

SOME PROBLEMS IN PHILIPPINE LINGUISTICS

by ERNESTO CONSTANTINO

0. *Introduction.* Philippine Linguistics as the scientific study of Philippine languages is relatively very recent. Perhaps it can safely be said that it started as an autonomous and distinct field of study only after the turn of the twentieth century with the coming of the American to the Philippines.¹ Its development up to the present time went through two distinct stages roughly corresponding to the Pre-World War II period and the Post-World War II period.

0.1 *Pre-World War II Period.* Before the outbreak of the Second World War Philippine Linguistics did not seem to be very active, and it did not seem to have made significant progress. The study of Philippine languages and dialects especially on a scientific basis, with the notable exception of Tagalog and perhaps also Ilokano, was generally neglected. This neglect of Philippine languages and dialects can be attributed to two successive events. First, in the first quarter of the twentieth century the attention of the linguistic scholars in the Philippines was directed towards the problems arising from the use of English as the medium of instruction in schools throughout the Philippines.² Second, in the 1930's until the outbreak of the Second World War attention was directed towards still another problem: that of evolving a Philippine national language.³

Whatever scientific study of Philippine languages and dialects was done during the Pre-World War II period was done primarily if not exclusively by five linguists: three Americans, one German and one Filipino.⁴

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¹ For an account of Philippine Linguistics during the Spanish rule in the Philippines, see John Leddy Phelan, "Philippine Linguistics and Spanish Missionaries," *Mid-America, An Historical Review*, XXXVII, 3 (July, 1955), 158-170.

² See Joseph Ralston Hayden, "Wanted: A National Language," Chapter XXIV in *The Philippines, A Study in National Development*, New York: Macmillan, 1955, pp. 583-603.

³ See Ernest J. Frei, *The Historical Development of the Philippine National Language*, Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1959.

⁴ The three Americans were Carlos Everett Conant, Leonard Bloomfield, and Frank R. Blake; the German was Otto Scheerer; the Filipino is Cecilio

All of these linguists, with the exception of two, were essentially interested in the history and genetic comparison of Philippine languages, usually together with other Austronesian or Malayapolynesian languages. Consequently, most of the linguistic works written during this period were on the genetic comparison of Philippine languages. Nonetheless, Scheerer, Bloomfield and Blake (three of the five linguists mentioned above) did write grammatical descriptions of Tagalog, Ilukano, and other Philippine languages.⁵

During the Japanese occupation of the Philippines there seemed to be no noteworthy activity in Philippine Linguistics. All efforts of a linguistic nature were directed towards the teaching of Japanese to Filipinos and the propagation of the Philippine national language.

0.2 *Post-World War II Period.* After the Second World War, to be more specific after 1950, Philippine Linguistics underwent a new orientation which we may call the American orientation. Two events occurring almost simultaneously were directly responsible for this. The first of these events was the establishment in the Philippines of a branch of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, Inc.⁶ The second event was the sudden popularity of the so-called "second language teaching" among English teachers and educationists in the Philippines.

The establishment of a Philippine branch of the Summer Institute of Linguistics brought to the Philippines the modern techniques in descriptive linguistics which were developed in the United States before, during and after the Second World War. The members of the Institute, who were (and still are) missionaries trained in linguistics, applied the techniques of descriptive linguistics in studying Philippine languages and dialects. They studied Philippine languages and dialects in the field especially the lesser-known ones. They made phonemic analyses of many Philippine languages and dialects; they devised practical orthographies for them; they constructed literary materials in them; they translated religious materials into them. Though in general the members of the Insti-

Lopez. Perhaps H. Costenoble and one or two others should be added to these linguists.

⁵ Leonard Bloomfield, "Tagalog Texts with Grammatical Analysis," *University of Illinois Studies in Languages and Literature*, Part II, Vol. III, No. 3, 1917, pp. 134-316; and "An Outline Guide of Ilocano Syntax," *Language*, 18 (July-September 1942), 193-200; Otto Scheerer, *The Naboloi Dialect* (Department of Interior, Ethnological Survey Publications, Vol. II, Part II), Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1905, and *The Particle of Relation of the Isinai Language*, The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1918; Frank R. Blake, *Grammar of the Tagalog Language* (American Oriental Series, Vol. I), New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1925.

⁶ See "Fifth Anniversary Report of the Summer Institute of Linguistics," *Philippine Social Sciences and Humanities Review*, XXIII (June-December 1958), 359-369.

tute do not seem interested in, or have not gone far enough in, studying the grammar of Philippine languages and dialects, especially the syntax, they have nevertheless up to the present time published in monograph form grammatical analyses of three Philippine languages and dialects.⁷

The Summer Institute of Linguistics came to the Philippines in 1953. At about the same time, if not a little bit later, the linguistic approach to the teaching (and learning) of a foreign language (also called second language) popularly known as the "second language" approach caught fire in the Philippines. This as a consequence created a great interest, especially among language teachers, in descriptive linguistics and contrastive linguistics, and much later because of contrastive linguistics in transformational analysis of the Chomsky type. This interest in second language teaching culminated in the establishment of the Philippine Center of Language Study in 1957.⁸

The immediate results of these two events which trace their origin in the United States were: (1) the change in emphasis or interest in Philippine Linguistics from historical and comparative (Indo-European) linguistics to descriptive (American) linguistics, (2) the description and analysis of more Philippine languages and dialects, and later (3) the contrasting of the major Philippine languages with English. However, the interest in descriptive linguistics and contrastive linguistics did not mean the end of historical and comparative linguistic activity in the Philippines. Historical and comparative linguistics was kept alive in the Philippines through the sustained devotion of the lone Filipino linguist (who was trained in Europe in the historical-comparative tradition in linguistics) and of one or two American linguists.⁹

This, in brief, is the short history of modern Philippine Linguistics. The status of this field of study is now established; it is increasingly becoming more active; its future looks very very bright indeed. However, like any new field of study, it still faces many problems. This short lecture will present and discuss some of these problems.

1. *The Problems.* The problems facing Philippine Linguistics may be defined in terms of needs. These needs are divided into two types:

⁷ Howard P. McKaughan, *The Inflection and Syntax of Maranao Verbs*, Manila: Institute of National Language, 1958; Phyllis M. Healey, *An Agta Grammar*, Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1960; Elmer Wolfenden, *A Re-Statement of Tagalog Grammar*, Manila: Summer Institute of Linguistics and Institute of National Language, 1961.

⁸ See Sirarpi Ohannessian, "UCLA Becomes Important Center for Teaching English as a Foreign Language," *The Linguistic Reporter*, III (February 1961), 3; also Trusten W. Russell, "Fulbright Programs in Linguistics and the Teaching of English," *The Linguistic Reporter* III (December 1961), 1.

⁹ The two Americans are Isidore Dyen of Yale University and Douglas Chrétien of the University of California at Berkeley.

external needs and internal needs. External needs refer to those needs which lie outside the discipline itself but which directly affect its growth. Internal needs consist of those needs which lie within the discipline itself.

2. *External Needs.* There are two basic external needs in Philippine Linguistics: (1) the need for more Filipino linguists who will study Philippine languages and dialects, and (2) the need for more research projects on Philippine languages and dialects. There are of course other needs which are secondary to these needs (and will not be discussed in this lecture). For example, there is the need for more teachers and courses in Linguistics. There is also the need for more money to do research work on Philippine languages and dialects.

2.1 *Filipino Linguists.* The need for Filipino linguists has always been an urgent problem. Before the Second World War up to 1959 the Philippines had had only one Filipino linguist; in fact this Filipino linguist may be called the first Filipino linguist.¹⁰ At present, two or three or may be four Filipino can be added to this lone linguist. However, only one or two of these new Filipino linguists are active in Philippine Linguistics. That is, only one or two of these new linguists are doing research work on Philippine languages and dialects. And the Philippines has more than 100 distinct dialects belonging to perhaps more than 80 different languages most of which are still undiscovered or undescribed or very inadequately or incorrectly described, and some of which are fast becoming extinct. Thus, in spite of the addition of four Filipino linguists the need for more Filipino linguists remains an urgent problem.

The training of more Filipinos to become linguists is not an easy task. For one thing, very few Filipinos at present are interested in linguistics because they think, perhaps not very correctly, that there is no money in it and also because of the common misconception that linguistics is merely learning to speak many languages. Another reason is that many Western linguists do not seem to be eager or don't have the time to train natives in this part of the world to become linguists. Many Western linguists would rather use the 'natives' or speakers of 'exotic' languages as their informants or data gatherers.

It should not be inferred from the preceding statement that foreign (Western) linguists are not needed in the scientific study of Philippine languages and dialects. They are needed. In fact, they were the pioneers in the study of Philippine languages and dialects. And they have contributed a lot to the development and modernization of Philippine Linguistics. All that we want is that more Filipinos should participate in the study of their own languages and dialects..

¹⁰ He is of course Dr. Cecilio Lopez.

One reason why we want Filipinos to study Philippine languages and dialects is of great importance to Philippine Linguistics and general linguistics. The Filipino linguist is in a better position to make satisfactory analyses of Philippine languages and dialects than the foreign linguist. The Filipino linguist has one big advantage over the foreign linguist: he is a native speaker of at least one Philippine language or dialect and as such he has intuitions about his language or dialect and other Philippine languages and dialects (since all Philippine languages and dialects are very closely related to each other) which will provide him a good start in making valid analyses of Philippine languages and dialects. The foreign linguist who does not possess intuitions about any Philippine language or dialect often times distorts Philippine languages and dialects to fit the structure of his native language, or also he describes a Philippine language as though it were Eskimo.

It should also be stressed that the linguists that are needed in Philippine Linguistics are those who will study Philippine language and dialects as an end in itself and not as a means to some end. That is, we need Filipino linguists who will study Philippine languages for the sake of describing and analyzing them scientifically, and not for the sake of being able to speak them, or teach them, or for the sake of being able to teach English or Spanish or Tagalog to Filipinos better. Only linguists who will study Philippine languages and dialects in and for themselves will be able to make substantial and permanent contribution to Philippine Linguistics.

2.2 *Research.* At present only two or three Filipino linguists and about two or three American linguists are doing research work on Philippine languages and dialects. And there are only two or three research projects on Philippine languages and dialects currently being undertaken. We need more linguists, Filipinos and foreigners alike, to do research work on Philippine languages and dialects. And we need more research projects on Philippine languages and dialects.

The lack of a sufficient number of Filipino linguists and the inadequateness of research on Philippine languages and dialects have hampered progress in Philippine Linguistics. In fact, these two problems are directly responsible for the internal needs in Philippine Linguistics which will be described next.

3. *Internal Needs.* The internal needs in Philippine Linguistics will be grouped into six: (1) the need for a linguistic survey of the Philippines, (2) the need for a critical survey of works on the languages and dialects of the Philippines, (3) the need for the scientific analysis of many Philippine languages and dialects, (4) the need for more comparative studies

(genetic, areal, typological) of Philippine languages, (5) the need for a dialect geography of the Philippines, and finally (6) the need for studies on language contact, bilingualism, and borrowing in the Philippines. These needs will be taken up one after the other in that order of mention.

3.1 *Linguistic Survey.* Up to now, no systematic linguistic survey of the Philippines has been undertaken. The last enumeration and description of Philippine languages and dialects was made by Beyer in 1916,¹⁴ and this has been copied and revised by others. Beyer's enumeration and description of Philippine languages and dialects has long been out of date; also it is far from satisfactory from the linguistic point of view. It is very clear now that many languages and dialects were not included in the list.

The making of a linguistic survey involves the task of determining which dialects constitute a single language, and which dialects belong to different languages. The undertaking has never been done yet in the Philippines. For example, some people consider the dialects spoken in the cities of Cebu, Iloilo and Tacloban as dialects of the same language (they call this the Bisayan language); others consider these three dialects as belonging to three languages (Sebuano, Ilonggo and Waray, respectively). But no one has tried to apply the linguistic method of testing whether these dialects belong to the same language or to different languages.

3.2 *Survey of Linguistic Works.* The lack of a systematic linguistic survey of the Philippines is paralleled by the lack of a critical survey of works on the languages and dialects of the Philippines. Such a survey is needed for several reasons. It will give us an idea of the status of Philippine Linguistics. It will provide us not only with a list of works on the languages and dialects of the Philippines but also with a critical evaluation of these works as to scope or adequacy and quality or scientificness. It will tell us how many languages and dialects of the Philippines have been described and analyzed and which of them are adequately and scientifically studied. It will tell us the extent of the Filipino participation in the study of Philippine languages and dialects. Lastly, it will indicate to us the urgent problems or needs in Philippine Linguistics.¹²

¹⁴ H. Otley Beyer, *Population of the Philippine Islands in 1916*, Manila: Bureau of Printing, 1917. But see also Harold C. Conklin "Preliminary Linguistic Survey of Mindanao," Paper read at the Mindanao Conference held in Chicago from May 13-15, 1955, mimeo.

¹² Unfortunately, it is impossible to include in this lecture a list of works on Philippine languages and dialects. Many of the works on Philippine languages and dialects and many authors are not mentioned in this lecture.

3.3 *Scientific Analysis.* The need to analyze Philippine languages and dialects using the methods of modern linguistics seems to be the most basic and urgent problem in Philippine Linguistics. Many Philippine languages and dialects still remain unidentified and undescribed. A number of them have been phonemically described only. Very few of them have been grammatically described. Many Philippine languages and dialects have been described and analyzed in the traditional way only.

3.4 *Comparisons.* Some studies have been made on the genetic comparison of the phonology of Philippine languages. These studies were mostly made by Conant, Costenoble, Chretien, Dyen and Lopez.¹³ The unpublished work of Lopez entitled "A Comparative Philippine Word-List" is the most extensive of the studies made so far. This research work includes 2,000 sets of words from more than 20 different Philippine languages.

In the genetic comparison of the grammar of Philippine languages, some studies have been made by Blake and Lopez. Blake's work is short and preliminary in nature.¹⁴ Lopez's work entitled "Comparative Philippine syntax" which is in the last stages of completion is more extensive. It includes data from about 12 or more Philippine languages.

In the typological or structural comparison of Philippine languages nothing has been done except for one current research project which was started in 1961 in the University of the Philippines. The preliminary findings of this project was reported at the Tenth Pacific Science Congress held in Honolulu, in 1961.¹⁵ A part of this project, a morphosyntactic comparison of the ten major Philippine language which received a grant from the Philippine Center for language Study will be completed this year.

The lexicostatistical comparison of Philippine languages has been attempted this year. A preliminary comparison of this sort was made on the language of northern Luzon in 1953.¹⁶ Dyen included several Phil-

¹³ Carlos Everett Conant, "The RGH Law in Philippine Languages," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, XXXI (1910), 70-85, and "The Pepet Law in Philippine Languages," University of Chicago, 1913; H. Costenoble, "Tracing the Original Sounds in the Languages of Today," *Philippine Magazine*, 34 (January, 1937) 24, 38-39; C. Douglas Chretien, *The Dialect of the Sierra de Mariveles* (University of California Publications in Linguistics, Vol. IV, No. 2) Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951; Isidore Dyen, "The Tagalog Reflexes of Malayo-Polynesian D," *Language*, XXIII (1947), 50-55.

¹⁴ Frank R. Blake, "Contributions to Comparative Philippine Grammar," *American Journal of Philology*, 28 (1907), 199-253.

¹⁵ See Ernesto Constantino, "Typology of Some Philippine Linguistics," in Stephen A. Wurm, "Oceanic Linguistics at the Tenth Pacific Science Congress held in Honolulu from August 21 to September 6, 1961," *Oceanic Linguistics*, I (Summer 1962), 4.

¹⁶ Robert Fox, Willie Sibley and Fred Eggan, "A Preliminary Glottochronology for Northern Luzon," University of Chicago: Philippine Studies Program, 1953 (mimeo.).

ippine languages in his lexicostatistical comparison of Malayopolynesian languages.¹⁷ Thomas and Healey made sub-groupings of Philippine language on lexicostatistical basis.¹⁸

3.5 *Dialect Geography*. Though many Philippine languages, like Tagalog, Ilukano and Ibanag, have several dialects not a single dialect geography of any area in the Philippines has been made. The dialect geography of the Philippines done by Pittman and associates in 1952¹⁹ is not properly a dialect geography since it treats more of the variations among different languages than of variations within the same language.

3.6 *Language Contact*. Practically no study has been made on the contacts of Philippine languages among themselves and with outside languages like Chinese, Spanish and English.²⁰ There are no studies on bilingualism in the Philippines. There are now several works dealing with borrowed words in some Philippine languages, like Tagalog, Ilukano and Sebuano, from non-Philippine languages, like Chinese, Spanish, English and Sanskrit. But no study has been made on borrowed words in one Philippine language from another Philippine language. The receptivity or non-receptivity of Philippine languages to foreign words has not yet been studied.

4. *Conclusion*. The foregoing are some of the problems or needs in Philippine Linguistics. These needs will always be there unless more Filipinos will become interested in the scientific study of their own languages and dialects. In other words, we need more Filipinos, who, like Dr. Lopez, will devote their full time to the scientific study of Philippine languages and dialects.

¹⁷ Isidore Dyen, "The Lexicostatistical Classification of the Malayopolynesian languages," *Language*, 38 (January-March 1962), 38-46.

¹⁸ David Thomas and Alan Healey, "Some Philippine Language Subgroupings: A Lexicostatistical Study," *Anthropological Linguistics*, 4 (December 1962), 22-33.

¹⁹ Richard S. Pittman and Associates, *Notes on the Dialect Geography of the Philippines*, University of North Dakota: Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1953.

²⁰ But see Keith Whinnom, *Spanish Contact Vernaculars in the Philippine Islands*, Hongkong: Hongkong University Press, 1956.