

*Routledge Advances in Translation and Interpreting Studies*

# TRANSLATION STUDIES IN THE PHILIPPINES

NAVIGATING A MULTILINGUAL ARCHIPELAGO

Edited by

Riccardo Moratto and Mary Ann G. Bacolod



# Translation Studies in the Philippines

The contributors to this book examine the state, development, issues, practices, and approaches to translation studies in the Philippines.

The Philippines is a highly multilingual country, with many indigenous languages and regional dialects spoken alongside foreign imports, particularly English and Spanish. Professor Moratto, Professor Bacolod, and their contributors analyse the different roles that translation plays across an extensive range of areas, including disaster mitigation, crisis communication, gender bias, marginalization of Philippine languages, academe, and views on sex, gender, and sexuality. They look at a range of different types of translation, from the translation of biblical texts to audio-visual translation and machine translation. Emphasising the importance of translation as an interdisciplinary field, they use a variety of analytic lenses, including anthropological linguistics, language and culture studies, semantics, structural linguistics, and performance arts, among others.

A comprehensive resource for scholars and practitioners of translation, as well as a valuable reference for scholars across a wider range of humanities and social science disciplines in examining the culture, language, and society of the Philippines.

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Edited by **Riccardo Moratto** and  
**Mary Ann G. Bacolod**

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# Contents

<i>Foreword</i>	<i>vii</i>
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>Notes on Editors</i>	<i>x</i>
<i>Notes on Contributors</i>	<i>xi</i>
<b>Introduction to Translation Studies in the Philippines: Navigating a Multilingual Archipelago</b>	<b>1</b>
RICCARDO MORATTO AND MARY ANN G. BACOLOD	
<b>1 A Concise History of Translation in the Philippines</b>	<b>7</b>
NAIDYL ISIS BAUTISTA AND ANNA MARIE SIBAYAN-SARMIENTO	
<b>2 Translation and Interpreting Education in the Philippines: A Preliminary Country Profile</b>	<b>23</b>
MARLON JAMES SALES	
<b>3 Performing Disappearance and Resurfacing: Viewing the World through Theater Translation in the Academe</b>	<b>38</b>
VLADIMEIR B. GONZALES	
<b>4 Beyond Constraints: Advancing Linguistic Consensus in Filipino Subtitling</b>	<b>52</b>
MICHAEL MANAHAN	
<b>5 Necessary Infidelity: Obligatory Shifts in Translating Audiovisual Texts for Children</b>	<b>66</b>
HONEYLET E. DUMORAN	

<b>6</b>	<b>Gender Bias in Machine Translation: The Case of Filipino-English Translation in Google Translate</b>	<b>83</b>
	DIVINE ANGELI ENDRIGA AND FRANCISCO ROSARIO, JR.	
<b>7</b>	<b>The Biblical, the Moral, and the Legal: Juxtaposing Filipino/Tagalog Translations of Biblical Passages and Local Views on Sex, Gender, and Sexuality</b>	<b>100</b>
	JEM R. JAVIER AND MADILENE B. LANDICHO	
<b>8</b>	<b>On the Translatability of Filipino Modals and its Impact on Disaster Communication</b>	<b>116</b>
	MARY ANN G. BACOLOD	
<b>9</b>	<b>Lost for Words: The Untranslatability of Some Tagalog Words and Phrases</b>	<b>135</b>
	JESUS FEDERICO C. HERNANDEZ	
	<i>Index</i>	<i>146</i>

# Foreword

The hasty observation that there might not be a lot of translation work being done in the Philippines probably just means that one is looking in all the wrong places.

It is true that most of the translation being done in the Philippines cannot be found in literature or philosophy shelves of local bookstores. Powerfully working against the growth and expansion of conventional belletristic translational work in the Philippines is the fact that, differently from most other countries in Asia, the Filipino educated elite continue to read and promote mostly imported English language books. Indeed, arduous translational efforts into Philippine languages are sometimes greeted with deflationary statements to the effect that translations are unnecessary since the reading public which matters, or those who can actually afford to buy expensive books, prefer to read these works directly in English or in English relay translations anyway. Translation is thus rendered almost redundant. A jaded Filipino publisher once told me that works in Filipino which traffic in serious ideas are just too high-brow for a Filipino language readership (because of its content), and too low-brow for an English language readership (because of the language it is in). The corollary is that translations of artistic and intellectually challenging works into Philippine languages apparently have no audience and are therefore considered unprofitable publishing prospects.

This is not to deny the fact that there has been a palpably encouraging surge of translations of foreign literary works, including saleable popular works, into Filipino and other Philippine languages in more recent years. But this is still not the area where most translations in the Philippines are being done.

Where then should one look to feel the living pulse of translational work in the Philippines? In a massively multilingual and archipelagic nation such as the Philippines, translation is obviously always taking place everywhere and at all times. It is to the credit of the editors of this volume, Prof. Dr. Riccardo Moratto and Dr. Mary Ann G. Bacolod, as well as of its contributing authors that they have sought out and discovered domains where the practice of translation is necessary, unavoidable, and even urgent. These are the points of intersection where languages pressed tightly together, cheek by jowl as it were, by relentless market logics, pragmatic educational considerations, paramount



religious imperatives, the exacting demands of performance, and life and death responses to natural disasters, generate veritable outpourings of translations.

This volume offers several rigorous empirically oriented analyses of the various domains of day-to-day translational practice in the Philippines. While these studies have clearly borrowed productively from the wealth of ideas in contemporary Translation Studies, distinct and original theories of translation in the Philippines can grow only on the basis of these kinds of fertile empirical research. Even reflections on deep philosophical questions regarding the problem of translatability and untranslatability can be more greatly enriched by the material of experience rather than by empty, oftentimes Orientalist, speculations.

In other words, this volume now has to be counted as one of the auspicious starting points of Translation Studies coming into its own in the Philippines.

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We are truly indebted to all the contributors of this volume, who provided the erudition and wisdom of each chapter. Thank you for answering with patience our editorial queries and responding to our suggestions. Working with you has been a pleasure and, notwithstanding the names on the spine of the book, this volume is really yours. We would also like to extend my most heartfelt gratitude to the editorial team at Routledge, in particular Katie Peace, Simon Bates, and Khin Thazin for your unwavering support, and all the copyeditors at Routledge. Our immense gratitude also goes to all past and future Filipino translators for your enormous yet oftentimes underappreciated efforts. This volume is dedicated to all of you.

Riccardo Moratto and Mary Ann G. Bacolod

To my husband, *Allan-Rey*, thank you for providing me with the much-needed love, motivation, and inspiration to complete this project, as well as for expertly managing our children and the house while I was fully immersed in this project. To my daughters, *Cassandra* and *Calliope*, whose support and understanding were unparalleled while I devoted myself to my work. To *Tatay* and *Nanay* for all the encouragement and the valuable lessons they taught me in life. My appreciation also extends to *Prof. Dr. Moratto* for spearheading the development of this book and for placing his confidence in me, as well as to my *family, friends, and colleagues* for their unrelenting support and sound advice. Lastly, I am humbled by the wisdom and strength that *God* has bestowed upon me, and I am genuinely grateful for the abundance of wonderful people in my life.

Mary Ann G. Bacolod

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# Introduction to Translation Studies in the Philippines

## Navigating a Multilingual Archipelago

*Riccardo Moratto and Mary Ann G. Bacolod*

Translation holds immense significance in the Philippines, a country known for its rich linguistic diversity. It serves as a potent tool for sharing knowledge, culture, and ideas, fostering cultural diversity on a wider scale, and bringing it to a broader audience. However, given the intricacies of this linguistic landscape, deciding which content to translate and which languages to employ can be a daunting task. According to Mojares (2017), translation undoubtedly plays a crucial role in shaping national literature, as it not only integrates foreign works but also reinforces local traditions.

In the Philippines, translation studies primarily revolve around literary works. The focus is often on the choice of languages involved, the materials to be translated, the traditions involved, and the intended audience. However, critical elements such as the translation process, the motivations for translating, and understanding the reason behind the translatability and untranslatability of specific terms are commonly overlooked. Additionally, there seems to be a limited emphasis on the practical applications of translation in various domains.

Moreover, an evaluation of the current practice and methods of translation studies in the Philippines and translation as a subject and profession as a whole receives little attention. How do scholars of translation view their field today? While specialized courses and programs in translation studies are available, a more practical and interdisciplinary approach is necessary in enhancing the field. Where do translation studies and practice currently stand? How are current practices and methods in translation being analyzed and measured, if at all?

This book elucidates various forms of translation and practice employed beyond literature and underscores its significance in diverse fields. It sheds light on the state and practice of translation and translation studies in the Philippines and explores how translation evolved and impacts local perspectives on sex, gender and sexuality, gender bias, marginalization of Philippine languages, and crisis communication. The book discusses issues in a wide range of translation practices, from subtitling movies to machine translation and theater translation. It investigates translation processes and procedures

from various perspectives, including pedagogy, anthropological linguistics, performing arts, language and culture studies, semantics, and structural linguistics. It breaks new ground by looking beyond literature to examine various forms, strategies, and contexts of translation. It takes a different track because it zeroes in on the important aspect of translation: not only the readers, the translators, and the texts, but also the scientific method and analysis of translation, while highlighting how translation is keeping pace with the rapid advances in technology and more pressing and relevant issues.

Translation encompasses much more than simply providing linguistic equivalents between languages. It is thus important to continue to understand the significant role translation plays in various domains and practical use in the Philippine context, including raising public awareness about societal and cultural concerns, influencing people's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors regarding significant concepts, deepening comprehension of the connections between words and their context, and enhancing the ability to evaluate and respond to emergencies. Through this book, readers will have the opportunity to witness the immense impact of translation firsthand.

To facilitate reading, the abstracts of the authors will be presented below as summary to each chapter. In Chapter 1, Naidyl Isis Bautista and Anna Marie Sibayan-Sarmiento argue that the Philippines is characterized by linguistic diversity dating back to the precolonial era. Before the arrival of the Spaniards, the communicative practices of indigenous Filipinos would involve organic hybridity through the overlapping of different languages in the construction of meaning, as evidenced by the Laguna Copperplate Inscription from 900 AD, where Old Malay, Sanskrit, Old Javanese, and Old Tagalog were seamlessly interwoven (Postma 1992). With the onset of the Spanish colonial period, however, the communicative practices began to change. Linguistic diversity was deemed problematic by the Spaniards, who wanted to dominate the archipelago's people and resources. Spanish missionaries, who likewise served as linguists, then turned to translation in spreading their ideology and religion, establishing a mindset of linguistic hierarchy as opposed to equality. Since then, the practice of translation has been one of unequal power relations. The authors hence argue that the practice of translation in the country as we know it today is intimately linked with the periodization of Philippine linguistics, whose beginnings can be traced to the Spanish colonial era. This chapter is a concise history of translation praxis in the Philippines, which aims to look into how translation was initially used to marginalize our own languages and how motivations and intentions changed throughout the years. It concludes with an analysis of the advances made at present in relation to these changes in translation objectives: the establishment of policy, as well as efforts to professionalize and/or intellectualize the enterprise, if any.

In Chapter 2, Marlon James Sales contends that although the Philippines, in recent years, has capitalized on the language skills of its workforce as a major selling point that facilitates their insertion into the local industries or the overseas labor market, there is no dedicated university course for training

potential translators and interpreters in the country. Since T&I education in the Philippines is usually offered as a series of university electives, many Filipino students who end up doing T&I and T&I-adjacent work are able to do so only by pursuing training outside an existing higher education program. In this chapter, the author constructs a preliminary country profile of T&I education in the Philippines by tracking the professional trajectories of T&I practitioners. By comparing data on the curricular offerings of select universities with information on actual industry prospects, Sales identifies common points of expertise and work prospects that stand in for formal T&I education. The author concludes by reflecting on the disciplinary strengths and weaknesses of T&I in the Philippines that may inform its professionalization.

In Chapter 3, Vladimeir B. Gonzales proposes that the processes involved in theater translation can be considered as “performances.” This means that apart from the actual staging of the translated theater text (translation as product), there are surrounding relationships, actions, imbalances, and insights that also translate and manifest into varying forms of disappearance and resurfacing. From these processes and performances, the chapter will explore how translation can be a situationer, as well as a commentary, on power struggles and institutional accountabilities in the academic setting. As guiding concepts, the author will frame the discussions using Hans Vermeer’s studies on *skopos* and translation as commissioned work, as well as Andre Lefevere’s research on patronage and poetics. The author will also use two stagings of *Mal*, a translation project based on Euripides’ *The Trojan Women*, as case studies for this chapter.

In Chapter 4, Michael Manahan argues that many scholars have traditionally regarded the translation of audiovisual programs as distinct from conventional translation due to the spatial and temporal constraints unique to the medium. This study reaffirms the role of subtitling as a form of translation, despite the inherent limitations posed by audiovisual media. The focus of the investigation is on Filipino subtitles and some challenges that author-translators encounter when adapting timed text content for digital platforms. The analysis examines the linguistic choices available to author-translators that impact their selection of linguistic registers, orthographic variations, colloquial expressions, and adherence to standard rules. It identifies perceived inaccuracies in subtitling while advocating for the acceptability of nonstandard forms and expressions in Filipino subtitles. The argument proposes that these nonstandard variants often offer a more authentic portrayal of the spoken language. This exploration extends beyond identification of these factors to looking into providing an initial analysis that motivates these choices. In the end, the study seeks to open a dialogue toward establishing a linguistic consensus that addresses subtitling challenges while maintaining and choosing a language register that accurately reflects the vernacular of its speakers. It seeks to contribute to the broader discourse on audiovisual translation and subtitling within the Philippine context, specifically in terms of effectively translating linguistic and cultural subtleties.



In Chapter 5, Honeylet E. Dumoran argues that audiovisual learning texts for children are described to bear these features: (1) real-time audience participation; (2) narrative-type format with recurring sequences; (3) accompanying theme songs for recurring segments; and (4) lesson delivery in problem-adventure-celebration format. In the translation of these texts, it is imperative that these four features are retained. This chapter posits that some shifts that may be optional in the translation of other texts are obligatory for these texts. Six types of obligatory shifts may occur in the translation of these texts: transposition, economy, simplification, adaptation, register conversion, and accommodation. Transposition and economy are formal processes, while the rest are various types of adaptation, which may be culture-centric or audience-centric. These are exemplified by the analyses of various audiovisual (AV) texts translated into Filipino.

In Chapter 6, Divine Angeli Endriga and Francisco Rosario, Jr., contend that Google Translate is the most popular machine translation tool available supporting over 100 languages. Its use varies from a starting point for professional translators to a quick search for word equivalents from one language to another by a language user. Despite its popularity and wide use in different sectors, some still raise concerns over how the popular machine translation tool perpetuates gender bias and stereotypical notions of masculinity and femininity. In simple terms, gender bias is defined as having preferential treatment for one gender over another. It is said that gender bias occurs in different machine translations when certain gender-neutral words in the source language tend to yield male defaults or gender-specific words in the target language. While there are studies on building Filipino-specific machine translation platforms, there is no systematic research yet on the topic at hand in Filipino or other Philippine languages. It is the aim of this study to contribute to the discourse on gender bias in machine translation by investigating how this issue is observed in Filipino-to-English translation using Google Translate. The corpus is from popular Filipino tabloid newspapers and comics, as well as formulated context-free texts. The sentences contain gender-neutral pronouns, occupations, activities, and adjectives and are tested in the translation platform thereafter.

In Chapter 7, Jem R. Javier and Madilene B. Landicho explores various mechanisms of expressing and euphemizing linguistic constructs related to sex, sexuality, and gender in the Filipino/Tagalog translations of the Bible. Centuries of colonization in the Philippines have resulted in the sacralization of the Christian text, penetrating different aspects of life in the country—from drafting the Constitution to conducting everyday activities, observing important events, and prescribing various sets of norms. For this study, focus shall be given to how translations of certain passages in the Bible shape and at the same time reflect perspectives on gender, sex, and sexual behaviors. Data were gathered from passages found in the Filipino/Tagalog translation of the Bible, written and published in different versions. Although published at different times, these versions of the Filipino/Tagalog translation of the Bible will be