

**“I have took the dare to civilize this language”
Notes on the Arrival of an Imperial Language in a Colonial City, Manila 1913**

ICK, Judy Celine
University of the Philippines

Abstract

What does a colonial language really sound like? What happens to a language landscape when a linguistic regime is imposed alongside a colonial government? What can we glean about colonial cultural production from the linguistic and literary traces it leaves behind? This paper explores early moments in the arrival of the English language on Philippine shores through official reports, newspaper accounts, teacher diaries, and student responses and reads them against grand narratives of American colonial history.

Specifically, it looks at the turbulent arrival of English against a background of war, the practical considerations of a colonial classroom and school system, and most importantly, at the very ground of arrival that was itself a complex mixture of cultures enabled by a rather cosmopolitan history. Looking through the lenses of the dense entanglements of the colonial cultural encounter gleaned through its language in an actual fragment of dialogue from Manila in 1913, this paper seeks not so much to unravel American colonialism's grand narrative of benevolent assimilation (which has arguably already been done) but to listen to the echoes of the emergent, divergent, and necessarily multiple modernities already present in the language it spoke.