propose that charlatan, which provides the strongest semantic and phonetic relationship, may have been the root word for *charot*. Semantically, *charlatán* refers to a person who babbles, deceives, or speaks nonsense—or in this case, speech that is unserious, excessive, or misleading. This aligns closely with the more current function of *charot*, which marks an utterance as "just a joke," "not serious," or intentionally playful. Phonologically, the preservation of the initial syllable *char-* is apparent, appearing almost unchanged in forms such as *char*, *charot*, *char lang*, and *charot lang*. Furthermore, the rhythm of *charlatán* (char-la-TÁN) loosely parallels that of *charot lang* (cha-ROT-lang). In turn, this produces a similarity that strengthens the probability of a metathetic relationship.

B. Syntactic Positions

To examine the role of *charot* in everyday interaction, this section employs dependency grammar analysis to clarify its relational ties with surrounding sentence elements. While *charot* most frequently functions as an interjection, this section focuses on that role specifically; adjectival, verb, and nominal uses are addressed in later sections. Following Hudson (2016), sentences are treated not as phrase-level constituents but as dependency networks in which each word is linked to a lexical head.

Figure 1

"Charot" used as an interjection on X

Catriona Gray as our coping mechanism again this year? No, it's Camille Prats. Charot

In the example, "Catriona Gray as our coping mechanism again this year? No, it's Camille Prats. *Charot*," the lexical head of the second clause is *it's*, with *Camille Prats* as its complement. The first sentence functions as a discourse unit that establishes an expectation. But the crucial observation concerns the attachment of *charot*; it does not depend on *it's*, *Camille Prats*, or any internal verbal element. It behaves as a discourse-level modifier that links to the speech act of the entire preceding assertion rather than attaching it to any individual word. This relationship can be analyzed as a paratactic dependency, wherein the modifier attaches holistically to the clause to signal non-serious intent.

Charot is also commonly paired with *lang* ("just"), forming *charot lang*, which functions as a nominalized interjectional unit. In this construction, *charot* acts as the head, with *lang* functioning as an adverbial dependent.

Figure 2

"Charot lang" used as an interjection on Threads

Lord sobrang busy ko lately ha, pag ako di naging successful magtatampo ako. Charot lang

In the utterance, "*Lord, sobrang busy ko lately ha, pag ako di naging successful magtatampo ako. Charot lang,*" the expression *charot lang* again operates as a discourse-level dependent instead of a clause-internal grammatical element. In the main clause "*pag ako di naging successful magtatampo ako,*" the lexical head is the verb *magtatampo*, with *ako* as its subject and the conditional clause *pag ako di naging successful* functioning as a clausal modifier. None of these elements governs *charot lang*; the expression again attaches paratactically as an evaluative stance marker, which signals that the claim "*magtatampo ako*" is not intended literally.

Hence, across both cases, *charot*, whether as a standalone interjection or as the nominalized form *charot lang*, operates outside the clause structure, modifies illocutionary force, and behaves as a pragmatic marker symptomatic of Filipino queer discourse.

C. Morphological Variants

In this morphological analysis, and in the absence of a conclusive historical origin amid various folk etymologies, I treat *charot* as the base form from which contemporary variations are derived due to its high morphological productivity. This choice stems from my observation of its dominance in everyday usage. As such, it remains semantically stable and socially recognizable across registers and platforms.

This analysis also argues that swardspeak, by design, thrives on morphological instability. Its creativity depends on opacity, novelty, and speed, which are features that simultaneously assert group identity and resist the mainstream. I argue that forms such as *charing*, *charaught*, *chariz*, *chour*, and *chararot* should therefore not be regarded as "incorrect" versions of *charot* but as instances of strategic morphological drift, in which meaning remains relatively constant while form mutates to maximize humor and in-group recognition. Espeño-Rosales and Careterro (2019) support this view, as they note that stylistic variation in gay lingo emerges through the creative attachment or replacement of prefixes and suffixes. In simpler terms, swardspeak is guided by euphony and phonological resemblance to the source word and not by fixed rules.

1. Charot

As the base form, *charot* appears in one of its earliest recognizable pop-cultural instances in the film *Charot!* (1983), starring Roderick Paulate and Vilma Santos. The film centers on a young boy, Toti, who witnesses a crime committed by henchmen of a politician. After being discovered, he is forced to flee and seeks the help of his gay friend Marlene. Marlene's solution is for Toti to disguise himself as a woman, both to evade danger and to allow him to continue supporting his family. In one key scene, Marlene proposes possible female aliases: *"Batutera? Hindi magandang pangalan. Chupadera? Malaswa. Supsupera?"* to which Toti responds, *"Ang papangit naman ng mga pangalang binibigay mo sa'kin eh."* Merlin then concludes, *"Ikaw naman, charot lang 'yun."* In that instance, *charot* is clearly used as an interjection meaning "just kidding."

Figure 3

Screenshots from the movie Charot (1983)

Figure 4
A screenshot from the movie Charot (1983)

Notably, when Toti first hears the word *charot*, he becomes fascinated by it and eventually adopts it as his feminine alias. In this shift, the word operates under three overlapping meanings: (1) "just kidding," and (2) a referent to a flirtatious woman or (3) a gay person, consistent with Zorc's documented senses. These symbolic meanings become more explicit in the film's song, which includes the lines: "*Charot, walang tatalo sa'yong ganda. Pang-Miss Universe ang iyong kalsada…*"

This cinematic example is significant because it captures *charot* at a historical moment before it settled into its contemporary role as a routinized discourse marker in everyday speech. This also allows us to further analyze its current semantic load, as demonstrated in the next contemporary digital examples.

2. Char

Char is a back-clipped form of charot, with the final syllable –ot removed, leaving only the initial syllable, which then stabilizes as an independent lexical item. Some other swardspeak words that have undergone the same process are *"bes"* from best friend and *"wa"* from *'wala akong pake.'* This interjectional use is illustrated in the following example:

Figure 5

"Char" used as an interjection on X

Toni with a one-on-one exclusive interview with Celestine. CHAR

Note: This post is accompanied by a seemingly AI-generated screenshot of a YouTube thumbnail featuring Toni Gonzaga sitting on a chair and Celestine Gonzaga sitting on the opposite side of her, posing for a picture.

In this instance, *char* attaches not to a specific lexical head but to the preceding discourse unit, which then frames the prior statement as a joke. Pragmatically, the speaker uses *char* to mark the absurdity of Toni Gonzaga interviewing herself—a gesture that simultaneously mocks the performance of innocence and implicitly comments on her silence during anti-corruption protests.

3. Char ½ and Charot ½

Char ½ and *charot ½* develop from *charot* through back-clipping (*charot* → *char*) combined with a scalar numeric extension (½) that functions as an orthographic stance marker. In Filipino online discourse, fractional numerics such as ½ and ¼ are used to encode degrees of emotional intensity and sincerity.

Figure 6

"Charot ½" used as an interjection on X

iyak na naman ang walang papa charot ½

Note: This tweet is accompanied by a high-angle shot of a headstone covered with flowers in the cemetery.

4. Charing

The form *charing* develops from *charot* through a two-step morphological process: back-clipping and expressive affixation. First, the base *charot* is reduced to *char*, after which the expressive suffix *-ing* is attached, producing *charing*. Crucially, this *-ing* is not

the English gerundive morpheme but a productive beki suffix found in forms such as *getssing*, *buysing*, and *najee-ing*, whose function is stylistic and not grammatical.

Figure 7
"Charing" used as an interjection on X

if symptoms persist, will you consult your doctor – Dipende kung guapo ang doctor! Charing

Here, *charing* functions in its canonical role as an interjection. Pragmatically, the speaker offers a deliberately inappropriate response: suggesting that medical consultation depends on the doctor's attractiveness, and *charing* immediately retracts and reframes the remark as humorous and non-literal.

In Philippine pop culture, an earlier sighting of this word can also be observed in Blakdyak's song *Modelong Charing (1997)*. In the song, *charing* functions as a noun referring to a flamboyant gay or trans-presenting figure, closely aligning with Zorc's earlier glosses of *charot/charing* as (a) a gay man or (b) a flirtatious woman. The character speaks in the first person as a hyper-feminized model who performs heterosexual desirability while concealing his male features—*ugat, lawit at muscle*.

5. Charis/Chariz

The forms *charis* and *chariz* undergo the same two-step morphological process observed in other swardspeak variants: back-clipping followed by expressive suffixation. The base *charot* is first reduced to *char*, after which the beki expressive suffix *–is / –iz* is attached. This formation is attested in words such as *was/wiz/wis* and *ako* to *akis*.

Figure 8
"Chariz lang" used as an interjection on Threads

Girlies, ibebenta ko na po itong friend kong CE. Chariz lang. Hahahaha smart and may class!!!! Plus points sa emotional intelligence

Note: This is accompanied by a screenshot of a conversation of the netizen, listing the redeeming qualities of their friend: "Engr., Smart, Stable, Pogi na medyo singkit, Maganda voice, Mapuan," which is followed by the message 'Binenta sa fb.' The last message in this screenshot is a reply from the friend saying "alisin mo na yang mapuan pls lang at engr. Ikaw nga iniiwasan na engineer e hahahaha"

In this utterance, *chariz lang* functions as a nominalized form parallel to *joke lang*. In this context, the speaker playfully "markets" a male friend to potential romantic partners. The phrase "*ibebenta ko na*" exaggerates the friend's desirability, and the expression softens the bravado and frames the utterance as mere banter.

6. Charinggola

Charinggola results from clipping combined with double expressive suffixation: *charot* → *char* → *charing* + *-gola*. The sequence *-ing* + *-gola* parallels flamboyant beki formations like *getching* → *getchicola* and *bet* → *betchicola*. This morphological expansion heightens camp, exaggeration, and comic effect while preserving the base meaning, "just kidding."

Figure 9

"Charinggola" used as an interjection on X

Stapler ka, papel ako. Handa akong masaktan.. Madikit lang sayo. 😊
#charinggola

This example illustrates *charinggola* as an interjection that reframes a preceding dramatic metaphor. The clauses *stapler ka, papel ako,* and *handa akong masaktan, mapalapit lang sa'yo* construct a romantic but feigned confession through symbolism. Within dependency grammar, *charinggola* operates independently and attaches pragmatically to the discourse to mitigate the intensity of the metaphor; this prevents the speaker from appearing overly earnest.

7. Charaught

Charaught undergoes phonological play through expressive orthographic substitution: the simple CVC syllable *–rot* is expanded into the multisyllabic, English-looking rhyme *–aught*, which alters spelling but not Filipino pronunciation. The result is a prosodically longer, more theatrical coda, also seen in forms such as *maharaught* and *karaught*.

Figure 10

"Charaught lang" used as an interjection on Threads

What if: mag-take ako ng Masters…? Charaught lang! Unless…???

As seen here, the construction *charaught lang!* creates a subtle push–pull effect: it defers commitment by suggesting the proposal for taking up a master's degree may be "just a joke." But it is then followed by the trailing *UNLESS…*, and allows the speaker to float a serious intention under the cover of humor.

8. Echos/Chos/Choz

*Ec*hos is commonly traced to the Spanish *hecho* ("done," "act"), and the shortened form *chos* emerges through front clipping (*echos* → *chos*), while *choz* reflects a playful substitution of the final phoneme. Similar borrowing processes appear in other items of

gay slang, such as *dako* ("big," Hiligaynon) and *gurang* ("old," Bikol), which have been recontextualized semantically and stylistically within queer linguistic practice.

Figure 11
"Chos lang" used as an interjection on X

Chos lang. Sabi kasi "caption this e"

Note: This tweet is accompanied by a picture of Sarah Duterte and Jinggoy Estrada signing a document, containing the caption 'Kapit lang fren may budget na tayo' on the upper left side of the picture.

In this example, the post *"Chos lang. Sabi caption this eh,"* responding to an image of Sara Duterte and Jinggoy Estrada with the mock caption *"Kapit lang fren, may budget na tayo,"* uses *chos lang* to soften the political insinuation of corruption from the subjects in the picture while preserving critical force.

Figure 12
"Echos echos lang" used as a noun phrase on X

Akala ko b4 echos echos lang yang hirap i-balance acads, career, and love life. PUTA TOTOO PALA!!

In this utterance, the reduplicated form *echos echos* indicates that the hardships of balancing school, career, and relationships were previously dismissed as exaggerations or nonsense. Reduplication amplifies this dismissive force while preserving the nominal function of the form *"joke-joke lang,"* which creates a contrast with the later realization, *"PUTA TOTOO PALA!!"*

Figure 13
"Ini echos" used as a verb on X

Ah kuya ini echos mo ako, mag tropa nga lang to ang kulet mo

Note: This tweet is a reply to GMA Network's post containing the caption 'The ship is sailing. Ang tanong—what ship are we boarding?! Watch #PBBCollabWithGMA every weekdays at 10:05 PM and every weekends at 6:15 PM on GMA,' with side-by-side pictures of Mika Salamanca and Brent Manalo

In *"Ah kuya, ini-echos mo ako,"* the term undergoes a functional shift into a verb meaning *"linoloko mo ako."* The verbal infixation pattern (*ini-* + *echos* + *mo*) follows productive Tagalog morphosyntax observed in forms like *ini-ignore mo ako* and *iniistorbo mo ako*. Pragmatically, the utterance blends mild frustration with playful accusation of celebrities Brent Manalo and Mica Salamanca being involved in a relationship.

9. Chour

Chour emerges through the interplay of clipping and expressive orthographic substitution. Derived from *char* (itself clipped from *charot*), speakers replace the *–ar* coda with *–our*, importing English orthographic conventions (like glamour, armour, troubadour). The pronunciation remains Filipino (*chor*), but the spelling visually and prosodically elongates the form. This re-lettering also appears in items such as *chourva* and *chourvahan* (from *churva*).

Figure 14
"Chour" used as an interjection on X

"who's your crush?"
"obv, piolo pascual"
"that's such a basic fucking bitch answer"
"alright you want a real answer? Coach bamboo sa audition ni zack tabudlo sa the voice kids 2014 nung sinabayan niya yung 'and I never want to leave' line ng Sunday morning. Look it up!"
CHOUR

Here, the punchline *CHOUR* follows a mock dialogue that escalates from a "basic bitch answer" to an absurdly hyper-specific pop-culture reference. This primes the *chour* to mark the speaker's self-awareness: that the narrative of having a crush on Coach Bamboo has become excessive, and the entire confession is just a joke.

10. Chararot

Chararot is formed through partial reduplication of the medial segment of *charot*: the sequence *–ar–* is copied and inserted, producing *cha–rar–ot* (surface: *chararot*). A similar pattern appears in playful formations like *flavoomvovoom* ("you go away"), where reduplication heightens expressive force.

In this example, the melodramatic metaphor *namatay kong puso* is immediately undercut by *chararot*, which marks the mourning as intentionally hyperbolic. The visual gag of lighting a candle at a cemetery headstone "for" her broken heart rather than for the deceased also amplifies this instance.

Figure 15
"Chararot" used as an interjection on X

Pinagtirik ko lang ng kandila ang namatay kong puso. Chararot!

Note: This is accompanied by a picture of a woman staring at the candles placed near someone's headstone and flower baskets at the cemetery.

11. Charos

Charos emerges through final-phoneme substitution, replacing the original *–ot* with *–os*, a coda pattern also seen in items like *ems/z* from *eme* and *mars* from *mare*.

Figure 16
"Charos" used as an interjection on Threads

Hot weather + hot coffee = Hot me HAHAHA charos!

As seen here, the expression *charos* modifies the self-evaluative hyperbole ("hot") as playful and self-aware. This encourages the audience to read the utterance as humorous flirtation to mitigate face-threats and accusations of being arrogant.

12. Charotism

The form *charotism* results from the attachment of the English suffix *–ism* to a queer Filipino base, which produces a new derived noun. Conventionally, *–ism* denotes ideologies, doctrines, or systemic tendencies like *Marxism*, *realism*, and *politicism*. In beki lingo, however, the suffix is resemanticized as the "habit" or "ideology" of joking, which establishes *charot* as though it were a belief system. A similar process can be observed in swardspeak formations such as *kinemetism*.

Further, this form was popularized by Ethel Booba's use of *Charotism* as a title and genre label for her collection of jokes. Within the text, #*charot* functions as a discourse tag appended to individual utterances. When rebranded as *Charotism*, the derived noun legitimizes joking as a recognizable social practice and invites readers to interpret each entry as something that uses humor as a method.

Figure 17
"Charotism" used as an interjection on Threads

thank you threads, makakapost na din na walang mag comment na lola
haha charotism

In this second instance, *charotism* is appended to a simple expression of gratitude and retraction. Subtly, *charotism* invites the reader to laugh at age differences among people on social media, calling upon the common notion that older people "should not be on" certain platforms, as alluded in the saying *"dapat hiwalay ang social media ng mga matatanda."*

13. Charotera

The form *charotera* uses the Spanish-derived agentive suffix *–era*, which marks a person characterized by repetitive behavior (as in *bungangera*, *chikadora*, *reklamadora*). When attached to *charot*, the suffix produces a noun meaning "someone who habitually jokes or says *charot*." This derivation shifts the base form from a sentence-level pragmatic particle into a personal label, be it a noun or an adjective.

Figure 18

"Charotero" used as a nominal label on Threads

my brother: "i can't say I'm the smartest pero emotionally intelligent ako" HAHAHAHA charotero ng taon eh nagagalit nga siya agad pagpinagsasabihan"

In this utterance, the masculine form *charotero* is used to label the netizen's brother, which demonstrates the suffix's gendered and speaker-aligned flexibility. Here, the label ironizes the gap between the claimed emotional intelligence and the brother's actual reaction when reprimanded (anger), and the laughter marker (*HAHAHAHA*) further frames the correction as playful.

Figure 19
"Charotera" used as an honorific on Threads

Weh? Charotera ka Ateng!

Note: This post is accompanied by a picture of Maris Racal crying in a press conference, while a reporter holds up a long mic stand in front of her.

In this context, *charotera* appears in direct vocative address, with *Ateng* functioning as an honorific. The adjectival use of the word dismisses a dramatic public display as performative after being caught in an alleged cheating scandal. When paired with the image of a public figure, the term reinterprets the scene as a staged melodrama rather than pushing for the celebrity's apologetics.

14. Charot-charotin

The form *charot-charotin* is a classic example of Filipino verbal inflection applied to a swardspeak base. It parallels forms such as *eme-emehin, landi-landiin,* and *halu-haluin*. In this construction, *charot-charotin* means "to joke repeatedly or excessively." An early variation of this form appears in the film *Charot!* when a parlor customer is asked by Charot (whose real name is Toti) about the salary in a sauna bath. In this scene, the line carries a flirtatious tone, as reinforced by the customer's tactile gesture as she strokes Toti's arm.

Figure 20
"Charot-charotin" used as a verb in Charot (1983)

15. Chinacharot

The form chinacharot is also a classic example of Filipino verbal inflection applied to a swardspeak base. It uses the infix-like structure -in- (chinacharot), functioning here as a progressive or imperfective marker (cf. sinisigaw, binabasa, kinakain). In effect, chinacharot means "is joking," "is in the process of joking," or "keeps making jokes." Comparable formations in swardspeak include kinekeme.

Figure 21

"Charot-charotin" as a verb on X

Teacher: ako ba ang laboratory teacher niyo?
Someone in the chat: yes sir Lab ka po naming
Teacher: Ay wag moa ko charot charotin. Hindi ko kayo lab
Me: lab=laboratory=/=love

In *"chinacharot na lang tayo ng MUO,"* the predicate *chinacharot* heads the clause, with *tayo* as the referring pronoun and *MUO* as the agent. Pragmatically, *chinacharot* here functions as a form of humorous collective critique by describing perceived pageant injustices and the cycle of ongoing mishandling of the candidates as playful teasing.

Figure 22
"Chinacharot" used as a verb on X

grabe iba't ibang beauty din talaga pinapadala natin every year
next year, wala nalang since chinacharot malang tayo ng muo
BWHAHHAHAH eme lang po

Note: This is a reply to a post with the caption 'AND WE ARE BAAACK #MissUniverse #MissUniverse2025,' accompanied by pictures of beauty queens that competed from 2010 to 2019: Venus Raj, Shamcey Supsup, Janine Tugonon, Ariella Arida, MJ Lastimosa, Pia Wurtzbach, Maxine Medina, Rachel Peters, Catriona Gray, and Gazini Ganados.)

IV. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reaffirm what scholars such as Nuncio et al. (2021) have long observed: queer lexical forms have left their subcultural origins and are now fully woven into mainstream Filipino speech. Words like *kaloka*, *keri*, *bongga*, *chika*, *jowa*, *churva*, and *harot* already circulate fluidly across demographic groups and communicative domains—from casual conversation to classrooms, workplaces, and even religious settings. The data show that *charot*, and its morphological family follow the same diffusion pattern. It now has no demographic limits: women, straight men, students, professionals, and even institutions use it with ease.

Semantically, the results reveal a clear case of narrowing. While *charot* once occupied a broader semantic field (Zorc, 1991), its near-exclusive sentence-final placement in contemporary usage has routinized it as a retrospective cue that reclassifies the preceding utterance as non-serious, thereby conditioning speakers and listeners to interpret *charot* almost automatically in its modern jocular sense.

Further, as it functions as a stance marker that softens accountability and modulates tone, the corpus reflects a coherent system wherein *charot* depends on its timing, syntactic structure, and emotional contour. Within this system, subtle distinctions among *char*, *char lang*, and *char ½* reveal a small but meaningful sincerity scale. *Char* and *char lang* function as full retraction markers, which signal that the prior statement is entirely playful or exaggerated, with *lang* slightly reducing the force of the retreat. These occupy the low-sincerity end of the spectrum. *Char ½*, however, marks a "half-joke, half-truth" stance, which preserves a trace of sincerity. This, in turn, reveals the increasingly fine emotional calibrations that characterize contemporary swardspeak.

In affective terms, *charot* enables speakers to momentarily voice desire, irritation, insecurity, or vulnerability, only to retract or soften that exposure through humor. The familiar practice of saying something emotionally risky, adding "*charot,*" and neutralizing the moment allows feelings to surface without demanding sustained accountability. In the domain of power, this same maneuver also takes on political weight. Rather than managing emotional exposure, the expression mediates the risk of critique by allowing dissent to circulate under the cover of humor. This, then, produces a form of low-intensity resistance that registers opposition without fully confronting

authority. In both senses, then, *charot* is a socially sanctioned "leak valve" through which desire or honesty may momentarily escape before being safely reabsorbed into banter.

Despite these insights, this study has several limitations. The dataset, while diverse, is skewed toward digitally active speakers, which may exclude offline practices. Furthermore, the absence of longitudinal data limits the analysis of how *charot* has shifted pragmatically across specific eras or in response to sociopolitical events. Future research may address these gaps by expanding the corpus to include actual spoken interactions across wider age groups and ethnographic observations of swardspeak in physical spaces such as bars, salons, and gatherings. Fellow scholars may also explore how the word interacts with other Filipino pragmatic markers or how it functions across other languages like English, Tagalog, Iloko, or Cebuano. These possible directions could strengthen the theoretical grounding of swardspeak studies and deepen our understanding of how language and humor work hand in hand as a cultural and political force.

V. CONCLUSION

This study of *charot* and its morphological family shows that what appears to be an idle joke actually performs dense sociolinguistic and affective labor in Filipino discourse. It functions as a polyfunctional discourse particle that lets speakers manage the social risks of directness, vulnerability, flirtation, criticism, and emotional exposure. Its syntactic detachability, creative morphology, and pragmatic flexibility allow it to shape discourse such that meaning becomes less about what is said than about how saying is socially negotiated.

Ultimately, *charot* can be read as a theory of Filipino indirectness in action, a pragmatic solution to the problem of saying too much in a culture that prioritizes harmony and emotional restraint as social glue. What appears as a throwaway particle is, in fact, a mode of speech that negotiates sincerity and critique without rupture and confrontation. In this sense, *charot* models a distinctly Filipino logic of humor—and to understand why people say "*charot lang*" is to understand how Filipinos speak desire and dissent not by shouting, but by laughing just enough to remain intact.

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