

Language and Nationalism

The Philippine Experience Thus Far

Andrew B. Gonzalez, FSC



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To my mother

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Foreword

This treatise on *Language and Nationalism: The Philippine Experience Thus Far* by Brother Andrew Gonzalez, FSC, is the most exhaustive and up-to-date treatment of the language problem in the Philippines that I know of. It is well-researched and well-documented. Brought to bear are various facets of Philippine history, government and foreign relations, sociology and economics, education and culture, and, above all, linguistics, more specifically sociolinguistics, and statistics. These facets are objectively synthesized in a happy and harmonious whole, and presented in a style which may not be gratuitously labeled "Filipino-English," which is an achievement in itself.

Brother Andrew is highly qualified to write on a subject such as this one. He spent his collegiate years in the United States and earned his Ph.D. degree in Linguistics in the University of California at Berkeley, first under the guidance of Professor Charles Douglas Chrétien of the Department of Linguistics and, after his lamented death from a stroke, Professor Denzel Carr of the Department of Oriental Languages, who took over where Chrétien left off. Professor Chrétien was a good friend of mine; so is Professor Carr. And Professor Carr speaks highly of his student.

It is quite amazing that as president of De La Salle University, a prestigious private educational institution of long standing in the Philippines, executive secretary of the Linguistic Society of the Philippines and editor of its organ, the *Philippine Journal of Linguistics*, in addition to teaching, Brother Andrew could still find time to write and publish. With his *Language and Nationalism* and Ernest J. Frei's *Historical Development of the Philippine National Language* complementing each other, subsequent studies on

the language problem of the Philippines will be mere footnotes.

I fully endorse Brother Andrew's conclusion in the epilog, which I partly quote: "The Filipino will continue to be multilingual, at least, trilingual, using the vernacular as the language of the home, Tagalog-based Pilipino as an urban *lingua franca*, and English as the language of commerce." By fortuitous coincidence, I discovered that I came to the conclusion of trilingualism also among Filipino children in a series of articles I wrote under the rubric "Our Language Problem" and published in *The Philippine Social Review* in 1932.

Every enlightened Filipino, whether he is *for* a national language for the Philippines based on one of the native languages or *against*, should try to find time and read Brother Andrew's treatise. And every school in the country, private or public, should feel proud to have a copy of it in its library shelves.

Cecilio Lopez
7 June 1978
Manila

Preface

The search for a linguistic symbol of unity in the Philippines, a national language, dates back to the 1935 Constitution and was resumed in the 1973 Constitution.

In the meantime, the country moved from being a colony of Spain and of the United States into a commonwealth in 1935 and subsequently into a full-fledged political body, an independent country, in 1946.

With political independence, however, economic and cultural independence did not necessarily follow, a sad reality that nationalistic Filipinos led by Claro M. Recto soon noted.

The search for national identity antedates the American Period, since it began in the last quarter of the nineteenth century under Spain in the movement of nationalism among the *ilustrados*, the Propaganda Movement, and eventually climaxed in the ill-fated Philippine Revolution.

The search for national identity continued all throughout the period of American rule and found legitimate expression in the Independence Movement which resumed in earnest early in the twentieth century, continued throughout the second and third decades under the leadership of Quezon and Osmeña, and finally found fruition through the Tydings-McDuffie Law in the 1935 Commonwealth.

Against this historical background and the steps taken toward the formation of a national community that was politically independent and possessed a functioning administrative body, recurs the theme of search for an identity as one people, a nation, with this identity expressed by a flag, an anthem, a march, a constitu-

tion, a functioning government recognized by the world powers, and early in the century, a national language.

In looking at the Philippine experience and the Philippine search for an elusive linguistic symbol of nationhood, a symbol which caused regionalistic loyalties and ethnic conflicts to surface, considerations regarding problems of dissemination and standardization, crises of acceptance of one language over others, and contemporary efforts at intellectualizing the selected language are likewise brought forth. Details of historical interest are reviewed as accompaniments to the thinking and the debate that went on among the country's leaders on the development of the national language.

Taking a more universal view, theories on language and nationalism propounded by Fishman (1972) are tested against the Philippine experience, for the Philippines represents a country at present which has become a nation but which repudiated its first choice of a linguistic symbol of nationhood only to renew the search once more. The social dynamics that precipitated such an unusual situation are explained and its future prospects analyzed.

Filipinos have thus formed a community without a national language or at least with only a national language in name but not in reality. In the meantime, they have disseminated among themselves a lingua franca called "Manila-based Tagalog or Pilipino" to which most Filipinos refuse to give the legitimate title of "national language," and they continue to maintain one variety or several varieties of a language of wider communication with colonial roots, English.

The purpose of the historical review, which goes beyond historical and legal documents and delves into census figures and quantified data as well as pertinent biographical details of the main participants in the search for and development of a national language, is to glean insights into the problems of nation building and language development and to draw conclusions on language policy and implementation, facets of language planning, from the Philippine data.

While using Frei's (1959) pioneering work on the historical development of the Philippine national language as a starting point, this study goes beyond Frei's work. It not only updates the account but also turns to sources which antedate the period covered by Frei's dissertation. It likewise focuses on nationalism as

the dynamic and unifying motive in this search for a national language, a motive often in conflict with an equally dynamic but divisive force arising from the wellsprings of ethnic loyalties and regional allegiances.

The study is divided into five parts.

Using the frame of a constitution and the formation of a republic, the first chapter focuses on questions on language in the documents and events of the Propaganda Movement and the Philippine Revolution of the late nineteenth century, culminating in the First Republic arising from the Malolos Constitution. One is led to the conclusion that in the framing of the Malolos Constitution, language was at best a marginal issue.

The second chapter, which describes events leading up to the 1935 Constitution and the transitional Commonwealth Government, outlines the first conscious attempts to develop a linguistic symbol of solidarity, which was mandated by the 1935 Constitution and enacted into a commonwealth act by the Romualdez National Language Law, prodded by the interest of the charismatic leader of prewar Philippines, Manuel L. Quezon, who was personally interested in a common language that would unite the ethnic groups of the fledgling state.

The study, in the third chapter, gives due recognition to the 1943 Laurel Constitution and the Laurel Government's impressive attempts to propagate the national language during the Japanese occupation.

Because of the anticolonial temper of the period and the conscious attempts aimed at the rediscovery of the Oriental roots of the Filipino and its consequent explicit nationalism, official language policy was implemented not only through the confirmation of the selection of Tagalog as the basis of the national language but through unprecedented efforts directed toward propagating the *wikang pambansa* (national language) amidst a wartime situation of abnormalcy.

During the Third Republic, which begun in 1946 and ended in 1973, the postwar period which saw the rise and fall of Tagalog-based Pilipino and its standardization (concomitant with the heated debates which ensued), the acceptance and propagation of the national language (renamed *Pilipino* in 1959) was tied to a more comprehensive nationalism movement which sought to

liberate Philippine life from economic and cultural ties with the West, especially with imperialistic America. The chapter recounts the events which led to the student movement of 1969-1972, cut short by the proclamation of martial law on 21 September 1972, and notes the language dimensions of these events.

The epilog looks toward the future, the renewed search for a common national language mandated once more, this time by the 1973 Constitution. It concludes with general and theoretical considerations concerning language development and returns to the basic theme of the book, the Filipino's search for roots, for authenticity, and the manifestation of this search for authenticity in a linguistic symbol of nationhood, taking a realistic picture of the prospects of success of such a search given the polyethnic situation of the Philippines and the language loyalties of ethnic groups and their regional ties.

Acknowledgements

The volume is based on lectures which were delivered from 12 November to 26 November 1977 at the Institute of Social Sciences, Waseda University, in Tokyo, Japan, while I was a visiting professor under the Waseda University-De La Salle University Faculty-Exchange Program.

I am grateful to the De La Salle University Science Foundation and the Japan Foundation for making the exchange program possible and to my hosts at Waseda University.

I am likewise grateful to my colleagues at De La Salle University, Professor Marcelino A. Foronda, Jr., Narcissa V. Muñasque, Olive Grande; Professor Bonifacio P. Sibayan of Philippine Normal College; and to Fe Aldave-Yap, assistant director of the Institute of National Language, for their invaluable help and suggestions in the location of documents and printed sources.

I would like to express sincere thanks to Cecilio Lopez, Professor Emeritus of Linguistics and Oriental Studies at the University of the Philippines, former secretary and director of the Institute of National Language, and dean of Philippine linguists, for his gracious help in locating documentation and his invaluable insights and recollections of the events treated in chapters 2 and 3. Any errors in dates and analysis are totally mine, however.

I deeply appreciate Professor Lopez's comments on the completed manuscript and his gracious foreword to this volume, and Professor Marcelino A. Foronda, Jr.'s helpful suggestions, comments, and corrections.

To Professor Lopez and my colleagues, and to my assistants and typists, Teresita Sanchez and Angelita Alim, my sincerest gratitude.

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The First Republic: Nationalism Without a National Linguistic Symbol

The search for national identity began in the last quarter of the nineteenth century under Spain in the movement of nationalism among the *ilustrados*; the Propaganda Movement, and eventually climaxed in the ill-fated Philippine Revolution.

This search for national identity, however, did not focus on language as an issue. Nor did it associate the search for national identity with a specific Philippine language.

In fact, the language of the *ilustrados* of the Propaganda Movement was Spanish and one of their causes, the dissemination of Spanish among the masses of Filipinos.

The documents of the revolution under Andres Bonifacio were entirely in Tagalog; the first phase of the Philippine Revolution culminated in the Constitution of Biak-na-Bato which stated that "Tagalog shall be the official language of the Republic."

Once the First Republic was founded, however, and the educated elite had taken over the reins of government, there was a reversion to Spanish, so that the final article on language in the Malolos Constitution made the use of the languages spoken in the Philippines "optional"; in the meantime, the Spanish language continued to be the official language of the emerging national community.

Hence, the emerging national community with its flag and its anthem did not choose a national language but maintained Spanish as an official language. It was not yet ready to select its national linguistic symbol.

THE PROPAGANDA MOVEMENT

The movement to campaign for reforms in the Philippines, initially in Barcelona, subsequently in Madrid, among the educated elites of the Philippine Islands living in Spain during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, was assimilationist rather than separatist.¹

On the part of the propagandists led by Marcelo H. del Pilar and joined by Jose Rizal, there was initially no question of independence but rather of the extension of rights and liberties in Spain to the Philippines.

The ilustrados, coming from middle-class and even affluent families (with enough resources to send their children to the mother country for advanced education) and educated in Spanish at the Ateneo Municipal and Colegio de San Juan de Letran and subsequently at the Universidad de Santo Tomas, learned their lessons on reform and freedom in Spanish and were most comfortable discussing, debating, and explaining in writing their proposals for reform in Spanish. Viewed by a psycholinguist in today's terms, they were bilingual in Spanish and a Philippine vernacular but Spanish-dominant, because of their educational experience and their sojourn in Spain. Except for Jose Panganiban (a Bikolano), and the fiery and eloquent Graciano Lopez-Jaena (a Hiligaynon Bisayan), and the Lunas and Llorantes (Ilokanos), the propagandists were Tagalogs in ethnic origin and for the most part residents of Manila.

One of the causes for which they campaigned in their writings was precisely to make Spanish available to the masses and therefore to implement a series of royal decrees enjoining the colonial administrators to teach Spanish to the native Indio.²

1. This section on the Propaganda Movement is based on Schumacher (1973) for its historical data and on Frei (1959) for important leads to pertinent documentation. Subsequent sections depend heavily on Agoncillo (1956 and 1960) for the historical matrix of considerations on the linguistic dimension of nationalism.

2. Blair and Robertson (1907), volumes 45 and 46, contain the pertinent royal decrees on the teaching of Spanish. Alzona (1932) discusses this matter from the propagandists' viewpoint, Bazaco (1953) understandably from the friars' viewpoint. Majul (1967) presents a more balanced consideration. The level of mastery of Spanish among Filipinos at the turn of the century and the causes for the alleged lack of success in the teaching of Spanish need restudy using empirical data, available only from scattered documents containing census data.

Schumacher (1973:135, fn. 9) cites Merino (1948), who made the valid linguistic point "that the principal reason why Spanish was never widely taught was precisely

According to the 1870 census of Agustin de la Cavada y Mendez de Vigo (Blair and Robertson 1907: 45.299-303), of a total population of 4,653,263, only 114,463 or 2.4% of the population *hablan castellano* ("talk Castilian"). Earlier, in the decision of the commissioners of 1837 on Cortes representation under Isabela II, mention is made of "three million Indians and the 6,000 whites of the Philippine Islands" (De La Costa 1965:167), or two-tenths of 1% of the population—an indication of the paucity of native speakers of Spanish to act as models for learning the language, let alone teaching it.

From a sociolinguistic point of view, given the small native-Spanish population, it is amazing how well the *ilustrados* learned Spanish, undoubtedly as a result of their interaction with the minuscule number of Spanish speakers in Manila and other centers of Spanish influence (Vigan, Cebu, Iloilo, Zamboanga).

That the Educational Reform Decree of 1863 had been promulgated and that an Escuela Normal de Maestros managed by the Jesuits had been established, and having as its chief purpose the training of native teachers in Spanish did not appease the propagandists, who accused the *frailes* of circumventing the royal decrees mandating the teaching of Spanish and of denying access to Spanish to the native populace, for fear of losing their control on the people. Whether this accusation was fair or not is disputable, and the reasons on the part of the religious for insisting on the mother tongues for evangelical purposes, justifiable. Ironically, most of the propagandists fulminating against the friars were educated in Spanish by these same friars. The reasons for the seeming reluctance on the part of the friars to propagate Spanish demand separate treatment. What needs to be pointed out at this juncture is the campaign on the part of the propagandists to make Spanish available to their countrymen and thus to render accessible to them the writings and ideas then current in Europe and the mother country so as to awaken their countrymen in the Philippines to demand reforms.

the lack of teachers until late in the nineteenth century, as well as the lack of any appreciable numbers of Spaniards in the Philippines, who might have provided Filipinos with an incentive to learn Spanish." If the majority of the inhabitants of the islands barely had any contacts with the Spanish, how could they learn Castilian?

The Propaganda Movement was in effect the expression of nationalism and gave rise to a series of studies stressing authenticity (the second component of nationalism, according to Fishman 1972) and the search for a usable past leading to the awareness of a broader unity (Fishman's first component of nationalism)—*las islas Filipinas*. This awareness subsequently led to the propagandists' arrogating to themselves a label hitherto reserved for the Spaniard born in the Philippines, the autonym *Filipino* (Abella 1960; Casiño 1977:9). However, such nationalism and discovery of an identity as a people was expressed in Spanish and did not manifest itself in a conscious use of a language other than that of the mother country, as Spain was referred to at that time.

The publications of the propagandists were either monolingual (Spanish) or bilingual (Spanish and another Philippine vernacular). The earliest among these, although short-lived, was the bilingual paper, *Diariang Tagalog* (1882), edited by Basilio Teodoro Moran and Marcelo H. del Pilar in Manila prior to the latter's departure for Spain. Following was the simultaneous emergence of another bilingual publication, *El Ilocano* (1889-1896), edited by Isabelo de los Reyes, who was subsequently imprisoned because of this publication (Retana 1906: 3,1653), and the monolingual newspaper *La Solidaridad* (1889-1895), whose survival was a year shorter than that of *El Ilocano*. Circulated a year after *La Solidaridad* and *El Ilocano* was another bilingual paper of propagandist nature, *La Lectura Popular* (1890-1892), written in Spanish and Tagalog. It counted Isabelo de los Reyes among its editors and was supported by circles connected with Marcelo H. del Pilar. The paper ended its career because it was "*un papel político sospechoso*" (Retana 1906:3,1680).

Among the propagandists, again to use current terminology in psycholinguistics, the only really close approximations to being balanced bilinguals, comfortable in both Tagalog and Spanish in their speaking and writing, were Marcelo H. del Pilar, Jose P. Rizal, and Mariano Ponce; the first two, initially Spanish-dominant, and the last, initially Tagalog-dominant.

As early as 1882, Del Pilar had edited the Tagalog section of the *Diariang Tagalog* in Manila. In 1888, he wrote the satiric rejoinder to a religious tract written in Tagalog, entitled *Caiigat Cayo*, under

the pseudonym Plaridel.³ From Barcelona in 1888, he wrote *Sagot nang España sa Hibik nang Filipinas* (Spain's Answer to the Weeping of the Philippines) and in 1889, he published *Arancel de los Derechos Parroquiales en las Islas Filipinas*, a list of regulations on stole fees, with a Tagalog translation.⁴ Toward the latter part of his career, in March 1889, "he was already discussing with Rizal, Ponce, Apacible, and Lopez-Jaena whether the future language of the Philippines ought to be Spanish or Tagalog" (Schumacher 1973:133). With Rizal he regularly corresponded in Tagalog. Withal, the bulk of Del Pilar's writing was, however, in Spanish and one suspects that in spite of his versatility, he was more Spanish- than Tagalog-dominant.

The same can be said of the gifted polyglot, Jose Rizal. While only eight years old (Agoncillo 1956:27), Rizal had already written a Tagalog poem praising the virtues of his native tongue, in the Calamba variety of Tagalog. He, nevertheless, was more comfortable in Spanish. Writing in Tagalog was for Rizal a conscious and deliberate choice with clear and specific purposes. His 1889 letter to the young women of Malolos, "Sa mga Kababayang Dalaga sa Malolos," was written in Tagalog to Tagalogs agitating to learn Spanish and to be educated.⁵ Regularly, Rizal corresponded in Tagalog with Del Pilar and Mariano Ponce as well as with certain members of his family. That he used Tagalog with certain members of his family may suggest that his family either did not know enough Spanish or were more comfortable in Tagalog. In writing to Ponce and Del Pilar, one surmises that Rizal might have used Tagalog for specific purposes: when speaking about his banned books and other forbidden publications, when writing short messages on *tarjetas postales* (postal cards) that

3. The tract, written by a friar, was entitled *Guardaos de ellos* (Guard yourselves from them). Del Pilar's rejoinder is *Caiigat cayo* (Be most vigilant; *ingat* [care or vigilance], with *ng* being written as *g*).

4. Stole fees were fees for sacramental rites (baptisms, weddings, funerals, masses).

5. The original texts of Rizal's letters (Rizal 1930) are found in Kalaw's excellent edition. My surmises about Rizal's use of Tagalog and his code-switching, an interesting sociolinguistic investigation, are of course tentative and need further investigation.

"Rizal's eight-year-old poem 'Sa Aking mga Kabata' is, I think, of dubious authenticity; his 'Sa mga Kababayang Dalaga sa Malolos,' though written in Tagalog in draft, was corrected by Del Pilar for its final form (Rizal 1930:2.122), as were others of Rizal's Tagalog writings" (Professor Teodoro Agoncillo, critical comments on the manuscript).