

■ DECOLONIAL STUDIES PROGRAM

Integrating Multiliteracies into Philippine Education for a More Informed Society¹

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The digital age, marked by the dominance of social media and technological advancements like immersive and interactive artificial intelligence (AI) tools, necessitates a paradigm shift in education. Equipping students with multiliteracies, including visual, digital, and critical skills, extends beyond traditional reading and writing proficiency without abandoning these foundational elements. This approach fosters adaptable communication in the digital landscape. It empowers students to analyze, create, and communicate effectively in a self-directed learning environment through diverse forms like images, videos, and online content. It acknowledges the spectrum of texts we encounter, each requiring specific literacy skills for comprehension: written texts, visual texts (photos, infographics), digital texts (websites, social media),

multimedia texts (combined elements), and oral texts (speeches, podcasts).

In researching materials and reading texts, integrating multiliteracies provides individuals with a broader competency set critical for navigating the complexities of the interconnected world through effective communication and critical thinking (Talusan 2023, 354–65). This approach, when applied in digital media use, facilitates responsible online behavior, combats misinformation, and fosters meaningful participation in the globalized world.

However, the Philippines faces challenges in achieving this goal. Consistent low reading comprehension scores in the Program for International Student Assessment

1 This policy brief is derived from an online workshop conducted by the Decolonial Studies Program (DSP) of the UP Center for Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS) on October 2-3 and 12-13, 2023, with the theme “Identities and Digital Humanities.” This policy brief also cites discussions from the forthcoming discussion paper titled “Philippine Identities and Digital Humanities in the Age of Machines, Social Media, and Artificial Intelligence.”

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(PISA) highlight existing literacy issues (Servallos 2023). Moreover, the prevalence of short-form content on platforms like TikTok, coupled with diminishing attention spans, poses additional hurdles in fostering effective learning habits. Furthermore, resource limitations like inadequate classrooms, outdated learning materials, and disproportionate teacher-student ratios persist, particularly in the Philippines, a nation in the Global South. Despite these challenges, this policy brief recommends focusing on the following key literacies:

1. Visual Literacy

Equip students to analyze and interpret visual information (images, infographics, videos) effectively, understand conveyed messages, identify potential biases, and appreciate the power of visual communication.

2. Digital Literacy

Foster responsible technology use by cultivating a deep understanding of digital (and multimedia) tools. This will enable students to navigate online environments critically, evaluate information credibility effectively, and protect themselves from digital threats.

3. Critical Literacy

Develop critical thinking skills, empowering students to analyze information rigorously,

identify biases, and construct well-informed arguments. This equips them to become discerning information consumers and active participants in a democratic society.

While acknowledging and addressing existing challenges, integrating essential literacies — including those fostered by digital humanities — into the Philippine education system can empower future generations to thrive in an increasingly complex and digital world. Digital humanities emerges as a transformative field, bridging the gap between technology and the humanities. It blends computational methods with disciplines like literature, history, and cultural studies. By supplying students and researchers with innovative tools and methodologies, digital humanities offers an engaging and multifaceted learning experience. This includes analyzing historical data, visualizing cultural artifacts, and utilizing interactive experiences.

More importantly, digital humanities extends beyond its theoretical advantages. It actively promotes multiliteracy development, which encompasses the ability to navigate and critically analyze information from various sources, including print, digital, and visual formats. By familiarizing students with these diverse tools and approaches, digital humanities equips them with a richer skillset for tackling complex challenges in the 21st century. This, in turn, cultivates responsible online citizenship and meaningful participation in the globalized world.

Philippine Case Studies of Integrating Digital Humanities

Understanding Filipino Reading Habits

Researchers increasingly turn to digital humanities tools to gain deeper insights into complex phenomena. Analyzing Filipino reading behaviors is no exception. To go beyond traditional data-bound metrics, this approach utilizes collaborative mapping and narrative research methods.

Projects like the one proposed by Gino Estella of the National Book Development Board (NBDB) during the October 2-3 and 12-13, 2023 workshop conducted by the Decolonial Studies Program (DSP) of the UP Center for

Integrative and Development Studies (UP CIDS), seek to map individual reading behaviors, capturing where and when people read, as well as their emotional reactions, recommendations, and encounters with authors. These qualitative elements provide a richer understanding of reading habits than traditional quantitative data.

Estella's proposed project harnesses the power of various digital tools: HTML provides a framework for building interactive maps and capturing user input; Google Maps allows researchers to visualize and analyze spatial data about reading locations; and ArcGIS offers

advanced functionalities for geographic data analysis and visualization.

Qualitative analysis software like AntConc and Voyant can help analyze the emotional language used in user-generated narratives and comments about reading experiences.

The comprehensive data can then be used to design and implement targeted reading campaigns that are more likely to resonate with specific communities and demographics. This ensures a data-driven approach to promoting reading culture, maximizing the effectiveness of tailored campaigns and resources, and nurturing a more vibrant reading culture in the Philippines.

Addressing Philippine Sociopolitical Issues

The “Pusila Project” (Pusila), initiated by the Institute for Nationalist Studies (INS) at the University of the Philippines Diliman in 2019, exemplifies the power of digital humanities in addressing complex sociopolitical issues like extrajudicial killings (EJKs) and human rights violations (HRVs) in the Philippines. This project goes beyond the simple reporting of the number of killings. By employing collaborative mapping and narrative research, Pusila is able to:

- Amplify marginalized voices from grassroots communities often overlooked in traditional media coverage;
- Expose potential biases in media reporting by scrutinizing narratives and language used by different news outlets through tools like AntConc and Voyant;
- Uncover the stories of victims and their families through narrative analysis, encouraging more profound understanding and empathy;
- Inform advocacy efforts for justice and accountability by providing data-driven evidence of HRVs, highlighting regional patterns of violations, and shedding light on potential biases.

By maximizing digital humanities tools, the Pusila Project breaks down complex issues for broader understanding. Specific digital tools employed in Pusila facilitate a layman’s approach to analyzing these issues and their impact:

■ **Textual analysis**

Tools like AntConc and Voyant analyze news articles and social media posts, revealing public discourse, evolving public sentiment, and potential reporting biases through hashtag and sentiment analysis.

■ **Comparative analysis**

AntConc allows for scrutinizing reporting styles and biases across various news outlets and sources, including comparisons between military and far-left groups.

■ **Interactive mapping**

ArcGIS and Aladin facilitate the creation of interactive maps showcasing the distribution and patterns of HRVs across the Philippines, providing insights into spatial dynamics and regional trends.

■ **Network analysis**

Interactive maps can be further analyzed through network analysis to identify clusters and central nodes, potentially highlighting areas requiring immediate attention.

With Pusila, researchers can delve deeper into complex phenomena by combining digital media and digital humanities. This synergy provides data-driven insights and amplifies the voices of those often unheard, paving the way for informed advocacy efforts and a path toward justice and accountability. The insights gained through these digital tools can inform advocacy efforts by providing data-driven evidence of human rights violations and contribute to holding perpetrators accountable by highlighting potential biases and shedding light on regional patterns of violations.

Preserving Philippine Regional Languages

Preserving Philippine regional languages can be achieved through a multi-faceted approach involving government initiatives, educational policies, and community engagement. This includes enacting laws to officially recognize and support indigenous languages, allocating funds for language revitalization programs, integrating regional languages into school curricula, offering language classes, providing teacher training in indigenous languages, organizing language workshops

and cultural events within communities, and promoting daily use of regional languages.

The "Cambio Chavacano" project, as presented by Floraima O. Pantaleta of Ateneo de Zamboanga Mindanao Institute during the "Identities and Digital Humanities" workshop, proposes utilizing several methods that can be considered within the realm of digital humanities:

■ Corpus Creation and Analysis

- *Digitization/encoding of Chavacano dictionary entries*: transforming physical dictionaries into digital formats suitable for analysis;
- *Text file creation for analysis*: formatting the digitized text into a standard format suitable for computational tools;
- *Frequency analysis*: identifying the most frequent words in the dictionaries to understand the core vocabulary and its evolution;
- *Outlier identification*: Detecting new words appearing across different dictionary editions, potentially reflecting vocabulary growth or changes.

■ Visualization and Timelines

- *Frequency maps*: creating visual representations of word frequency across different dictionaries;
- *Timelines*: plotting the appearance of words across different dictionary editions to understand the historical evolution of vocabulary.

■ Comparative Analysis

- *Cross-referencing with other corpora*: comparing Chavacano vocabulary with other language corpora to identify potential influences or shared words;
- *Etymology exploration*: investigating the origin and historical development of specific words within Chavacano;

- *Comparison with Tausug dictionaries*: analyzing similarities and differences in vocabulary between Chavacano and another local language, potentially revealing historical interactions or linguistic influences.

■ Additional Considerations

- *Digitizing historical texts*: exploring the possibility of digitizing "La Antorcha," a Chavacano newspaper that operated in Zamboanga City, Philippines in the 1930s, which could be considered a valuable historical resource for studying Chavacano evolution;
- *Semantic mapping*: using tools like GapMaps to visualize semantic relationships between words and concepts within Chavacano;
- *Linguistic mapping projects*: drawing inspiration from existing projects that map linguistic variations and interactions across different geographical areas.

While these methods primarily focus on analyzing existing data, they contribute to the digital preservation and understanding of Chavacano by:

- Creating a digital archive of Chavacano vocabulary through digitizing dictionaries and other textual resources ensures their accessibility and long-term preservation;
- Providing insights into historical language evolution by analyzing vocabulary changes and frequency shifts across different periods that reveal patterns of influence, adaptation, and language development;
- Facilitating cross-linguistic comparisons by comparing Chavacano with other languages can shed light on its unique characteristics, historical connections, and potential areas of influence; and
- Informing language policy discussions through collating the insights gained from these digital humanities methods that contribute to informed decision-making regarding language preservation and promotion strategies for Chavacano.

By utilizing these digital humanities tools, the “Cambio Chavacano” project serves as a valuable model for preserving and understanding not only Chavacano but also a multitude of other Philippine languages facing similar challenges. The methods employed, such as corpus creation, analysis, visualization, and comparison, can be adapted and applied to diverse languages with the following potential implications:

1. Enhanced understanding of language evolution

Analyzing dictionary entries and other textual resources across different periods can offer insights into the historical development, influences, and adaptation patterns of various Philippine languages. This knowledge is crucial for understanding their unique characteristics and trajectories.

2. Identification of endangered languages

These methods can help identify languages with declining usage by analyzing vocabulary usage and frequency, potentially signaling a need for focused preservation efforts.

3. Development of language learning resources

Digitizing and analyzing existing language materials can inform the creation of practical learning resources, such as dictionaries, online courses, and mobile applications, to promote and revitalize endangered languages.

4. Data-driven policymaking

The insights gained from digital humanities analysis can inform the development of data-driven language policies that are tailored to the specific needs and challenges faced by different Philippine languages. This can lead to more effective and targeted preservation and promotion strategies.

5. Collaboration and knowledge sharing

By sharing methodologies and findings across different projects and languages, researchers and communities can foster collaboration and knowledge exchange, leading to a more comprehensive understanding of the linguistic landscape in the Philippines and facilitating collective efforts toward safeguarding its rich linguistic diversity.

Limitations and Challenges of Digital Humanities-Derived Data

While the Philippine case studies (i.e., NBDB’s Estella’s proposed project, the Pusila Project, and the Cambio Chavacano project) showcase the potential of digital humanities, they also highlight some limitations and challenges associated with the data derived from these methods. The following are some of these limitations and challenges:

1. Data Bias and Representativeness

- **Selection Bias.** Digital humanities projects often rely on user-generated data or online content, which can be susceptible to selection bias. Individuals with access to technology and internet connectivity are more likely to participate, thereby potentially exclude marginalized communities or those without digital literacy. This can lead to data that is not representative of the entire population of interest.

- **Algorithmic Bias.** Digital tools and platforms used for data analysis can introduce biases through their algorithms or design choices. For instance, sentiment analysis tools might misinterpret sarcasm or cultural nuances, leading to inaccurate representations of public discourse.

2. Data Quality and Verification

- **Accuracy of Digitized Data.** User-generated data or online content may contain inaccuracies, misinformation, or personal opinions. Verifying the accuracy of this data can be challenging, especially in large datasets or when dealing with sensitive topics like human rights violations. Moreover, the accuracy of data obtained from digitized sources like historical documents or dictionaries depends heavily on the quality of the digitization process. Errors

during transcription or encoding can introduce inconsistencies and inaccuracies in the data.

- **Incomplete Data.** Digital humanities methods may not capture all aspects of the phenomenon under the study. For instance, focusing solely on online narratives in Pusila might miss crucial insights from offline communities or individuals who do not use social media.
- **Verifying User-generated Data.** Data collected through online platforms like social media or collaborative mapping tools might be unreliable due to the possibility of fake accounts, fabricated information, or biased opinions.

3. Limited Scope and Depth

- **Focus on Quantitative Data.** Digital humanities tools often prioritize the analysis of large datasets and quantitative information. This can potentially overlook the richness and complexity of qualitative data, such as individual experiences, emotions, and cultural context.
- **Limited Capture of Historical Data.** While some projects utilize historical materials, digital humanities methods often focus on analyzing readily available digital data. This may limit understanding of long-term trends and historical developments.

4. Ethical Considerations

- **Privacy and Consent.** Collecting and analyzing user data raises questions about informed consent and data privacy. Researchers need to ensure they have appropriate mechanisms in place to protect user privacy, obtain informed consent when necessary, and secure the storage of sensitive information.

- **Misrepresentation and Cultural Sensitivity.** Researchers need to take into account ethical considerations when analyzing cultural expressions or narratives through digital tools. Avoiding potential misinterpretations or disrespectful representations of diverse cultural practices is crucial. Misguided interpretation or representation of cultural data can result in mischaracterizations and may offend specific communities. Therefore, researchers should remain attuned to cultural nuances and prioritize respectful collaboration with the relevant communities.

5. Sustainability and Long-Term Access

- **Data Archiving and Preservation.** Ensuring the long-term sustainability and accessibility of digital humanities data is crucial. This requires robust data archiving strategies and considerations for future technological changes affecting data formats or accessibility. Preserving and ensuring long-term access to digital data requires ongoing maintenance of digital infrastructure and storage solutions. This can be a significant challenge, especially for resource-constrained institutions.
- **Evolving Technologies and Formats.** The rapid evolution of digital technologies and data formats can render older data inaccessible or incompatible with newer tools, potentially hindering future research and analysis.
- **Capacity Building and Training.** Utilizing digital humanities tools effectively requires ongoing training and capacity-building for researchers and communities. This ensures responsible application of these methods and encourages stakeholder collaboration in data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

Policy Recommendations for Integrating Digital Humanities into Philippine Education

The proposed policy recommendations aim to empower Filipino learners, educators, and the general public with the skills and knowledge in engaging with the digital world. These proposed policy recommendations also promote responsible citizenship, cultural understanding, and lifelong learning by integrating digital humanities into the national education curriculum.

1. Education and Curriculum Integration

- Develop age-appropriate learning modules across various subject areas incorporating digital humanities methodologies and tools.
- Integrate digital humanities projects into existing curriculum frameworks, aligning with learning objectives and national standards.
- Encourage using open educational resources specific to the Philippine context for broader accessibility and adaptation.

2. Teacher Training and Support

- Provide training programs for educators on effectively integrating digital humanities tools and methodologies into their teaching practices.
- Enhance educators' digital literacy skills and keep them abreast of emerging technologies and resources by implementing professional development initiatives. Recognize the valuable skills teachers acquire through online learning platforms and acknowledge emerging forms of certification, such as open badges or MOOC certificates, as integral components of their formal qualifications and ongoing professional development (Minea-Pic 2020, 33). Foster collaboration between educators, researchers, and digital humanities practitioners to share best practices and co-create learning materials.

3. Digital Preservation and Technology Integration

- Invest in technology infrastructure upgrades and reliable internet access in schools to ensure equitable access to digital learning resources.
- Develop and curate a national repository of digital humanities resources specific to the Philippine context, including digitized historical materials, cultural artifacts, and online learning modules.
- Provide technical support and training for educators and students on using digital tools and maintaining responsible online practices.

4. Community Engagement, Collaboration, and Empowerment

- Partner with cultural institutions, libraries, and local communities to co-create digital humanities projects that preserve and promote Philippine heritage.
- Encourage community participation in data collection, curation, and storytelling initiatives related to local history and culture.
- Foster intergenerational dialogue and knowledge exchange through collaborative digital humanities projects.

5. Research and Evaluation

- Conduct research to assess the effectiveness of integrating digital humanities into Philippine education, evaluating its impact on student learning outcomes and overall educational goals.
- Encourage collaborations between educators and researchers to develop innovative digital humanities projects that address specific educational needs and challenges.
- Regularly monitor and evaluate the policy framework, adapting it to address emerging trends and advancements in the field of digital humanities.

6. Legislative Support and Recognition

Legislative support and recognition are vital to establish partnerships with, and among, private and state universities and colleges; research institutions (e.g., Institute of Philippine Culture, NBDB, etc.); and cultural organizations (e.g., Cultural Center of the Philippines, Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino, National Archives of the Philippines, National Historical Commission of the Philippines, and National Library of the Philippines) to develop digital humanities resources and learning materials.

- **Department of Education (DepEd) Policy.** DepEd, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, should develop a comprehensive policy framework outlining the integration of digital humanities into the national curriculum. This policy should specify learning objectives,

instructional strategies, and assessment methods appropriate for different educational levels.

- **Integration into K to 12 Curriculum.** Digital humanities methodologies and tools should be strategically integrated into existing subjects across the K to 12 curriculum, not only with Media and Information Literacy (MIL). This ensures alignment with learning objectives and age-appropriateness.
- **Higher Education Commission (CHED) Guidelines.** CHED, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, should establish guidelines for incorporating digital humanities into teacher education programs and relevant higher education curricula. This ensures that future educators possess the necessary skills and knowledge to integrate digital humanities effectively into their teaching practice.

Integrating Multiliteracies into Philippine Education Towards Achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Integrating multiliteracies, such as visual, digital, and critical skills, into Philippine education offers a powerful tool for achieving several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) outlined by the United Nations (2024).

SDG 4 - Quality Education

■ **Enhanced Learning**

Multiliteracies enable a deeper understanding of complex subjects and encourage engagement through interactive learning experiences.

■ **Critical Thinking**

Analyzing information critically empowers students to discern fact from fiction, identify biases, and make informed decisions.

■ **Teacher training**

Equipping educators with these skills allows them to create effective learning environments and adapt to evolving digital landscapes.

SDG 8 - Decent Work and Economic Growth

■ **Employability**

Graduates with multiliteracy skills are well-equipped for jobs in the digital economy, requiring effective communication and information analysis.

■ **Entrepreneurship**

These skills can empower individuals to create and manage online businesses, fostering economic opportunities and innovation.

SDG 9 - Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure

■ **Technological Advancement**

Multiliterate individuals can contribute to technological advancements by understanding, utilizing, and critically evaluating emerging technologies.

■ Responsible Innovation

Critical thinking skills encourage responsible innovation, considering the ethical and societal implications of technological advancements, such as the integration of artificial intelligence (AI). This is particularly important when examining the potential negative impacts of AI, particularly its ability to mimic AI art and other intellectual property products with such precision. This blurring of originality creates challenges in protecting intellectual property and ensuring fair compensation for the rightful owners.

SDG 10 - Reduced Inequalities

■ Inclusive Education

Multiliteracy strategies enhance educational inclusivity by accommodating different learning preferences and providing a range of communication avenues, aligning with the overarching commitment of the UN 2030 Agenda

for Sustainable Development and its SDGs to ensure that no one is marginalized or left behind.

■ Bridging the Digital Divide

Integrating these skills fosters digital literacy, empowering individuals to access essential information and participate actively in the digital world.

SDG 17 - Partnerships for the Goals

■ Collaboration

Multiliteracy skills promote effective communication and collaboration across diverse individuals, communities, and stakeholders, nurturing essential partnerships crucial for realizing SDGs.

■ Sustainable Solutions

Critical thinking equips individuals to analyze complex global challenges like illiteracy and develop sustainable solutions.

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THE PROGRAM

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