

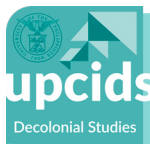
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**UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES
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Exploring Methods to Decolonize English Studies

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Introduction

Coloniality, deeply entrenched in history, has etched an enduring legacy on institutions within the Global South. It often acts as a formidable obstacle to their full realization of liberating potential. Subjecting coloniality to rigorous examination entails “identifying those aspects of Western modernity in postcolonial states and involving a critical engagement with colonial acts, collective memory, with the use of both colonial and local languages” (Villaceran 2019). This exploration is carried out with a profound awareness of the nuanced interplay between colonial and local languages, recognizing their role in shaping contemporary narratives and discourse.

The urgency of decolonizing academic disciplines has assumed a prominent role in our ever-evolving global landscape. This imperative extends its reach into the domain of English studies, a discipline which, according to Lennard Davis (2019), “. . . is seen as yoked to an oppressive history of conquest, enslavement, and imperialism.” Through these multifaceted inquiries, the Decolonial Studies Program (DSP) of the University of the Philippines Center for Integrative and Development Studies Decolonial Studies Program (UP CIDS) endeavors to shed light on the complex dynamics that continue to shape the trajectory of English studies and societies in the Global South.

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 - 2 Marie Aubrey J. Villaceran, Ph.D. (mjvillaceran@up.edu.ph) is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English and Comparative Literature at UPD. She is also the Covonor of Decolonial Studies Program of the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies, and served as convener of the round table discussion titled “Exploring Methods for Decolonizing English Studies.”

This article serves as the culmination of the roundtable discussion (RTD) held on 18 September 2019 with the theme “Exploring Methods for Decolonizing English Studies.” This paper embarks on a voyage of exploration, specifically focusing on methods tailored to the broader Global South and, more intimately, the Philippines—a nation steeped in a history of colonization and resilience. We aspire that this discussion paper will act as a catalyst, igniting ongoing conversations, stimulating further research, and inspiring actions directed toward the decolonization of English studies. This extends not only to the Global South but also its influence far beyond these boundaries.

Furthermore, this paper meticulously delineates the strategies employed by Filipino scholars to decolonize their respective areas of expertise within English studies, encompassing both pedagogy and research. The invaluable contributions of distinguished scholars have played a pivotal role in shaping the content of this paper. Notably, the perspectives and insights of Dr. Judy Celine Ick, Professor in the Department of English and Comparative Literature (DECL) at the University of the Philippines Diliman (UPD); Prof. Gabriela Lee, Assistant Professor II in UPD DECL; Dr. Isabel Pefianco Martin, Professor in the Department of English and Department of Education at Ateneo de Manila University; and Dr. Aileen Salonga, Professor I of UPD DECL, have been instrumental in its formulation, lending profound significance to the discourse.

As Filipino scholars deeply committed to addressing the intricacies of decolonization, our journey begins with the acknowledgment of colonialism’s enduring influence on the English studies curriculum, research methodologies, and pedagogical approaches, as articulated in this discussion paper. The legacies of imperial powers have woven themselves into the very fabric of English studies. It has not only determined what we study but also shaped how we study it. Thus, it is imperative that we critically examine these inherited structures and embark on a transformative odyssey toward decolonization, especially in the Global South.

The term “Global South” encompasses the regions of Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Oceania, along with related expressions like “Third World” and “Periphery.” These terms refer to regions outside Europe

and North America, which are typically characterized by lower income and occasional political or cultural marginalization, though exceptions exist (Dados and Connell 2012, pp. 12–13). As such, decolonizing the English studies curriculum “. . . includes paying attention to the Global South” (Davis 2019).

Our pursuit is guided by an unwavering commitment to nurturing a more inclusive, equitable, and culturally responsive English studies discipline. By centering our discourse within the Global South, especially focusing on the Philippines, we aspire to amplify historically marginalized voices and provide a platform for constructive dialogue, thoughtful critique, and meaningful transformation. Through scrutinizing the experiences, challenges, and distinctive contributions of the Philippines, this article endeavors to construct a nuanced understanding of decolonization within the realm of English studies that harmonizes with the specificities of this region.

English Studies and the Use of English in the Philippines

In tertiary education, English studies continue to be a source of contention. “Teaching English in Philippine classrooms has not just become about aesthetic appreciation for the work of North American or British authors but also geared towards acquiring skills that, according to a joint statement by ASEAN education ministers, include English education as an area that will help narrow developmental gaps” (Villaceran 2019). Drawing from the perspectives and research-based insights of Dr. Isabel Pefianco Martin, one of the distinguished speakers in the RTD, this section of the roundtable discourse navigates through the complexities of studying and teaching English. It scrutinizes how colonial legacies continue to exert influence and explore innovative strategies for decolonization.

Dr. Martin positions the examination of the literary canon during the American Colonial period as the starting point of her scholarly pursuit—her “ground zero,” in her words. Within this context, she meticulously explores the policies imposed by American colonizers, their profound impact on Philippine literature, and their influence on attitudes toward our literary heritage as well as our approach to writing. In her second venture in the field of education, she delves

into the periphery of English language teaching, concentrating on dispelling myths, debunking misbeliefs, and addressing fallacies related to language in the Philippines.

Considered as groundwork, these two pointers established practices within Philippine courtrooms, highlighting their heavy reliance on hegemonic, colonial languages like American English. In many courtrooms, one will find that the accused often does not speak English, leaving only proficient lawyers to engage in litigation in the language. Numerous individuals are incarcerated because they do not comprehend the proceedings that take place during court hearings. This challenge has evolved into a form of advocacy and has also spurred the development of the field known as forensic linguistics. Dr. Marilu Rañosa-Madrurnio and Dr. Martin pioneered this field, establishing the University of Santo Tomas (UST) to become a stronghold in forensic linguistics. Dr. Martin expressed the aspiration for an increased number of Filipino academics to engage in the study of forensic linguistics within the field of language and law.

Rañosa-Madrurnio and Martin (2023) critically reviewed forensic linguistic studies in the Philippines over the past eight to nine years. They examined various texts, including courtroom proceedings, legal writings, police investigations, as well as language choice and policy in the Philippine legal system. The authors highlighted the multifaceted language policy dynamics in the Philippines, shaped by multilingualism and a history of colonization. Taking a sociolinguistic stance, they argued that understanding the social meanings and practices of language is essential for effectively applying forensic linguistics to legal contexts. With this in mind, the future directions for research on forensic linguistics in the Philippines can focus on the following objectives:

- Understand how forensic linguistics is currently used in the Philippine legal system and identify the areas where it could be used more effectively.
- Assess the impact of the Philippines' multilingual language policy on the legal system, particularly how language barriers affect the rights of defendants and witnesses.

- Explore other potential applications of forensic linguistics in the Philippines, especially in the fields of education, business, and media.

Dr. Martin argued against an overly monocentric approach to English, contending that the complexities of English in the Philippines extend beyond a single language variety. This complexity, she suggests, calls for the reevaluation of English teaching methods. It involves considering the presence of various “Englishes” in the country. English teaching methods should be designed to help students develop the skills they need to communicate effectively in various contexts, both inside and outside the classroom.

Most studies and policies on English in the Philippines have failed to recognize the diversity of Englishes that multilingual Filipinos use in different situations and circumstances. Adopting a more nuanced approach, Dr. Martin views English in the Philippines as a multitude of constantly evolving varieties, which speakers adapt to their surroundings. This diversity of Englishes is what Martin (2020, p. 491) refers to as “Pinoylish,” a term that captures the fluid and dynamic nature of English in the Philippines. Pinoylish draws from a variety of sources, incorporating Filipino languages, English as a Philippine mother tongue, and other meaningful modes of communication that are meaningful to Filipinos (Martin 2020, 492–495).

Dr. Martin’s approach underscores the significance of tailoring language education to the multilingual context of English usage in the Philippines. To illustrate, she references the three-concentric-circle model of Kachru (1985) to explain why English in the Philippines cannot be simply categorized as an alternative-circle use (see Figure 1).

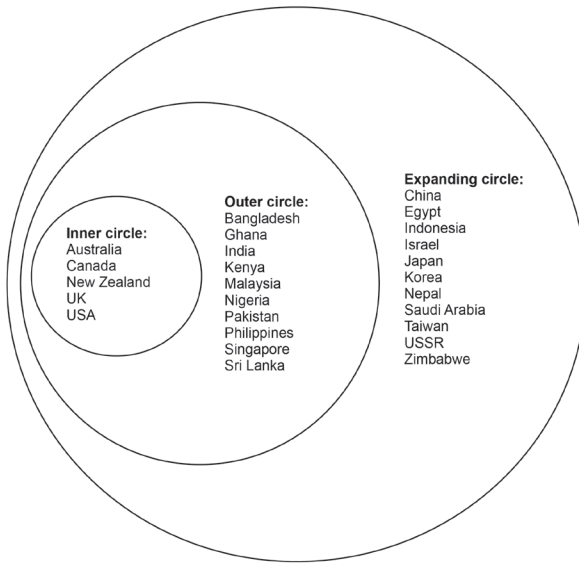


Figure 1. Kachru’s three concentric circles of the English model. Adapted from Esquivel (2019).

In the context of linguistics, the English-speaking populace can be categorized into three distinct groups: native speakers, those for whom English serves as a second language, and those for whom English functions as a foreign language. Kachru (1994), as cited by Esquivel (2019, pp. 58–59), introduced a conceptual framework delineating these divisions, known as the “Inner Circle,” the “Outer Circle,” and the “Expanding Circle,” which has become pivotal in the classification of World Englishes.

In Kachru’s circle, the Inner Circle comprises nations where English is spoken as a native and primary language. These include countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. In the Outer Circle, one will find countries with historical British colonial ties where English plays a significant role in social and governmental contexts. Many nations, such as India, Malaysia, Singapore, Ghana, and Kenya, have adopted English as a second language. The third circle, known as the Expanding Circle, includes countries that introduce English as a foreign language in educational institutions, primarily to facilitate communication with

the Inner and Outer Circles. Examples of these nations include Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Japan, China, and Korea, among others (Al-Mutairi 2020, pp. 85–86).

Dr. Martin’s research on English studies in the Philippines challenges traditional assumptions about language, culture, and knowledge in our globalized world. She underscores that the traditional, monocentric approach to English is no longer viable in the Philippines. Here, a diversity of Englishes, known as “Pinoylish,” is used in a variety of contexts. Dr. Martin argues that this diversity should be embraced and celebrated since it reflects the Philippines’ rich multilingual heritage and its position as a global hub for communication.

In collaboration with Dr. Marilu Rañosa-Madrurnio, Dr. Martin has spearheaded the adoption of forensic linguistics in the Philippines to ensure equal access to justice for individuals regardless of language proficiency. Their efforts recognize the substantial influence that language barriers can exert on the legal rights of defendants and witnesses within the legal system.

A Multifaceted Nature of English Language and Identity Formation in the Philippines

Acknowledging the complexity of the decolonization process, Dr. Aileen Salonga highlights the multifaceted nature of English in the Philippines and the necessity for nuanced consideration. Her work centers on language and globalization. She specifically examines the political dimensions linked to the global proliferation of English and its adoption, utilization, and interpretation within the unique sociolinguistic milieu of the Philippines. Dr. Salonga explores the practical realities of English, dissecting the motivations and methods behind its usage.

Dr. Salonga emphasizes the importance of discerning users’ intentions when employing the language and the localized consequences of such usage. This recognition acknowledges agency among Filipino English speakers. However, Dr. Salonga also acknowledges the presence of power structures that influence language dynamics. As

she mentions, “I recognize that misuses of the language and whatever intentions and effects they carry exist within Robert [Phillipson]’s structures of power” (Salonga 2019).

In his essay titled “Linguistic Imperialism,” Robert Phillipson (2018) emphasized how structures of power allow dominant languages like English to gain control transnationally, marginalizing other languages. Dominant languages consolidate power nationally and internationally at the expense of other languages. Phillipson’s work presented key aspects and critiques of linguistic imperialism, with examples illustrating how English spread via British and American promotion, affecting other cultures and languages. In the postcolonial age, English teaching methods promoted by the United Kingdom, the United States, and the World Bank embody fallacies like the monolingual fallacy and the native speaker fallacy. Elites now form in monolingual international schools and are spreading worldwide. As linguistic imperialism remains powerful in places like Turkey and China, policies that bolster linguistic diversity serve as a counterforce against it. Hence, Phillipson advocates linguistic diversity to combat these hegemonic language structures. Scrutiny is needed not only on English privileges in education systems and discourses justifying them but also on European Union (EU) language policies.

Zeng et al. (2023, p. 7) also explained how English stayed in power through internal, not external, dynamics. They argued that English became “an index of local, multilingual identity,” which provided one convenient global communication method. The authors proposed features of English linguistic neo-imperialism to explain its continuous spread and power across domains in periphery countries after colonization. The features include locally-driven spread by speakers who value English for its economic benefits; structurally-motivated status as institutions mandate English for inclusion; lingering colonial/imperial attitudes of English superiority; and normalized actualization as English becomes the status quo. These manifest across communication, business, academia, and education. Zeng et al. (2023, 2) argued that “English transformed from a colonial language into a first/second language or lingua franca,” impacting local languages. Thus, combating the spread of English is unrealistic now. Governments should instead strengthen multilingual policies

and education, foster inclusive online platforms, and build confidence in the value of local languages while accepting English as part of the local linguistic repertoire.

While considering the diverse identities of English users in the multilingual Philippine society, Dr. Salonga highlights the intricate interplay between macro-level structures of language use and micro-level everyday language deployment. This complexity challenges simplistic dichotomies of English as either a tool of linguistic and cultural imperialism or as a wholly indigenized form. Nonetheless, she seeks a middle ground that allows Filipino users of English to establish a sense of ownership that encompasses both global and local dimensions of the language.

Furthermore, the affective aspects of English can be explored by examining the emotions and sentiments associated with the language. They can be viewed as socially conditioned and influenced by historical factors (e.g., colonialism, linguistic and cultural imperialism, linguistic changes, the development of English literature, etc.) and sociopolitical factors (e.g., language policy and planning, social class and inequality, education, etc.). Dr. Salonga intends to analyze the effect of English by scrutinizing historical discourse and existing frameworks that elucidate the global dissemination of the language. While recognizing the prevalence of specific paradigms in the field, Dr. Salonga is committed to challenging these norms. She is eager to contribute to the ongoing discourse on decolonization and to advocate for the diversification of academic sources, incorporating insights from multiple perspectives.

“Philippine English establishes its identity apart from other World Englishes” (Esquivel 2019). According to Florendo (2012), as cited in Esquivel (2019, 59), Philippine English retains identifiable English traits while incorporating innovative vocabulary, sentence structures, and intonation patterns that are intelligible and specific to the Filipino linguistic community.

Philippine English embodies a form of linguistic emancipation and challenges traditional monocentric perspectives. Within our diverse society, as Dr. Salonga stressed, English is used with a distinct Filipino essence, reflecting a fusion of cultures and languages. It is a

language shaped by lived experiences—a dynamic and ever-evolving entity that defies rigid categorizations. For Dr. Salonga, “[Filipinos] use English according to basically how we want to use it.”

Since American colonization, the Filipino people have adopted English as their secondary language. They have incorporated it alongside their native tongues. Dr. Salonga explained that throughout this period, the phonological, morphological, semantic, and syntactic characteristics of the English language evolved in the Philippines, particularly in how English is received, interpreted, and employed by those who use it. This transformative phenomenon has given rise to what is now known as Philippine English, or “Pinoylish,” in the words of Dr. Martin (2020)—a distinct variety of English indigenous to Filipino culture.

In our multilingual context, English coexists with numerous other languages, each vying for its space in the linguistic tapestry of the Philippines. Dr. Salonga highlighted terms such as *senatoriable*, *bold*, and *salvage* as classic examples of words initially perceived as standard English but have, in fact, Philippine English counterparts. In context, the word *salvage* as a verb means “to save, rescue, or retrieve something of value from destruction, damage, or loss,” as defined by the *Cambridge Dictionary*. However, in the Philippine context, *salvage* signifies the apprehension or execution of a suspected criminal without a trial, as shown in the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

Additionally, these distinctions are particularly noticeable in the realm of prepositions, where phrases like “result to” instead of “result in” are commonly used in the Philippines. According to Danica Salazar (2023), *Oxford English Dictionary* editor for World English, this pattern is noticeable in how words and grammar come together, especially with particle verbs or phrasal verbs. Choosing the right verb is quite random in English, so second-language speakers like Filipinos often tackle this challenge using analogies.

This complexity, though intricate, is also exhilarating to explore. It calls for a shift in how we examine English. It is not just about cataloging unique phonological, morphological, or syntactical features but also understanding the profound impact of language on people’s lives. It

dives into emotions, beliefs, attitudes, and ideologies associated with English. It reveals the social conditioning that underpins our sentiments toward the language.

As we investigate the effect of English, we engage with historical discourse surrounding the language in the Philippines. We scrutinize language policies and global frameworks. This work seeks to bridge the macro and micro, connecting grand narratives with personal experiences, and ultimately, contributes to the ongoing discourse on decolonization. It recognizes the imperative to diversify perspectives and challenges the dominance of certain voices in this field.

Decolonizing Shakespeare: A Scholar's Journey through Philippine English

Dr. Judy Celine Ick, a distinguished scholar in the field of Shakespeare studies, addresses the complex challenge of navigating colonial legacies within this discipline. Despite the inherently colonial nature of Shakespeare studies, she embarked on a unique academic journey that took her to the very heart of this colonial matrix. To deconstruct and challenge the canon of English literature, she believed this process had to be initiated from within as an “inside job.” Her academic voyage exposed her to a plethora of critical frameworks such as new historicism, feminism, cultural materialism, psychoanalysis, poststructuralism, postcolonial studies, and postmodern Marxism.³ In doing so, Dr. Ick expanded her horizons far beyond the binary of colonial or anticolonial perspectives.

Her rigorous training in historicist studies of texts at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, where she obtained her Ph.D., instilled in her the ability to read texts within their historical contexts. This leads her to explore diverse sources, including wills, mandates, and diaries, to understand their respective influences on literature. However, upon returning to the Philippines, she found herself in a situation where her advanced studies seemed disconnected

3 For historicism and feminism, see Ick (1994). For cultural materialism, see Ick (1999). For poststructuralism, see Ick (2010). And finally, for postcolonial studies, see Ick (2013).

from her local environment. The early days of the internet limited her access to resources. Undeterred, she turned to theater as a means to engage with Shakespeare and make his work relevant to contemporary Filipino audiences. While enriching, this shift to theater also presented significant challenges in interpreting Shakespeare's work in a way that resonated with local audiences.

Dr. Ick's journey eventually led her to question why Shakespeare held such a special place in her heart compared to fellow Filipinos who did not share her enthusiasm. This introspection prompted her to investigate her colonial education and whether she was, as Renato Constantino (1970) in his essay titled "The Mis-education of the Filipino" puts it, a product of colonial miseducation. Her extensive research into colonial education challenged the notion of a monolithic colonial mentality instilled by American colonial education. She discovered that the reality was far more complex, with colonial education producing diverse perspectives rather than a single colonial mindset.

Further fueled by her immersion in postcolonial theory, she sought to bring Shakespeare home and examine him through a Filipino lens. Her scholarship focused on taking Shakespeare beyond the show-and-tell approach, aiming to theorize Shakespeare within a Filipino context. She emphasized the importance of questioning established theoretical frames and embracing a perspective that is "oblivious to the colonial monolith." This journey allowed her to "take Shakespeare home" uniquely, acknowledging that it was a continuous process of learning and questioning.

Driven by a desire to go beyond the paradigms of postcolonialism and globalization, Dr. Ick engaged with a community of Asian Shakespeare scholars in Malaysia who, like her, had been educated in the West and were now reevaluating their relationship with Shakespeare. Their studies revealed indigenous Shakespeare in Malaysia that existed independently of colonial education. Thus, their collective efforts challenged the dominance of a British-centered colonial narrative and the absence of colonial burdens in noncolonial Asian "Shakespeares" fostered creativity and freedom.

Dr. Ick reflected on her journey as a Shakespearean scholar, highlighting her remarkable transformation from being an outsider to being recognized as a key figure in Shakespeare studies. Her narrative embodies the essence of decolonial English studies, positioning oneself at the table and challenging dominant narratives within the field.

Decolonizing Children’s Literature in the Philippines

Prof. Gabriela Lee delved into the roots of children’s literature in the Philippines in her discussion. Historically, children’s literature in the country was closely intertwined with pedagogical objectives, firmly rooted in colonial values and language instruction. Its origins can be traced back to the Spanish colonial period, when it served as a tool for disseminating colonial ideologies and shaping young minds into obedient Christian subjects. During this period, there was virtually no distinction between literature intended for children and that intended for adults, as both shared an oral and mnemonic form of storytelling. With the advent of Spanish colonial rule, the pre-colonial landscape transformed. During the Spanish colonial period, children’s literature became a distinct genre, often infused with religious themes.

The narrative of children’s literature underwent another significant evolution during the American colonial period. It was a time when foreign textbooks, primarily from the United States, found their way into the Philippines, as highlighted by Prof. Lee. While essential for acquiring English proficiency, these textbooks brought with them American culture and values. They introduced Filipino children to foreign concepts. Take, for example, apples and snow; both were starkly incongruous with Filipino children’s tropical surroundings. This period marked a pivotal juncture where colonial values were again reinforced, albeit through different means.

Prof. Lee observes the ongoing struggle to challenge this monolithic perspective on children’s literature. She sheds light on how magazines like *Lidayway*, featuring Lola Basyang’s stories, attempted to contest the prevailing narrative. Following World War II, a surge of nationalism prompted a resurgence in folk tales and a renewed connection with indigenous narratives. However, a significant caveat persisted—these

narratives were predominantly presented in English, thus constraining their accessibility and reach.

Prof. Lee's research endeavor aims to interrogate the traditional purpose and conventions of children's literature. Central to her inquiry lies the fundamental question of what children's literature should represent—whether it should remain primarily didactic or broaden its horizons beyond instruction and delight. She advocates for a critical reassessment of genre conventions, prompting an examination of the books currently in circulation. Notably, many contemporary children's stories, especially those tailored for public education, often emulate or imitate international works. They provide young readers with narratives already familiar with global literature.

Prof. Lee challenges the notion of departing from what is typically considered “canonical” or “traditional” children's texts. Instead, she advocates for the selection of readings that portray a more diverse and global childhood experience.⁴ Furthermore, Prof. Lee extends her study to the realm of translation within children's literature. She underscores the importance of recognizing and preserving linguistic diversity within the Philippines. As an illustration, she presents examples of books published in regional languages alongside English translations (e.g., *Ako ang Bayan*; *Ako at ang Diktadura*; *Mga Uring Panlipunan*; *Sari-Sari Storybooks*, etc.). This initiative nurtures an appreciation for the linguistic variety and enables readers in connecting with the country's rich cultural tapestry.

The decolonial project for children's literature in the Philippines takes shape in the broader context of decolonizing English studies. This undertaking encompasses creating discursive spaces that celebrate national and regional identities, translating works to promote linguistic diversity, and acknowledging the cultural richness that defines the Philippines. Prof. Lee's exploration provokes fundamental questions about the future of children's literature in the country, particularly in promoting diverse childhood experiences and empowering children to play a more active role in the creative process.

4 See Lee (2023).

Facilitating Decolonization in English Language Education

The RTD speakers emphasized the importance of questioning traditional approaches to English language instruction, embracing flexibility, and contextualizing language within societal and power structures. They also discuss the complexities and nuances in teaching and research, especially the decolonization of English language education.

Prof. Lee underscores the imperative of questioning the narratives embedded within children's literature. She challenges the prevailing notion that children are *tabula rasa* or blank slates, asserting that children possess innate intelligence that should not be underestimated. Prof. Lee also highlights the pivotal role of language, especially English, in the creative realm. Drawing a parallel to children's poetry, she views language as malleable, as something akin to bubblegum, and as a medium for playful experimentation. Prof. Lee emphasizes the need to break away from a monolithic perception of English. She advocates for its use as a tool for exploration and storytelling rather than just didactic instruction.

Dr. Ick, in her contribution, connects her research to her teaching practice. She emphasizes the necessity of flexibility when approaching Shakespearean literature. While introductory courses might necessitate a more traditional approach, upper-division and graduate courses delve into diverse adaptations of Shakespeare's works. They transcend the confines of British and American interpretations. Dr. Ick also puts a spotlight on the transformative power of technology, citing student vlogs on Shakespeare that reached international audiences as an example. The vlogs effectively challenge established power dynamics in English studies.

Dr. Martin delves into integrating decolonization principles at the graduate and undergraduate levels of English education. She presented a holistic approach to transformative pedagogy. She directs our attention to the foundational stages of undergraduate English courses, where students are encouraged to embark on a reflective journey with their relationship with the English language. This reflective exercise

not only fosters a profound understanding of the intricate dynamics of language but also unveils the complex web of societal hierarchies in which it is embedded.

In addition to her focus on language dynamics, Dr. Martin grapples with the intricate challenge of teaching grammar. She underscores the significance of contextualizing English within the broader frames of societal and power structures. By doing so, she equips students with the knowledge and critical thinking skills needed to make informed decisions about language usage. This approach empowers learners to recognize that language is not an abstract entity but a dynamic social and political tool with multifaceted expressions and implications.

Moreover, Dr. Martin extends her insights to teacher training, emphasizing its pivotal role in advancing the decolonization of English education. She acknowledges the divide between universities fortunate enough to engage in in-depth discussions on decolonization and remote regions grappling with unique challenges. In this context, teacher training programs emerge as vital conduits for disseminating awareness and knowledge regarding the decolonization of English education. They also play a crucial role in bridging the gap between diverse educational settings and facilitating the equitable adoption of transformative practices.

Adding her perspective to the discussion, Dr. Salonga underscores the significance of sociolinguistic discourse in teaching and research. She presents a fascinating project where students interview individuals about their connections with English, revealing patterns and emotions related to language usage. Dr. Salonga also navigates the intricate terrain of teaching grammar, emphasizing the need to frame English as a dynamic social and political tool rather than a static, abstract language.

These conversations collectively highlight the imperative to reassess conventional English-language instruction paradigms. The insights underscore the significance of adaptability, contextual understanding, and inclusivity within the field. The discussions offer perspectives on decolonizing English studies, spanning from challenging established narratives in children's literature to embracing innovative pedagogical methods and technology.

The Future of English Studies in the Philippines

The future of English studies in the Philippines is intricately tied to the ongoing discourse on decoloniality. As the open dialogue through the RTD underscores, the process of decolonizing English studies requires a profound transformation that goes beyond just revising the curriculum. It necessitates a fundamental shift in academic practices, policies, and paradigms.

One crucial aspect that demands development is the recognition and appreciation of multilingualism. In a postcolonial nation like the Philippines, where English is just one among numerous languages spoken, it is imperative to challenge the assumption that English should maintain a dominant position in academia. This can be achieved by actively promoting multilingual teaching and learning as well as supporting research publications in Filipino and other Philippine languages (e.g., Kapampangan, Ilocano, Waray, etc.).

Another pivotal area of focus is the indigenization of knowledge production. This entails moving away from the traditional reliance on Western paradigms and nurturing theories and methodologies from the Global South that reflect the unique perspectives and experiences of Filipinos. This can be accomplished by promoting collaborative research with indigenous communities and facilitating the development of Filipino-language academic journals and other platforms for knowledge dissemination. Ick (2019) stressed the importance of immersion in local communities, “There’s no substitute for on-the-ground legwork research. All the theory in the universe will not change it until you go to the field, to the ground.” In the same light, Martin (2019) emphasized that there is a “strong need to go out to the field, and teacher training is the most decolonized project [to consider]. . . .”

In addition to these curricular and research imperatives, addressing the structural challenges that hinder the decolonization of English language education in the Philippines is also essential. These challenges include understanding the complex relationship of Filipinos with their mother tongue, where “there’s not a lot of anxiety about English anymore compared to Filipino,” as well as the privileged positions of discussing ideologies in classrooms, which not

all schools can openly accommodate (Salonga 2019). Furthermore, the decolonization of academia includes addressing cultural appropriation and “nativist thinking,” the belief that literary writing can only use the language of a specific region if the author is a local (Lee 2019).

The future of English studies in the Philippines is grounded in principles of decoloniality and multilingualism. It is a future where English is appreciated as a tool for communication and collaboration without overshadowing other languages or cultures. It is a future where Philippine languages are recognized and respected as legitimate mediums for academic discourse and knowledge production. Moreover, it is a future where academic institutions are transformed into inclusive, equitable, and supportive spaces for all students and scholars, irrespective of their linguistic or cultural backgrounds.

To delve deeper into this topic, here are some specific recommendations that illustrate how these principles can influence the future of English studies in the Philippines:

- **Curriculum Reform.** English studies curricula can be enriched with more diverse perspectives and voices, including those from the Philippines and other countries in the Global South. This can be achieved by incorporating works by Filipino authors and scholars, as well as teaching the history and culture of the Philippines and other colonized countries.
- **Language Policy.** Academic institutions can implement language policies that promote multilingualism and support the use of Filipino and other Philippine languages in teaching and research. Resources for learning and using multiple languages, courses, and programs in Filipino and other Philippine languages can be made available.
- **Research Funding.** Government agencies and funding bodies can allocate more resources to support decolonial and multilingual research. This can empower Filipino scholars to explore topics relevant to their communities and develop alternative knowledge-production methods.
- **Academic Publishing.** Academic journals and publishers can actively publish more research from the Philippines and other

Global South regions. They can adopt more inclusive editorial policies, such as waiving language editing fees for non-native English speakers.

- **Scholarly Activism.** Filipino scholars and academics can take a leading role in the global movement to decolonize English studies. They can raise their voices against language shaming and discrimination while advocating for policies and practices that support decoloniality and multilingualism.
- **Global Discourse.** Discourse on English studies can emphasize the inclusion of voices from Filipinos and marginalized communities to enhance diverse perspectives and actively promote the decolonization of knowledge production, sharing, and valuation.

By embracing the tenets of decolonization and promoting multilingualism, the future of English studies in the Philippines takes shape as a diverse and inclusive fabric, one that is deeply woven with the country's linguistic and cultural richness. Challenging the prevailing English-centric paradigm, it advocates for acknowledging Philippine languages, reforming educational curricula, and actively supporting alternative knowledge creation. In doing so, the Philippines emerges as a guiding light in the global campaign to decolonize English studies. Through collaborative endeavors in research, language policies, academic publishing, and scholarly activism, this vision sets the stage for a fairer and more balanced academic landscape. It enables previously marginalized voices to assume their rightful roles, enhancing the worldwide discourse on language, culture, and knowledge. Moreover, by championing these principles—with emphasis on decoloniality, multilingualism, and inclusivity—the Philippines can help create a more just and equitable future for English studies worldwide.

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