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## **Multilingual English Language Teaching in the Philippines**

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### **Abstract**

In English language teaching (ELT) circles, the English used in the Philippines is traditionally labelled as ESL. However, that label, including the attitudes and practices that it brings, does not accurately capture the complex language situation in the country. In this article, we argue that English education in the Philippines does not account for the multilingual and linguistically diverse context of use in the country. We argue that monolingual perspectives and approaches in ELT continue to dominate the field. Issues of language variation, the existence of varieties of English, and the reality of translanguaging practices are not addressed. From curriculum design, assessment policies and practices, to classroom teaching, ELT in the Philippines persists in taking a one-size-fits-all approach that only privileges so-called 'native speaker' norms. English in the Philippines is best characterized as Englishes. Although an educated Philippine variety of English exists (Bautista, 2008), it cannot be concluded that this is the variety of widespread use across the archipelago. The language situation of the Philippines is complex, thereby eluding labels and categories that only betray a native-speakerism perspective and a monolingual bias. We argue that Englishes in the Philippines are more appropriately approached as ENL, ESL, and EFL. The implications of these categorizations on ELT in the country are discussed in this paper.

### **Keywords**

Philippine English, Philippine Englishes, monolingual bias, multilingual pedagogical paradigm, English language teaching

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## 1 Introduction

The Philippines has known diversity since time immemorial. Home to 7,641 islands (Barile, 2017), the country houses more than 180 languages (Simons & Fennig, 2018) and is considered as one of the most linguistically diverse nations in the world. This diversity is so strong that within a half-hour ride to another town in any part of the Philippines, one will most likely arrive at a different language-speaking region.

Indeed, the Philippines, with its diverse ethnolinguistic people, possesses a wealth of indigenous languages which, although related, also bring with them extensive differences (McFarland, 2008). This diversity, according to McFarland, is a result of certain natural processes that can broadly relate to “language change, the divergence between linguistic communities caused by lack of communication, and the converse convergence caused by a high rate of communication between communities” (McFarland, 2004, p. 59). As a country that has been colonized by different countries, the various languages in the Philippines have been shaped Spanish and English. Between the two, it is the latter that has not only transplanted firmly into Philippine soil but has also shaped the different aspects of Filipino life, such as education, law, business, economics, international trade, governance, and many other important domains of Philippine society.

One glaring truth that escapes traditional discourses about English in the Philippines is that the language, despite its origins as a colonial imposition, has become a Philippine language. In fact, one of the most quoted statements about English in the Philippines is that “We have our own way of feeling, by which we then use this language called English. So that English is ours. We have colonized it too” (Abad, 1997, p. 170). True enough, this ownership of English is evident in the existence of the Philippine variety of English, also called ‘standard Philippine English,’ which carries its own distinct features (Bautista, 2000, 2008). However, English in the Philippines has also evolved into Englishes (i.e., not only one variety, but many) even if most studies on English in the Philippines have focused on the mainstream variety, that is ‘standard Philippine English.’ Martin (2020) states:

*Many studies have approached English as a single language, and few have foregrounded the complex sociolinguistic context of use of English in the Philippines. Most studies are set in Manila, the political and economic center of the country, and involve the educated class, who are believed to speak the “standard” variety. The message that is not communicated is that there are a variety of Englishes that multilingual Filipinos constantly use in a variety of situations and contexts. (p. 491)*

For a nation that is multilingual and linguistically diverse, how then should language policies be shaped to reflect multicultural realities? A review of the language policies in the country reveals a moot point. In 1987, the Bilingual Education Policy (BEP) was instituted to hopefully raise the quality of education in the country by using English and Filipino, the official languages of the Philippines, as the primary media of instruction (Brigham & Castillo, 1999; Department of Education, Culture and Sports, 1987). The Philippine Constitution stipulates that for purposes of communication and instruction, Filipino is one of the official languages of the country, together with English. Languages in other regions serve as auxiliary media of instruction. However, the exclusive use of these two languages only marginalized those who neither speak Filipino nor English. In 2009, the Mother Tongue Based-Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) policy was institutionalized, effectively replacing the BEP. MTB-MLE prescribes the use of the mother tongue as the primary medium of instruction and as subject from kindergarten to third grade (Department of Education, 2012a). However, as with all policies, a number of concerns and issues have been raised. Some of these include concerns about teacher training, availability and access to teaching and instructional materials in the mother tongue, and assessment, employability, amongst others. An equally challenging concern with regard to the MTB-MLE policy is the reality of having students in one classroom with different mother tongues. The MTB-MLE policy is truly a paradigm shift for all the

stakeholders of education. However, the success of the policy remains highly dependent on a change in attitudes towards languages in the Philippines (Mahboob & Cruz, 2013).

Although the Philippines has come a long way in attempting inclusivity in its language policy in the last decade, the policy continues to subscribe to fixed notions of language, which goes against its true nature as constantly evolving. A centralized policy from the Department of Education (also known as DepEd) assumes a uniform framework in approaching languages, leaving much confusion among teachers and other stakeholders. For example, the policies are blind to the reality of students belonging to exclusive private schools in Manila, whose population mostly belongs to the upper crust of society, who use English as their first language. In these cases, English language teaching (ELT) cannot be approached from the perspective of ESL, which the Philippine context is traditionally seen as.

The categories of ENL, ESL, and EFL that English language professionals have used for decades provide a convenient way of approaching the teaching and learning of English. However, the labels are also understood differently, with some scholars fusing two categories as one, while others approaching the labels as fixed. Rautionaho, Deshors, and Meriläinen (2018) approach the ENL-ESL-EFL concepts as a continuum, rather than as a strict categorization. Deshors's corpus-based study (2014) explores a unified approach to ESL and EFL. Nayar (1997, p. 10), in investigating the history of the labels ESL and EFL, notes "a great deal of fuzziness... and denotative overlap between the two ... making the terminological distinctions unclear, impractical, ineffective or, worse still, in some cases inauspicious and irrelevant." His investigation suggests strengthening the denotation of ESL to point only to postcolonial contexts where the "goal (is) acculturation and assimilation into the (native-) English-speaking society" (Nayar, 1997, p. 29). This argument, in a sense, follows the Kachruvian Three Circles Model, which assigns the ENL category to inner-circle countries, ESL to outer-circle countries, and EFL to expanding-circle countries. (Kachru, 2005)

The ENL-ESL-EFL labels and by extension, the Three Circles Model, as pointed out by Bruthiaux (2003), focus on differentiating nation-states according to historical and geographical conditions rather than on sociolinguistic realities, thus failing to recognize variations within locales. Beyond inaccuracies in applications of the ENL-ESL-EFL labels, a deeper concern in ELT is that the categorizations tend to promote the monolingual bias, defined by Barratt (2018) as "the viewpoint that takes the prototypical human as having only one language." Mahboob (2014, p. 1) further underscores the pointlessness of this bias by stating that "Monolingual English speaking countries are a myth." Even more pointless is the belief that the so-called non-native speakers of English, such as the Filipinos, cannot have English as one of their mother tongues. In addition, the ESL categorization, as currently applied in Philippine ELT policies and practices, takes a native-speakerism perspective, described by Holliday (2015, p. 11) as "a disbelief in the cultural contribution of teachers who have been labelled 'non-native speakers'." In other words, only native speakers, as so-called 'owners' of English, are seen to have a legitimate status as English language teachers. The term 'native-speakerism' comes from Holliday (2006) who defines it as "an ideology that upholds the idea that so-called native speakers are the best models and teachers of English because they represent a 'Western culture' from which spring the ideals both of English and of the methodology for teaching it" (p. 1). By insisting that the ELT landscape of the Philippines is ESL, the reality of multilingualism and linguistic diversity in the country is ignored, thus pushing marginalized learners (those whose conditions are best described as EFL) further into the periphery. We see this happening in curriculum design decisions, testing and assessment policies and practices, as well as teaching approaches in the classroom.

## **2 The Ascendancy of Native Speaker Norms in Curriculum Design**

Despite the multilingual and linguistically diverse reality of the Philippines, curricular policies and decisions continue to favor native speaker norms when it comes to curriculum design and implementation

with its restrictive and short-sighted directives to English language teaching. Curricular decisions in English language education persist in rejecting the realities of English language variation in the Philippines by favoring native speaker norms. This is very much evident in the rigid syllabus and unclear assumptions to the teaching and learning of English as reflected in the K-12 English language curriculum that English teachers are expected to implement (Canilao, 2020).

Admittedly, the Kinder-Grade 12 English language curriculum guide is a detailed plan that provides the rationale, goal, topics about the subject and the curriculum across grade levels. In its guiding principles, the curriculum reveals that the Department of Education (DepEd) acknowledges the reality of multilingualism and multiculturalism in the Philippines, as follows:

*All languages are interrelated and interdependent. Facility in the first language (L1) strengthens and supports the learning of other languages (L2). Acquisition of sets of skills and implicit metalinguistic knowledge in one language (common underlying proficiency or CUP) provides the base for the development of both the first language (L1) and the second language (L2).* (Department of Education, 2016, p. 3).

It even goes as far as acknowledging the existence of non-standard forms of language as seen in the succeeding section.

*Language learning involves recognizing, accepting, valuing and building on students' existing language competence, including the use of non-standard forms of the language, and extending the range of language available to students.* (Department of Education, 2016, p. 3).

Nevertheless, a further interrogation of the document reveals a misalignment between the stated principles on the one hand and the performance standards and outcomes of the English language curriculum on the other. In a study conducted by Barot (2018), which evaluated the language curriculum alongside twenty-first century learning skills, such as digital-age literacies, inventive thinking, effective communication, and high productivity, there is “a lack of concrete requirements that will demonstrate how children can actually make use of their skills outside the classroom” (Canilao, 2020). In line with this, despite the curriculum being anchored on the communicative competence paradigm of Canale and Swain (1980), there is no elaboration into the specifics of the students' sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competence that should be enhanced. The curriculum remains biased towards concerns for correct grammar and accuracy in what is believed to be ‘standard’ English. One illustration of this in the Barot study is the case of Grade 3 students who were assessed on their grammatical awareness on the basis of whether they were able to “read, speak and write correctly and express themselves ‘in oral and written forms, using the correct grammatical structure of English’” (Department of Education, 2016, p. 15). In high school, the same situation can be observed. In one grade 7 performance standard for English:

*The learner transfers learning by: showing appreciation for the literature of the past; comprehending texts using appropriate reading styles; participating in conversations using appropriate context-dependent expressions; producing English sounds correctly and using the prosodic features of speech effectively in various situations; and observing correct subject-verb agreement* (Department of Education, 2016, p. 151).

A closer look at the series of lessons where the above performance standard is seen reveals that there is no emphasis on variations in terms of context, purpose and audience. Most of the topics are about prescriptive rules, such as “use subject-verb agreement, use phrases, clauses, and sentences appropriately and meaningfully, use the active and passive voice meaningfully in varied contexts (Department of Education, 2016, p. 151). Barot argues that this approach does not ensure that children can actually ‘understand that the meaning of any form of communication depends on context, purpose and audience’ (2016, p. 6). As it is, the students simply regurgitate the prescriptive grammar rules they learn in the classroom. Apart from this, Barot adds that the definition of ‘Standard English’ is not provided and that the curriculum does not take into account that standards change according to the

‘context, purpose and audience’ (2016, p. 6). As it stands, although some degree of ‘standard’ is needed in education to ensure common ground, policy making bodies should be wary of the limitations that standards carry because by itself, a given standard is an unstable category and lends itself to privileging one form of English over another.

Given these restrictive directives from the DepEd, it is clear why schools do not seem to devote space in their respective curricula to the topic of language variation. We then see the dangers that come with a centralized policy that does not seem to account for the complex sociolinguistic conditions of the country. A curriculum with unclear definitions, assumptions, and incohesive alignment is what schools all over the Philippines have to contend with. As a result, school administrators and teachers are left to interpret the curriculum according to how they see fit. Because the central policy-making bodies are at a loss, it is no surprise that schools, as implementing bodies, seem equally lost as well. The DepEd, where school and education policies come from, should make the necessary efforts and adjustments in their directives. There is a need to make policies, teacher trainings, materials development more pronounced and favorable towards language varieties so that school officials are better able to see local languages as a natural part of the teaching and learning process, and that these local languages, including non-standard forms of English, are not hindrances but resources.

These same realities are also revealed in a curriculum study conducted by Espino (2019) in a private school in Metro Manila. In this study, it was found that language varieties were not given attention in the curriculum. One of the most compelling reasons for this is that the school’s curriculum was modeled after an international American curriculum. Because of this, the topics, the learning materials, teacher training, and even the standards and benchmarks all adhered to native-speakerism perspectives. The curricular decisions then that the teachers made, starting from the choice of texts to use, and even the delivery of the lessons, favor native speaker norms.

A survey of the topics in the school’s curriculum from the same study reveals that there is little attention given to the study of multiculturalism (Espino, 2019). The bulk of the curriculum was allocated to the teaching of strategies, either in reading or writing, which all followed native speaker norms. This is clearly reflected in the program’s standards and benchmarks, (Espino, 2019) the excerpts of which are found below:

1. *Reading*: Determines key ideas and important details, and uses them to make logical inferences and sound analysis
2. *Writing*: Writes routinely over an extended time frame and a shorter time frame for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences
3. *Speaking and Listening*: Presents knowledge and ideas in an effective manner through a variety of media, demonstrating appropriate speech and command of formal English
4. *Language*: Demonstrates command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing

There is a lot to be said about these standards. For example, similar to the DepEd’s curriculum guide, the schools’ curriculum does not specify what standard of English is used, although one may safely assume that it is a Standard American variety, as inferred by the following curriculum overview.

The backbone of our literacy program is the workshop for reading and writing. Workshop teaching was developed by The Teachers College Reading and Writing Project (TCRWP) of Columbia University in New York City. This research-backed teaching method is literature-based, so children work with high-quality children’s literature and not textbooks.

That Standard American English is the model of choice of Filipino teachers of English is reported in Martin’s (2020) discussion of four myths about English that beset ELT in the Philippines. In addition, the Philippines stands out among its neighbors in ASEAN as the only country whose post-colonial English variety is derived from its American parent (Schneider, 2007).

Admittedly, learning about the conventions of standard English is important; however, the issue remains that there are no extensive opportunities for Filipino students to be made aware of other English language varieties, when in fact, the topic of the evolving nature of language must be included in the curriculum. Strengthening the students' sociolinguistic competence will provide them a more holistic language education where there is an acknowledgement and acceptance of the legitimacy of language varieties in the Philippines and elsewhere. Canilao (2020) calls for the integration of World Englishes principles into Philippine curricula in order to help students excel locally and internationally. English language learning is simplistically approached in the school's curriculum as a cognitive process detached from the sociocultural realities of the students and their immediate communities. In speaking and listening lessons for example, performance standards expect students to present their ideas using formal English despite the differences in context, purpose, and audience. A survey of the curriculum also reveals that topics are too grammar focused without giving students opportunities to practice their skills to a variety of audiences of different sociocultural, socioeconomic, and sociopolitical backgrounds.

The same is true for writing standards which expect students to write for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences. Such writing standards would have been the perfect opportunity for learners to enhance their sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic competences. However, a survey of the school's curriculum in the study of Espino (2019) reveals that many of the concepts presented to learners do not do much to train or enhance their ability to communicate with people from varied cultural backgrounds. Because of this, there are a lot of missed opportunities for students to negotiate meaning and identity, invariably stunting the development of communication and comprehension skills. Moreover, by adopting an English language curriculum that sees and treats the process of language learning as mechanical and routinary, the school only promotes a homogeneous approach to the process. In turn, the school, through its curriculum design, propagates linguistic uniformity and counters the principles of linguistic diversity, which is the natural state of things in the Philippines.

Given these realities of a restrictive education system in the Philippines, from the point of view of curriculum development, labelling English language education as ESL can be misleading and at the same time restrictive. There are far too many diverse socio-cultural realities in the Philippines that homogenizing the curriculum into strictly ESL approaches defeats the purpose of learning English in a multicultural setting, where arguably, a lot of opportunities to enhance the students' other language competences exist. After all, language teaching and learning should not just be about mastery of grammatical structures, but an opportunity to go into cultural studies, among others. As argued by Barratt, "language lessons should incorporate cultural lessons; as cultural activities and comparisons are common practice in language teaching" (Barratt, 2018, p. 5). The problem too with simplistically labelling English language education in the Philippines as ESL in its official curriculum guide, where the Philippines is traditionally seen, is that each educational context in one region is so unique that treating language learning as homogenous cannot fully address the needs of the learners in various contexts. More often than not, English is not simply a second language for these students. For example, for students from private schools who come from affluent families, English is the first language. In some cases, English is not simply seen as the learner's second language, but the third language. Therefore, a curriculum anchored on ESL would be limiting. Because of this, ELT in the Philippines cannot be simply approached from the perspective that "acquisition of sets of skills and implicit metalinguistic knowledge in one language provides the base for the development of both the first language and the second language" (Department of Education, 2016, p. 3) since the situation is far more complex, involving the contact of several Philippine languages in almost all situations. It is therefore imperative that in the case of curriculum design and development in the Philippines, we look beyond the traditional labels used to describe English language teaching where traditionally the teaching of learning in English is seen as a process mediated by two. By insisting on labels, policy making bodies, school administrators, and teachers inevitably fall into the trap of employing teaching strategies and assessment practices that only promote the monolingual bias, when in fact, "language teaching should not aim at anything as unrealistic

as native-like competence, but rather strive to produce proficient language users who are able to utilize all the languages they know” (Illman and Pietila, 2018, p. 239).

### 3 Monolingual Perspectives in Classroom-Based Testing and Assessment

Aside from curriculum design, another important aspect of ELT in the Philippines is assessment. Despite the country being multilingual and linguistically diverse, assessment policies and practices persist in promoting monolingual bias and native-speakerism perspectives (Gonzales, 2019; Santiago, 2020; Tupas & Tabiola, 2017).

Developments in the language testing and assessment field have shown that classroom-based assessment may be manifestations of the social ideologies that govern an institution (McNamara & Roever, 2006). McNamara (2001) argues that assessment practices in schools which determine what to be assessed, and the procedures for assessment, may be at odds with the needs of the learners and teachers. Thus, there is a need for the practice of ethical responsibility among test developers or language tester designers. This calls for English language teachers, school administrators, external publishing institutions, and national and local government units to be mindful of the power of tests to impact on the lives of test takers — the learners.

In the Philippines, the DepEd is the executive department of the government that regulates and directs testing and assessment practices in basic education. With the implementation of curricular reforms through the Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013, or the K-12 Law, new testing and assessment guidelines were promulgated. DepEd Order No. 73, Series 2012, also known as “Guidelines on the assessment and rating of learning outcomes under the K to 12 basic education curriculum” was implemented in Academic Year (AY) 2012-2013. It offered a new grading system called ‘KPUP’ (Knowledge, Process, Understanding, and Performances). What is noteworthy in this new grading system is the importance it places on performance-based tasks. This is a departure from what Plata (2007, 2010) observed in the previous 2002 Basic Education Curriculum (BEC) and Revised Basic Education Curriculum (RBEC) in 2010. In previous systems, testing and assessment tools focused mostly on discrete-point type of language testing and relied mostly on multiple-choice format tests. Another significant inclusion in the D.O. No. 73, s. 2012 is the provision on the “Use of Multiple Measures” (p. 2). Again, this highlights the transition of the grading system from a monolithic view of assessment practices to a more diversified approach to assessment. However, Plata (2015) notes that the KPUP grading system may not meet its goal of assessing the content standards because of its “complicated nature of assessment and rating systems” (p. 4).

A second grading system, referred to as “Policy guidelines on classroom assessment for the K to 12 basic education programs,” was issued by DepEd on April 1, 2015 (D.O. No. 8, s. 2015). This updated system that was implemented in AY 2015-2016 offered fewer components, namely written work, performance task, and quarterly assessment. According to Plata (2016), this new set of guidelines has a number of shortcomings and must therefore be carefully reviewed because of overlaps between the three components, as well as the lack of policy guides for calibrating test scores. Since learners’ grades would be mostly based on performance tasks, Plata argues that there was a need for a common objective system for evaluating these subjective-type tests.

Classroom-based assessment, or assessments internal to the classroom and managed by the teacher, is regarded only as an off-shoot of large-scale assessment. Turner (2012) argues that classroom-based assessment was taken for granted in the language testing literature, and the assumption was that testing types or tasks and the interpretation, use, or reporting of results executed in large-scale assessment may also be applied to classroom assessment. Fortunately, scholars have begun to consider the importance and uniqueness of the learning and teaching context in classroom-based assessment (Leung, 2004; Rea-

Dickins, 2001). As an example, Saefurrohman and Balinas (2016) investigate classroom assessment practices of English language teachers in Indonesia and the Philippines. Their findings support the claim that the language policies of an institution have a significant impact on the assessment practices of teachers in the classroom. In particular, this study finds that both Philippine and Indonesian contexts use assessment for learning, or the continuous way of checks and balances in the teaching and assessment processes, as the main goal of assessment.

In a study conducted by Gonzales (2019) during the implementation of the new DepEd policy guidelines, he finds that bureaucratic demands (assessment policies from national and school levels) do not match the needs of language teachers and learners. Adapting Messick's (1989) value implications in his validity matrix, and Bernstein's pedagogic device (Motteram, 2016), Gonzales (2019) examines the assessment practices of six English language teachers from two private schools in Laguna, Philippines. Data were gathered from classroom observations, a collection of testing materials, and audio-taped interviews with the English language teachers. The results reveal that "in planning and implementing classroom-based assessment, [English language teachers] are confronted by competing demands"(p. 92). The study also uncovers that in the assessment practices, the monolingual bias, which asserts that the only language permitted in the institution is English (Phillipson, 1992), persists. In particular, both schools in Gonzales' (2019) study subscribe to the same language policy and test construction practice. An English-only policy is strictly implemented in both schools in the study. This is despite DepEd's educational policy of MTB-MLE, which requires all schools in the country to use the learners' mother tongues as the medium of instruction in the first few years of basic education. In the study of Gonzales, learners are dissuaded from code-switching, or using both English and Filipino in the classroom.

Aside from the presence of a language policy that prohibits non-English languages, both schools in the study heavily rely on a test format that does not contribute positively to teaching and learning English. The multiple-choice format (MCF) is the most common type of test used to assess the English proficiency of learners in both schools. In fact, one school purchased a databank system to ensure that all summative tests would be designed in MCF. One possible reason why these schools opt for MCF tests, despite national policies that encourage performance-based assessment, is that most national board examinations, college entrance tests, and job application tests in the Philippines used the MCF as default testing format. However, Martin (2018) points out that MCF presents several weaknesses in successfully assessing the English language proficiency of the Filipino learners. First, MCF test results offer mere snippets of the possible knowledge of language structures. In other words, MCF test items do not provide the evidence needed to make informed predictions about success in English language use. Another weakness of MCF language tests is that these promote a monolingual view of language because it fails to consider that language is dynamic and diverse, consequently evolving into varieties (Martin, 2018). A number of scholars who advocate the social dimension of language testing have also called for ethical considerations in test design, as well as a rejection of a monolingual view to testing in multilingual societies (Spolsky, 1995; McNamara & Ryan, 2011; Shohamy, 2001).

Gonzales (2019) also finds that teachers prioritize the needs of the learners despite the bureaucratic demands on their assessment practices. The teachers in the study report about their awareness of dominant policies and practices but reject these when found to be in conflict with their students' needs and circumstances. Rea-Dickins (2001) sees this as presenting conflicting identities in classroom assessment, that is, the misalignment between bureaucratic and pedagogic expectations in assessment. For McNamara (2001), these instances demonstrate what he calls the "competing demands which do not necessarily match the needs of the learners and teachers"(p. 340). The findings of the study affirm what McNamara sees as teachers acting as agents in meeting the needs of the learners, despite the conflicting demands of school administrators and other stakeholders. Thus, there appears to be traces of an emerging paradigm, an alternative paradigm for testing (Shohamy, 2001) that challenges the monolingual bias and native-speakerism perspectives.

To illustrate, the English-only Policy in one school (Gonzales, 2019) is purposefully set aside by the teachers in their classroom-based assessment practices because they see the need to accommodate the learners' use of their non-English linguistic resources, such as Tagalog, to generate ideas in formative assessment tasks. This practice challenges the myth that English and Filipino are in opposition (Martin, 2020). Another practice found is the tweaking of the answer keys (such as giving points to “linguistic features” of Philippine English) in the language tests that are made by the subject coordinators. Allowances are made for the teachers and learners to negotiate valid and meaningful answers to test questions, in consideration of the varieties of English in the country. This practice presents a challenge to the myth that English is not owned by Filipino users of the language (Martin 2020).

Thus, in classroom-based testing and assessment practices where language variation is recognized, there are limitations in using the ENL-ESL-EFL categories. By their very nature, categories tend to be fixed, making it impossible to capture all sorts of complex conditions. In the case of English language testing and assessment in the Philippines, in which the American variety remains the target language, the monolingual bias is promoted. Santiago (2020), whose study includes an investigation of assessment practices of 13 Filipino language teachers in Central Luzon, finds that the teachers are unaware of their monolingual bias in their Oral Communication classes. In a study of a US-funded educational development aid project, Tupas and Tabiola (2017) uncover that the monolingual bias is more explicit. The aid project, called Job Enabling English Proficiency (JEEP), aims to improve English language proficiency in Mindanao by supplying state colleges and universities with teaching and testing materials from the United States. Tupas and Tabiola (2017) argue that these materials only expose the native-speakerism agenda of the aid project. Indeed, we need policies and practices that are multilingual in perspective (Barratt, 2018). The call of Yamuna Kachru (1994) “to reevaluate the dominant paradigms in SLA research from a bi/multilingual perspective” (p. 796) rings true for the current ELT situation in the Philippines.

#### **4 Privileging Native Speaker Varieties in Teaching Practices**

As in the case of curriculum design, as well as testing and assessment policies and practices, ELT practices in the Philippines persist in the promotion of the monolingual bias. There is an abundance of evidence that supports the claim that pedagogical practices in English education persist in rejecting the realities of language variation.

One of these is the existence of English-only policies in schools, despite the government mandate for mother tongues to be used in literacy practices in basic education. In 2013, three 8th-grade children were expelled from school because they spoke Ilokano on campus (Lagasca, 2013). This caused an uproar among education stakeholders who successfully pushed to penalize the school head for what they believed to be a clear violation of linguistic rights. Despite this, in schools, you will find evidence of the promotion of English monolingual norms. An example lies in what Astillero (2017) describes in a school in the Bicol region, where school signages reflected a strong preference for English even if the language practices of the community are not dominantly in English. Tupas and Tabiola (2017) report about English-only teaching practices in schools in Mindanao that have been receiving US aid funding in a project known as “Job Enabling English Proficiency” or JEEP. In Cebu province, local officials call for the implementation of English-only policy in all schools, in clear violation of an existing law that mandates the use of mother tongues in Grades 1 to 3 of elementary schooling (Israel 2019).

Inside the classroom, teachers mostly rely on native speaker norms in teaching English. The teaching of speech communication, for example, was reported as having a “long-standing love affair with English.” (Navera, 2018, p. 163) This love affair with English was directed at developing students who were “marketable English-speaking commodities” (p. 175). In his analysis of textbooks used in teaching

speech communication, Navera finds that the technicist framework of these materials presented speech communication like some form of investment in labor. Specifically, this means that speech communication is directed to produce labor for the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry of the country. Navera writes: “As the analysis of textbooks shows us, Filipino patterns of speech that deviate from the General American English (GAE) standard are considered “incorrect” and a “problem.” (2018, p. 173)

From school policies to instructional materials to teachers’ beliefs and practices, Santiago’s (2020) study about English native-speakerism in the Oral Communication subject echoes the findings of Navera (2018). Santiago (2020) makes the following interesting conclusions from her study of 13 teachers of Oral Communication in selected senior high schools.

1. Because the teachers in the study see their students’ English as “crooked, broken, and ungrammatical” (p. 212), their teaching is directed more at the learning of language forms that observe native speaker norms.
2. The teachers in the study assume that they are using the American English variety, and that this is the variety that their students must learn.
3. Native-speakerism is evident in language policies implemented in Oral Communication classes, even if the teachers themselves are unaware of the bias for native speaker norms in these policies.
4. Pedagogical innovations employed by the teachers are directed more at students’ linguistic and emotional needs, rather than to reject or resist native-speakerism.
5. Despite the presence of native-speakerism in instructional materials, the teachers are the final arbiters in promoting or rejecting natives-speakerism.

The policies and practices that subscribe to English native-speakerism also reveal a monolingual mindset that privileges native speaker varieties over others. For Canilao, such mindset corresponds to the “existence and persistence of unequal Englishes” (2020, p. 4) In her study of how ELT was conducted in a 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade and a 4<sup>th</sup> Grade English class, she found that the students had uneven access to English, with children of privileged families having an academic advantage. Teaching practices were also found to be biased for native speaker norms. Finally, Canilao stresses that the education policy itself, which was the K to 12 English subject curriculum, favored native speaker norms. Canilao believes that these multilingual classrooms have become “birthing grounds for linguistic insecurity which teachers and learners may experience if they are expected to mirror native speakers.” (p. 6)

Why do these teaching practices persist? Martin (2020) argues that English education in the Philippines is characterized by four myths about the English language, namely, (1) American English is the only correct English; (2) English is the only cure to all economic ailments; (3) English and Filipino are languages in opposition; and (4) English is the only language of knowledge. Instead of these myths, teachers of English must address four realities in their teaching practice; these are: (1) Philippine English is a legitimate variety of English; (2) Proficiency in English does not guarantee economic success; (3) English, Filipino, and other Philippine languages may coexist in the education domain; and (4) English is not the only language of knowledge. According to Martin, “without an acceptance of these realities about English in the Philippines, teaching and learning the language will only push Filipino students further to the margins, preventing them from embracing the English language as their own.” (p. 294)

However, while teaching practices continue to reject language variation and subscribe to native speakerism, while the myths about English in the Philippines persist, there are indications that not all English teachers subscribe to these myths. In a study conducted by Perfecto (2020) of Grade 3 and Grade 4 English teachers, it was found that the teachers “utilised different translanguaging strategies ... (and) ... various linguistic and semiotic resources of both students and teachers as mediating tools to allow more efficient teaching and learning and more active participation from students in the language learning activities.” (p. 1) Translanguaging, or the practice of multilinguals to smoothly switch between languages, is nothing new in the Philippines where languages come into contact every day. As Perfecto

has noted, translanguaging strategies were utilized even if the default language of the teachers, as well as their expectations of their students' use of language in the classroom was English. Perfecto reports the following about the teachers' primary goal:

*"...the teachers' primary goal was to conduct their classes mostly in English, but would resort to the different strategies when they sensed that students were struggling to understand the lesson or participate in the discussion."* (p. 6)

This observation is consistent with what Paez (2018) found in her observation of the classes of a 6<sup>th</sup> grade English teacher in a public school in Manila. According to Paez, the teacher taught English using the Filipino language as a "strategy for empowerment in a periphery ELT setting." (Paez 2018, p 119) This teacher who Paez observed declared: "If I do not teach English in Filipino, what I teach will have no meaning. No one will understand me." (p. 119) The same teacher gave the following reasons for using Filipino in teaching English (Paez 2018, p. 131):

1. To adjust teaching method to students' needs;
2. To encourage students to participate in class;
3. To be more efficient in explaining ideas and teaching skills;
4. To fulfill the requirements of the prescribed syllabus;
5. To assert the relevance of English to students' daily lives and future goals.

Similarly, De Los Reyes (2018) reports on the use of mother tongues in English language teaching in Mindanao. Delos Reyes presents language use in the classroom, not as code-switching, but as a translanguaging practice. In a mix of Chabacano (a Spanish creole), Tagalog, Tausug, and Cebuano Bisaya, teachers of English in the study practiced translanguaging to present lessons, conduct class discussions, elicit and affirm student responses, manage student behavior, and express emotions. These practices were deliberate efforts to reject the monolingual bias. The students in the study also practiced translanguaging as they participated in classroom discussions and accomplished assessment tasks. According to Delos Reyes, "the students could communicate better through translanguaging, suggesting that it is their inherent and natural way of communicating as multilinguals." (p. 12)

## 5 Conclusion

In this paper, we have demonstrated that English education in the Philippines does not account for the multilingual and linguistically diverse context of use in the country. Issues of language variation, the existence of varieties of English, and the reality of translanguaging practices are not addressed. From curriculum development, to testing and assessment policies and practices, to classroom teaching, ELT in the Philippines persists in taking a one-size-fits-all approach that only promotes the monolingual bias and privileges native speaker norms.

In the area of curriculum development, characterizing English language teaching and learning as ESL does not fully capture the complex and diverse nature of the learners inside the classroom. By insisting on a curriculum that is ESL in approach, English language teaching and learning becomes a homogenized experience for the learners, thus promoting the monolingual bias and favoring native speaker norms. In the area of classroom-based testing and assessment, the same observation may be made. The English-only Policy continues to be enforced in some schools, consequently marginalizing learners who depend on their local languages to help them bridge to a second or a foreign language. Moreover, the dependence upon the rigid multiple-choice format in testing language abilities only rejects the social dimension of English language learning, forcing learners into a one-size fits all paradigm. Thus, by labelling ELT in the Philippines as ESL, the more nuanced dynamics of teaching and learning English in a multilingual context are disregarded. Lastly, in the area of teaching practices, it is also apparent that the monolingual

bias dominates. Although there are efforts that are directed towards resisting this bias among Filipino teachers of English, acceptance of the Philippine variety of English as legitimate remains far from reality.

Given all these realities about teaching English in the Philippines, we see how the ESL label cannot be neatly applied. The ELT landscape in the country is, as Kirkpatrick describes, “linguistically extremely diverse,” (2021, p. 163) thereby eluding fixed categorizations. What the Philippines needs is an approach to ELT that is mindful of multilingualism and linguistic diversity in the country, but at the same time, connects the country to the international community. In the same light, Kirkpatrick makes a case for English as an Asian language (2021, p. 189) by presenting five principles of the Lingua Franca Approach, namely:

1. The native speaker of English is not the linguistic target. Mutual intelligibility is the goal.
2. The native speaker’s culture is not the cultural target. Intercultural competence in relevant cultures is the goal.
3. Local multilinguals who are suitably trained provide the most appropriate English language teachers.
4. Lingua franca environments provide excellent learning environments for lingua franca speakers.
5. Assessment must be relevant to the ASEAN/Asian context.

Furthermore, it is important that teachers rightfully own the language they speak; for the Filipinos, this language includes English. At the time when English was transplanted to Philippine soil, it began to bear its own unique forms. This means that what is traditionally seen as deviations from the native-speaker norms should in fact be seen as features of a Philippine variety of English. Barratt argues that “the English speakers and learners around the world will help decide the future of English with both the words that they borrow from others and the words they create” (Barratt, 2019, p. 6). Part of recalibrating traditional mindsets about ELT is rejecting the binary categories of native/non-native speakers which only assigns inferiority to non-native teachers of English. This hierarchical view must continually be challenged because the non-native category, which aligns with the labels ESL and EFL, does not translate to lower competence in the language and lower quality of teaching. Thus, multilingual teachers of English should regard themselves, not as non-native speakers, not as ESL practitioners, but as multilingual teachers who carry a wealth of expertise in curriculum development, assessment practices, and teaching strategies that are appropriate to multilingual learners in multilingual contexts.

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