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Pedagogy and Goal-setting in Foreign Language Policy:
Potentials for a Decolonial Framework

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to draw attention to two aspects of foreign language (FL) learning that emerged from the roundtable discussion with various stakeholders on the decolonial dimension of FL enterprise in the country, which took place in April 2019 at the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS). First, the implicit reinforcement of the one-nation-one-language ideology, inexorably embedded in our notions of foreign

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languages, is problematized, with particular reference to foreign language policies, materials, and teaching methods. Secondly, considerations for foreign language teaching approaches and materials are put forward, taking into account the sociolinguistic and historical features of a postcolonial setting such as the Philippines. Challenges in integrating a decolonial framework in the institutional conceptualization and policies on foreign language teaching in the Philippines conclude this paper.

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Introduction

This essay is based on a roundtable discussion (RTD) that was held in April 2019 at the University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS) and organized by the UP CIDS Decolonial Studies Program (DSP), the UP Diliman Department of European Languages (DEL), and the Philippine International Studies Organization (PHISO). The roster of speakers included representatives from higher and secondary education institutions offering foreign languages and representatives from the Department of Education (DepEd) and the Commission on Higher Education (CHED). The discussion unpacked the various assumptions and attitudes that have undergirded policies, teaching methods, and materials creation in the teaching of foreign languages in the Philippines.

One of the aspects frequently asked of decolonial studies and perspectives is how they differ conceptually from postcolonial perspectives. In an article on the epistemic decolonial turn, Grosfoguel (2007) narrates one of the key events in the scholarly development of decolonial studies that involved a debate during a meeting of the South Asian Subaltern Studies Group and the Latin American Subaltern Studies Group at Duke University in 1998.

The subsequent 'split' of the Latin American group had to do with largely different conceptions of the epistemological bases of colonial critique. Grosfoguel describes the conflict in terms of a "Eurocentric critique of Eurocentrism" (2007, 211) on one hand, and a "critique of Eurocentrism from subalternized and silenced knowledges" (ibid.) on the other. A decolonial perspective thus eschews critiques that reaffirm the dominance of Eurocentric forms of knowledge, ways of being, and power. The concept of modernity/coloniality/decoloniality (Mignolo 2010) is based on the idea that the structures and institutions formed under the aegis of colonialism continue to exist in the form of a social order that privileges certain ways of being under the pretext of universality or coloniality—or alternately, colonial modernity.

Decolonial thought further eschews reductionism and recognizes that the gross effects of colonialism are to be found along various intersections of religious, sexual, racial, linguistic, economic, political, social divisions in society (Grosfoguel 2007). For Mignolo, "[…] we witness [in the current stage of global coloniality] a significant switch in the way languages are conceptualized in relation to both colonial control and national ideologies on the one hand, to knowledge and reason on the other" (2000, 219), as languages are being continuously dislocated through the flows of globalization, veering away from colonial logics that associated nation, state, language, rationality and territory. Quoting Coulmas, who problematized this persistent relationship, Mignolo emphasizes that the treatment of language is mired in the history of assumptions of the monolingual, monocultural speaking subject. The privileging of the realm of the monolingual often went hand in hand with chauvinism and exclusivism in the name of the nation-state: "Language may be as disruptive a force as any culture marker and it is clear that the national language-ideology has bred intra-communal strife and in a sense, created minorities in many countries that have established themselves as states in modern times" (Coulmas 1988, 11, quoted in Mignolo 2000, 221). The arrival of Western languages to the colonies was thus not merely a case of learning foreign languages for specific purposes (i.e., to communicate with representatives of the colonial government, and to conduct economic transactions), but a case of introducing communities to Western concepts and certain ways of being and thinking.

Furthermore, Mignolo (2000) argues that there are different dimensions to 'foreign languages,' which have long been treated separately from the primary medium of instruction in monolingual curricula in First World countries, while being part and parcel of 'bilingual education' in Third World countries. This suggests that while foreign languages (understood as languages that are not spoken where one originates) are clearly demarcated from national languages in Europe, they are subsumed into the language curriculum in countries with a colonial history, being somehow both 'foreign' and at the same time integral to the composition of the 'local.'

Despite the complexities of boundary demarcation due to the arbitrary nature of colonial territories and in the current era, of globalization among societies, groups, and countries and their effects on languages and dialects, the tendency to associate foreign languages with a particular nation-state rather than sub- or transnational groups remains strong. Terms that reflect the various contexts of language learning in a globalized era have been gradually incorporated into academic discourses. In linguistics, this is reflected in the distinction between foreign versus second languages, where the latter are seen as languages for survival in migration contexts. Other terminologies and concepts concerning the complex relationship between language and context can also be found in works such as Edgar Schneider's dynamic model of postcolonial Englishes (2007); multilingual studies that include code-switching (Borlongan 2009; Bernardo 2007) and translanguaging (Canagarajah 2011), among others. This paper aims to draw attention to three aspects of foreign language learning (FLL)[6] that are relevant to the discussion on the decoloniality of foreign language policy in the Philippines. First, the implicit reinforcement of the associations between foreign languages and nation-states is problematized, with particular reference to foreign language (FL) materials and teaching methods. With the rise of interest in introducing various aspects of cultural practices in applied linguistics in the late 20th century, contemporary textbooks for FL classes often

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[6] In the Philippine context, we take this to mean languages learned beyond one's L1s or native languages, additional regional languages spoken in the Philippines, and English.

contain many references to a particular country and speech examples that use a prestige or standard dialect alongside grammar exercises. These are not only a poor representative of the reality of languages of global scope (such as English, French, and Spanish), but are also mired in a 'monolingual habitus,' which Gogolin (1997, 41) describes as:

> "[...] inspired by Pierre Bourdieu's use of the term 'habitus' for a modus which generates dynamic changes in human activity. Bourdieu's theory attempts to describe dynamic relations between [ ] the structural conditions of an individual existence on the one hand[,] the individuals activities as a product of socialization under the conditions on the other hand[,] and third field of influence, the endless, and at the same time, strictly limited capacity of the individual to act."

The habitus is thus able to generate sustained actions in a community through socialization, which Gogolin relates to "the assumption [in language teaching] that the children all grow up within the bounds of the same social class, culture, or ethnic group and language" (ibid., 40) and has historically structured ontological and epistemological approaches to language and culture. The monolingual habitus and enduring notions of the territorial nation-state with language as an identity marker have further facilitated the notion of a 'one-way' transmission of knowledge from the native speaker to those who are presumed to not speak the language, rather than a 'two-way' interaction of mutual learning of different ways of self-expression and inter-cultural exchange. It has further guided the policy of compartmentalizing English and Filipino in basic education in the Philippines, with English acting as the medium of instruction for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) subjects, and Filipino for the social sciences (Bernardo 2007).

Secondly, there are sociolinguistic and historical features of interest in postcolonial settings that deserve attention when conceiving of foreign language teaching (FLT) approaches and materials. The formal introduction and institutionalization of FLs during the colonial era reflected and reproduced power asymmetries

that established a linguistic hierarchy between the colonial language and the local languages of the colonies. Colonial languages allowed upward mobility and access to positions of prestige within colonial society, while acting as a basis for postcolonial communication through their appropriation as official languages and the primary medium of instruction. In the present era, the power dynamics that the continued use of a colonial language engenders have been observed to influence educators' attitudes towards local languages in that these are relegated to a secondary status in instruction and everyday conversation. The challenges of multilingualism that arose from arbitrarily-drawn colonial lines are manifested in modernity/coloniality, wherein various groups find themselves in the midst of the struggle for ethnolinguistic recognition and autonomy beyond neighboring geographical boundaries and in migration contexts.

The increasing drive towards the recognition of diversity in FL undergirds Kramsch's argument for global competence as an additional language teaching goal (Kramsch 2019). Teaching languages alongside global competence entails the promotion of the qualities of sensitivity, respectful behavior towards other cultures, the willingness to increase knowledge of the other, among others (ibid.), which serve as behavioral guidelines towards encounters with the 'other' within and outside states.

Thirdly, language is assumed—particularly from a 'Western' logocentric point of view—to convey both thought and rationality, as can be inferred from the connotations of the words 'logos' and 'alogos,' the latter of which refers to speechlessness commonly attributed to animals. If language was thought to represent a particular way of viewing the world, then it can account for some of the ways colonial and Western languages were seen as more intellectual and capable of expressing rational ontologies and epistemologies, in contrast to the languages found in the non-West, which were appended to the dichotomous 'other' of irrationality.

There is thus a lot of difficulty in separating 'colonial' languages (or even 'prestige' languages) and the forms of knowledge that were expressed through them and within the context of their usage and

diffusion from the web of coloniality and modernity. The development of one's own language(s) and the recognition of the complexity of cultures and languages (including creoles) in territorial and transnational settings are some ways by which cultural reproduction of the tragedies that accompany the colonial/modern territorial nation-state are being alleviated.

In terms of the decoloniality of FLT, the roundtable discussion focused on possible decolonial approaches to policies, teaching methods, and instructional materials. The onset of globalization has brought to light linguistic policies in the Third World/Global South and the proliferation of FL institutes and classes has brought to the fore a global industry of FL textbooks and teaching methods. At the same time, many instructional materials and methods have come under scrutiny as to what assumptions they carry about people who learn a language and those who teach it.

The role of the FL teacher in settings where a language is mostly learned in a classroom setting involves constant engagement and experimentation with instructional materials such as language textbooks, videos, and websites, among others, in order to determine which are suitable for students. These instructional materials are then modified by the teacher in various ways, such as by extension (by expanding the coverage of existing materials), deletion (reducing content), and replacement (exchanging contents of one set of materials with another set of materials), to suit the specific linguistic needs of the students or their context(s) (Islam & Mares 2014). For instance, language teachers may want to adapt or create their own materials if they realize that their class sizes are not suitable for the activities in the textbooks, if the textbooks contain inappropriate subject matter, or if there are not enough grammar exercises for crucial topics, etc. (ibid.).

McDonough and Shaw (1993, quoted in Islam & Mares 2014, 89) note that some of the primary objectives for adapting materials, however, are to localize and personalize them. There are many ways by which these objectives can be attained: some teachers include targeted grammar or phonetic exercises that address students' difficulties,

while others attempt to identify cultural or intercultural content that might be more relatable to students. This dimension often materializes when the settings and issues that appear in language textbooks are far removed from the students' immediate surroundings, interests, and concerns.

The decolonization of FL materials hinges upon the FL teacher's recognition and resolution of these issues. The content of FL textbooks was long governed by the idea that native speakers and the native speaker's context stood at the center of textbook contents. Instructional materials have invariably been informed by assumptions of what constitutes a cultural taboo and topics that are held to be both acceptable and widely relatable to people all over the world. These include cosmopolitan lifestyles and 'safe' topics such as hobbies, vacations, personal preferences, and so on. While some progress has been made regarding the alleviation of stereotypical depictions in textbooks, there have been fewer efforts at considering the value of local cultural scenarios, even in regionally distributed materials that are now increasingly becoming dominated by books with Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) structures built into them and emanating from Western publishing houses. Some efforts have been made, however, in books such as *Criss Cross* (for English language learners in Central and Eastern Europe) and *Ihr und Wir* (a German language textbook for the Sub-Saharan African market) to thematize local culture or intercultural themes. This means that in terms of teaching materials, contents, or methods, language learning is no longer always a one-way process that flows from core to periphery.

There have also been various articles on language that highlight the assumption of neutrality and universality when implementing teaching methods. Canagarajah (2002, 136) argues that while attempts have been made to promote "culturally harmless and politically neutral" language teaching methods, he laments that attempts to overcome 'center' (referring to the 'core' countries of the English-speaking world) biases in instruction do not appear to have provided a method by which local settings and local ways of learning could first be established—i.e. proper ethnological groundwork. The

language policies of any country or institution for both local and foreign languages can thus reveal much about how the very ideas of language are farmed, including why we learn them, what we can learn from them, and the boundaries and nature of the relation between the foreign and the local.

In the long term, a project on decoloniality and FL would analyze the various ways language policies and teaching practices are bound with coloniality—for instance, in terms of how languages are tied to global economic, political, and socio-cultural norms and relations. This RTD serves as a way for language teachers to meet with various stakeholders such as students and government representatives from DepEd and CHED in order to share their views on the Philippines' language teaching policy.

Foreign language teaching in the Philippines

In the Philippines, FL teaching and learning is featured in various government policies and is supported in varying degrees through the education sector's three governing entities: the Department of Education for primary and secondary education, the Commission on Higher Education for tertiary and graduate education, and the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority (TESDA) for technical-vocational education and training.

The Special Program in Foreign Language (SPFL) is the DepEd's vehicle in delivering FL education. Information about the SPFL was provided by Ms. Rosa Ligaya Domingo, who is currently serving as Officer-in-Charge of the Special Curricular Programs Division of the DepEd. As part of the presentation, the aim of this program is to produce a multilingual Filipino learner who is "globally competitive" and "equipped with 21st–century skills" who is able to move around in a "culturally diverse environment while preserving his/her national identity" so that the learners may be prepared for a "career, higher education, or entrepreneurship." This may be achieved through the provision of an "enhanced, research-based curriculum; a competent

roster of teachers, supportive administrators, and strong collaboration with program partners."

The SPFL was instituted in 2009 in selected schools, with Spanish as its sole language offering. It was subsequently officially recognized as part of its Special Curricular Programs through DepEd Order No. 46, s. 2012. The SPFL is implemented at the secondary level, starting from Grade 7 up to Grade 12. However, these language courses will be taken by students as electives and are not part of the core curriculum. As such, these courses are allotted four hours per week as stipulated in DepEd Order No. 46, s. 2012.

To date, the program has expanded its language options and now offers three Asian and three European languages: Mandarin Chinese, Japanese, Korean, French, German, and Spanish. Spanish, French, and Japanese were also offered in 2009, followed by German in 2010, Mandarin in 2011, and Korean in 2018. The DepEd works with institutional partners for each language whose roles are to assist in capacity building efforts, especially in training teachers in both the language and teaching methods, and to provide learning materials. Teacher training activities include the provision of both face-to-face and distance courses on the language and on teaching methods in the partner institutions. For French and Spanish, immersion programs abroad are also available for the teachers. It was even mentioned in the roundtable that there are scholarships for Spanish teachers in order for them to pursue a master's degree in Spain. The institutional partners for each language are listed in Table 1 (on next page).

Current data on the SPFL were also presented during the roundtable, which showed that the program is implemented in 16 out of 17 regions in the Philippines. There are a total of 620 FL teachers and 12,026 FL learners distributed among 254 schools all over the country. Table 2 (also on next page) shows statistics on the nationwide implementation of the program.

As seen in Table 2, only Spanish is implemented in 16 regions, followed by Mandarin Chinese, which is implemented in 10 regions. On the other hand, German is taught only in one, the National Capital

TABLE 1   SPFL institutional partners

Language	Institutional Partners
Mandarin	Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the Philippines Confucius Institute at Angeles University Foundation
Japanese	Embassy of Japan in the Philippines Japan Foundation Manila
Korean	Embassy of the Republic of Korea in the Philippines Korean Cultural Center in the Philippines
French	Embassy of France in Manila Alliance Française de Manille
German	German Embassy Manila Goethe Institut Philippinen
Spanish	Embassy of Spain in the Philippines Instituto Cervantes Manila

Source: Department of Education (DepEd)

TABLE 2   Statistics on the nationwide implementation of the SPFL

Language	Teachers	Schools	Students	Regions Covered
Mandarin Chinese	269	94	2,580	10 (I, III, IV-A, IV-B, V, VI, IX, XI, NCR)
Japanese	92	38	3,020	4 (I, NCR, VII, XI)
Korean	36	18	800	2 (NCR, IV-A)
French	23	12	1,112	2 (NCR, VII)
German	20	9	983	1 (NCR)
Spanish	190	83	3,531	16
Total	**620**	**254**	**12,026**	**16 regions**

Source: Department of Education (DepEd)

Region or Metro Manila. While Mandarin has the biggest number of teachers and schools, Spanish and Japanese have the highest number of student enrollees. Compared to Korean which is taught in only two regions, German has more students even with fewer teachers and

schools. This difference, however, could be attributed to the recency of the Korean language offering. Mandarin, despite having been offered two years after Spanish, French, and Japanese, has exceeded French in terms of number of learners. Based on the data, there are more learners studying Asian languages than European languages.

As with basic education, higher education also provides opportunities for students to take FL courses as electives. The Commission on Higher Education, which is tasked to regulate higher education institutions (HEIs) in the country, adopts a less hands-on approach to teaching and learning FLs than its basic education counterpart. The CHED's approach in supporting FL teaching and learning is stated in CHED Memorandum No. 23, s. 2017, which lays out the policies, standards, and guidelines for institutions wishing to offer a degree program in foreign languages. The purpose of instituting a Bachelor of Arts in Foreign Language program is to create professionals to work in education, in translation, and in business, industrial, and international institutions (CHED 2017). Graduates of the program must be well-versed in oral and written communication, textual analysis, and intercultural communication, while being responsible, appreciative of "Filipino historical and cultural heritage," and engaged in lifelong learning (ibid.). While the CHED grants academic freedom to HEIs to design their own curriculum in accordance to their aims, philosophy, and typology, the document stipulates the expected outcomes for all FL graduates, as well the prescribed units, model learning experiences, and physical and human resource requirements for the program.

Statistics on the teaching and learning of FLs in higher education are not readily available due to the decentralized nature of curriculum development in tertiary education. To date, the University of the Philippines Diliman remains as the only institution that both offers FL courses and grants a bachelor's degree in European Languages. The Department of European Languages and the Department of Linguistics of UP Diliman offers to the general public short courses on European and Asian languages, respectively, through their extension programs.

Likewise, the TESDA offers FL courses for free through its Language Skills Institute (LSI). Languages taught in the LSI include Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, and Spanish. All languages are taught for 100 hours except for Japanese, which is taught for 150 hours. LSIs are found nationwide across the country's 16 regions.

Context-sensitive FL materials creation

Despite substantial financial and logistical support from DepEd's various partner institutions in terms of curriculum implementation and teacher training (in varying degrees of consistency), there still seems to be a lacuna with respect to materials development and/or adaptation tailored specifically to the Philippine context. Many of the speakers during the roundtable aired out grievances pertaining to this gap and cited the need to contextualize and humanize didactic materials, either through adapting existing textbooks or producing new ones to adequately fit the needs of Filipino learners and encourage more meaningful learning experiences.

Considering both the CHED (2017)'s common learning outcomes for the humanities, which highlight multi-perspectives and interrelations among texts in different contexts, interpretive and heuristic approaches to texts, and proficiency in theories, methodologies, and research skills; and the Higher Education Act of 1994 (Republic Act No. 7722), which mandates the alignment of higher education policies and plans "with the cultural, political and socioeconomic development needs of the nation" and "the enrichment of our historical and cultural heritage" as springboards for discussion, the panel was asked on their thoughts on the objective of FL education vis-à-vis the achievement of national goals and on its relation to materials and teacher training. What are some of the best practices in FL education and how does one move forward while being mindful of broader national goals? What must be done to promote Philippine culture—or even intercultural or transnational relations—in FL teaching and learning?

First, the role of Filipino culture in the FL classroom is deemed fundamental by a majority of the roundtable participants, reiterating that students will have a better understanding of the complexities and foreignness of another culture if they first have a deep understanding of their own culture. This belief is based on their experiences both as FL learners and teachers. Some examples cited from various European language textbooks that tackled common topics such as neighborhoods and hobbies were perceived to be problematic and rather distant from the reality of the Filipino student. Specifically, Professor Jose Teodoro Vera Cruz, a professorial lecturer at the UP Diliman Department of European Languages, relayed his experience with the French textbook *Alter Ego*, wherein the topic on describing neighborhoods understandably—yet contestably—refers to the stereotypical and homogenous French communities whose common sites and establishments (e.g., cathedrals, theatres, cinemas, and hospitals) differ from those that are characteristic to Philippine neighborhoods (e.g., car washes and computer shops). This aspect of cultural encounters in studying FLs remains contestable, because in a transnational world where diaspora and media expansion give rise to hybridity and cultural diversity, it is important to question the ideology of monolanguaging and the notion that language, literature, culture, and territory are part of a homogeneous whole (Mignolo 2000) as propagated by nations and as seen even in seemingly "mundane" tools like FL textbooks.

The topic on hobbies, on the other hand, was also considered to be a tricky one. In Europe, hobbies are usually seen in a functional and integral sense, being either skill-based or based on collections. This varies from how hobbies are generally viewed by Filipino students, the majority of whom opt to go to the movies, eat in restaurants, or sleep, instead of developing a certain skill during their free time. These cultural differences in viewing hobbies and leisure are most likely rooted in socioeconomic factors and disparities. Notwithstanding the fact that topics like these may not fully resonate with all FL learners, it is not uncommon for modern FL materials to focus on the glamorous and 'cosmopolitan' aspect of (Western) languages that "assumes a materialistic set of values in which international travel, not being bored, positively being entertained, having leisure, and above

all, spending money casually and without consideration of the sum involved in the pursuit of these ends, are the norm" (Brown 1990, 13).

While the better part of these materials make use of stimulating activities that aim to expose the learners to the kind of language used in "real" contexts through themes that pertain to everyday life in the foreign countries, it cannot be denied that these textbooks have limitations and are not able to fully cater to the perceived needs of Filipino learners. One should not even hesitate to question the authenticity of the representation of these languages, especially if we are to consider that linguistic systems are constantly deconstructing themselves and allows for multiple meanings and ideologies (Canagarajah 2002).

As argued by Castellani and Peccianti (as cited in Kuitche Talé 2014, 112), the problem of identifying and classifying didactic materials is a particularly important aspect for language teachers, especially for those who are in service outside of the 'target language countries' who do not have materials at their disposition that cater to the needs of their students. Although this problem of the disparity between FL and L2 (second language) has existed since the 1990s, many textbook writers and publishers choose not to pay close attention to it, leaving the task of adapting the materials to fit diverse contexts and learner profiles to the teacher. The need to link our own culture to that of the target language is crucial to FL acquisition as it ensures the relevance of the materials not only to the learner's needs, but also to his or her reality and experiences.

Two problems arise from these kinds of materials. The first is that these were created for a general audience, imagined to be residing in the target country and learning the target language as an L2 (as opposed to as a FL). The decision of primarily satisfying the linguistic needs of a 'general learner profile,' taking little consideration of the affective-humanistic approach to language teaching is connected to its commercial value. Thus,

> instead of evaluating whether materials are ideal for a very specific audience, the publisher is often evaluating whether materials are suitable for the widest range of

possible users, or at the very least versatile enough to be adapted easily. It is about developing materials that offer the highest possible return on investment without compromising essential minimum customer expectations. (Amrani 2011, 273)

The lack of interest and/or support from publishers poses a great challenge for authors who are interested in materials development for smaller niche groups. This is also a reason why many teachers in periphery communities have no choice but to take it upon themselves to adapt the given materials through various methods, such as 'bottom-up contextualization' (Kuitche Talé 2014) and the 'bits-and-pieces approach' (Tomlinson 2003).

Another problem is that these materials were produced by Western nations, who, according to Canagarajah (2002, 135), "hold an unfair monopoly over less developed (or periphery) communities in industrial products, similar relations characterize the marketing of language teaching methods." He adds that it is no longer surprising that many teachers from the peripheries tend to believe that the methods propagated by center communities are the most effective, efficient, and authoritative for their purposes, consequently plunging them into a deeper "vortex of professional dependence" in which periphery institutions spend more resources for getting assistance of center experts for the training or re-training of their teaching staff (ibid.).

This dependence on the center communities or the acceptance of the "superiority of the West" makes itself known when it was mentioned that in the process of developing the SPFL curriculum guides, the Common European Framework of Reference was also employed in the Asian language programs due to lack of other viable frameworks. While the CEFR is descriptive and not prescriptive, the fact that a single framework, regardless of how open to interpretation it claims to be, is deemed to be applicable and adequate for all languages is a rather presumptuous and unsound claim. It was suggested that a concept-based approach can be useful in the teaching of FL. Rather than strictly following the CEFR, which is skill-based and appears to be removed from wider social concepts, teachers are

invited to highlight different concepts pertinent to the reality of the target learners (such as migration, poverty, ecology, etc.) as they incorporate the framework's descriptors. It is significant, therefore, to veer away from the perspective that language automatically equates to grammar, and that learning a language is all about correctness.

As the discussion continued, more practices that aimed to fulfill the national goals of producing intercultural agents who are aware of global concerns and issues while being appreciative of their own culture were shared. One of these practices involved the organization of international conferences or colloquia that highlight the influences of the foreign culture (in this case, Spanish) in various aspects of local culture, such as cuisine, architecture, and language, among others. As for Asian languages such as Chinese and Japanese, contextualization can be done by calling attention to loan words in Filipino that originated from these languages. For instance, the vast vocabulary on family taken from the Chinese language can be traced to strong relations between the Philippines and China during the pre-colonial times. Relating the target language to the learner's background knowledge, and thus bridging the cultural gap, facilitates language learning and acquisition.

In comparing cultures and in developing intercultural competence, it was raised that what is fundamental is what the students do after knowing that these cultures are different or the same. The reaction to those similarities and differences are what must be made explicit in the classroom, because at the end of the day, it should not be a question of grammatical competence. As Canagarajah (2002, 146) reiterated,

> the project in language teaching is not to make students move from a 'native' language to a target language, or a host culture to a receiving culture [...] the need is to shuttle between cultures and communities [requiring] a certain amount of reflexivity as students are expected to develop a meta-linguistic and meta-cultural awareness of codes and conventions. We are not in fact dealing with binary languages or cultures anymore.

What we aspire for our students is to instill in them multidisciplinary, intercultural, transnational, and global competencies that deal more with the skill of approaching differences rather than highlighting the fact that there are differences.

A point that was repeatedly emphasized in the discussion is the need for the contextualization of FLs so as not to lose national identity. But what exactly is national identity? What is local culture? What is the local language? Do all Filipinos have the same notion of what it means to be a Filipino and of what Filipino culture is? This is where the obstacle lies: the conviction that "there is a one-to-one relationship between languages and territories, and that there is a one-to-one relationship between the people speaking a given language and their sense of identification with themselves and their territory" (Hobsbawn 1990, as cited in Mignolo 2000, 257) can no longer be considered as universally valid, especially in today's modern, complex, and globalized world.

Addressing these issues requires an approach that goes beyond the national and monolingual focus of FL studies. As one of the members of the audience during the RTD pointed out, it is vital to bear in mind that foreigners have different goals when it comes to the promotion of their languages; thus, we cannot allow these center institutions to dictate the way we teach these languages, whether in terms of methods or medium of instruction (i.e., the SPFL commands that the medium of instruction must either be the target language or English). Not surprisingly, language promotion on the part of foreign cultural institutions does not include or consider Filipino historical and cultural heritage. However, this should not mean that it must be eliminated altogether. Drawing attention to the need for more emphasis on our colonial history, it is imperative that the way we approach FLT is to learn and appreciate their history and culture, so that we can admire and imitate what is good, and challenge and critique what is problematic.

While perceived as crucial, there was no definitive answer when the CHED was asked if it could provide funding for locally-produced FL materials written in the local language. The top-down approach to

contextualization of materials still has a long way to go before coming to fruition, since, as of this writing, there is no effort to encourage university instructors to develop their own pedagogical paradigms for contextualized FL education, since primacy is placed on publishing academic articles instead of creating textbooks and manuals.

The Filipino student in the FL classroom

Not only in FL materials do we disenfranchise our own cultures and languages, but in the FL classroom as well. Foreign language learning is defined as the learning of a non-native language in an environment where the language is not spoken and often in a more formal setting like the confines of a classroom (Gass and Selinker 2008). At the RTD, the DepEd recognized such constraints, therefore imposing the use of the target FL (or English), "especially [at] the basic level, [where] learners have a minimal level of language proficiency" in its SPFL, with the intention of exposing the students to the target language as much as possible. However, in doing so, we run the risk of patterning the classroom on monolingual models, suppressing the local languages, and rendering them inferior in the process (which is reminiscent of the days when one had to pay *piso* (one peso) for every Filipino word uttered in English class). Marginalizing our native language in the FL classroom implies that the local languages are less valued compared to the foreign, and consequently instills on the learners that the idea that they are also less than others. As educators, it is necessary to recall that the language one speaks and the culture in which one lives are not one but many, and that other people's views, values, traditions, feelings, and cultures are as valid and valuable as our own (Brown 1990). Other FL teachers, on the other hand, are torn between teaching in the vernacular and in English. However, it is not a question of either-or; in fact, it is not a question at all.

Adolescents and adults learn and make sense of an FL through the languages that they already know. They create a new language system, widely referred to as *interlanguage* (Selinker 1972), with only limited exposure to the target FL (Gass and Selinker 2008). For their interlanguage to approximate the target language, they constantly find

the need to compare its pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, and cultural behavior with those of the languages that they already speak (Selinker 1992). Hence, for the learner, the teacher debate on which medium of instruction to choose is immaterial, as all the languages he knows facilitates his learning of an FL.

Another reason for attempting to teach the FL as a monolingual native speaker would be the idealization of the monolingual native speaker and the idea of the multilingual as having multiple monolinguals in one body. This mythical multilingual does not exist, as our English-speaking selves cannot be fully separated from our Filipino-speaking selves (Grosjean 2001). The two linguistic systems that we speak constantly interact in our minds, as evidenced by our capacity to comfortably, mindlessly, and seamlessly switch from one language to another within a single utterance (for instance, in the streets or in social media) (Bautista 2000). This linguistic interaction is even richer and more complex in the case of Filipinos who know another local language. The suppression of a language in the classroom is hence the suppression of an integral part of the speaker and of his or her identity and sense of self, which may be more detrimental than beneficial to FLL. In this light, we would like to emphasize that FL learners are language users in their own right and must neither be taught nor evaluated with monolingual native speaker competence in mind.

Filipinos are, in fact, multilingual by default. What FL teachers can do is to capitalize on all their previously learned languages and consider the multilingual mind as point of departure (Cenoz, Hufeisen, and Jessner 2001). As diversity is the norm, it is difficult to find common ground, thereby making the imposition of a single language as medium of instruction an impossible ideal. However, independent from choosing the medium of instruction is the role of the teacher, which is to offer as many opportunities for reception and production practice (i.e., listening, reading, speaking, writing) in the target language (Muranoi 2007) and elevate their metalinguistic awareness by encouraging them to access their mother tongues, examine comparable linguistic elements and cultural concepts (Jessner 2006), and identify gaps in their knowledge (Philp 2003).

This, in turn, empowers all the languages present in the classroom. This process of *translanguaging* (Canagarajah 2011), or the allowing of learners to draw on their various linguistic, cognitive, and semiotic resources to make meaning and to make sense (Li 2018), is not only beneficial, but turns out to likewise be an inevitable method that most, if not all, students use in FLL.

It is important to note, however, that metalinguistic awareness does not always come naturally (Flavell 1987; González 2010). Experience helps a learner know how to make use of the languages that he or she knows (Jarvis and Pavlenko 2008), a language learning reality that justifies the DepEd's apparent partiality toward English. One of the requirements of the SPFL for both its teachers and students is a certain proficiency in English, and throughout the archipelago—perhaps with the exception of the capital—English largely remains a second language that is learned at school at the elementary level. As this paper is a resistance to hegemony, coming to the defense of English may seem counter-intuitive, but we would like to underscore that decolonial praxis need not be synonymous to the boycott of imperial cultures, but rather a critical espousal of such hegemony which allows for the bringing of periphery cultures to the fore. Notwithstanding, arguing for the appropriation of an imperial language such as English in order for postcolonial societies such as the Philippines to participate more actively in dominant discourse, though significant in decolonizing FLT, is quite beside the point in FL acquisition. This experience of acquiring a not-too-foreign language (English in the case of the SPFL) aside from their mother tongues, develops a linguistic consciousness in childhood that creates fertile ground for FLL in the future.

However, it is also experience that entrenches our biases, which, in turn, reflect our local prejudices. As we strive to move away from culturally-inappropriate FL instructional materials produced outside the context of the Filipino learner, we may fall into prioritizing a Filipino culture that might be too "Manila-centric." But if we continue to consider our multilingual-multicultural students as a frame of reference in contextualizing FLT, we shall come to realize that they hold most of the answers to our questions. Just as we propose that

we capitalize on previously learned indigenous/vernacular languages in FLT, we likewise propose that we capitalize on our existing local cultures. This plethora of cultural backgrounds is not a pedagogic limitation, but rather an unlimited classroom resource that can be tapped in order for students to develop *intercultural competence*, the ability of a FL learner to function adequately and satisfactorily in any given foreign situation (van Ek 1986; Oliveras 2000). Though it is commonly perceived that it is important for language students to be able to identify similarities and differences in local and foreign cultures, it is, in reality, their ability to deal with people coming from cultures foreign to their own that makes them successful users of the FL that they are learning (For a more in-depth discussion on the teaching of culture in the FL classroom, *see* Cruz 2017.).

There is no better place to hone intercultural skills than the FL classroom, foremost, because it is where students are already confronted with various home cultures (Aguilar 2008), with some possibly more distinct than others. It is through the acknowledgment of diverse ways of life that they learn to be tolerant of norms different from their own and become sensitive to the elements that comprise a linguistic situation (e.g., characteristics of the situation, acceptable behavior, level of relationship between interlocutors, etc.) and that a proficient language user considers in order to communicate effectively. Secondly, it is in the FL classroom that students are made aware of the variety that exists not just externally, but *within* the global language that they are learning: that there is not a single English language, but English*es*; not one Spanish, but many. Parallel to the didactic concern on the medium of instruction is the question of which variety to teach, which, again, is not a barrier, but an avenue to instill cultural sensitivity. We need not look far: what we tend to collectively call Bisaya, is in fact, Cebuano, Boholano, Waray, and Ilonggo, among many others. The students' awareness of this local practice of lumping together diverse language varieties, may lead to a different appreciation of Mexican, Argentine, and Peninsular Spanish and possibly, a realization that one is not better than the other, and that it is context which warrants the "correct" variety. The proficient FL user, after all, adapts his language behavior accordingly (Grosjean 2004). This ability to cope in any linguistic situation, though stated

in many different ways, is a common goal that secondary and higher education have for the Filipino FL student. Unfortunately, this is as far as their similarities go.

While the rationale of FLT in secondary education is increased employability of the Filipino in the global context, higher education considers FLT a tool for the culmination of research. FL programs in high schools are regulated by the DepEd through the SPFL, which, as described previously, envisions the Filipino as a globally competitive citizen who is capable of meeting the demands of the 21st century. The curriculum guides of the SPFL are based on a foreign scheme and the underpinnings of the program clearly demonstrate that it was conceived to enhance the chances of the Filipino in the competitive global market.

On the other hand, tertiary education concerns itself with intellectual pursuit—perhaps with the exception of CHED's AB Foreign Language program, whose aim is "to develop experts in FLs who can bridge cultural boundaries and help the country gain global competitiveness in the region." (CHED 2017, 3). At UP Diliman, the two departments that offer foreign language courses are the Department of Linguistics of the College of Social Sciences and Philosophy (which offers courses on Bahasa Indonesia/Malaysia, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Thai, and Persian) and the Department of European Languages of the College of Arts and Letters (offering courses on French, German, Italian, Latin, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish). The Department of Linguistics is focused on "the scientific study, preservation and promotion of the Philippine languages through teaching, field research and publication" ("About | UP Department of Linguistics" n.d.), while the Department of European Languages aims to provide students the critical knowledge and linguistic and pragmatic skills they will need as future contributors to knowledge production, professionals in their chosen field, and cultural mediators. Albeit coming from different traditions, both departments prioritize contributing to the country's intellectual gains.

Within FL programs in higher education, there exists another disjunct—the issue of the bifurcated curriculum, where students learn

the language in the first two years and use it for content courses in the last two years. As this bifurcation similarly exists in the United States, one can only suspect that ours has been patterned after theirs, like much of our education system. The lack of a proper transition between the two halves of the program has caused much anxiety for both students and faculty. Both parties identified the need for more preparatory courses for undergraduate research work. Fortunately, this has been duly acknowledged in recent curriculum revisions through the inclusion of additional courses on academic writing and critical theories, to name a few. However, student misgivings do not end here. Many students, if not all, worry about life after finishing a degree in a FL, a grave concern even among those who have not entered the program. The fact that very few continue learning FLs at the tertiary level (a case in point is the dwindling number of enrollees in UP Diliman's BA European Languages program)—despite the high number of high school students in the SPFL—warrants a more efficient dissemination of scholarship opportunities and possible career options (For a more in-depth discussion on the issue of the bifurcated FL curriculum, *see* Cruz 2017).

Aside from the disconnections between and within secondary and tertiary education institutions that need to be addressed, the current system discounts an equally important stakeholder in the FL enterprise: the students. Though largely based on anecdotal evidence and unpublished research, students from UP Diliman (mostly from the two aforementioned departments) claim to study FLs primarily for self-gratification. The reasons are many and varied, ranging from finding pleasure in taking on a new challenge to pursuing an interest. Only a handful undertake FLL for career growth— academic or otherwise. Hence, a third disjunct in the objectives of policymakers (integration in the global economic market), the academe (knowledge production), and the students (self-satisfaction) necessitates a reconsideration of the manner in which we formulate education policies and learning goals: from a top-down approach to a more organic bottom-up design. We do not argue for the scrapping of well-meaning attempts of education institutions to advance the country's education system, but an improvement of what has been set

in place, taking into consideration empirical findings from the fields of education and psychology which prove that successful learning occurs when it stems from the students' interests (e.g., Dewey 1913). The awareness of these disjuncts and of the lack of acknowledgment of the students' backgrounds leads us to the recognition that we have so far only been concerned if the students can communicate in the FL, not what they can communicate and what they can contribute to the foreign community using the target language.

Capitalizing on the students' motivations, as well as their mother languages and home cultures, can ensure less laborious learning and a more successful FL program. Instead of imposing an FL program whose reality is far removed from the realities of our students, policymakers and educators should take advantage of the Filipino students' existing knowledge and personal motives, as this would have a two-fold effect: finding personal relevance in a foreign subject matter and finding relevance in our Filipino-ness. In the future, we can take a step further in bringing our own cultures to the fore by putting the learning of local languages on the same pedestal as FLs and offering courses on these languages at the tertiary level.

Challenges for FL's future in the Philippines

The postcolonial nations that constitute contemporary Southeast Asia, most of whose boundaries emerged as a result of the Western empires' cut-and-paste policy on colonial territories, are unsurprisingly comprised of multilingual and multicultural societies. Home to 183 living languages, the Philippines is an excellent example of the sociocultural and linguistic diversity that characterizes the majority of the region. In a pluralistic Filipino society where colonial and national tensions are translated into the politics of language, we observe a hierarchization of the existing (and at times contending) principal languages. This hierarchization has been historically manifest, on one hand, through the artificial (i.e., mandated by law) construction of a national language (i.e., Filipino), which pushed the regional languages to the periphery, and through the privileging of the more "prestigious" and more remunerative imperial language (English) on the other.

Given this already strained context wherein regional languages, the national language, and the imperial language are contending actors, it is noteworthy to interrogate the mise-en-scène of an additional foreign language through FLL. As languages are vehicles of culture, the introduction of a foreign language signifies the arrival of new ways of being and thinking. Integral to the West's *mission civilisatrice* was the imposition of its epistemologies and ontologies upon the colonial subjects. Despite the survival of most Philippine languages, it cannot be negated that the colonial history (or histories) of the Philippines nevertheless resulted in the displacement and/or transformation of indigenous ways of being and thinking.

It is within this context that we situate the discussion of FL teaching and learning in contemporary Philippines and bring to the fore its potential decolonial dimension. What constitutes decoloniality in the teaching of foreign languages in the Philippines? How is decoloniality articulated by FL practitioners and stakeholders, namely policymakers, teachers, and students? What are the challenges that deter the full articulation of a decolonial framework in the FL classroom? These inexorably linked concerns were touched upon in the different sections of this paper, most exhaustively in the two sections that drew attention to the development of context-sensitive didactic materials and of student-centered practices in the FL classroom. Moreover, such concerns have been recurrently examined under the themes of goal-setting and pedagogy, both central to this paper.

In order to contextualize and subsequently problematize its current praxis, it is foremost necessary to interrogate the primary objectives that shape FL teaching in the Philippines. What are the goals and who sets them? As laid out in detail in the second section of this paper, the two driving institutions behind FLT in the country are the Department of Education, through the establishment of the Special Foreign Language Program in 2009, and the Commission on Higher Education, through the crafting of policies, standards, and guidelines for a BA in Foreign Language program that is offered by a few HEIs. A look at the objectives set forth by these institutions points to a disjunct in their ideation of what we as a nation stand to gain in promoting FLL among Filipinos.

The DepEd has created a starkly commercial rationale for promoting FLL among Filipino high school students, since competency in a foreign language is perceived to aggrandize the employability of Filipinos. This is unsurprising and is apparent in the ample literature on the politico-economic implications of education policies, such as San Juan (2016)'s article on the K to 12 program as a neoliberal restructuring of the education system in response to demands of the labor market. The plurilingual Filipino who is proficient in a foreign language cannot but become "globally competitive" and "equipped with 21st century skills," which are also recognizable signposts of neoliberal thought.

Such neoliberal rhetoric is not completely amiss in CHED's AB Foreign Language program, which is deemed as "a response to the felt need in the academe to develop experts in foreign languages who can bridge cultural boundaries and help the country gain global competitiveness in the region" (CHED 2017, 3). The policies, standards, and guidelines set by the CHED for the FL degree program reflect an envisioning of FLL that is both pragmatic and humanistic at once. While the program is expected "to equip the students with the different language skills and vocabulary needed to carry out business negotiations, [and] translate and interpret various types of communications," it is also envisioned to "expose the students to the history, literature and culture of the foreign language" and to encourage knowledge production by enabling the students to "conduct research and other academic activities using the foreign language" (ibid.). The relative autonomy of the few HEIs that offer AB Foreign Language programs ensures the safeguarding of FLL as an avenue for critical elaboration. This is exemplified by the UP Diliman's Department of Linguistics, which offers classes in select Asian languages yet whose main thrust is the preservation and promotion of the Philippine languages, as well as by the Department of European Languages, whose primary aim is developing contributors to the production of knowledge and cultural mediators who are cognizant of intercultural processes and identities.

In contrast, the DepEd's SPFL was designed as a tool to increase the global marketability of the Filipino worker, which

regretfully encourages rather than redresses the now-longstanding hyperdependence of the Philippine economy on the export of human labor. Thus the learning of a foreign language figures into the wide-scale tradition of commodifying education. Equally noteworthy is the program's institutional dependence on foreign state agencies, such as embassies and cultural organizations. So crucial is the role that these foreign institutions play in capacity building (e.g., teacher training and materials provision) that DepEd owes them the logistical initiative to institute almost its entire foreign language program to them. This high degree of dependence brings about two consequences that might slow down the process of integrating a decolonial approach in FL education. First, it ensures that only the languages of nations that are economically capable and ideologically motivated to boost their soft power in the Philippines are represented, as evidenced by the fact that all the SPFL's language options are those of countries that are developed and belong to the Global North. Second, it precludes an overturn of the current goal-setting dynamic from employing a top-down approach to a bottom-up one. Decoloniality, within the context of goal-setting in FL policy, can thus be articulated by prioritizing the nation's intellectual gains rather than aiming solely to serve the global market. However, this is an illusory ideal which probably necessitates a structural shift in the nation's entire education system.

If there are challenges in integrating a decolonial framework in the institutional conceptualization of FL teaching and learning in the Philippines, then there are, without a doubt, equally challenging concerns in its praxis. The challenges in articulating decoloniality in the classroom through a more critical pedagogy are largely rooted in the myth of the monolingual habitus, which, on one hand, implicitly reinforces associations between the foreign languages and nation-states, and on the other, encourages a didactic mode based on assumptions of homogeneity among the students. Again, this can be traced to Western epistemology and ontology purveyed through colonial discourse, specifically from early conceptions of the nation-state that privilege the monolingual individual belonging to a homogeneous whole. As Nectoux (2001, 93) puts it:

In the industrialised Western world, the phenomenon of nationhood is often perceived as a monadic archetype—one nation, one ethnic group, one mythological historical framework and one national language—as if the collective mind that created the 'imagined community' had been working with homogenous material. Diglossia and pluri-linguistic practices are presented as deviations from the archetype, rather than the norm that they are. This is not surprising, especially at the linguistic level, as older European nations (and especially the three classical examples of France, England and Germany) have evolved within such a model.

Such an archetype cannot be farther from the lived realities in plural postcolonial societies, where the Western imprint of this mythical monolithic still somewhat endures, as exemplified by the case of FLT and FLL in the Philippines. The operationalization of this myth, which arrests rather than promotes the decolonization of FL education in the country, is most observable in pedagogy, as discussed lengthily in sections three and four.

The most evident problem posed by the persistence of the monolingual habitus in the FL classroom is the systemic downplaying of the plurilingualism of the Filipino student. Even the imposition of a single language as medium of instruction in a multilingual context carries problematic implications not just from a pedagogical viewpoint, but also from a political perspective. Instances of privileging the global language to the point of penalizing students for taking recourse in their native languages have been reported. Moreover, the tendency of using the national language to promote a rather Manila-centric Filipino identity, a process which pushes regional vernaculars (and by extension, regional cultures) further to the periphery, is just as problematic. Again, this is rooted in the perceived homogenization of FL learners which the monolingual habitus promotes, alongside its idealization of the monolingual native speaker. Rather than suppress the plurality of identities that Filipino learners possess, FL teachers must capitalize on the rich linguistic repertoire of the learners from which they could draw as they grapple with a new language system.

This can be done by promoting translanguaging in the classroom, a process that proves constructive both pedagogically and politically, as it encourages metalinguistic awareness among students and equalizes the various languages present in the classroom.

One major point of contention that was raised during the RTD is the cultural-appropriateness of the instructional materials that FL teachers in the Philippines have at their disposal. While the FL practitioners present in the roundtable unanimously agree that a good understanding of Filipino culture is integral to more meaningful FLL, this "Filipinoness" was loosely defined, if not altogether overlooked. Nevertheless, an encompassing problem is the lack of context-sensitive materials, as almost all instructional materials that are being used prove to be inadequate to fit the diverse contexts within which Filipino FL learners find themselves. Most of these imported didactic materials are perceived by both FL students and teachers to be largely divorced from local realities, and thus diminish the possibility of employing an affective-humanistic approach to FL education. From this, we can say that another way to articulate decoloniality in FL education is through the creation of instructional materials that are sensitive to the diverse realities of the Filipino learner and challenge the prevailing unidirectional relationship between the native speaker and the "non-speaker," which simultaneously hampers intercultural exchange and facilitates the observed monopoly in knowledge production of cultural and political hegemons.

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THE PROGRAM

The **Decolonial Studies Program (DSP)** focuses on five different dimensions of coloniality/modernity that continue to impact institutions in the Global South in ways that often hinder them from achieving their liberating potential: religion, law, English Studies, European Studies, and Southeast Asian Studies. It seeks to interrogate coloniality and will involve identifying aspects of Western modernity in postcolonial states and involves a critical engagement with colonial-era texts, collective memory, and the use of both colonial and local languages.

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