ISSN: 3116-3475
International Journal
of Education, Research, and Innovation Perspectives
Volume 2 Issue 4 (April 2026)

From Colonial Roots to Cultural Reclamation: Strategies in Decolonizing English Studies

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Date Submitted:
February 23, 2026

Date Accepted:
March 30, 2026

Date Published:
April 05, 2026

DOI:
10.5281/zenodo.19430138

ABSTRACT

This qualitative study examined how university professors understand and practice the decolonization of English Studies in their pedagogy. Using a descriptive qualitative design, in-depth interviews were conducted with Six English Studies professors, and the data were analyzed thematically. Findings reveal that decolonization is primarily understood as contextualization rather than as a formally articulated theoretical framework, with professors enacting decolonial practices intuitively through localized content, reflective and dialogic pedagogy, translanguaging, creative adaptation of texts, and culturally responsive assessment. Despite limited familiarity with decolonization as an academic discourse and the absence of formal faculty training, professors have a strong commitment to centering students' cultural and linguistic realities in their teaching. However, these practices were often constrained by rigid curricula, English-only policies, and lack of institutional support, resulting in fragmented and individualized efforts. The study concludes that while decolonizing practices are already present in English Studies classrooms, their sustainability and transformative potential depend on systemic institutional reforms, including curriculum revision, policy alignment, and comprehensive faculty development, to move decolonization beyond isolated pedagogical initiatives for a coherent and intentional educational framework.

Keywords: *Decolonization, English Studies, Pedagogy, Translingualism, Culture Reclamation*

INTRODUCTION

English Studies were historically developed in the colonial systems of knowledge production that privileged Eurocentric epistemologies, literary canons, and linguistic norms. As a discipline, it was closely related to imperial projects that positioned English as a marker of intellectual authority and cultural superiority, often marginalizing indigenous knowledge systems and local literary traditions (Quijano, 2007; Mignolo, 2011; Davis, 2019). This colonial legacy continued to shape what was taught, how texts were interpreted, and whose voices were legitimized in academic institutions, particularly in postcolonial societies (Smith, 2012; Shahjahan et al., 2022). English Studies functioned not only as an academic field but also as a mechanism for reproducing colonial hierarchies of knowledge. These lead to renewed calls to critically visit the discipline and to reimagine its pedagogical and curricular foundations.

There seems to be a need to dismantle coloniality in curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment practices. Coloniality was conceptualized as a persistent structure of power beyond just colonization, shaping contemporary modes of thinking, knowing, and being (Quijano, 2007; Maldonado-Torres, 2011; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). This entailed questioning the dominance of Western literary canons,

challenging native-speaker norms, and recognizing alternative epistemologies rooted in the Global South (Shahjahan et al., 2022; Dei & Cacciavillani, 2024). Decolonization was not a symbolic gesture but an ongoing, context-dependent process that required sustained institutional and pedagogical commitment (Tamimi et al., 2024; Browning et al., 2022). These scholarly discussions highlight the urgency of studying how decolonial ideas were translated into actual teaching practices.

The context of the Philippines offered a suitable area for understanding the decolonization of English Studies because of its colonial history under Spanish and American rule. English was institutionalized as a medium of instruction during the American colonial period, integrating Anglo-American linguistic and literary standards in the education system (Martin, 2004; Hsu, 2013). This legacy persisted in contemporary English education through curriculum design, assessment practices, and attitudes toward language proficiency (Abella et al., 2024; Villaceran, 2019). At the same time, scholars highlighted the emergence of localized Englishes and multilingual practices that challenged monocentric views of language and identity in the Philippines (Martin, 2020; Esquivel, 2019). These tensions between colonial inheritance and linguistic pluralism made English Studies a critical space for exploring decolonial transformation.

While theoretical discussions on decolonizing English Studies grew substantially, fewer empirical studies focused on how university professors enacted decolonial strategies in their everyday teaching practices. Existing literature often emphasized policy reforms or curricular critiques, leaving a gap in understanding educators' lived experiences, reflections, and pedagogical decisions (Roman-Tamesis & Villaceran, 2023; Baker et al., 2025). Scholars argued that educators played an important role as agents of decolonization, as their choices in curriculum, pedagogy, language use, and assessment directly shaped students' engagement with knowledge (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 2011; Shahjahan et al., 2022). Examining professors' perspectives was therefore essential in documenting how decolonial principles were operationalized within English Studies classrooms. Such empirical accounts contributed to grounding decolonial theory in concrete educational practice.

Guided by decolonial theory, this study determined the strategy of university professors in decolonizing English studies. It sought to answer how professors (1) understand decolonization of English studies in pedagogy. This question's main purpose was to provide a context for the strategies of decolonization. The primary focus of this paper was to (2) describe the decolonization practices of professors in their teaching of English studies. This included their current (2a.)strategies, (2b.)curriculum (2c.)transformation, (2d.) pedagogical approaches, (2e.) language and representation, (2f.) assessment and evaluation, and (2g.) faculty development and training. These questions provided a leeway for the researcher to create an empirical description on the strategies employed by university professors in decolonizing English studies. At last, this study proposed a recommendation that was derived from the findings of this study.

Theoretical Framework

Decolonial Theory guided both the conceptual orientation and the analytical process of this study. Rooted in the works of scholars such as Quijano, Mignolo, and Smith, decolonial theory tackled the persistence of colonial power structures in knowledge production, language, and education. In this study, the theory was used to frame English Studies as a discipline historically shaped by Eurocentric epistemologies and colonial ideologies. It provided a lens for understanding how university professors understood decolonization in pedagogy and how they positioned themselves in relation to colonial legacies within English Studies.

Decolonial theory also guided the analysis of participants' practices by foregrounding efforts to disrupt Eurocentric ways of teaching. The interview questions and codes were aligned with decolonial concerns, particularly related to curriculum transformation, pedagogy, language and representation, and evaluation and assessment. During data analysis, informants' answers were interpreted in terms of resistance to coloniality and the re-centering of culturally situated knowledge. The framework allowed the

ISSN: 3116-3475
International Journal
of Education, Research, and Innovation Perspectives
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study to move beyond surface-level reforms and to understand decolonization as an ongoing, context-sensitive process rather than a fixed outcome. This theory led the study's interpretation of university professors' strategies as acts of cultural reclamation and epistemic resistance of English Studies.

LITERATURE REVIEW

English Studies and Colonial Legacies

English Studies in the Philippines was widely studied as a discipline shaped by colonial education policies and continuous imperial language ideologies. Monroe Report, positioned English as the primary medium of instruction and framed it as a civilizing tool (Davis, 2024). This colonial foundation had lasting consequences, as contemporary English Studies continues to privilege Western literary canons, native-speaker norms, and Eurocentric standards of knowledge production (Abella et al., 2024). With this, English Studies functions not merely as something academic but as a mechanism through which colonial hierarchies of language, culture, and authority were normalized in the Philippine education system.

More recent scholarship emphasized how these colonial legacies are negotiated, contested, and reworked in contemporary practice. Varieties of English emerged from colonial schooling while challenging monocentric and prescriptive language ideologies embedded in English Studies (Martin, 2020). Similarly, Esquivel (2019) demonstrated how Filipino users of English appropriate and reshape the language in digital and social contexts, which complicated ideas of linguistic legitimacy. At the disciplinary level, Filipino scholars increasingly viewed English Studies as a colonial inheritance that requires systematic reorientation, calling attention to how curriculum, pedagogy, and research practices continue to reproduce coloniality (Roman-Tamesis & Villaceran, 2023). These critiques resonate with broader international scholarship that frames English as a global language deeply entangled with colonial power relations and cultural politics (Pennycook, 2017). Contemporary commentaries on decolonial discourse in Philippine English scholarship highlight that the discourse is often unevenly adopted, showing tensions between theoretical commitments and institutional realities (Salonga et al., 2025). Being decolonized in English Studies is not only curricular content but also the historical, ideological, and epistemic structures that have long defined the discipline.

Decolonization in Higher Education

Scholars conceptualize universities as venues where colonial power is historically embedded and continually reproduced through Eurocentric epistemologies and academic hierarchies (Mbembe, 2016; Heleta, 2016). In the Philippines, studies emphasize how colonial language regimes and globalized academic norms persist in higher education, particularly through the dominance of English and Western models of knowledge production (Salonga, 2019). At the institutional level, decolonization is framed not only as a disciplinary revision but a broader effort of universities and faculty to challenge colonial academic structures and rethink their roles in national and global knowledge systems (Roman-Tamesis & Villaceran, 2023). Recent empirical and conceptual studies highlighted how decolonization is enacted through contested and uneven institutional practices. Case-based and comparative research shows that efforts to decolonize curricula and pedagogy are often driven by faculty engagement, yet remain constrained by structural, policy, and ideological limitations in universities (Tamimi et al., 2024; Stein & Andreotti, 2016). Studies of decolonization show the importance of centering marginalized voices and interrogating whose knowledge is legitimized in higher education reforms (Adefila et al., 2022).

Philippine-based studies extend this discussion by understanding how indigenous knowledge systems, historical narratives, and faculty agency are incorporated into university curricula, often relying on individual initiatives rather than systemic institutional support (Flores et al., 2025). Similarly, research on internationalization in Philippine higher education framed global engagement as a site of epistemic

ISSN: 3116-3475
International Journal
of Education, Research, and Innovation Perspectives
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struggle, where academics negotiate Western-driven agendas while attempting to assert local knowledge and priorities (Ulla et al., 2025). With these senses, decolonization in higher education is enacted through complex interactions among policy, faculty agency, curriculum, and institutional power.

Decolonizing Practices in English Studies in the Philippines

Research on decolonizing practices in English Studies in the Philippines pointed up how colonial language hierarchies are reproduced and contested with pedagogy, curriculum design, assessment, and applied linguistic work. Roman-Tamesis and Villaceran (2023) situate decolonization in English Studies by emphasizing the role of universities and faculty in interrogating inherited disciplinary structures and Western-centric knowledge production. While their work focuses on English Studies as a field, it also emphasized how decolonial practice necessarily materializes in institutional decisions about curriculum, research priorities, and teaching orientations. Complementing this institutional perspective, Salonga (2019) studied how English functions in globalized power structures in Philippine higher education, arguing that language policies and academic practices continue to privilege English as symbolic capital. The persistence of colonial language hierarchies provides the structural context within which decolonizing practices in English Studies must operate.

A central strand of decolonial practice in English Studies involves challenging native-speaker norms by recognizing Philippine English and World Englishes as legitimate linguistic resources. Martin (2020) explicitly frames the pedagogical recognition of Philippine English as a disruption of colonial language ideologies that equate legitimacy with American or British standards. By outlining pedagogical implications for teaching English in localized and pluralistic ways, Martin demonstrates how decolonization is enacted through classroom-level decisions about norms, models, and assessment. Esquivel (2019) similarly shows how localized English practices in the Philippines function as expressions of identity that destabilize monocentric views of English. Together, these works support pedagogical approaches that validate linguistic diversity and reposition English Studies away from deficit models of local language use.

Decolonizing practices are unevenly implemented in English instruction. Madriaga (2025) provided a qualitative content analysis of English curricula for pre-service teachers, demonstrating that Western literary canons and English-only instruction remain dominant despite emerging decolonial elements such as localized texts, multilingual pedagogies, and culturally responsive strategies. This tension illustrates how decolonization is often partial, constrained by institutional requirements and policy frameworks. Similarly, Meneses (2025) determined teacher ideologies and instructional materials in college English classes, finding persistent bias toward American English norms and limited intentional use of decolonized content. Her proposed framework for localized and culturally responsive ELT materials highlights how decolonial practice requires not only alternative content but also critical awareness among teachers. Abella et al. (2024) traced how native-speaker norms and monolingual pedagogies remain embedded in English language teaching due to historical policy legacies, while also documenting scholarly advocacy for multilingual and contextualized approaches. Kilag et al. (2024) similarly identify policy fragmentation and colonial residues in English language education, arguing that coherent policy support is necessary for sustained decolonial pedagogical reform. These suggest that decolonizing practices in English Studies cannot be fully realized through individual classroom initiatives alone, but must be supported by systemic policy shifts.

Decolonial practice is also evident in applied and evaluative dimensions of English Studies. While teachers recognize Philippine English conceptually, they often continue to privilege American and British norms in assessment (Acobo, 2025). This finding underscores assessment as a critical site where colonial language hierarchies are reproduced, even when pedagogical discourse appears decolonial. Clima (2025) argued for the broader integration of Standard Philippine English into English instruction, framing such integration as essential to supporting linguistic identity and inclusivity. Beyond pedagogy and

ISSN: 3116-3475
International Journal
of Education, Research, and Innovation Perspectives
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assessment, Rañosa-Madrunio and Martin (2023) demonstrate how applied linguistic practices, particularly forensic linguistics, can challenge colonial language dominance in legal and institutional contexts. Their work emphasized how English Studies can intersect with social justice, extending decolonial practice beyond the classroom.

METHODS

Research Design

This study was a descriptive-qualitative research design to determine the strategies of university professors in decolonizing English Studies. A qualitative descriptive approach was appropriate as the study aimed to provide a rich, straightforward account of participants' understandings and practices without seeking to generate theory or uncover the essence of lived experience. The design allowed for the systematic description of professors' perspectives on decolonization in pedagogy, curriculum, and institutional practice.

Research Participants and Sampling

The study utilized a purposive sampling technique to select informants who could provide rich and relevant insights regarding the decolonization of English Studies. The informants consisted of three university professors teaching English Studies in higher education institutions in the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR). They were selected based on their professional experience in teaching English Studies courses and their involvement in curriculum design, pedagogical decision-making, or related academic practices. The number of informants was deemed sufficient for this study because the primary goal was not to generalize findings to a larger population but to provide an in-depth, contextualized description of existing strategies and practices. In qualitative descriptive research, a small number of information-rich informants is appropriate when the focus is on depth, clarity, and contextual understanding rather than statistical representation.

Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected through one-on-one semi-structured interviews conducted online, allowing flexibility and accessibility for the informants. An interview guide was used to ensure that key areas related to the study's objectives were consistently addressed across interviews, while also allowing informants to elaborate freely on their experiences and perspectives. The interview questions focused on informants' understanding of decolonization in English Studies pedagogy and their practices related to strategies, curriculum transformation, pedagogical approaches, language and representation, assessment and evaluation, and faculty development and training. Each interview was conducted individually to encourage openness and depth of responses. With the informants' informed consent, interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accuracy and were subsequently transcribed verbatim for analysis.

Data Analysis

The interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and read repeatedly to achieve data familiarization. Initial codes were generated based on recurring ideas and patterns in the data, guided by the study's research objectives and categories derived from the interview guide. These codes were then organized into broader themes that tackled informants' shared and divergent perspectives on decolonizing English Studies. Thematic analysis enabled the systematic interpretation of data while remaining grounded in informants' response

ISSN: 3116-3475
International Journal
of Education, Research, and Innovation Perspectives
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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Decolonization as Contextualization

Professors of English studies use decolonization not through abstract theoretical frameworks but rather through a shift in the orientation of pedagogy. One of the informants described decolonization as "doing away from the traditional way of teaching English," which she associated with Western models that prioritize classical texts and standardized English. Another informant also emphasized that "we are not colonized anymore, but our thinking is," pointing to the educational practices' persisting colonial mentality. These reflect shared understanding that decolonization is rejection of the dominance of Western ways and instead embracing local cultural and linguistic contexts. Instead of using postcolonial theorists or decolonial scholars, the informants contextualize their understanding in their own experiences as professors in the Philippines, where American colonial legacy in education continues to influence English language instruction.

While professors still engage in practices that are aligned with the decolonial aims, they do so without knowing it is actually what they are doing. One of the informants said, "I came across the term only when you invited me," talking about the invitation to be interviewed for this study; and another participant stated "I am not fully aware of what the term would have been." This lack of familiarity in what the term "decolonization means," however, does not equate to a lack of engagement with decolonial principles. Instead, it shows a separation between academic discourse and pedagogical practice. Professors are using decolonial strategies such as using local texts, encouraging cultural reflection, and validating Philippine English, without necessarily seeing these actions as a language of decolonial theory. This is not unique in the Philippines. Shahjahan et al. (2022) argued that decolonization in higher education is often actualized in ways that are deeply contextualized and not always tied to formal theoretical frameworks. Also, Dei and Cacciavillani (2024) emphasized that decolonization must be understood as a lived, relational, and situated practice rather than a fixed set of principles.

The responses also show a recognition of Philippine English and World Englishes. Professors challenge colonial language ideologies by making local varieties of English legitimate. An informant referenced "World Englishes" and asserted that "Philippine English is one of the World Englishes," while another informant noted that "Philippine English is acceptable here. This shows a pedagogical stance which resists giving privilege to Western English as the only legitimate forms of language. This is aligned with the work of Martin's (2020) which frames pedagogical validation of Philippine English as a disruption of colonial language ideologies. Through the acknowledgement of the local English, professors did not only affirm students' linguistic identities but also resists the colonial logic that equates linguistic correctness with proximity to native speaker standard.

These codes are evident that informants understand decolonization primarily as a process of contextualizing English studies to reflect local cultural, linguistic, and historical contexts. This understanding came from the practice rather than theory, shaped by the constraints and opportunities of their institutional and sociolinguistic situation. The emphasis of the responses to contextualization signals an orientation to decolonization that prioritizes relevance, accessibility, and cultural resonance over rigid adherence to theory. This finding is consistent with the literature on decolonizing education, which cautions against standardization of definitions of decolonization and instead advocates for context-sensitive, practice-based approaches (Shahjan et al., 2022; Browning et al., 2022). In the Philippines where English has long been intertwined with colonial legacies, this practice-oriented understanding of decolonization offers a meaningful and doable pathway for educators that aims to reclaim and reframe their pedagogical practices (Roman-Tamesis & Villaceran, 2023; Salonga, 2019). However, while contextualization enables immediate pedagogical shifts, it may risk reducing decolonization to surface-level cultural inclusion if it is not accompanied with structural critique. As Dei and Cacciavillani (2024)

ISSN: 3116-3475
International Journal
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argue decolonization must not only be about changing what is taught but also about transforming how knowledge is built and the institutional structures that sustain colonial hierarchies. In light of this, the professors' limited familiarity with decolonization as a theoretical discourse may impede their ability to challenge colonial roots in English Studies. The findings suggest that while contextualization is an important entry point, it must be supported by institutional commitment and theoretical grounding to realize the potential of decolonizing English Studies in the Philippines.

Implicit and Unintentional Practice of Decolonization

Professors are actively engaging in practices that are aligned with decolonial principles, they often do so without consciously identifying their actions as a decolonizing practice. Professors are unfamiliar with the academic discourse of decolonization, yet their pedagogical choices, such as using local texts, encouraging cultural reflection, and validating students' linguistic identities, is an evidence of their tacit alignment with decolonization. Roman-Tamesis and Villaceran (2023) argue that in the Philippines, decolonization is frequently practiced without being explicitly named, as educators respond to the cultural and linguistic needs of their students. Professors described their teaching strategies as emerging from a desire to make learning more meaningful and relevant to students, rather than from a deliberate engagement with decolonial theory. An informant noted that she had been "doing it [decolonization] without knowing it was decolonization," and another informant described her efforts as "unconscious." These suggest that decolonial practices are often existing in the everyday decisions of educators who are attuned to the cultural and linguistic context of their students. This affirms with the findings of Browning et al. (2022) that decolonizing language teaching is a dialogic and open-ended process that often unfolds through reflexive practice rather than through adherence to a fixed set of principles. Moreover, Tamimi et al. (2024) noted that decolonization must be grounded in care, inclusivity, and experience, which are precisely the values that informants in this study appear to prioritize, even without formal training or theoretical knowledge.

Professors are utilizing pedagogical strategies that are actually aligned with decolonization yet they do so without consciously identifying these actions as part of a decolonizing agenda. This is both a strength and a limitation. On one hand, it demonstrates that decolonial practices can emerge organically from educators' experiences, cultural awareness, and responsiveness to the needs of their students. This affirms the argument of Shahjahan et al. (2022) that decolonizing curriculum and pedagogy (DCP) is often actualized in deeply contextual ways, shaped by local histories, institutional cultures, and educators' positionalities. In the Philippines, where colonial legacies are embedded in language policies, curriculum structures, and societal view of English, it is perhaps unsurprising that decolonization is enacted through practice rather than theory (Roman-Tamesis & Villaceran, 2023; Salonga, 2019). However, without shared conceptual framework or institutional discourse on decolonization, there are challenges for coherence, sustainability, and critical depth. Tamimi et al. (2024) emphasize that decolonizing higher education involves challenging long standing power structures, redefining the hierarchy of knowledge, and embedding anti-racist and inclusive pedagogies, but these goals cannot be fully achieved by isolated, intuitive practices alone.

Curriculum as a Structural Constraint to Decolonization

Professors perceive a gap between their pedagogical intentions and the institutional frameworks for English Studies. Participants consistently stated that while they attempt to integrate local content and culturally relevant materials into their teaching, these efforts are not formally supported or reflected in the curriculum. An informant noted that "decolonization is not emphasized" and "it's not intentionally included," pointing to the lack of prioritization by their institution. Another informant had the same sentiment, stating that "there was never a conversation about decolonizing the syllabus," while one informant observed that although the university has a Cordilleran museum, "we don't study local

ISSN: 3116-3475
International Journal
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knowledge." These reflections show that there is a systemic disconnect between the values of cultural relevance and the actual content and structure of the curriculum. The persistence of Western literary canons and standardized English rules in the curriculum suggests that colonial legacies continue to shape what is considered legitimate knowledge in English Studies. This aligns with the critique of Quijano (2007), who argues that coloniality persists in modern institutions through privileging Eurocentric standards and the marginalization of local knowledge systems.

Some of the professors expressed a desire for greater autonomy in selecting culturally resonant materials and for the inclusion of local knowledge systems in the curriculum. An informant recommended that decolonization be "intentionally included" in syllabi, while another proposed the introduction of a Cordilleran Studies course to institutionalize the teaching of local culture and literature. Another one advocated for allowing teachers to "choose materials that would cater to the culture of the students," pointing to the limitations imposed by rigid curricular structures. These reflect a recognition that decolonization cannot be fully realized through individual effort alone as it requires institutional commitment, policy alignment, and curricular flexibility. This is consistent with the findings of Shahjahan et al. (2022), that the actualization of decolonization of the curriculum and pedagogy is often hindered by institutional structures that the priority is global competitiveness and standardization over local relevance. Moreover, Smith (2012) emphasizes that decolonizing education requires a fundamental rethinking of the purposes and structures of research and curriculum, advocating for the inclusion of indigenous perspectives and methodologies as central rather than peripheral.

There is a tension between the aspirations of professors to decolonize English Studies and the structural constraints imposed by standardized curricula, regulations, and institutional passivity. While professors are aware of the necessity to make English Studies more culturally relevant and locally contextualized, their efforts are often hindered by the lack of institutional support and curricular flexibility. This tension reflects what Maldonado-Torres (2007) describes as the "coloniality of being," where the structures of knowledge production continue to reflect colonial hierarchies, even in postcolonial contexts. In the Philippines, where English has historically functioned as a tool of colonial control and social stratification, the curriculum remains a site where colonial ideologies are reproduced through the privileging of Western texts, authors, and linguistic norms (Martin, 2020). The responses of the informants in this study affirm these findings. While individual educators may be willing to engage in decolonial work, their efforts are often constrained by curricular mandates that remain dependent on colonial standards. This is evident in the need for institutional leadership to recognize and support decolonizing initiatives through curriculum reviews, policy reforms, and the development of localized, culturally responsive syllabi. As Roman-Tamesis and Villaceran (2023) argue, decolonization must be embedded in institutional decisions about curriculum, research priorities, and teaching orientations to achieve meaningful and lasting change.

Localization of Content and Creative Adaptation as Pedagogical Strategies

Professors actively resist colonial legacies in English Studies by integrating Philippine and Cordilleran cultural elements into their teaching. Professors described selecting texts that reflect local realities, such as Philippine literature and regional narratives, to make learning more meaningful and culturally resonant. An informant shared that she uses "texts that are culturally based here in the Philippines," while another mentioned assigning "local literary pieces" like "The Mats" by Francisco Arcellana and "A Letter to Pedro" by Rene Estella Amper. Another informant recounted how her students adapted the Disney character Moana into "Mona," a Cordilleran figure, thereby embedding local identity into a global narrative. These practices reflect a deliberate pedagogical move to decenter Western texts and instead foreground Filipino and indigenous voices. This aligns with the work of Kumaravadivelu (2012), who advocates for a postmethod pedagogy that empowers teachers to draw from local knowledge systems and cultural contexts to make language education more relevant and transformative. In the

ISSN: 3116-3475
International Journal
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Philippines, where English has historically been used as a tool of colonial control, such localization efforts serve as acts of cultural affirmation and resistance (Tupas, 2015).

Professors encourage students to reimagine dominant narratives through culturally grounded creative outputs. These include rewriting Western stories with Filipino characters, composing poetry in local languages, and producing original works that reflect indigenous experiences. One of the informants, for example, allowed students to write *haiku* in Ilokano, while another informant described how students created localized children's stories that incorporated Filipino values and settings. These creative tasks not only encourage student engagement but also serve as cultural reclamation, enabling learners to assert their identities and challenge the dominance of Western literary forms. This pedagogical approach resonates with the principles of critical pedagogy, particularly Freire's (1970) emphasis on education as a practice of freedom, where learners are encouraged to critically engage with and transform their realities. Moreover, these practices align with the findings of Browning et al. (2022), that decolonizing language teaching involves dialogic, reflexive, and creative engagements that allow students to question and reshape inherited narratives.

Localization and creative adaptation are not peripheral or supplementary strategies but are central to how professors enact decolonizing pedagogy. These practices reflect a shift from passive consumption of Western texts to active engagement with local culture, language, and identity. They also demonstrate how decolonization can be operationalized through everyday classroom practices that empower students to see themselves as legitimate producers of knowledge. This is particularly significant in the Philippine context, where English education has long been entangled with colonial legacies that marginalize local languages and literatures (Martin, 2020). By encouraging students to rewrite and localize texts, professors disrupt the colonial logic that positions Western narratives as superior and universal. This approach also aligns with the findings of Roman-Tamesis and Villaceran (2023), who emphasize the importance of embedding Philippine contexts on English modules to institutionalize decolonizing practices.

Pedagogical Emphasis on Cultural Reflection and Meaning-Making

Professors in English Studies encourage students to engage with texts through the lens of their own cultural experiences. This approach is characterized by the use of open-ended questions, comparative analysis, and classroom discussions that prompt students to relate literary themes to their local contexts. For instance, one informant shared that she often ends lessons by asking, "What about in your place? What about in your culture?" and this strategy invites students to draw connections between the text and their lived realities. Similarly, another informant described how she encourages students to analyze literature by asking questions rooted in Filipino experiences, while another informant emphasized that "learning is more meaningful when familiar," suggesting that students comprehend and engage more deeply when content resonates with their cultural background. These pedagogical choices are a sign of commitment to student-centered learning, where knowledge is co-constructed through dialogue and cultural relevance. This aligns with Freire's (1970) concept of dialogic education, which positions learners as active participants in the learning process and emphasizes the importance of critical reflection in developing consciousness and agency.

This pedagogical orientation also reflects a broader shift away from traditional, transmission-based models of education toward more participatory and culturally responsive approaches. By centering students' cultural identities and experiences, professors encourage a learning environment that validates different perspectives and challenges the dominance of Western standards. As highlighted by Canagarajah (2005), *privileging* often marginalizes local voices and reinforces linguistic and cultural hierarchies. The professors' emphasis on cultural reflection and meaning-making serves as a counter-narrative to this trend, positioning local knowledge as a legitimate and valuable resource in the study of English literature and language. Moreover, this approach aligns with the principles of culturally sustaining pedagogy, which

ISSN: 3116-3475
International Journal
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seeks not only to acknowledge but also to sustain the cultural practices of marginalized communities in education (Paris & Alim, 2017).

Negotiating Language Use and Representation in English Studies

Professors in English Studies navigate the tension between institutional expectations of English-only instruction and the linguistic realities of their students. Professors are willing to allow students to use local languages such as Ilokano and Filipino in their creative outputs, discussions, and even assessments. One informant shared that she permits students to write haiku in Ilokano, while another informant stated, "I am for translanguaging," emphasizing that students' thought processes are often more coherent when they use their mother tongue. Another informant acknowledged that strict English-only policies can alienate learners and hinder their ability to express themselves authentically. These pedagogical choices serve as a recognition of the multilingual nature of Philippine classrooms and a commitment to linguistic inclusivity. This aligns with Garcia and Wei's (2014) theory of translanguaging, which views language practices as fluid and dynamic, allowing learners to draw from their full linguistic repertoires to make meaning. In decolonizing education, translanguaging becomes a powerful tool for resisting linguistic imperialism and validating the linguistic identities of marginalized communities (Flores & Rosa, 2015).

Professors encourage students to center Filipino and Cordilleran characters, settings, and cultural references in their literary and creative work. An informant observed that students often default to using Japanese or Western names in their stories, an evidence to the pervasive influence of global media and colonial education. In response, she actively pushes students to incorporate Cordilleran characters and local cultural elements into their narratives. One of the informants also noted that her students "put Filipino characteristics" into adapted stories, such as transforming Moana into "Mona," a character rooted in the Cordilleran landscape. These efforts challenge the dominance of Western representations in English Studies and promote a more inclusive and culturally grounded literary imagination. This aligns with the work of Alim and Paris (2017), that culturally sustaining pedagogy must go beyond inclusion to actively support the maintenance and development of students' cultural and linguistic practices. In the Philippines, where colonial education has historically marginalized indigenous and regional identities, such representational shifts are crucial for fostering cultural pride and countering internalized colonialism (Tupas, 2015).

By allowing translanguaging and promoting the representation of local identities, professors were able to challenge the colonial hierarchies that have long privileged English and Western cultural norms in education. These practices not only enhance student engagement and comprehension but also affirm the legitimacy of local languages and cultures as sources of knowledge and creativity. However, these efforts are often enacted at the individual level and may lack institutional support or policy backing. As Roman-Tamesis and Villaceran (2023) note, while some faculty members are already engaging in decolonial practices, these remain fragmented and are not yet embedded in curriculum or institutional mandates. Moreover, the persistence of English-only policies and the societal valorization of Western linguistic and cultural norms continue to pose challenges to the full realization of decolonizing goals. This reflects the need for a change that includes revising language policies, developing multilingual curricula, and providing professional development for faculty on translanguaging and culturally sustaining pedagogy. As Garcia and Wei (2014) argue, embracing translanguaging in education requires a paradigm shift that recognizes the legitimacy of multilingual practices and the value of linguistic diversity.

Assessment as a Site of Decolonizing Practice

Professors are rethinking traditional evaluation practices in English Studies to prioritize content, cultural relevance, and student expression over linguistic accuracy. Some of the informants emphasized that while grammar remains a component of assessment, it is no longer the central criterion. An informant noted that "grammar is only one criterion," and that she includes "cultural relevance" in her rubrics. Another informant stated, "I measure content, not grammar," showing a deliberate move to assess

ISSN: 3116-3475
International Journal
of Education, Research, and Innovation Perspectives
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students based on their understanding and contextual application of concepts rather than their adherence to prescriptive language norms. Another informant described her final assessment as performance-based, where students are expected to embody characters and narratives that reflect local culture, suggesting a broader and more inclusive understanding of what constitutes academic excellence. These practices reflect a growing awareness that traditional assessments, which often privilege standard English and Western literary forms, can marginalize students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. By shifting the focus of assessment, professors are creating space for students to demonstrate learning in ways that are more aligned with their identities and lived experiences.

This reorientation of assessment practices aligns with broader calls in the literature to decolonize evaluation systems in educational institutions. According to Smith (2012), decolonizing methodologies must include a rethinking of how knowledge is validated and assessed, moving away from Eurocentric standards that often exclude indigenous and marginalized perspectives. Similarly, Dei and Cacciavillani (2024) argue that assessment should be reimagined to reflect the values, epistemologies, and communicative practices of local communities. This means recognizing that linguistic diversity and cultural specificity are not deficits but assets that enrich the learning environment. The professors' emphasis on content, creativity, and cultural relevance in assessment reflects an effort to align evaluation with the goals of decolonizing pedagogy, which seeks to empower students as knowledge producers and cultural agents.

Lack of Faculty Development and Training on Decolonization

There is a consistent concern among professors regarding the absence of structured professional development opportunities that explicitly address decolonizing English Studies. The informants acknowledged that while they may be engaging in practices aligned with decolonial pedagogy, these actions are largely self-initiated and not supported by institutional training. One informant stated that "there was even no seminar or lecture series that is anchored on decolonizing English Studies," while another admitted, "I have not experienced any seminar for that." Another two informants noted that while some trainings touch on culture and local language use, they are not labeled or framed as decolonization efforts. This lack of formal engagement with decolonial theory and practice suggests that faculty are left to address these pedagogical shifts on their own, often without the conceptual tools or institutional backing necessary to deepen and sustain their efforts. This aligns with the findings of Tamimi et al. (2024), who argue that higher education institutions often fail to provide adequate support for faculty to engage in decolonial work, resulting in fragmented and inconsistent implementation.

Shahjahan et al. (2022) emphasized that decolonizing curriculum and pedagogy requires not only individual initiative but also collective, institutional commitment. Without structured opportunities for faculty to engage with decolonial theory, reflect on their own positionalities, and collaboratively develop strategies for implementation, efforts to decolonize English Studies risk remaining superficial or isolated. This is particularly problematic in contexts like the Philippines, where colonial legacies continue to shape educational structures, language policies, and curricular content. As Roman-Tamesis and Villaceran (2023) point out, decolonial practice must be embedded in institutional decisions about curriculum, research priorities, and teaching orientations. Faculty development is a critical mechanism for achieving this integration, as it equips educators with the knowledge, language, and frameworks needed to critically examine and transform their pedagogical practices.

The professors' reflections reveal a strong desire to engage in decolonial work, but also a sense of uncertainty and isolation due to the lack of formal training and institutional guidance. This gap not only limits the depth and coherence of decolonial practices but also places an undue burden on individual educators to navigate theoretical understanding without support. As Smith (2012) argues, decolonizing education requires a collective reimagining of research and pedagogy that is grounded in indigenous and

ISSN: 3116-3475
International Journal
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Volume 2 Issue 4 (April 2026)

local epistemologies. Faculty development programs play an important role in facilitating this reimagining by creating spaces for dialogue, critical reflection, and collaborative learning.

CONCLUSION

Informants in this study understand decolonization of English Studies as a process of contextualizing pedagogy to reflect the cultural, linguistic, and historical context of Filipino, particularly Cordilleran students. Rather than drawing from formal theoretical frameworks, they interpret decolonization as a shift away from Western-centric teaching toward practices that are culturally relevant and locally grounded. This includes recognizing Philippine English as legitimate, selecting local texts, and encouraging students to relate literature to their own experiences. While most professors admitted unfamiliarity with the term "decolonization," their pedagogical choices reflect an intuitive alignment with decolonial principles, suggesting that decolonization is already being practiced, although implicitly and without institutional framing.

Professors described their decolonizing practices in curriculum transformation, pedagogical strategies, language use, assessment, and professional development. They localized content by integrating Filipino and Cordilleran literature, encouraged creative rewriting of Western narratives, and promoted reflective, dialogic learning that centers students' cultural perspectives. Language use in the classroom was negotiated through translanguaging and the validation of local languages, while assessment practices shifted from grammar-focused evaluation to performance- and content-based approaches. However, these efforts were often constrained by rigid curriculum, lack of institutional support, and the absence or lack of formal training. Faculty development on decolonization is lacking, leaving professors to rely on personal initiative. These findings are evident in the need for systemic reforms, such as curriculum revision, policy alignment, and structured faculty development, to support and sustain decolonizing English Studies. Without institutional commitment, decolonial practices risk remaining fragmented and unsustainable, despite the clear willingness and creativity of professors to challenge colonial legacies in their classrooms.

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