

Philippine Regionalism versus Nationalism and the Lexicographer

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0. Introduction

I am most pleased to have this opportunity to dedicate a paper to Prof. Zgusta, a long time friend and advisor, on the occasion of his seventieth birthday. Since lexicography and Philippine linguistics are both close to my heart, I would like to provide a brief survey of national language planning and various stages of concomitant language biases in that country and how they affect the lexicographer's labors.

1. Tagalog as National Language

The historical details of how and why Tagalog was proclaimed the basis for the Philippine national language (formally named Pilipino) on December 30, 1937 are discussed at length in Frei (1959) and in Gonzalez (1980). Particularly notable was the prolonged indifference of American linguists to the potentially fantastic laboratory for language planning and national language engineering that the archipelago had to offer. Suffice it here to mention that several criteria came into play that led to the selection:

- the historical importance of the Manila Bay area,
- the attention the Spanish paid to this tongue,
- the highest percentage (24%) of the overall population,
- a broad base of extant literature, and
- the proximity to the national capital.

This decision met with such long-standing resentment from other large linguistic groups, particularly Bisayans and Ilokanos, who felt by-passed. At that time Cebuano alone had a speaking population [3,620,685] very close to that of Tagalog [4,068,565] and was in wide use as a lingua franca in the central and southern Philippines. Even if only the other two major Bisayan dialects (out of 37) had been included, Hiligaynon [1,951,005] and Samar-Leyte [920,009], the total [6,491,699] would have clearly put Bisayan in first place (representing 40% of the overall population). Meanwhile Ilokano was ranked third in number of speakers [2,353,318] and was a lingua franca in much of central and northern Luzon. In order to lighten the blow, a hybrid language (using rigid grammar and either archaic or coined vocabulary) was developed by the then Institute of National Language (INL), e.g.:

banyúhay 'metamorphosis' [reduction of Tagalog *bágo-ng anyo ng búhay* 'new stage of life' replacing English-derived *metamórposis*],
salumpuwít 'chair' [coinage replacing widespread Spanish-derived *sílya* ~ *síya*].

It was presumed that such a creation would not give unfair advantage to native speakers of Tagalog. This obligated the entire nation, hopefully politicians, but especially teachers, to learn to communicate via this medium.

In the late 1930's, the newly formed Institute of National Language began publishing an eleven-volume *Preliminary Studies* (INL 1937-40). Only the first three were published by the time the recommendation for Tagalog was made on November 12, 1937. For the most part, this effort was organized around Austronesian reconstructions by Otto Dempwolff (1938) that were supplemented by Philippine vocabulary in common with Tagalog prepared by Dempwolff's student, Cecilio Lopez, the Philippine's first comparative linguist and the secretary and executive officer of the INL. This study had its strengths and its weaknesses (e.g., summaries of vocabulary held for the most part in common throughout the nation and the sheer volume of data amassed, as opposed to poor cognate decisions and relating cross-language homonyms). Tagalog was presented first among all the Philippine languages, which of itself sent a strong message about its priority.

At the commencement of the academic year in June of 1940, the public schools began to teach Pilipino, imposing the burden of learning it on all (especially non-Tagalog) teachers whose lack of time and training did little to promote or accelerate national language development. World War II intervened making a catastrophe of this and every other national program. As of July 4, 1946 (when the Philippines was granted full independence), Pilipino was effectively an official language. Clearly, there were too many problems to allow smooth sailing.

So, in the 1950's, the INL undertook a survey to see how much vocabulary was shared between Tagalog and other Philippine languages and what words might be incorporated in the national language to make it more representative of the pluralistic society. A questionnaire of 1,382 entries was sent out in 1949 to teachers in the various school divisions throughout the country. Collations of the responses led to the publication of *A Composite Vocabulary* (INL 1953), which consisted of 1,110 English words translated into 21 languages. It was notable that Tagalog was herein presented in alphabetical order (second from the last, just above Tausug). Hence, the Tagalog data were presented along with all others, without any special priority.

Meanwhile, unrelated to political moves, academic chaos, linguistic studies, or negative undercurrents, the Tagalog media of comics and movies grew to achieve such immense popular support that a whole generation grew up with at least a passive command of a low variety of Tagalog, involving "market" vocabulary and "street" grammar. Filipinos came to call this speech variety *mix-mix* (more recently *Engalog*, *Taglish* or *Spantaglish*) based on the wholesale inclusion of English, Spanish or even local language words. [McFarland's study (1989) illustrates to a great

extent (but not exclusively) this kind of language, while Zorc (1991) documents its street version in extenso.] This process of media absorption, which brought hundreds of Tagalog words to regional languages, worked in the other direction too: Tagalogs picked up other language words from the many ethnic groups living in and around Metro Manila.

By 1973 the national language question had still not been settled and the new constitution called for a more representative medium to be named Filipino. Politicians committed to their respective regions refused to accept what was happening linguistically within the nation. Linguists, even if responding more to the needs of their science than to those of the Philippines, indirectly helped by producing comparative studies (e.g., Llamzon 1978) or wordlists (e.g., Reid (1971) and McFarland (1977)). Three notable exceptions were the publications of Panganiban (1972), a thorough Tagalog lexicographer who included cross-linguistic comparisons, Lopez (1974, 1976), who was mentioned above, and Yap (1977), who was Assistant Director of the INL. Their research fit directly within the guidelines of the 1973 constitution.

Furthermore, native lexicographers refused to include widely-used Tagalog words in their studies because of a puristic attitude that developed via the polarization of local versus national language issues. In researching the Aklanon-English Dictionary during the late 1960's, I met with this resentment when I chose to include words I had heard in wide use in Aklan, e.g.:

bakla 'homosexual' [Aklanon *agl'*] (Zorc 1969:70)

dámay 'be involved in' [Aklanon *daEáhig*] (Zorc 1969:156)

dapá 'lie face down' [Aklanon *kuEób*]. (Zorc 1969:157)

hinakít 'bear a grudge, have ill feelings toward, feel bad about' [original Aklanon 'to sympathize with [somebody's loss]' [Note: Tagalog use seems to be overriding the older Aklanon meaning in current Aklanon.] (Zorc 1969:215,326)

"That's Tagalog, don't put it in!", would be a standard piece of advice. Nevertheless, on the basis of actual usage I did include them with a prerequisite cross-reference to the vernacular equivalent. Most recent language dictionaries also reflect usage rather than cultural bias. For example, Wolff (1972) treats vocabulary uncovered in his research without any statement about the Tagalog provenance of a word or of its Cebuano equivalent or synonym:

bakla 'sissy; homosexual' [Author's note: native Cebuano is *báyut*]

*lagáy*² 'bribe, grease the palm' [Author's note: Cebuano *lagáy*¹ means 'penis; scrotal sack encasing the testicles']

2. Conclusion: The Sources of "Filipino"

What has been happening over the past four decades is a virtual convergence of urban dialects into a popular medium that may not represent a "high" or "deep" version of Tagalog or the local language, but which form a standard means of communication within the multilingual society.

Zorc (1979-85) and McFarland (1992) have independently suggested that forms used by the majority of the nation be incorporated into this Filipino national language. In the introduction to the third fascicle of my Etymological Dictionary, I

decided ... to indicate strong candidates for a genuinely Filipino national language with an arrow before the entry. Although such words are not Tagalog (the basis for Filipino), they are used by a majority of other Philippine speakers (e.g., Ilokano, Bisayan, Bikol, Hanunoo, Maranao) and certainly by more than half of the non-Tagalog-speaking population, so that they should be understood passively (even if not actively) by the entire nation. For example, as a matter of mutual respect, all Filipinos should understand that *dangkál*, *dangan*, and *dangaw* refer to a 'handspan (measurement of approximately 8 inches)', or than *danóm* and *túbig* refer to 'water', etc. This is no more (and no less) than a survey of how Filipinos outside of Manila actually speak about items in their universe (regardless of their language) -- a kind of "democratic vote" for given words. Whether any or all of these forms get used in Filipino is not so much the question at present, only that they be understood as viable synonyms for Tagalog words. (Zorc 1982:xii)

McFarland (1992) speaks in a similar vein:

Nonetheless, I continue to cling, desperately perhaps, to the idea that there is, and should be, a distinction between Filipino and Tagalog. That Filipino is more than Tagalog plus something. . . .

You might say we should adopt a laissez faire attitude on the question. After all, Tagalog (whatever it's called) is spreading rapidly and eventually all Filipinos will be speaking it anyway. True, you can't legislate what language people can speak. No matter what we do, they will continue to use Tagalog, English, Taglish, Swardspak [homosexual argot], or whatever. . . .

A quick survey of Lopez 1974 indicates that about 400 of the top 2000 Tagalog words correspond to identical or cognate words in at least one other major Philippine language. In some cases almost all languages have the same word (except for regular phonological changes).

But this means that a large percentage of Tagalog words have no cognates outside Tagalog. Sometimes this is because each language has gone its own separate way.

In a number of cases this is because Tagalog has innovated while many or most of the other languages have continued the original form. . . . Especially to be noted are the areas of agreement among the Bisayan languages and Bikol. These languages together account for nearly half of the total population.

We both would and do therefore suggest that *Filipino* include forms like:

alad 'fence' [is the most widely used term throughout the Philippines (in Cebuano, Samar-Leyte, Ifugao, Ilokano, Maranao and Manobo); Tagalog *bákod* is also a widespread doublet]

baláy 'house' [used throughout Bisayan and Ilokano; Tagalog *báhay* reflects a unique sound change]

danóm 'water' [this original Austronesian form is used throughout the northern Philippines (in Ilokano, Pangasinan, Ibanag, Sambal, Kapampangan, Ifugao, etc.), Mindoro (in Hanunoo and Buhid) and Palawan (in Aborlan, Batak, and Palawano); Tagalog *túbig* reflects a southern Philippine innovation shared with Bisayan, Bikol, and Subanon]

ikug 'tail' [used in Bisayan, Bikol, Maranao, with cognates found in Kapampangan (*iki*) and Pangasinan (*ikál*); Tagalog *buntót* is independently borrowed from Indonesian, while *ikog* in Tagalog has acquired a specialized meaning 'haft (of a knife)']

Any researcher on virtually any Philippine language has a wealth of Tagalog loans to incorporate in his or her work, and on Tagalog a plethora of other language words and expressions. If usage is recorded objectively, the Tagalization of regional dialects (but surely not their loss, as was originally feared) and the nationalizing of Tagalog are a current reality that cannot be ignored by any interest group: teachers, politicians, linguists, or, most significantly, lexicographers.

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