



2026 SYMPOSIUM

TASTES AND TONGUES:

Imagining the Filipino through Food and Language

ABSTRACTS and BIOS

PLENARY

Why some languages matter more than others: Challenging linguistic inequality online

Ruanni Tupas, University College London

Why are some languages treated as more valuable than others? In the Philippines, colonial histories continue to shape how people think about language, with many Philippine languages still dismissed as mere “dialects” despite being rich and fully developed languages. In this talk, I reflect not only on these broader linguistic inequalities but also on my own experiences engaging in online activism around language issues. Drawing from public conversations, social media engagement, and collaborations with groups such as ALAMAT, I explore how online platforms can become spaces for challenging linguistic prejudice, building solidarities, and making sociolinguistic discussions more accessible beyond academic audiences.

Ruanni Tupas is an Aklanon/Filipino scholar specializing in language education, multilingualism, and the politics of knowledge production. He is an Associate Professor of Sociolinguistics in Education at the Centre for Applied Linguistics, Institute of Education, University College London.

ROUNDTABLE I: LANGUAGE AND HERITAGE

Languages are often seen as prerequisites for participation and belonging: to know a language is to become part of a place, a society, a heritage. Yet multilingualism and migration, experiences familiar to many Filipinos, remind us that this is far from simple. Languages are not equally valued, and belonging is never singular. This roundtable is about what languages mean to us, what shapes our choices, and what it might take for languages and their speakers to thrive.

Lorena Domanog Clerc advocates for migrant visibility, focusing on indigenous heritage. For her MA thesis at the Universität Zürich, she researched language use in Swiss–Filipino mixed-marriage families, contributing to more accurate Filipino representation in Swiss academia and encouraging reflection on how language shapes identity, belonging, and cultural transmission across generations.

Beatriz Lorente is an Ilocano/Filipino scholar whose research centers on language and migration, and language and colonialism. She is a lecturer at the Department of English at the University of Bern and co-president of Studiyo Filipino.

Cherry Malonzo-Marty is Filipina by birth, Saudi-raised, multilingual by necessity. She and her brothers switched between English (in school) and Tagalog (at home) growing up. Now her three boys outdo them: Swiss German with Papa, Tagalog with her, French at school, English as an aside. When the boys are lazy, they craft four-language sentences.

Therese Stadelmann is a Filipino-Swiss social scientist who is interested in sustainable food systems and decolonial perspectives. (Swiss-)German is her mother tongue and she has some passive understanding of Bicolano and Tagalog. For her, knowing a few phrases in a local language is a way of showing respect and a chance to connect while travelling.

ROUNDTABLE II: FOOD AND IDENTITY

A conversation about the many ways we experience, encounter, and relate to food. What can culinary practices — from sourcing and growing food to preparing, cooking, sharing, and eating — reveal about the meaning of food in our lives? How do these practices shape ideas of identity, such as "Filipino"? How are such meanings influenced by different realities: globalisation, abundance and scarcity, access and limitation, home, migration, and diaspora? If food traditions are living practices that adapt to changing worlds, personal histories, and shared human experiences, what happens when food is treated as a fixed marker of identity? What kinds of stories does that produce? Can food still bring us together and create deeper connections, or can it also bring division, conflict, and tension?

Doris Bacalzo, a social and cultural anthropologist, connects research, public education, and community collaboration beyond academia. She teaches contemporary topics on social and cultural relations and transformation, including introductory courses on the Philippines. Her fieldwork in the Philippines and Papua New Guinea further informs her engaged academic and public work.

Micha Merz, an independent chef, is known for intimate Chef's Table experiences, a hosting style that nurtures close connections with up to 14 guests. Micha combines nostalgic flavours rooted in classical French training at Hotel Baur au Lac with inspirations from other culinary traditions through his travels across Southeast Asia, including the Philippines.

Keshia Palm, a Zurich-based Canadian theatre artist of Filipinx-German descent, creates shared live experiences that invite connection, reflection, and conversation. Through a play-

reading potluck, Keshia has adapted Jovanni Sy's *Taste of Empire*, an interactive theatre work questioning the Philippines' colonial entanglements and the ethics of today's food system through an immersive experience.

Laura Lynn Reyes, a designer with Filipino/German roots, explores organic waste through material research and a design lens. Laura transforms waste-based materials into functional objects and reflective projects. Her Coconut Waste Exploration project in the Philippines examines coconut oil production from copra, revealing community resilience and Filipino food practices through a design perspective.

Sarah Reyes, a culinary creative, food stylist, and founder of Coin Coin in Zurich, highlights Filipino cuisine through art, design, and storytelling. Entirely self-taught, Sarah cultivated her culinary language through experimentation, pop-ups, and immersive dinners. With backgrounds in fashion and food tech, she develops products, catering concepts, and creative collaborations through Studio Chou Chou.