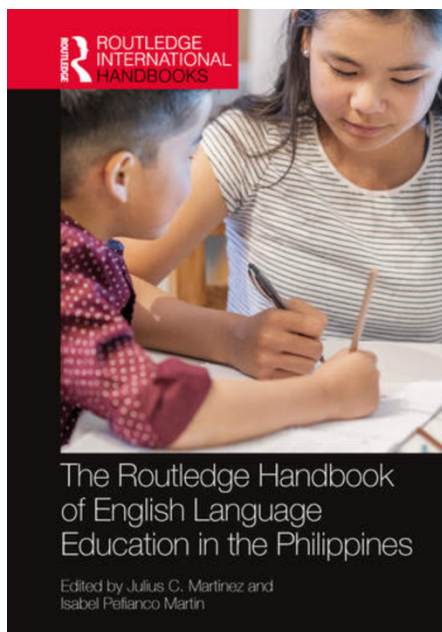


Book Review



The Routledge Handbook of English Language Education in the Philippines. Edited By Julius C. Martinez, Isabel Pefianco Martin. ISBN 9781032621364. 408 Pages 25 B/W Illustrations. Published September 30, 2025 by Routledge

Reviewer: **Rizza Ramos-Consad**
Division of Language and Letters,
Bukidnon State University, Philippines.

Suggested Citation:

Ramos-Consad, R. (2025). [Review of the book *The Routledge Handbook of English Language Education in the Philippines* by Julius Martinez& Isabel Pefianco Martin(eds)] *Langkit Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 15(1), 108-119. <https://doi.org/10.62071/6ktbw121>

The Routledge Handbook of English Language Education in the Philippines published by Routledge in 2025 as edited by Julius C. Martinez and Isabel Pefianco Martin comprehensively presents scholarly empirical studies on English language education in the Philippines. This volume brings together contributions from various researchers and scholars who explored language policy, curriculum development, pedagogy, multilingualism, teacher education, sociolinguistics, and emerging issues in English language teaching and learning in the country.

The handbook is organized according to six parts: *getting to grips with English and Multilingualism*; *traversing the political economy of English language*; *grasping the marginalized and vulnerable*; *confronting oppressive ideologies*; *reclaiming linguistic diversity*; and, *intervening through criticality*.

The studies in the first part, *getting to grips with English and Multilingualism*, of the handbook scrutinize the relationship between English language education and multilingualism in the country; they share a common conclusion that the teaching of English should not undermine the learners' first languages.

Torio and Candelaria present two lessons for future reform concerning the use of the Mother Tongue in education: networks or the stakeholders in charge of the implementation should be far-reaching enough to influence institutions that are resistant to change; and, the framing of multilingual education should avoid oppositional perspectives in the responding to the hegemonic position of English.

Using historical and ethnographic data, Arzadon and Abaya describe the teachers' experiences in the Cordilleras in the implementation of the MTB-MLE through the "*Padasen tako*" (let's give it a try) a pragmatic response to a policy, making sense of things as they unfold or are experienced; they show that faculty and parents viewed (an indigenous language) *Kankanaey* materials as threatening English proficiency. They recommend, however, that teaching of English should complement the learners' languages.

Balgoa's study of public school teachers in Mindanao reveals that the use of one primary medium of communication

in the classroom is not feasible because of the linguistic diversity of the learners. She recommends an additive approach to multilingualism that aim to develop learners' high proficiency in the first language alongside other languages. This values students' linguistic backgrounds and fosters more inclusive and innovative language teaching practices.

Lastly in this part, Beric advances four key ideas for rethinking English language teaching: first, emphasizing students' cultural models in learning English rather than the near native-speaker models and using the students' models on how they position authority, accommodation, and solidarity in the classroom to protect multilingual identities; second, suggesting that there are a number of teaching strategies that the English teachers can use to strategically support identity, and authenticity instead of employing imported methods like communicative language teaching; third, promoting a more egalitarian classroom where students are guided to learn independently allowing for translanguaging; and lastly, challenging colonial mentality that local languages hinder English language learning, but valuing them as tools.

In the part 2 of the book, *traversing the political economy of English language*, the studies critically examine the political economy of the English language teaching (ELT), specifically how neoliberal ideology shapes language attitudes, policies, and practices. The chapters also describe how web-based discourse and educational contexts reveal a prevailing view that English is related to employability and global competitiveness, reducing local languages as less valuable.

Imperial, through the lived experiences of Filipino teachers of English, examines the ideology of non-nativeness in the

teaching of English, perpetuating colonial, racial, and epistemic inequalities by reinforcing native-speaker norms, resulting to the marginalization of these teachers when their first language interferes in the use of English. He recommends the development of metalinguistic and language practices, hoping to eliminate the native and non-native divide in order to address and reduce social inequalities.

Bae navigates the Korean learners' experiences and discovers that their pursuit of English proficiency is shaped by neoliberal pressures such as economic and social mobility. She describes three central themes emerging from these experiences; North America as the *endgame* of happiness; fear and anxieties in South Korea; and self-assurance in the Philippines.

Through deductive and inductive processes including the examination of the *National Roadmap for Global Competitiveness in Communication Skills*, Martinez finds out that teachers and learners' desire towards English, influenced by prestige and potential of social mobility, is constructed by colonial and neoliberal ideologies. He recommends a call for decolonization of these aspirations for more informed and ethical choices about learning English.

The chapters in part III, *grasping the marginalized and vulnerable*, collectively scrutinize the experiences of marginalized and vulnerable groups in English language education that suffer social inequalities through poverty, displacement, disability, discrimination, and linguistic exclusion. Palisuc, in a case study, traces the life of an internally displaced person in learning English whose experiences are shaped by interconnected barriers from the home, school, and other factors from the social environment. She recommends a

more inclusive, multilingual, community-supported approach to ELT to reduce these difficulties.

Tadaya finds out that teachers who speak with non-dominant languages and are influenced by colonial legacies and linguistic racism invested significant resources to learn “native-like” English. One recommendation she proposes is rethinking language investment by recognizing the influence of colonial legacies and the role of affective capital in sustaining learners despite discrimination.

Go and Lim discover that in ELT materials, women are often portrayed with domestic responsibilities; men are granted a more diverse range of professions; and, there is invisibility of LGBTQ+ identities in these materials. They suggest that investments shall be afforded to create gender-responsive materials.

Cabutihan and Bustos trace the deaf education in the Philippines and examine the experiences of Deaf teachers and students in the teaching and learning of English. They find that there are barriers related to language access, educational policies, and culturally appropriate materials in the learning of English. They propose that the Deaf community to be engaged in research and educational policy and planning.

Part IV, *confronting oppressive ideologies*, delves into the oppressive language ideologies that influence the Philippines’ English language education and how these ideologies are perpetrated into homes and schools. The chapters in this part investigate how these ideologies permeate different contexts.

Alvarez-Tosalem, Basmayor, Martinez, Monserate, and Servano cover case studies in four major areas (Luzon, the

National Capital region, Visayas, and Mindanao) in the Philippines, revealing that many Filipino parents reinforce English-only practices at home with the belief that it will improve the socio-economic status of their children at the expense of the children's local languages and multilingual development.

Santiago studies the practices, policies, and strategies of senior high school teachers teaching oral communication; she finds out that teachers employ teaching innovations that defy native speakerism. She further encourages teachers to be critically aware if there are manifestations that promote this ideology in their pedagogy.

Through an anthology, Saqueton analyzes the public school teachers' language ideologies, discovering that colonial and native-speakers ideologies continue to shape their perceptions and experiences. Meanwhile, Vallente discovers that pre-service English teachers often align their language teacher identity with monolingual and native-speaker-oriented practices due to their imagined future identities as successful teachers and the top-down power dynamics imposed by cooperating teachers, which limit critical reflection and agency. The author recommends an adoption of multilingual, locally responsive, and reflective approaches against these prevailing ideologies.

Astillero gathers school signages that incorporate English and other languages. She encourages the advocacy for a more equitable and multilingual schoolscape that values local languages to preserve cultural identities and heritage.

Finally in this part, Gonzales who examines English language testing, finds out that the privileging of English marginalizes regional languages and insufficiently reflects multilingual realities of Filipino learners. The author recommends adopting assessment practices that are inclusive and equitable.

In Part V, *reclaiming linguistic diversity* underscores the importance of reclaiming linguistic diversity by advocating pedagogical innovations that embrace multilingualism, multimodality, and Global Englishes in English language education.

Bernardo describes the design of a Global Englishes-grounded course where students are treated as co-creators of an instructional blueprint, considering their perspectives and affording them with empowerment and ownership of the curriculum.

Canilao's study reveals that teachers through their graduate studies developed more inclusive teaching practices when exposed to concepts of World Englishes, Philippines Englishes, multilingualism, and translanguaging. With this finding, the author recommends strengthening teacher professional development and raising awareness of these concepts to improve curriculum.

Meniado uncovers that Filipino English teachers generally acknowledge the importance of multiliteracies and use of multimodal resources in teaching, and many lack a clear understanding on how to apply multiliteracies in teaching. With this key discovery, it is suggested the continuous reskilling and upskilling of teachers are required.

Describing how teachers use multimodal modes in teaching writing skills, Magno shows how students express their ideas more effectively by integrating written, visual, and other semiotic resources. She proposes that teachers consider rethinking traditional writing instruction by integrating multimodal approaches, guiding students to effectively use linguistic and non-linguistic elements to create meaningful texts.

Paterno discusses that English teachers use translanguaging as a “spontaneous and on-the-spot remediation strategy” in a monolingual English-dominant classroom, recognizing the learners’ local languages in improving comprehension. Since the use of translanguaging is more of a spontaneous response, the author recommends a deliberate translanguaging practice through teacher training, reflective practice, and stronger institutional support.

In the last part, *intervening through criticality* brings together studies that advocate for critical approaches to English language teaching, encouraging educators to examine dominant ideologies and develop inclusive and transformative strategies for teaching and learning.

Manicio explores pre-service English teachers’ (PSTs) sensemaking through reflective essays on course content on multiliteracies pedagogy and its application to Philippine English language education; the study finds out that sensemaking allows the PSTs context-sensitive and adaptive pedagogical perspectives. The author recommends dialogic learning spaces where students can cultivate critical reflection on language teaching.

Through in-depth interviews and document analysis, Caday discovers that English teachers demonstrate critical and socially responsive practices, but their beliefs and teaching are still influenced by colonial and dominant ideologies that associate English with economic advancement and favor American English norms. The author calls for these teachers to be positioned as transformative intellectuals who further critical citizenship and awareness; and recommends broader institutional and governmental support through educational reforms, progressive language policies, and the protection of academic freedom.

Perfecto's study reveals that the global pandemic paved the opportunity for English teachers to localize instruction considering students' circumstances, cultures, and available resources, thereby promoting more inclusive and responsive language learning. She proposes for the continued adoption of context-responsive pedagogies that empower students to use language for social action, even in times of crisis.

Examining English Self-Learning Modules for junior high school students, Matias uncovers that these materials challenge dominant colonial practices through the inclusion of the literary texts that tackle social issues like exploitation of the working class and racism. They encourage reflection and social engagement rather than passive language learning. The author suggests the strengthening of critical literacy in the curricula and instructional materials through capacity building for IM developers and teachers and the continued decolonization of the English language education.

A closer examination of the volume reveals several strengths that distinguish it as a timely, empirically grounded,

and contextually relevant contribution to the discourse on English language education in the Philippines. *The Routledge Handbook of English Language Education* showcases a collection of research studies that describe the English language education in the Philippines and shed light on the *raison d'être* of its current state, by tracing its histories, influences, present practices, and the possible futures based on the recommendations.

The volume presents studies employing diverse methodologies such as case studies, ethnography, document analysis, and in-depth interviews, establishing the credibility and practicality of the book, thus a strong grounding on empirical research.

Another significant strength of the volume is its centrality on the educational, linguistic, cultural, and sociopolitical realities of the Philippines. The country's multilingual and multicultural contexts provide the very backdrop of the studies, revealing gaps and opportunities for improvement of curriculum makers and educators. The handbook provides a specific lens as to how the language education in the country is to be viewed and scrutinized for enhancement, considering its unique educational landscape.

Several chapters challenge native-speakerism, monolingualism, English-only policies (a learner does not have to be punished for speaking their mother tongue), and colonial assumptions about language learning, encouraging educators to rethink English language teaching through more equitable and socially responsive lenses. Competencies in the English language may provide opportunities for economic advantages, but how it is taught in the classroom should not undermine the linguistic repertoire and the cultural background of the learners.

This handbook presents that there are alternative frameworks such as translanguaging and Global Englishes that are valuable pedagogical resources in the learning of the target language while recognizing the importance of local languages.

There are also studies that delve on internally displaced learners, Deaf students and teachers, Indigenous languages, LGBTQ+ representation, and gender issues. The inclusion of underrepresented groups broaden the discussions by foregrounding equity and inclusion.

With the recent curricular reforms and language policy changes in the country, the handbook provides recommendations that are essential for the educational decision-making. Starting from 2002 Basic Education Curriculum, followed by Revised Basic Education, Secondary Education Curriculum in 2010, K to 12 Curriculum in 2013, Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) in 2020, and the recent 2023 Matatag curriculum, the Philippine basic education system has gone through these curricular reforms with the intent to prioritize essential learning and reduce curriculum overload. Most notably, there is the discontinuation of the Mother Tongue as medium of instruction from kindergarten to the first three years in elementary education (RA 12027).

As a whole, *The Routledge Handbook of English Language Education in the Philippines* is a significant resource that contains diverse perspectives of language education in the country. It is highly recommended as a valuable reference for understanding contemporary issues and decision-making. This handbook is more than a collection of studies because it calls for a rethinking of how English teaching is taught, that is, valuing the Filipino

learners' linguistic identities while equipping them for a globalized world.