

## From the Editors

We were very much honored to have taken up editorial responsibilities for this thematic issue of the *Philippine Humanities Review* (PHR) that highlights the present areas of strength of the Department of European Languages (DEL): foreign language education, literary and cultural studies, and translation studies. The array of work in this volume reveals the long history of the Department, as well as the number of transformations that have left an indelible mark on its existence today. As 2020 marks the 110th anniversary of the earliest institutional precursor of the DEL, the Foreign Languages Section of the College of Philosophy, Science and Letters, it is worth revisiting how the current DEL emerged from a unit offering preparatory classes in French, German, Latin and Spanish, to administering a degree program that emphasizes a strong foundation in languages and the humanities.

From a Foreign Language Section, the DEL's transition to a university department can be found in the fusion of the Department of Spanish and the Department of Modern Languages in 1958. European languages were then taught collectively under the current name of the Department in 1979. It is worth noting that the present-day research agenda of DEL, and thus the themes of the articles in this volume, can be gleaned from the various roles that the Department has been playing in the University, as a pioneer in foreign language (FL) teaching on the one hand, and as a branch of the humanities on the other.

The link between the DEL and the Humanities began in the foci of the Department of Spanish, which not only acted as a vibrant venue for the continuing exchange among Hispanic cultures but also for the study and appreciation of Fil-hispanic literature in the original language. The early to mid-twentieth century, however, saw the rapid expansion of the English language, initially through its institutionalization in the constitution, and eventually through the public education system as mandated by national language policies such as the DECS Order No. 25 ("Implementing Guidelines for the Policy on Bilingual Education") which mandated Filipino and English as mediums of instruction. It was at this time that writers such as Nick Joaquin would straddle the lingering influences of the Spanish colonial era and the pragmatics of the new

language that the Americans had brought, his writing, a linguistic testament to the cultural dynamism of the transitional period itself. The increasing use of English in the academe also meant an increasing demand for translation, as Filipinos gradually lost the linguistic proficiency needed to read the Fil-hispanic canon in its original language. Literary analysis and translation thus unavoidably became key elements of the curriculum of the Department of Spanish, a legacy which continued even with a formal change in name.

As the study of Fil-Hispanic literature supported the need to re-connect new generations of Filipino students with the literary and cultural landscape of the nation's Hispanic past, so too did the roots of foreign language pedagogy align with the colonial history of the country, the mechanisms of empire, which would gradually serve as the foundation to globalization. With the rapid acceleration of mobility and information, the mastery of a foreign language came to be seen increasingly in the 20th century as a necessary skill for socio-economic mobility. The colonial roots of sociolinguistic linkages between class, race and language persisted long after the Philippines gained its independence, a matter that compels the DEL to continuously reckon with its role as both a venue for learning foreign language on the one hand, and on the other hand, as an academic unit that is deeply concerned with matters of national cultural preservation and the shortcomings of neoliberal approaches to employment. Foremost among these is the emergence of a discourse of "global competitiveness" that has become fashionable in the core institutional objectives of teaching foreign languages. It is the prospect of increased marketability in the global workplace that drives the seemingly endless need for language teaching and language teachers in the Philippines. In addition to English and other European languages such as French, Spanish, German and Italian, Asian languages such as Japanese, Mandarin, and Korean have gained increasing popularity for their economic potentials and relationship to cultural production, likewise providing a space for their critical interrogation. Hardly surprising then, is the marked interest in topics concerning language teaching and applied linguistics are thus clear in this volume. One would also be remiss in not noting the impact of faculty being sent abroad for training, or how the changes in the way the teaching of European languages is imparted as a field of research in Europe have diffused through educational mobility. The opportunity to study in another setting has thus not only supplied a new set of research specializations and tools, but also new opportunities to link research trends in Europe to relevant

As times have changed, so have the challenges which beset the Department. Some of these are considered in this issue, while others have been discussed in recent work by the faculty such as Cruz's 2017 article on curricular bifurcation in the *Philippine Humanities Review*, Cabling et al's 2020 article on decolonizing the foreign language curriculum in *Social Transformations: Journal of the Global South*, and Guban's 2020 article on the effects of COVID-19 on foreign language classes.

The first of the challenges involves achieving coherence between and among the types of knowledge offered within the Department -- language learning on the one hand, and literary analysis, translation and language teaching on the other. The increasing demands of interdisciplinarity, both within the Department and in the larger scope of higher education, require more opportunities and institutional support for discussions and research collaboration across specializations. Such an intervention may also help in easing the disjunctures in the bifurcation of FL curriculum, and bridge the gap between the grammar-focused half of the curriculum and content courses in the second half of the degree program.

Another challenge stems from the department's social responsibility to engage practitioners of foreign language education in light of the inclusion of foreign languages in the K-12 curriculum. Aside from leading teacher trainings in coordination with various European cultural institutions, DEL's mandates have included managing dialogues with stakeholders of foreign language pedagogy in the

country, as well as spearheading discussions to legitimize decolonizing approaches and practices in language learning and teaching, and to further understand concerns and phenomena idiosyncratic to Filipino students and teachers of foreign languages.

Lastly, and while Fil-Hispanic literature is a rather obvious starting point for intercultural encounters due to the long colonial presence of Spain, there is a strong impetus within the Department to find intercultural points of encounter with other European languages and cultures, while simultaneously not privileging them over others. The selection of articles below evidences ways in which faculty members of the department have tried to thematize and engage with these themes and challenges.

Zarah Dane D. Tan begins with a piece on the translation of *L'Éloignement du ciel: Invention et mémoire des mythes chez les Palawan du sud des Philippines*, a significant ethnographic work of Palawan, revealing tensions and challenges in both the selection of words in Filipino as well as questions of critical engagement with knowledge gained in the past, which may have since been altered or subject to new knowledge.

Continuing the tradition of literary studies of the Department is the reading by Wytan de la Peña of the poetry collection *Rimas Filipinas*, in which he puts Philippine Catholic faith in perspective and situates the values reflected in Fil-Hispanic poetry as at odds with the rise of communism in the Philippines and around the world during the Cold War.

Reflected in the works of Nina Rachel V. Agcaoili, Aleczandra de la Paz and Faith Cao is the increasing interdisciplinarity of research among the faculty, a picture of convergence and expansion, while all three fall under the field of applied linguistics, with Agcaoili's article on assessment, de la Paz' textual analysis, and Cao's exploratory study of curriculum standardization and teacher training.

Agcaoili's action research, carried out in elementary German language courses, argues for the adoption of assessment measures in foreign language classrooms that promote critical thinking and autonomous learning. She focuses on two uncomplicated formative assessment techniques whose benefits are twofold: on the part of the teacher, a reliable estimation of the students' actual competence; on the part of the student, an engendering of a culture of self-reflection.

De la Paz, through the combination of corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis, of concepts such as symbolic power and interpellation, examines (1) frequency and (2) semantic and pragmatic meanings of employed adjectives and nouns, (3) word choice of the newspapers and tabloids, and (4) existence of the traditional gender roles of women in German print media, therefore exposing how newspapers and tabloids differently portray five influential German women in 2017.

Lastly, Cao contextualizes shortcomings of DepEd's Special Program in Foreign Languages (SPFL) by interviewing various stakeholders at length. Her exploratory Needs Analysis sheds light on the lack of a guiding framework for the pedagogy of French as FL, as well as a predilection for language proficiency development in teacher training programs. She concludes with a proposed conceptual framework to address the identified gaps.

Hence, this DEL issue of the PHR aims to gather academic endeavors that represent the current areas of specialization of the Department, to contribute to the theoretical and practical discourses on and critically examine intercultural points of encounter. Tan's translation work and de la Peña's literary analysis are manifestations of our mediational role, a link between cultures, societies, and bodies of knowledge in both international and local contexts. Discourse analysis by de la Paz

demonstrates how critical lenses are presently part and parcel of the appreciation and the acquisition of foreign languages as well as of the steadily increasing forms of collaboration between the humanities and technology-driven analyses in the form of digital humanities. And finally, the works of Cao and Agcaoili remind us of the important function of the Filipino teacher-researcher in making headway in foreign language education for Filipinos.

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