

## **JAYSON PARBA, PhD**

### **Spotlight: Executive Council Member**

#### **What is your primary research area, and what specific questions are you currently investigating?**

My primary research focuses on critical applied linguistics and sociolinguistics, examining how language education can be re-envisioned to support social-justice-oriented initiatives within Hawai‘i and in the Philippines. I explore the transformative potential of language instruction, advocating for practices, curriculum, and assessment that empower learners and promote equity in educational settings. Specifically, I aim to reframe Filipino language education to reflect the diverse Filipino experiences and identities. By doing so, I hope to foster a stronger sense of belonging and cultural pride among younger generations, ensuring that language becomes a bridge rather than a barrier within communities.

In addition, my research delves into the complex landscape of linguistic diversity and unequal multilingualism in the Philippines. I critically analyze how historical coloniality continues to influence contemporary educational structures, often privileging certain languages in the name of globalization and nationalism. This dominance not only marginalizes local dialects and indigenous languages but also perpetuates systemic inequities in access to quality education. Through my work, I seek to raise awareness about these imbalances and contribute to the development of more inclusive language policies. My research strives to pave the way for educational reforms that celebrate (but also critically question) linguistic diversity and foster social justice in multicultural Philippines and Hawai‘i.

#### **What is your teaching philosophy, and how do you approach creating an engaging learning environment?**

Drawing upon my experiences as both a language learner and educator in the Philippines, the U.S. mainland, and Hawai‘i, my teaching philosophy centers on cultivating an inclusive, respectful, and engaging learning environment where every student is seen, heard, and valued. I firmly believe that transformative learning occurs when students are encouraged to actively participate, express themselves in the language they are most comfortable with, and engage in critical dialogues about culture, identity, and society. In my classroom, I embrace diversity by recognizing the complexity of each student’s identity and prior knowledge, deliberately making space for their voices within the curriculum and integrating materials that reflect their lived experiences.

I approach teaching not merely as a profession but as a profound responsibility to empower learners. I carefully design lessons that challenge students to think critically while fostering a supportive classroom atmosphere where difficult yet essential conversations can flourish.

Continuous growth is central to my practice; I remain engaged with current research, professional development, and collaborative efforts with colleagues to continually refine my pedagogical approach. Reflection plays a crucial role as I listen to student feedback and adapt to their evolving needs, ultimately striving to empower students to view their own experiences and knowledge as indispensable contributions to our collective learning journey.

**Can you share an accomplishment you're most proud of from your previous or current position?**

One accomplishment I am particularly proud of is championing curricular changes within the Filipino Program to make it more inclusive. Historically, the program has maintained a nationalist orientation. However, my research revealed that many of our students—especially Filipino immigrants and members of the diaspora raised in the continental US or in Hawai‘i—do not fully resonate with a strictly nationalist perspective due to their diverse experiences. Recognizing this gap, I have advocated for a reimagined curriculum that honors the lived realities of our students.

My efforts have focused on integrating materials and practices that reflect the complex identities of those who, although not born in the Philippines, seek to reconnect with their cultural roots. By incorporating diverse narratives and perspectives, we are working to build a stronger sense of belonging among our students. This initiative not only enriches our curriculum but also empowers students to view their unique experiences as valuable contributions to our shared mission in sustaining our cultural heritage. These changes aim to create an educational environment that is both authentic and affirming, ensuring that every student feels seen, heard, and valued.

**Please describe how you have become involved in the field of Philippine Studies. Feel free to describe your journey from student to professional. What principles and values guide your research, and how has it helped you to arrive at where you are now? How has the field, topic, or industry changed?**

I have been involved in Philippine studies since university. Although I majored in English and was initially fascinated with American and English literature, I later found joy in reading Philippine literature. I learned to appreciate the uniqueness and richness of our culture, history, and traditions. This journey not only deepened my understanding of my roots but also sparked a curiosity about the diverse narratives that shape Filipino identity. I came to appreciate how literature serves as a bridge between past and present, offering insights that challenge traditional perspectives. When I did my PhD here in Hawai‘i, I realized that there’s a huge gap between immigrant and second/third generation Filipinos in Hawai‘i, so I wanted to help bridge that gap through research, language education, and community work. I think there’s still a lot of work for us to do to empower our communities and encourage younger generations of Filipinos in the diaspora to pursue higher education and take pride in their cultural roots.