

# 'Something New and Strange': The Philippine-American War and the Making of Filipino English

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## Abstract

This paper is premised on the assumption that contemporary Englishes of the world have a far longer historical ideological trajectory dating back to how they were imposed on subjugated peoples as part of the broader projects of colonialism. What we understand now as postcolonial Englishes can be traced back to their colonial formation as undesirable racialized varieties which prevent their speakers from becoming full-fledged modern and Westernized people, qualified to march with the rest of the enlightened world towards modernization and freedom. Thus, this paper constructs a history of ideas about Filipino English which through the years has served as a differentiating and identity-making marker for use of English among some Filipinos by drawing on texts, both official and anecdotal, produced during and after the Philippine-American War period. More specifically, it is a critical historiography of Filipino English since it does not merely map the development of ideas about it but, more importantly, in doing so it seeks to visibilize fundamental relations of colonial power grounded in the imbrication of language and race or raciolinguistic politics (Rosa & Flores, 2017).

After leaving the Philippines where he taught English and journalism for three years, an American teacher (Scott, 1949) narrated some of his experiences teaching the language to Filipinos:

An American woman in the Philippines who had guests for dinner said to her Filipino waiter, a high-school junior: "Put the pickles here on the plate, Ramon." The boy stood a moment, perplexed. Presently he asked, holding the pickle jar politely, "Ma'am, shall I fut da fickles on da flate?" An *f* passes as legal tender for a *p* anywhere in the Philippines (p. 327).

This is true. Among Filipinos, /p/ and /f/ are interchangeable because most Philippine languages do not have the sound /f/ in their phonetic system. In fact, many Filipinos find it hard to distinguish between the two sounds when using them with English words, and those who have indeed "mixed up" the two sounds have historically been mocked and pathologized as in need of "correction". In a more recent study by Guinto (2014), [b], [p], and [f] have been interchangeably used to approximate the English sound /v/. Such linguistic characteristics in the English speech of Filipinos have taken on ideological and social meanings, but most important of all these linguistic characteristics and the – negative – values associated with them have converged around the idea of Filipino English or, in recent years, Philippine English. As one 'Yankee' English teacher observed of her classrooms around the same time Scott (1949) above taught

in the Philippines, "Most of the students really would like to be able to speak and write good English, *American rather than Filipino English* [emphasis added]" (Wakeham, 1951, p. 88). The specific configurations of use of sounds produced by Filipinos have become part of a linguistic repertoire of Filipino English which is "something new and strange" (Wakeham, 1951, p. 88), and which has consequently been a source of different forms of linguistic prejudice against different groups of Filipinos such as foreign domestic workers (Lorente, 2017), call center workers (Salonga, 2010), teachers (Perez-Amurao & Sunanta, 2020) and immigrants in foreign countries (De Castro et al., 2008).

At the tail end of formal American colonial rule in the Philippines, American teachers Scott and Wakeham above articulated their views of Filipino English as not just different but undesirable, and these views were constituted of a racially-induced body of knowledge about Filipinos and their English which circulated throughout the American colonial period. Such body of knowledge, we will soon find out below, began to take place during the Philippine-American War of 1899-1901. During this period, amidst the brutalities of war and the armed resistance against the new foreign aggressors, American soldiers were tasked to build classrooms and teach English in their assigned localities, colonial policies (at the heart of which was how to 'educate' Filipinos through the English language) were put in place, and the first batch of American teachers – popularly known as the

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'Thomasites', named after the ship they took to travel to the Philippines – arrived as part of the grand project of 'benevolent assimilation'.

Scott and Wakeham, therefore, espoused ideas about Filipinos and their English which could be traced back to these important generators of social transformation in the Philippines, especially because both the educational policies (which mandated the use of English as the sole medium of instruction) and the Thomasites (who went on not just to teach in most parts of the country but also to take on leadership roles in the provinces) combined to operationalize universal or free basic education for Filipino pupils. In ethnographic accounts of Thomasite teachers in the early years of American colonial rule, Fee (1910, 1913), who taught during the first decade of American colonial rule, demonstrated how the teachers themselves were not simply engaged in benevolent neutral work of teaching but were, in fact, doing so while also forming their own colonial impressions of Filipinos and of their own pupils specifically. In short, they were part of what has been referred to as the American "pedagogic invasion" (Roma-Sianturi, 2009, p. 5) of the Philippines. There have been attempts to understand the role of the Thomasites and the education system they were made to lead (see Racelis & Ick, 2001) through a postcolonial lens which resists a totalizing view of colonialism. However, such framing inadvertently de-emphasizes the enduring structures of colonialism which shape, if not dictate, how we live our lives (Pineda-Tinio, 2002, p. 581).

In this paper, I argue that ideas about so-called Englishes of the world, which have for at least four decades now been recuperated as instantiations of postcolonial resistance and agency, have a far longer historical ideological trajectory dating back to how they were imposed on subjugated peoples as part of the broader projects of colonialism. 'Scientific' descriptions of localized Englishes have correctly demonstrated the grammatical systematicity, and semantic and pragmatic legitimacy, of these Englishes, thus resulting in evidence-based arguments against the 'sacred cows' of the English teaching profession (Kachru, 1988), such as the superiority of Standard English and the native speaker. However, despite decades of raising awareness of and campaigning against harmful practices in the field, these sacred cows endure and continue to frame both popular discourses and language-in-education policies and practices (Kumaravadivelu, 2016; Tupas, 2003). This paper contends that the durability of such practices and ideologies is due to the fact that they remain embedded in the coloniality of today's global and local matrices of power.

Thus, this paper constructs a history of ideas about Filipino English which through the years has served as a differentiating and identity-making marker for use of English among some Filipinos by drawing upon what Rafael (1995) refers to as "a larger archive of colonial knowledge" (p. 644) from texts, both official and anecdotal, produced during and after the Philippine-American War period. More specifically, it is a critical historiography of Filipino English since it does not merely map the devel-

opment of ideas about it but, more importantly, in doing so it seeks to visibilize fundamental relations of colonial power grounded in the imbrication of language and race or raciolinguistic politics (Rosa & Flores, 2017).

In a sense, this paper engages in a critical conversation on work on the pluralization and localization of English around the world (see, for example, Thirusanku & Yunus, 2012, on Malaysian English; Sharma, 2012, on Indian English; Baumgardner, 1990, on Pakistani English), by aiming to incorporate a critical historiography of these sociolinguistic processes (read: of English becoming 'Englishes') in order to understand 'world Englishes' as colonial constructs which underpin their use and their study even today. The idea of a 'localised English' pre-dates the establishment of World Englishes, but this is rarely acknowledged formally in studies in this area even if the pluralization/localization/indigenization of English has been traditionally framed as acts of postcolonial resistance and creativity. By tearing down traditional (for example, citational) boundaries in the study of the Englishes of the world, we shall be able to trace historically the ideological constitution of these Englishes, thus hoping to understand more clearly why 'Philippine English', 'Malaysian English', and 'Indian English', to name a few, continue to take on indexicalities of coloniality.

The usual starting point of such work on the Philippines would be the influential Monroe educational survey of 1925. Substantial work has been done to unpack the political and ideological underpinnings of such important work which endorsed the use of English as medium of instruction, except in character development classes where the local 'dialects' would be used (Magno, 2010), and recommended ways to solve Filipinos' English language "handicap" (Monroe, 1925, p. 127). One of the survey's main theses was that the local languages interfered with the learning of English, thus English itself "created a kind of disability" (Rafael, 1994, p. 290). Rafael has detailed the survey's ideologized view of Filipinos' English as centrally concerned with the negative impact of local languages on the teaching and learning of English which "remained foreign and external to students, while the vernaculars refused to keep to their place" (p. 292).

To explicate my argument that 'Philippine English' now has a longer racialized historical trajectory than is conceived within the postcolonial paradigm of World Englishes (Kachru, 1988, 1996), I also go back to other texts such as official colonial documents, newspaper articles, teacher stories and academic publications of American scholars of language and education to trace the ideological configurations of current beliefs about it. This is also to contend that racialized and pathologized views of Filipino users of English were distributed across official and unofficial textual spaces – also in the everyday and not just in key or major policy texts. This means mapping the racial construction of Filipino English during the Philippine-American War of 1899-1901 – then already "one of the bitterest wars in history" (Blount, 1912, p. 295). If one views "racial construction" through the lens of colonialism, one would understand the racial construction of

Filipino English as the constitution of the notion of Filipinos' English as the colonized/racialized variety. It is this racialized mobilization of Filipino English that remains internalized both individually and collectively by Filipinos, as evidenced by the still dominant native speakerist ideologies in the country (Bernardo, 2017; Salonga, 2015). Such an ideological framing of Filipino English has survived the postcolonial transition of the Philippines such that despite 'scientific' approaches to the study of English in use, many scholars, education practitioners and the public in general, remain fundamentally uncommitted to liberatory and culturally appropriate practices in the use, teaching and learning of English.

This paper helps explain why 'Philippine English', which is endorsed by scholars and educators as an alternative standard for classroom teaching but which they also admit is resisted by institutions of power, remains much less valued than American Standard English (Bautista, 2000; Bernardo, 2017; Tupas, 2010). Language-in-education policies, English language education, and teacher training and education, must contend with historically formed racial underpinnings of beliefs about languages and language varieties. There has been much talk recently about decolonizing all aspects of our work – our theories, methods, curricula, classroom practices – but there is a need to critically account for the continuing link between past and present ideologies and practices and move away from the framing of language issues as either colonial or postcolonial, or towards either a structural/determinist or agentive/resistive orientation (Paterno, 2018). We must face head on – rather than deny – the coloniality of epistemologies and practices of our scholarship and pedagogy if we are to work towards transforming these forms and appropriations of knowledge in the first place.

### From Filipino English to Philippine English

One of the earliest 'scientific' attempts at systematizing World Englishes was undertaken by Filipino linguist Teodoro Llamzon (1969) on Filipino English. Filipino scholars, in fact, have been at the forefront of promoting the legitimacy and liberatory potential of English spoken and used by Filipinos (Bautista, 1982; Gonzalez, 1976; Gonzalez & Alberca, 1978), preceding the enthusiastic beginnings of sociolinguistic and postcolonial approaches to English as a multicultural and multivoiced language. Yet, despite these laudable efforts, the normative construction of what is now referred to as 'Philippine English' points to one consistent variable: it is the 'educated' variety of English in the Philippines. What represents English in the Philippines is one that is constructed as educated Philippine English (Berowa, 2024; Berowa & Regala-Flores, 2020; Regala-Flores, 2014).

Ironically, for five decades now scholars and education practitioners sensitized into the sociocultural nature of English language, learning and teaching, admit that school officials, teachers and students, have persistently refused endorsing this 'educated' variety in the classroom: it represents how Filipinos speak but it should not

be how Filipinos are taught how to speak because there is a standard of standards and that is American Standard English (Bautista, 2000). In other words, despite contestations over what it actually means, 'American Standard English' remains the ideal standard for teaching and learning, while 'educated' Philippine English remains sociolinguistically legitimate but devalued (Bautista, 2000; Berowa & Regala-Flores, 2020; Regala-Flores, 2014). What this also means is that 'Philippine English' is a racially undervalued or delegitimized variety because it is spoken by so-called non-native speakers of the language (Choe, 2016; Salonga, 2010, 2015). It mobilizes racial inequality, both locally through an internalized colonial inferiority complex among Filipinos where they mock or denigrate their own uses of English, and globally through transnational institutions of power which advance and benefit from enabling 'native speaker' Standard English. Such overlapping layers of socially- and racially-induced inequalities of Englishes and their speakers are traceable to configurations of ideology and power which produced the infrastructures of American colonialism in the Philippines in the first place.

### English and the Philippine-American War

One of the ideological strategies of colonialism was imperial forgetting (Jacobson, 1999) – the writing of the history of the colonized through the lens of the colonizers such that experiences of subjugation, suffering and resistance are erased from colonial memory through, for example, education. One of the concrete examples of historical erasure is the deletion of the Philippine-American War from 1899-1902 from the narrative of the 'introduction' of English and American colonial education in the country. "Hidden and untouched behind the single phrase, the U.S. 'taking' of the Philippines" (Jacobson, 1999, p. 118), are facts about English being first taught by "soldier-teachers" (Margold, 1995, p. 375) during the war who were tasked to build classrooms and teach English in towns while engaged in the war. In history books, including the works of language and education scholars and policy-makers, English 'entered' the Philippines at a time when 'friendly' US-Philippine relations began after the war. This discursive construction of English, education and American colonial rule for that matter, as having been 'introduced' to the country remains prevalent in current popular and even scholarly discourse on language and education. The Philippine-American War – "the first war of national liberation in Asia" (Diokno, 2002, p. 75) – was "a ferocious" (Margold, 1995, p. 375) and "brutal" (Jacobson, 1999, p. 119) war, with hundreds of thousands of Filipinos killed in the name of the civilizing mission of the United States. But for colonial discourse to serve the racist agenda of American rule in the Philippines, it had to engage in "the erasure of the Filipino dead" (Rafael, 1994, p. 265). This was the historical context of the 'introduction' of the English language, or more appropriately its imposition on the local population as a tool of subjugation, where "a feeling of hostility to Americans and American occupation was practically universal"

(Wilfley, 1904, p. 731). Such imperial amnesia as regards the historical context of the emergence of English as the most powerful language in the country has served to frame English as a desirable and modern language in language-in-education policies, popular discourses and academic scholarship. Thus, as "Americans liberated Philippines from the Spaniards", the imposition of English "seemed reasonable and logical" (Koo, 2008, p. 20).

Preceding the war, Filipinos had pockets of successful campaigns against the Spanish colonial government which ruled the country for 333 years (Rodao & Rodriguez, 2001). In fact, a Philippine revolutionary government was established in 1898, with a constitution of its own and a system of government, essentially declaring independence from Spain. However, the United States by virtue of its massively more powerful military might immediately acted to quell the advances of the independence movement in order to impose its first imperialistic rule in Asia. Thus, in order to trace the ideological continuities of concepts associated with English and education in the Philippines, we must start with – not after – the Philippine-American War. It was during this war when English and American colonial education were imposed and justified, for example through the instruction to the Second Philippine Commission of President William McKinley on April 7, 1900, which became "the basis of all our policies in dealing with the Filipinos" (Shuster, 1910, p. 67) in the immediate years after the war, as well as throughout the decades of direct American colonial rule and the ensuing 'postcolonial' period.

### English, race and 'benevolent assimilation'

On the surface level, the English language was imposed during the Philippine-American War on grounds that it was the language of modernization and enlightenment. On greater scrutiny, however, English was justified within the same logics of American colonialism: the ultimate objective of the occupation was "human freedom" (Smith, 1958). That is, Filipinos – a "jumble of savage tribes" (Roosevelt, 1900 as cited in Blount, 1912, p. 297) or "niggers" (Anderson, 1900, p. 292) – needed to be protected or freed from perpetual backwardness. They belonged to an inferior race, with 'dialects' which were the cause of disunity and discord among the different ethnolinguistic groups, as well as a culture which represented "forces which stand for the black chaos of savagery and barbarism" (Kramer, 2006, p. 1). In short, English was justified on racial grounds. We will refer to two intertwined presidential declarations or instructions during the war which would operationalize what Buglass (2021) refers to as "the continuity of racial preconceptions and administrative techniques - within the American imperial project" (p. 3), by focusing on how such instructions serve as the ideological matrix of the imposition of the English language. Buglass configures the transnational flow of imperialist ideologies, while in this section we map the discursive circulation of racialized ideologies emerging from and surrounding the two landmark declarations during the Philippine-American War

in order to provide a broader historical and ideological framework for the understanding of the politics of English in the Philippines.

First of all, the annexation of the Philippines, and the eventual war that ensued, was justified by then President McKinley through the Benevolent Assimilation proclamation signed on 21 December 1898 but released on 1 January 1899: "the mission of the United States is one of benevolent assimilation" (in Blount, 1912, p. 149). This meant placing the 'uncivilized' Filipinos under the 'protection' of the United States whose intentions were allegedly pure and benevolent: "we come not as invaders or conquerors, but as friends to protect the natives in their homes, in their employments, and in their personal and religious right" (148). In critiquing the policy, Diokno (2002) describes it as "colonialism with a heart" (75). It would, of course, be an extreme irony that the policy of benevolence "precipitated the war" (147). In fact, 'benevolent assimilation' was a ferocious assault on the subjugated people because despite aiming towards "the greatest good of the governed" (Blount, 1912, p. 150), the proclamation concluded with a rhetoric of force and authority: "there must be sedulously maintained the strong arm of authority, to repress disturbance and to overcome all obstacles to the bestowal of the blessings of good and stable government upon the people of the Philippine Islands under the free flag of the United States" (150). Indeed, this last statement from the proclamation legitimized the brutal war as a benevolent assimilation campaign to simultaneously civilize, discipline and subjugate the Filipino people.

In a sense the centrality of race in the mobilization of the colonial logics of power during the Philippine-American War makes the war unexceptional in the histories of imperial aggression around the world (Kramer, 2006). In fact, an analysis of the war would be inadequate if we do not locate it within infrastructures of racialization – or the process(es) by which subjugated people have been assigned arbitrary racial categories and meanings to accomplish the project of subjugation or assimilation. For example, the tasks of the First Philippine Commission according to the Benevolent Assimilation proclamation were to collect information about the Philippines and the Filipinos – because American authorities knew very little about the country and the people at the time of the war (Ileto, 1999). It must be emphasized, however, that the commission did not take on the job without bringing with them their own racial prejudices. For example, Jacob Schurman (1900), the chairperson of the commission, believed that Filipinos were not developed enough to rank "with the highest type of civilization in Europe and America" (p. 216), and that "Filipino people and nation" were non-existent because "[w]hat you have is an assemblage of different peoples and tribes, speaking languages which are unintelligible to one another" (p. 217). This was the deployment of the racialised idea of "ethnological homogeneity" (Kramer, 2006, p. 2) among Filipinos to justify subjugation. Thus, when the commission sought ground observations and reports from American military

personnel stationed in different towns in the Philippines concerning education and literacy, safety and order, and health and hygiene, it ensured the circulation of prevalent raciolinguistic ideologies during the war. There was almost unanimous endorsement of English as the 'common' medium of instruction to replace the 'dialects', useless in the quest for national unity or homogeneity. A brigadier general on the ground reported that "[t]here is such a number of dialects that profound knowledge of one is of little value even for the purpose of intercommunication" (Smith in War Department, 1901, p. 52). Thus, on the one hand, "No instruction is desirable in any of the native dialects" (Brett in War Department, 1901, p. 56). On the other hand, "English is the only language in which it is desirable to have instruction" (Spurr in War Department, 1901, p. 57); "only English should be taught" (Sweet, War Department, 1901, p. 58). The first commission's tasks were essentially recommendatory in nature, and its general conclusion after its 'fact-finding' mission was that Filipinos desired independence but were not ready for it. It recommended the establishment of a colonial civil government which would prepare Filipinos for self-rule, and a universal primary education which was to be delivered through the English language as a homogenizing tool to civilize and enlighten the Filipinos, a precondition for self-rule.

A year after, the Second Philippine Commission was formed, this time to take on the massive task of rehabilitating the Philippines through civilian rule but building on the work of the earlier commission. The second commission extended and facilitated the circulation of the same raciolinguistic ideologies to advance the project of benevolent assimilation, thus English would continue to be associated with civilization, and Philippine languages with disunity, and barbarism or backwardness. For example, Tagalog, the language of the political center, Manila, was "deficient in many qualities which have made European tongues the vehicle of civilization" (MacKinlay, 1901, p. 214). The main mandate was "to pacify as well as to administer, with instructions to take over the provinces from the military as rapidly as practicable, and set up civil government in them" (Wilfley, 1904, p. 731). Such instructions, which also came from President McKinley to the commission through the Secretary of War, were given on the assumption that there were "many different degrees of civilization and varieties of custom and capacity among the people of the different islands" (McKinley, 1900-1904/1904, p. 8), thus respect must be accorded to local people such that "measures adopted should be made to conform to their customs, their habits, and even their prejudices" (p. 8). However, among those serving the government in all levels of the civil service, "absolute and unconditional loyalty to the United States" was required, and the commission had the "absolute and unhampered authority and power to remove and punish any officer deviating from that standard" (p. 8). In short, benevolence was premised on unflinching loyalty to the United States.

Having framed the instruction to the commission as one of benevolent intentions, it was then made clear that the duty of the commission was to ensure that the free system of primary education to be put in place in all islands of the country "shall tend to fit the people for the duties of citizenship and or the ordinary avocations of a civilized community" (McKinley, 1900-1904, p. 10). We see here again how the education of the Filipinos was premised on the notion that they needed it for the attainment of civilization. However, the conflicted rhetoric of benevolence concerning English and education could be seen in the way the 'true intentions' of colonial rule unravelled themselves in relation to English and the local languages:

This instruction should be given in the first instance in every part of the islands in the language of the people. In view of the great number of languages spoken by the different tribes, it is especially important to the prosperity of the islands that a common medium of communication may be established, and it is obviously desirable that this medium should be the English language (p. 10).

There was the declaration of 'the language of the people' as the language to be used for instruction in schools but other than the fact that this was the only reference to it, the succeeding sentence practically invalidated the premise of the need for 'the language of the people'. Note here the several overlapping colonial assumptions which helped legitimize this pronouncement on English. First, the local languages were spoken by 'tribes', thus framing the languages as un-modern at the very least. Second, the existence of different languages – multilingualism in more recent discourses – was undesirable and a hindrance to progress. And third, there was no other language which would lead to the prosperity of the islands by serving as a common medium of instruction except the English language.

Thus, following the instructions and the work of the second commission, there had been recurring reference to the march towards civilization which would be derailed if Filipinos insisted on speaking in the 'dialects' only. W. Morgan Shuster (1910), who held the position of secretary of public instruction, framed colonial rule in such a manner that mobilized "white supremacy" (Rafael, 1994, p. 274):

...if we are to make them into an intelligent, cultured, self-respecting and capable people, prepared to take their position in the world's onward march, that result can be accomplished only by the systematic, patient education of all the people (Shuster, 1910, p. 63).

Scholars throughout the entire 20<sup>th</sup> century Philippines and in the past two decades would frame their work in fundamentally the same way, thus engendering particular ways of configuring their views about language and education in the country: The United States 'came' to the Philippines with the best of intentions, but it faced the challenge of uniting the country because the local

'dialects' proved to be a hindrance to progress and homogeneity, thus English was 'introduced' as the only medium through which communication between Filipinos could be accomplished (Bernardo & Madrunio, 2015). This was the precondition for self-rule, and those Filipinos who misinterpreted the true intentions of the United States were self-serving and anti-Filipino (see Tovera, 1975). Consequently, English as the primary medium of instruction in the country is justified as it is the language of modernization, enlightenment and unity (for critical studies on the role of history in the works of Filipino scholars and educators, see Canieso-Doronila, 1996; Tupas, 2003).

### **The role of race in the colonial construction of 'Filipino English'**

Therefore, colonial assimilation began not in the ensuing years of 'peaceful' colonial rule but, in fact, during the Philippine-American War itself when some Filipinos embraced the racial ideologies of American rule. In 1899, the first known Filipino political party to have supported American rule, Federal Party, declared what might be considered as the "first political support" of English (Tovera, 1975, p. 11). It stated that as peace had gradually returned to the archipelago "all the efforts of the party will be directed toward the Americanization of the Filipinos and the spread of the English language, so that by this medium the American spirit may be infused, its principles, political usages, and grand civilization adopted, and the redemption of the Filipino people be radical and complete" (Report of the Philippine Commission, 1900, p. 164). To borrow Rafael's (1994) words, this was the beginning of the Filipino as an American subject "colonizing itself" (p. 268), and English as the language of civilization and enlightenment was indeed central to the process. Some of "the thousands of uncivilized people who look up to us for their first lessons...are already asking for English schools" (Miller, 1901, p. 44). In fact, among the allegedly most civilized of the semi-civilized races of the Philippines, Pierce (1901), Chaplain of the US Army during the war, claimed that "[t]he desire of the Tagal children for a knowledge of English is one of the most encouraging signs" (p. 36). Thus, on the part of the United States, this would indeed mean early indications of the success of its assimilationist campaign to "regenerate a race" (Anderson, 1900, p. 283) as it was now the Filipino as an American colonial subject who would articulate and mobilize the 'true intentions' of the benevolent colonial project: "to complete the evolution of civilization, and to weld a people, to prepare them for suffrage and to lead them on to the highest of civic attainments – the ability to govern themselves" (Pierce, 1901, p. 23).

However, as soon as English was deployed as a tool for benevolent assimilation during the Philippine-American War, Filipinos began to transform it. For the past five decades at least, work on World Englishes, within which Philippine English studies join the conversations, has highlighted the localized realities of (postcolonial) English language use (Kachru, 1988; T. A. Llamzon, 1969).

However, if we frame such uses as 'postcolonial' in nature (Kachru, 1996; Lok, 2012) – that is, transformations in English are practices of agency and resistance against colonialism such that the subjugation of the colonized was never absolute – we then can argue that the very first instance of resistance through English occurred at the time Filipinos began using them, and that would be during the time of the war. The very first time Filipinos were taught English by American soldiers – one hour a day was devoted to teaching English when schools reopened in Manila on 3 July 1899 ("School system", 1899) – they began resisting it by changing the language. Such a resistive impulse, of course, could simply be viewed as sociolinguistic changes since the teaching and learning of a new language in multilingual contexts would always occur in language contact zones. However, whether political or sociolinguistic, the point is that the Philippine-American War served as the sociocultural context of the emergence of Filipino English both as a social phenomenon and as an idea. The English language had penetrated most parts of the Philippines such that "even in the most remote towns... one is surprised to hear conversations among the children in English, or the strains of 'America' or of 'The Star Spangled Banner'" (Marvin, 1904, p. 65). The question now is: what was "heard" when children started using English in their conversations or singing songs in English, and what did the "hearers" say about what they heard? This is a question worth pursuing because throughout American colonial rule and, in fact, after they formally left the country, people did not only 'hear' Filipino English but, more importantly, they had much to say about it. This is where race remained as the lens through which Filipino English was heard and evaluated.

When official presidential instructions (discussed above), ground reports from American soldiers, declarations from other colonial government officials, and newspaper articles (to name some), framed English as the language which would help Filipinos join the march towards civilization and be equal with other so-called civilized races and nations, it was not the idea of Filipino English which would accomplish the task. It was going to be – or should be – American English. Thus, when teachers and other social commentators began to observe and codify the way Filipinos spoke and wrote in English (Yule, 1925), Filipinos using a so-called civilized language once again fell short of the colonial ideal of an English-speaking civilized subject (Rafael, 2015). It must be acknowledged that the first few decades of English teaching and learning, and education in general, would be very challenging (Barrows, 1907; Hewitt, 1905; "Schools in the Philippines," 1901; Shuster, 1910; Yule, 1925), thus Filipino schoolchildren were expected to experience difficulties in their use of English. Nevertheless, what is the concern here is the way such 'difficulties' were framed by educators and commentators. Phonological, syntactic and idiomatic characteristics of Filipino English were ridiculed, negatively assessed and/or measured against the ideal standard 'native' American English. In short,

prevalent ideas about Filipino English were racialised ideas which characterized Filipino speakers of English as inferior speakers of the language. The language which would make them completely civilized (because the local languages were 'deficient') would be the same language which would prevent them from becoming so. In the process, racialization by "educating the little Filipinos" ("Schools in the Philippines," 1901, p. 280) through English would successfully help accomplish the project of benevolent assimilation and legitimize American rule in the Philippines.

It is not surprising that Filipino English would be heard through the sounds the Filipino children produced in and outside of schools. Characterizations of the phonology would zero in on the inability of the students to distinguish between phonemes of American English (sounds which distinguish meanings, such as the difference in meaning if one uses /p/ instead of /f/ in 'pat') because interchangeable use of the sounds among Filipino users of English is due to the sounds being not found in Philippine languages (Struble, 1929). In fact, more than a century of English language teaching and learning in the Philippines but scholars continue to provide evidence of the impact of the phonological systems of Philippine languages on the sounds of "Filipino English" or "Philippine English" (Guinto, 2014; T. Llamzon, 1996; T. A. Llamzon, 1969; Paz et al., 2003; Tayao, 2009). What Yule (1925) assessed as "hindrances" (p. 118) to approximating American English speech are identified as distinct Filipino sounds when Filipinos use English today. For example, "The use *p* for *f* and of *b* for *v* are two major errors. *Verb* becomes *berb*; the data are *piled* not *filed* (p. 118)."

These phonological realizations of American English phonemes were part of a constellation of sounds which caused "confusion in Filipino English, and oftentimes amusement to English speaking listeners" (Yule, 1925, p. 118). We should highlight here how the production of the sounds was framed through colonizers as hearers and evaluators of Filipino speech. "The remedy is obvious; intensive primary drill to limber up and bring into proper control the muscles involved" (p. 118). However, this remedy, if it aimed to change how Filipinos produce American English sounds, had not worked because for at least half a century now, Filipino scholars have consistently identified the same sounds as characterizing the localized use of English such as what Guinto (2014) has found: "The participants substitute /b/ for /v/, /p/ for /f/, /θ/ for /t/ and /ð/ for /d/." (p. 74).

Distinct Filipino English uses were not only confined to the sounds of English. Early accounts of Filipino English also extended to pronunciation, syntax and idioms, essentially evidencing the reality of English language use in the Philippines as mediated by Philippine culture and multilingualism (Fee, 1913; Struble, 1929; Yule, 1925). Its "peculiarities arise from two sources: the influence of Spanish and the influence of the Malayan dialects" (Struble, 1929, p. 278). While it is claimed that there "is nothing irreverent about this" (Yule, 1925, p. 118), such accounts were actually embedded deeply within racial prejudice

against Filipino teachers, learners and users of English. Characterizations of Filipino English were characterizations of the uncivilized, ignorant or lowly Filipino race. The years immediately following the Philippine-American War were extremely challenging to the implementation of free three-year English-medium basic education because of lack of American teachers. Thus, good performing young Filipino learners were needed to teach English (three years), arithmetic (two years) and geography (one year). They "were naked little brownies, who could smile in English, but could not understand a word of it. What had the new teachers to teach? They did not even know how to live in the open-sided, stilt-uplifted, *nipa* houses" (French, 1905, p. 549). They were, after all, Filipinos, "shallow; bright on the surface, quick to catch the superficial, but beyond that nothing! a blank!" (p. 553). It does not even matter that these early Filipino teachers were "good material for assistants" many of whom belonged to the "aristocratic classes...already fairly educated well in Spanish" (Fee, 1913, p. 541). The "problem of anglicizing the speech of a people" (541) was ultimately a racial problem as it implicated speakers and bodies who were not ideal speakers of the language but who needed to undergo "Americanization" (Marvin, 1904, p. 65):

The American child whose vocabulary is fairly well formed before he enters school has acquired his vocabulary by practical experience; and the only way to give a corresponding development to the Filipino child's mind is to study the habits of speech as found in the American child before he is affected by the reading work (Fee, 1913, pp. 541-542).

If educating the Filipino child was going to be successful, this would mean leading one's "charges from darkness to light, from 400 years of Spanish implanted ignorance to that knowledge of the truth which alone makes men free" (p. 65). Such education would only be through an English medium, thus the school's "first task is always to break the bad English habits already formed" (Struble, 1929, p. 278) and correct "mispronunciation" (p. 279) because they "are distorting" the English language (p. 279).

Such so-called distortions gradually became a source of worry or anxiety among educators which crossed over into popular discourse during the colonial period. "Worried educators", the New York Times claimed, "have finally confirmed the rumoured existence of another mongrel offshoot of the Anglo Saxon language" (Darrach, 1930, p. A9). It was no longer just Filipino English as "the [emphasis added] English of Filipinos" (Struble, 1929, p. 279), but "queer sounds drifting across the China Sea from Manila" (Darrach, 1930, p. A9). Notice the subtle perpetuation of the superiority of American English with the claim that core aspects of Filipino English were actually "diverting departures from linguistic regularity" (p. A9), but in the same breath such so-called irregularity of Filipino English is now framed in avowedly racialised discourse. Revealing Americans' anxiety over such a mongrel, they being "custodians of the lingual heritage in the Philippines" (p. A9), those who observed classrooms:

...have been bringing home collections of these weird specimens of bamboo English. When repeated by the returning traveller, they were laughed over as amusing and considered no more deplorable as an assault on the king's English than the usual school boy blunders. (p. A9)

The expectation from 1900 was for English to serve as the common language of the country, but according to one exasperated American educator, it was no longer "the English that we know" (Barry, 1927, p. 14) because the "tutelage of the little brown brothers" (p. 14) was placed "in the hands of native pedagogues" because "[n]one of the primary or intermediate teachers are white, and of the high school instructors, but a dwindling minority" (p. 14). For the pioneer teachers especially, "the language evolution which has taken place in our Far East possession has fallen far short of the expectations of those who, a quarter of a century ago, inaugurated the plan to educate the Filipinos along our standardized lines" (Darrach, 1930, p. A9).

In the end, political, educational and popular ideas about Filipino English converged to construct a colonial racialised ideology which served as the discursive matrix upon and through which *the* English of Filipinos was going to be evaluated in pejorative or damaging ways. As a racialised use of English, Filipino English was inferior, undesirable and useless, and its "little brown" speakers, lowly and incapable of self-rule. The lines were drawn: the colonizers owned the country – "our [emphasis added] own Philippines" (Barry, 1927, p. 14) – but dis-owned Filipinos' English – "their [emphasis added] English" (Scott, 1949, p. 327).

## Conclusion

Much of "postcolonial" ideas about language and colonialism (not just of American or British type) have centered around the political dynamics between colonial languages (English, French, Spanish, etc.) and local languages, including the need for national languages as a response to continuing conditions of coloniality and racism (Sercombe & Tupas, 2014). Much less is known about the role of colonialism and race when the colonial languages began to undergo linguistic and sociolinguistic transformations [read: localization, indigenization and pluralization] as they took root in the lives of the subjugated, and how the emergence of particular configurations of discourses continue to embed language talk today. Postcolonial language politics, in fact, usually removes or glosses over this historical aspect of language and, instead, focuses on the 'new face' of the colonial language(s): colonial then, resistance to colonialism now (Kachru, 1996; Sibayan & Gonzalez, 1996). In the case of the global spread of English, the Englishes of the world have been framed in this manner. They are expressions of resistance and manifestations of agency such that colonial subjugation, after all, was never absolute and complete.

Such a framing is not untrue and is, in fact, a much needed political and theoretical corrective to under-

standings of the imposition of English as if the subjugated users were completely powerless and dejected. However, what is problematic is their lack of nuance to accounting for the politics of localization and pluralization of English. Yes, the colonized began to transform the language but such transformation was also received with trepidation and mockery to do for the most part with the speakers' racialised colonial subjection. As the paper has hopefully shown, this was certainly the case with Filipino English. If we are to critically understand why Filipinos continue to publicly humiliate fellow Filipinos who 'fall short' of the standard English ideal, and why many Filipino language scholars still stop short of endorsing it as a standard for teaching and learning, we need to stretch our trajectory further back historically to find the answers. Popular and scholarly ideas about Filipino English or Philippine English today remain locked into an infrastructure of racialised relations and ideologies, except that they are veiled or masked by the belief that they no longer exist because colonialism is now a thing of the past.

One of the earliest "scholarly" accounts of Filipino English was published in *American Speech* in which the Filipinos' English was – correctly – framed as a language contact phenomenon because of the strong influence of Spanish and Philippine "dialects". To illustrate how the Spanish-dialect influence has shaped the English language, Struble (1929) writes:

An *Americano* said to his *muchacho*, 'Take that *quan* out and put it under the *quan* and catch me some *quan*. After the storm he had a tub full of rain water! (p. 285).

The Spanish *quan* is a context-demanding filler which points to practically anything which the speaker uses to refer to a particular object or idea which he or she assumes is also understood by the listener. What the writer projects here is a successful mobilization of Filipino English which he himself appropriates to communicate with the Filipino speaker. What needs highlighting here, however, is how he frames the conversation: it is not between an *Americano* and a *Filipino*, but between an *Americano* and a Filipino servant. Does he deploy Filipino English only if he speaks to servants? Does he assume that Filipino English is necessary only if communicating with servants? For Struble (1929), the well-meaning illustration is to gain "a more intelligent understanding of their [Filipinos'] difficulties" (p. 282), yet given the immediate context of the article which describes Filipino English as distortion, and the sociopolitical context of Filipinos as racialised colonized subjects, the illustration above does visualize the racialised infrastructure of Philippine English. Filipinos themselves internalize this infrastructure unknowingly. Despite voluminous evidence of the systematicity of Philippine English, when it comes to using English in today's world, we refuse to believe that it is an inferior variety but we remain subservient to speakers who we deem to be superior speakers of the language. The transformation of hegemonic English into Englishes



has been framed as postcolonial resistance – or a linguistic case of the empire writing back – but this remains overly celebratory if we do not change our perceptions and internalized stances as inferior non-white, “non-native” speakers.

### Positionality Statement

My work of more than two decades has spanned issues concerning ‘inequalities of multilingualism’, and dedicated to helping demolish infrastructures which perpetuate such inequalities. I come from the Philippines, colonized by Spain, United States and Japan, and thus

went through an education system which taught us Filipinos that our languages are of lesser value than the colonial languages, even internalizing the belief that their languages are mere ‘dialects’ representing the backward cultures of the past. Harmful practices continue to pervade the schools today, with huge support from the entire population for English-Only policies, native speakerism, and anti-multilingual ideologies. As a deeply racialized scholar of language, my advocacy-driven research is dedicated to unravelling and transforming structures and practices of inequalities of multilingualism.



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