

Article

The Century-Long Engineered Value of the English Language and the Neoliberal Labor in the Philippines

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Abstract: The neocolonial entanglements of the Philippines with the United States, as intensified by globalization, have maintained the status of English as a privileged language in the country. Learning and using English is inevitable in the Philippines, especially due to globalization. People across cultural, linguistic, and geographical boundaries are now closely intertwined with one another due to the advancement in technology and transportation. This research intends to investigate the link between English and globalized discourses of labor. This research asks the question: How is linguistic skill valued within the framework of neoliberal labor? This general question is answered through supplementary inquiries that each represents a site for the production and circulation of such discourses about English: 1) How does the semi-colonial, semi-feudal setup of the Philippines contribute to the construction of the neoliberal labor?; 2) How is the educational policy in the Philippines shaped by the global market historically?

With the pending policies and mindset by the Marcos Jr. administration regarding the English language, further discussion on language policy is significant. This paper will explain the historical creative design of neoliberalism in creating an engineered economic value of English in a Third World country, creative in such a way that it creates an illusion of choice in employment and that it covertly encroaches on our language planning.

Keywords: neoliberalism, English language, neoliberal labor, language education policy, engineered language value, discourse of labor

I. The Overview of the Century-Long Design

The neocolonial entanglements of the Philippines with the United States, as intensified by globalization, have maintained the status of English as a privileged language in the country. Learning and using English is inevitable in the Philippines, especially due to globalization. People across cultural, linguistic, and geographical boundaries are now closely intertwined with one another due to the advancement in technology and transportation. Therefore, the need for a lingua franca is very significant nowadays, and this is where English as a native, a second, or a foreign language, comes in. English is considered the most spoken language worldwide with an estimated 1.5 billion people currently speaking it as a native or a second language (Statista 2023). People from various countries use English either as a second or a foreign language, and the Philippines is one of the countries where English speakers can be found. More than 14 million Filipinos use English of different fluency levels (Cabigon 2015). In 2022, the Philippines even ranked second among Southeast and East Asian countries and 22nd worldwide based on the English Proficiency Index of the Education First (Business World 2022). Today, English and Filipino are both considered official languages of the country and are being used in a wide array of formal and informal functions such as in the government, media, academia, and industries. This research will investigate the link between English and globalized discourses of labor. This research asks the question: How is linguistic skill valued within the framework of neoliberal labor? This general question is answered through supplementary inquiries that each represents a site for the production and circulation of such discourses about English:

1. How does the semi-colonial, semi-feudal setup of the Philippines contribute to the construction of the neoliberal labor?
2. How is the educational policy in the Philippines shaped by the global market historically?

This paper will explain the *creative* design of neoliberalism in creating an engineered economic value of English in a Third World country. Creative in such a way that it creates an illusion of choice in employment and that it covertly encroaches on our language planning. Primarily, language-in-education and labor policies in different eras were considered as discussion points on how the encroachment of neoliberalism is a century-long design.

This research can be a significant contribution to the field of critical language pedagogy and an addition to the body of critical knowledge in the development of future language planning. Additionally, this research aims to help in the development of English as a discipline in the Philippines and of a language curriculum that is void of market dictates, and its genuine role in society. In a larger context, this specific study helps further

concretize how English is a market-driven language worldwide with the case study of the language in the Philippines.

II. The Blueprint of the Neoliberal Labor

The English language in the Philippines functions as a significant commodity in a semi-colonial, semi-feudal country whose economic condition is engineered according to the pressures and imperatives of the global market. Such a condition in the country did not happen in the blink of an eye; the historical context of production in the Philippines led to this semi-colonial, semi-feudal condition. The vast and rich agricultural land is owned by only a few families and tilled by landless farmer-workers paid seasonally and inexpensively. On the other hand, the industries are run by transnational corporations and bureaucratic capitalists. Workers are considered a commodity and are compensated with low wages. Philippine history has shown that such low real wages, poor working conditions, and lack of job security have happened since the Spanish colonization of the Philippines. During that time, thousands of acres of land were overseen by friars and few landlords, while Filipino farmers till the lands for agricultural export (Guerrero 1970). This persists up until now, with most agricultural lands held by few landholders (IBON Foundation 2017). Landless tillers earn scant wages in exchange for their labor. For example, Hacienda Luisita farmers then received roughly Php 66.50 weekly (US \$1.17 or a daily wage of Php 9.50/US \$0.17) (Karapatan 2014). The landlessness of the farmers and the inhumane wage persists up until now. Unyon ng mga Manggagawa sa Agrikultura (2022) reported that seven of ten farmers own no or little land for tilling and that the lowest daily wage of Php 9 (US \$0.16) received by a *sacada* or a seasonal laborer under the Duterte regime.

While such a context was happening to most agricultural areas, poor working conditions and cheap labor were also significant issues for workers, especially in the early 1900s under the American colonization. Legal papers during that period indicated daily wages as low as Php 1.25 (US \$0.022) for government workers while sugarcane workers earned Php 0.40-0.50 (US \$0.0071-0.0088) per day despite a family spending of 47 centavos (US \$0.83) for rice daily (Dennison 1938). Aside from low wages, prolonged hours at work, rendering 14 hours daily as an example (Dennison 1938), and sexual abuse from a male authority among women workers (Taguiwalo 2011) were rampant during that milieu as well. Such conditions drove Filipino workers to render cheap labor to the United States of America. Act No. 2486 of 1915 legalized the recruitment of Filipinos to work in the United States of America through an agency called Hawaiian Sugar Planters Association, managing and recruiting Filipinos through commission work (Filipino Contract Laborers in Hawaii 1926). Though Hawaiian sugar plantations were initially the destinations for the first wave of Filipino migrant workers, more flocked to varied agricultural plantations in California, Watsonville, Imperial Valley, Central Valley, Washington, and Oregon, and canning factories from Southern California to Alaska (Moore 2019). Under a contract, a Filipino

laborer in Hawaii earned Php 40 (US \$0.71) monthly with 26 workdays, rendering ten to twelve hours at a field or factory, while women earned a monthly wage of Php 28 (US \$0.49) and children depending on the rendered services (Filipino Contract Laborers in Hawaii 1926). Such is a relatively higher wage compared to wages in the Philippines, and this attracted a lot of Filipinos during that time. From 1909 to 1925, 76,242 individuals, including 10,000 women and children, went to Hawaii (Filipino Contract Laborers in Hawaii 1926). Filipino workers abroad met their fair share of issues with the inhumane number of working hours, the lack of transparency with the value of labor and agency expenses covered by the contract, late payments, and racial and political discrimination (Filipino Contract Laborers in Hawaii 1926). Unfortunately, such plights were rarely reported. Commissioner Cayetano Ligot often favored plantation administrators over workers (Moore 2019).

Another program that was initiated by the U.S. during the colonization period was the introduction of public health by sending out Filipino women called *pensionados* to the States to train as a nurse and later on by establishing training programs for nursing in the Philippines during the Commonwealth period, and the institutionalization of the 1948 U.S. Exchange Visitor Program (EVP) after the Second World War (Rodriguez 2010). Catherine Choy (quoted in Rodriguez 2010), added that, during the 1960s, the majority of the participants of the said program were Filipinos and were nurses.

These programs and opportunities back then served as the economic motivation of the Filipinos to accept the educational system, including the language of instruction. Despite the Philippines being a multilingual country with 186 documented languages (Eberhard et al. 2022) and lacking a language of solidarity, the English language was formally introduced to the Filipinos through the education system instilled by the American colonizers. Under Act No. 74 of 1901, a centralized public education system was formed in the Philippines, enforced by the Philippine Commission under the jurisdiction of President William McKinley. The same act enforced the use of the English language as the mode of instruction in public schools (Dawe 2014). Such an educational system was assumed by Americans to be triumphant only if it were under American teachers. As Charles Burke Elliot (quoted in Constantino 1982, 3) stated:

“of course such a system of education as the Americans contemplated could be successful only under the direction of American teachers, as the Filipino teachers who had been trained in Spanish methods were ignorant of the English language.”

To enforce this vision into reality, the first group of teachers composed of 357 males and 200 females of different academic backgrounds was sent from the United States of America to the Philippines boarding the U.S. army ship *Thomas* (A Brief History of the

Thomasites 2019). This marked the beginning of a colonial language policy under the guise of benevolence, and this practice helped subjugate Filipinos through education which aided in shaping the minds of Filipinos into conformity: “The molding of men’s minds is the best means of conquest. Education, therefore, serves as a weapon in wars of colonial conquest (Constantino 1982, 2).” The English language was used as a mode of instruction and provided difficulty to learning children (Dawe 2014). Despite the establishment of a national committee to recommend a national language through Commonwealth Act No. 184 in 1936 and the institutionalization of Tagalog as the national language through Executive Order No. 134 in 1936 (Belvez, n.d.), English remained the medium of instruction. With the vast reach to the Filipino public of the English language through education, it was only in 1957 that the Board of National Education adopted a policy that allowed the use of native languages as the medium of instruction, but only for the first and second grades (Sibayan, 1985). While the debates on the national language continued beyond English colonization, and to the Third Republic, English remained steadily as a medium of instruction. By almost the end of the 1930s, a quarter of Filipinos from the 1939 census report could speak the language (Tupas & Lorente 2014).

The Commonwealth period marked the beginning of how the English language is viewed today: a skill needed for economic gain. The economic motivation became one of the factors for early labor exports and the acceptance of the English language as a learned skill in the academe. Gonzalo Campoamor II (2013) discussed the historical context of English as a pedagogical tool in the reproduction of products from the American colonization period. According to him, the English language in the Philippines has been deeply rooted based on the present language policies implemented by the government. He recognized the English language as an ideological state apparatus of the ruling class to maintain the mode of production. Similarly, Ruanni Tupas (quoted in Cabling et al. 2020, 189) shared that this language-in-education campaign of the United States of America provided an “imperial amnesia” that caused Filipinos to change their attitudes unfavorably towards Philippine languages.

III. The Institutionalization of Labor Brokerage

The economic policies that had been crafted post-Second World War despite the independence of the country from any direct colonization did not mitigate or solve the country’s labor issues that can be traced back to the Spanish and the American colonizations. These policies primarily favored the capitalist investors by providing leeway for a higher profit and cheaper cost of production, wherein labor is considered part of the latter (Tidalgo 1983). The prolonged and persistent cheap real wage and unresolved labor issues are some of the factors why labor export has become rampant. The further integration of labor export to the government’s policies clawed its way under the ruling of then President Ferdinand Marcos Sr. The Marcos Sr. administration institutionalized the

Overseas Employment Development Board (OEDB) and National Seamen Board (NSB) as part of the 1974 labor code (Moore 2019). The said administration paved the way for cheap labor export by creating job strategies for workers and seamen in the Middle East (Africa 2016). These moves had become the government's solution to the issues prevalent during the Martial Law. Contrary to the administration's label of the period of dictatorship as the Golden Era of the country, the real wage of the laborers went down from 100 in 1970 to 63.7 in 1980 (Torres-Yu 2003) amid price hikes. Increase in prices of goods and services hiked from 2.7% to 23.2% in 1965, similar to the joblessness from 7.1% to 12.6% in the same year (IBON Foundation 2016).

Competent and skilled workers are still hired in the global market for cheap labor, saving companies and capitalist enterprises costs. In this setup, the government served as the broker between the laborer and the capitalist countries which are in need of a cheap labor workforce. By legitimizing the labor export, Robyn M. Rodriguez (2010) explained the concept of "labor brokerage" as a strategy that enables the states and institutions to earn through remittances of their natives working abroad for what is considered substandard pay.

The Marcos Sr. administration had not only established institutions and policies that ensured labor export, but also fortified the position of the English language in the Philippines. Additionally, Andrew Gonzalez (quoted in Tupas & Lorente 2014) provided that one of the two reasons for the immense trajectory of the English value had been the advantages received for learning the language such as services received from the government, the career advantages, and politics. And to ensure the advantage of Filipinos for overseas work, the Marcos Sr. administration institutionalized the Bilingual Education Program through the Department of Education, Culture, and Sports (DECS) Order No. 25. The program operationalized the use of both English and Pilipino in the classroom, having the former to be used for the subjects of mathematics and science and technology while the latter for the subjects of social sciences, arts, practical arts, music, home economics, and character education (Espiritu n.d.). Despite the inclusion of the national language as a mode of instruction, the program was seamlessly tied to the administration's promotion of cheap labor export. Being vulnerable due to government policies and at the same time highly skilled and fluent in English became advantages for career advancement. With the enactment of Presidential Decree 442 of the same year, using the U.S. Exchange Visitor Program (EVP) as the blueprint, the administration promoted labor export not only to the U.S. but to other foreign countries as well. After the enactment of the labor code, the number of overseas workers ballooned from 36,035 in 1975 to 266,243 in 1986 (Dalupang 2017). Such policies provided gains not only to foreign countries who were able to minimize the cost by hiring cheap labor, but also to the administration who had become dependent on remittances of the workers abroad as a band-aid measure of a failing economy. The government has successfully placed the country as a source of labor export that:



“by the latter part of the twentieth century, the Philippine state had thus begun to assume greater authority with regard to overseas workers by framing labor migration as a development strategy, defining the privileges and responsibility of labor migrants, and strengthening its overall powers as a labor brokerage state.” (Padios 2018, 16)

IV. The Shadow of the Sunshine Industry

The firms based in the United States had begun outsourcing customer services, telemarketing, technical support, and debt collection offshore, mostly to Third World Asian countries in the latter part of the 1990s (Padios 2018). At that time, the Ramos administration provided an economic plan to mitigate the \$28 billion debt incurred during the dictatorship of the Marcoses. During his term, *Business Week* (quoted in Aguilar 1997) named the country “Asia’s Sick Man.” With no financial capacity for industrialization and under a huge debt, the Special Economic Zone Act in 1995, which was later amended by the Republic Act 8748 was enacted to attract foreign and local investors from agro-industrial, industrial, tourist, financial, banking, investment, and commercial industries. These identified zones or lands are under the jurisdiction of the Philippine Economic Zone Authority and on their website, they currently identified 419 economic zones of different industries: 78 manufacturing economic zones, 297 information technology (IT) parks or centers, 17 tourism export enterprises, 24 agro-industrial economic zones, and three medical tourism parks or centers (Philippine Economic Zone Authority, 2023). However, the caveat of the creation of these zones is that the policies were deregulated for profit. An investment consultant of Megaworld Corporation (quoted in Bartolata 2009) shared that profitability with “cost effective labor force and environment” is the primary factor as to why foreign investors are attracted to IT parks. Robyn M. Rodriguez (2010) stated that the cost-effectiveness that foreign and local investors would gain by outsourcing in the Philippines comes from the cheap labor and resources provided by these zones. On the other hand, the zones with outsourcing investors created jobs for Filipinos, who longstanding struggled for job security.

The amendment of the Constitution in 1987 during Pres. Corazon Aquino only fortified the DECS Order 25 of 1974, institutionalizing the two languages as the mode of instruction and including the regional languages only as auxiliary languages with the goal of keeping the competence not only in Filipino as a national language, but also in English, and Pres. Fidel V. Ramos simply reinforced this policy, much more priming towards the English language. In his 1994 speech, he (quoted in Official Gazette 1994) reiterated his plan of creating a pool of globally competitive Filipinos by not only providing deregulations on education to make way for technical-vocational courses but also reinforcing the need to

strengthen English language teaching. Additionally, the Commission on Higher Education (CHED) released Memo No. 59 of 1996 and No. 4 of 1997 that provided engineered priming towards the English language. A closer inspection of the CHED Memo No. 59 of 1996 for the General Education Program (GEP) Curriculum A showed that 18 of the general education courses had been taught in English while nine were in Filipino, and that additional English courses were given for those unable to pass their English courses (Abad 2007). Additionally, the CHED Memo No. 4 of 1997 for the GEP Curriculum B, courses taught in the Filipino language were only six units, while those taught in the English language could range from nine to 15 units, and the six units of Philippine literature due to limited recognition of local writers and scholars (Abad 2007).

During the Macapagal-Arroyo administration, Pres. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo once said that she considers herself a CEO and the country a “global enterprise” that creates what is considered an asset in global production: a willing “highly skilled, well-educated, English-speaking” and at the same time a “productive” and “efficient” worker for a lower salary. In the Philippines, job opportunities in business process outsourcing (BPO) have risen as well due to the deregulation of labor export policies and outsourcing labor (Rodriguez, 2010:x). The so-called “sunshine industry” of the Philippines garnered export revenue of \$13B with an annual stable growth of 8-9% for the country (Abad 2017). Despite garnering such revenue, any foreign economic slowdown also affects this industry due to its dependence on foreign economies. And with the economic setback in the U.S. before, the industry of BPOs was looking for alternatives to maintain capital growth by moving from major cities to other highly urbanized areas due to cheaper labor (IBON Foundation 2009). In addition, remittances by Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) grew, reaching an amount of \$18.6B from January to August of 2017 (Lucas 2017), while the demand for cheap English language courses has risen (McGeown 2012).

Such industries built by foreign machineries meant that the employment requirements of Filipino workers should be at their convenience and the ability to communicate with foreign individuals and groups is a necessity to survive in such foreign-built and governed industries. Maria Teresa Tinio’s (2013, 216) work described the factor that the English language plays in a labor landscape:

“the employment requirement of “excellent English communication skills” is a quality that is not particularly rare in the Philippine college-graduate workforce, as a college graduate would have had significant exposure to use English almost exclusively in college.”

The economic imperatives dictate the privileges of English, and the language and education policies are reinvented to provide a leeway for neoliberalism to creep into. The Executive Order 210 (Establishing the Policy to Strengthen the Use of English in the Educational



System) in 2003 by President Macapagal-Arroyo established the use of English language for the subjects English, Mathematics, and Science from the third-grade level, and for all levels in secondary education, providing those learning areas that use English as the mode of instruction more than or at least 70% of the total time allotment for all learning areas. The executive order explicitly stated the rationale for this: “to make them better prepared for the job opportunities emerging in the new, technology-driven sectors of the economy (Official Gazette, 2003).” Melania L. Abad (2007) described this order as a reinforcement of the English language in secondary education by allocating 70% for English-mediated learning areas from the original 45%.

The K-12 Education in 2015 during the administration of Pres. Noynoy Aquino provided another creative design to maintain the globally competitive human resource base for labor export and outsourcing. With the aggressive inclusion and promotion of the technical-vocational track in the additional two-year basic education, the Philippine state kept up with the demand. A total of 1,252,357 students first completed the K-12 program in 2018 with 61.13% of it from the academic track and 38.2% from the technical-vocational tracks; former secretary of the Department of Education Leonor Briones assured the technical-vocational track takers of employment: “the close to 90% of the tech-voc students who have undergone the modeling program since 2013 and eventually got employed, while 10% pursued higher or further learning” (quoted in Montemayor 2018). Similarly, San Juan (2016) mentioned that these technical-vocational tracks cater to the needs of capitalist ventures abroad, with capitalist countries receiving the most advantages from the new scheme of Philippine education.

Furthermore, the mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE), included in the K-12 program, challenged the dominance of the English language in the realm of education; however, upon closer evaluation, the MTB-MLE is only introduced in the kindergarten and the first three levels of the basic education. From then on, the native languages are to be used as auxiliary languages or scaffolding to learn Filipino and English. As said by Beatriz Lorente (2013), the hold of the English language remained the same despite the inclusion of the MTB-MLE due to the former’s value. On the other hand, the CHED during that time further privileged the English language by removing the Filipino language and literature courses in the General Education Curriculum of the programs in the higher education by issuing the CHED Memo No. 20 of 2013, rationalizing that these duplicated the subjects in the secondary education without any close analyses and simultaneously promoting global market through terms like *global*, *world*, *globalized world*, *larger community*, *globalization*, *globalized community* (Marin 2021).

This design to be dependent of foreign countries pushed the Filipino workers to oblige with the labor entry standards set by these countries. For example, the Department of Labor and Employment (DOLE) (2014) released a statement requiring Filipino overseas workers to take an English proficiency test in a recognized center by the International



English Language Testing System (IELTS) or Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) as compliance to the requirements of Cayman Islands in the issuance of work permits. These testing agencies or systems require an amount to be paid and the government agency DOLE explicitly stated that the fee, along with the preparations, is to be shouldered by Filipino workers individually. Simply passing the proficiency test is insufficient as the Cayman Islands requires a 6.5 band score in IELTS or a level B2 band score in TOEIC (Department of Labor and Employment 2014). Similarly, Filipino nurses who wish to work in the United Kingdom are required to receive a band score of 7 in IELTS, as per the announcement of the Nursing and Midwifery Council (in British Council of United Arab Emirates n.d.) in 2018.

V. The Prevalence of the Century-long Grand Design

Before the pandemic, a 2019 survey reported a 7.8% increase in the number of overseas Filipino workers (OFW) from the 2010 survey and there were 2.2 million overseas Filipino workers in that year alone with 70% of them classified as sales and service workers, 12.2% as plant and machine operators, and 39.6% as laborers or unskilled workers (Kang and Latoja 2022). As a matter of fact, David Michael San Juan (2016) reported that remittances from overseas Filipino workers contribute substantially and exponentially to the country's gross domestic product while national manufacturing remains stagnant. When the mobility restrictions were held due to COVID-19, the Department of Foreign Affairs was able to repatriate a total of 327,511 OFWs by the end of 2020 (Kang and Latoja 2022). Unfortunately, the domestic labor landscape created by the state for more than a hundred years failed to provide repatriated OFW employment locally. Additionally, the newly created Department of Migrant Workers under the Republic Act 11641 of 2021 encourages the deeply embedded issue of having Filipino migrant workers for the sake of labor brokerage.

On the other hand, the BPO remained unscathed by the pandemic, and has proven to withstand the series of lockdowns and mobility measures in the Philippines. The integration of other sectors such as healthcare, retail, banking, telecommunications, e-commerce, and financial administration into the BPO industry provided not just an offset to the losses in the industry of hospitality and travel, but also a rise in employment and revenue (Piad 2021). Strikingly, the employment requirements in such industries built and managed by foreign investors is the ability to use the English language. Two applicants shared their experiences of taking tests on English language fluency to gauge their communication ability (Piad 2021). This further provides an insight into the world of employment with the engineered value of the English language.

With the return of the Marcoses, the design of engineered value continues. The Ferdinand Marcos Jr. administration had begun its term with pronouncements on education “overhaul”, though a closer look suggests that such overhaul covertly pertains to asserting the neoliberal approach to language policies. One of these pronouncements pertained to the language policy in education when Marcos Jr. said:

“what we teach in our schools, the materials used, must be retaught. I am not talking about history, I am talking about the basics, the sciences, sharpening theoretical aptitude and imparting vocational skills such as in the German example. Alongside, the national language, with equal emphasis and facility in a global language, which we had and lost” (quoted in Manila Bulletin 2022).

The acknowledgment of how the English language is placed with a high value in job opportunities only solidifies the centennial creative design of the state. The statement also implies that such linguistic skill was lost due to previous policies, which in fact did not deter the use of English in the first place. Alongside the engineered valuing of the English language is the eradication of critical courses like history in replacement of skills needed to maintain the huge pool of globally competitive human resource, when the inclusion of courses like history provides young Filipinos the space for discernment and critical perspectives on national policy making. With the reopening of the borders for labor export and continuous building of special economic zones, the need to continuously provide a huge base for cheap yet globally competitive human resources is heightened.

Additionally, the administration intends to undermine the progress of the Filipino language and of Philippine languages through legislation and terror-tagging. Recently, two proposed legislation policies suspending the implementation of MTB-MLE have become a recent topic: the House Bill 2188 by Representative Roman Romulo and the House Bill 3925 by Representative Mark Go, both intend to suspend the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction from kindergarten to Grade 3. Alongside such legalistic maneuvers is the recent case of terror-tagging of Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino (KWF) publications by the government’s counter-insurgency unit, National Task Force to End Local Communist Armed Conflict (NTF-ELCAC) during the *Buwan ng Wika*. NTF-ELCAC branded these several KWF publications as “subversive” and “anti-government” in a television show, then the event was followed by the KWF’s memo to prevent the publication and circulation of these. This only shows the government’s efforts extending even in its agencies and institutions to curtail academic freedom and the right to information.

VI. Advancing National Industrialization as an Alternative Language Landscape

The premium value placed on the English language in the Philippines did not happen overnight. The labor landscape throughout the years has been shaped by the colonial history of the country and the foreign economy dependence of the country. This landscape perceives human resource, labor, and skills as products to be exported and accepted by foreign countries and investors for cheaper or a more cost-efficient way to gain profit. Due to the lack of national industrialization and self-sufficiency in providing jobs for Filipinos, the Philippine state chose to give abundant material and labor resources to foreign countries and investors through labor brokerage. The American colonization provided the labor blueprint that the Philippine state followed throughout the years and the *de facto* stature of the English language in education. The dictatorship of the Marcoses provided a strong legal framework for the cheap labor export and the institutionalization of the English language in the classrooms while the post-dictatorship administrations provided all legal institutions and policies in education to maintain the human resource base that the global market needed.

The need for advancing national industrialization is significant to overhaul this century-long design of engineered value of English. With national industrialization, the dependency of decent job opportunities to the dictates of foreign machineries, may these be in or beyond the geographical boundaries of the country, and this engineered prestige of English dependent on the framework of global competitiveness in the labor sector will diminish. Correspondingly, the education system should be overhauled as well. Instead of catering to the needs of foreign, capitalist machineries, it should cater to the needs of a nation, alongside the needs of its citizens.

This paper does not intend to eradicate the concept of learning a new language; however, a redirection is necessary. The English language, much like any language, should be taught in a decolonial framework wherein language teaching is not confined to the grammar of the language per se, but also provides students with a program of critical thinking and knowledge production, similar to how the paper by Cabling and the others (2020) view foreign language teaching in the Philippines.

Lastly, it is necessary to produce more research that focuses on neoliberal labor and language. One topic that can be endeavored is a thorough investigation and discussion on the language guidelines of hiring private and public agencies as this will provide a more solid discussion on how the engineered value of the English language materializes in job opportunities.

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