INTRODUCTION

Language Studies in English in the Philippines: Challenges and Prospects

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Filipinos talk like birds.

The Monroe Survey, 1932

During the 1960s and 1970s, language research in the Philippines received much attention because of a number of major language issues that arose out of the sociopolitical and historical context of the time. The furor and debate over the use of P/Filipino as the national language, the maintenance of English as an official language in the country, and

the role of vernacular education in language and national development, created boundaries not only within ideological and political groups, but also within ethnolinguistic and regional affiliations as well. It was on March 16, 1973 when Department of Education and Culture Order No. 9 was issued stating that "the National Board of Education supports the policy of developing a bilingual nation able to communicate in Pilipino as well as in English." This policy on bilingual education in Philippine schools was largely a response to a "need to balance the legitimate aspiration of nationalism ... and an equally legitimate desire to maintain English as a Language of Wider Communication and to continue to gain access to science and technology for development through this second language" (Gonzalez, *Evaluating Bilingual Education*, 153).

The policy, of course, was a historical product of decades of intense attention given to language and language education in the Philippines (see Gonzalez, *Nationalism*). Because of the highly political and ethnolinguistic dimensions of the introduction of English in the Philippines, *fight* or *battle* in many cases became the dominant metaphor for the "The Language Problem in the Philippines" (Samonte).[1] It was a "tug-of-war" or a "nagging, gnawing war" between English and Tagalog; it was a "three-cornered struggle" when the vernacular was deemed to be the appropriate medium in Grades One and Two; when Spanish "entered the ring via Congress," it became a "free-for-all" (2). For Roces, the "language controversy" which involved "warring factions" (15) was a question of whether Pilipino "can" or "should" *take over* (11). [2] The Filipino-Cebuano "rivalry," which dates back to the 1935 National Assembly has seen a number of "truces," but no "permanent peace," yet (Gonzalez, *Ethnic Rivalry*, 114).

Understandably, much research done was oriented towards determining and addressing issues concerning bilingualism and bilingual education in general (e.g., see Pascasio, *The Filipino Bilingual*). This largely involved various surveys that attempted to map out the various aspects of language use, language attitudes, language acquisition and proficiency, and language planning in the

country, leading Gonzalez and Bautista to assert that "perhaps there is no country that can surpass the Philippines in the number, extent, detail, and continuity of language surveys" (1) conducted between the late 1960s and early 1980s.

On the other hand, the 1980's for Filipino language planners and policymakers was largely characterized by a need to evaluate and examine the effects of language education policies and guidelines (specifically bilingual education) introduced in the earlier decade. It must be noted that this need was imbricated within the sociopolitical turmoil that culminated in the overthrow of the Marcoses in 1986, thus necessitating under the Aquino administration a review and drafting of a new Philippine Constitution in 1987 which states, among others, that "The national language of the Philippines is Filipino." A much more invigorated nationalism and "renewed democracy" during this period led to a new sociolinguistic order where "Filipinos have accepted Pilipino as the linguistic symbol of unity and national identity" (Gonzalez, *Evaluating Bilingual Education*, see Gonzalez and Sibayan). An important work on language and language education around this time was the summative evaluation of bilingual education policy conducted by the Linguistic Society of the Philippines, considered as the "single most important recent study" in the field before the 1990's (Tucker, 2).

All papers in this journal attempt, consciously or unconsciously, to address specific issues raised by the various language researches mentioned and alluded to above. They partly extend and partly redirect the concerns and agenda of language research of the past few decades. Some works (e.g., Tupas, Marquez, E. Flores, Nuñez) no longer see, as traditional sociolinguistics in the Philippines does, the relationship between language and society (see "Book Reviews") — between ways of speaking and the contexts in which they occur — as neutral and commonsensical. Rather, they view the relationship as always ideological, motivated by power structures that impact on forms and meanings of (inter)action between speakers and social

institutions. Although the ideological underpinnings and linguistic assumptions of the individual journal papers are varied, these papers assume that the hybrid context of language attitudes, socioeconomic variables, and cultural reformations within which Filipinos negotiate their own identities and subjectivities, either has determined the writers' choice of material for analysis or has made its mark on some uses of language in the country. This explains the use of various texts in the papers which, in postmodern fashion, are all equally important and legitimate forms of discourse, e.g., Marlboro ads (Laurel), telephone conversations (Hernandez), a Bulosan novel (E. Flores), a letter/narrative in the past (Marquez), and an Ati-atihan chant (Tupas). Analyses of texts and discourses in various forms and contexts (including pedagogic materials in M. Flores and Nuñez) reveal at least a recognition of the ubiquitous presence of language in society, thus the relevance of language analysis as a form of sociopolitical, ideological, and/or historical analysis. The Philippines is in dire need of such kind of language analysis.

In Halliday's terms (*Explorations*, 48-71; *Social Semiotic*, 39-43), we can say that the papers in this issue are involved in exploiting the various multilevel potentials of English and other languages. Laurel and Amio, for example, exploit the lexico-grammatical potential of language, specifically English. They are involved in determining what we *can say* with English and other languages as well. Hernandez and M. Flores, on the other hand, examine the semantic or meaning potential of language, or what we *can mean* with language. Tupas, Marquez, E. Flores, and Nuñez as well as "Writers and Writing in Southeast Asia," are concerned with what we *can do* with language; they situate their analyses within the behavior potential of our culture. Thus, although the nature of analysis differs from writer to writer, e.g., descriptive (Amio and Laurel), interpretive (Hernandez) and/or explanatory (Tupas, Marquez, E. Flores, and Nuñez); and although the linguistic assumptions are likewise different, e.g., formal (Amio and Laurel), functional (M. Flores and Hernandez), and/or ideological (Tupas, Marquez, E.Flores, and Nuñez) — the papers nevertheless are

involved in opening up language studies in English to a multidisciplinary perspective which necessitates the adoption of theories from sociology, history, literary criticism, media and popular culture studies, postcolonial and postmodern theory, and language pedagogy, to name a few. This multidisciplinarity will help bring more light to an understanding of language and language use in the Philippines, especially their potentialities to constitute and be constituted by various lexico-grammatical, semantic, and cultural formations in the country. It is in this latter sense that the papers in this issue — though largely sharing methodological and/or theoretical congruence with the linguistics of Llamson, Bautista (*Filipino bilingual's*; *Lexicon*), Gonzalez (*English*) and Reyes-Otero; and the pragmatics of Pascasio (*Dynamics*; *Philippine Bilingualism*) and Marasigan, partly deviate from these works by relocating language studies within (or, at least, by drawing attention to) a much more complex multilingual and multicultural context. Moreover, the papers in this issue are not language surveys reminiscent of those in the past two decades, including earlier ones (the Iloilo Experiment of 1948-54 and the Swanson Survey of 1960), although the varying survey conclusions and recommendations are extremely helpful in understanding the characteristic forms and uses of English and other languages in the Philippines. The papers are likewise largely not language teaching studies *per se* although some (E. Flores, M. Flores, Nuñez) have clear pedagogic agenda.

It must be noted, however, that this issue of papers on language studies in English must be read critically against the backdrop of larger theoretical, historical, and sociocultural contexts. This issue — symbolically confronting the demands of the next many decades — specifically grapples with the new theoretical and political challenges in language studies in the Philippines where the "historical interconnectedness" of English, English language teaching, and colonialism (see Pennycook, *Discourses*) on the one hand, and the institutionalization of Filipino as the national language, English as a global language, and the "postmodern world" on the other hand, bears its marks on the various competing discourses of

power, legitimation, and resistances among Filipinos of different affiliations (e.g., gender, social, educational). Language studies in English in the country is domesticated[3] within what Kandiah calls a paradox shared by some ex-colonial countries:

> ... the realities of the world that the ex-colonial countries occupy decree that the task of repossession and reconstruction that they are determinedly engaged in can only be pursued *within* the global order created for our times by the very history that dispossessed and disempowered them in the first place (xxi).

Linguistics, thus, in the sense of it being a modern linguistic enterprise characterized by objectivism, idealism, and scientificity,

> ... appears at a quick glance to be one contemporary Academic discipline that has managed to insulate itself Considerably from the currents of thought generated by the post-colonial and post-modern projects that have come to assume such significance in the contemporary world (xxi).

Language studies in English in the country should not — because it cannot — isolate language from its history and its speakers. This is not a new theoretical breakthrough about language. Vcloshinov, early in the 20th century, problematized the "abstract objectivism" of Saussure and the ahistorical rendering of language by modern linguistics. Halliday (*Social Semiotic*) referred to Chomskyan linguistics as "a form of reductionism" which is "highly idealized" (38). If we are interested in linguistic interaction, he adds, we will certainly not be able to use Chomsky's notion of competence because "the distinctions that are important to you are idealized out of the picture" (Ibid.). Derrida[4], about three decades ago, deconstructed Austin, then Searle, and their problematic theorization of context as one where "ordinary language" resides, and where "unhappy" or "unfelicitous" (read: nonstandard) speech acts are "parasitic" or "non-serious" (see Austin).

And there are more of these, old and new, even within the circle of applied linguists, ethnographers of communication, and discourse analysts. Hymes (e.g., *Ethnography*) critiqued Chomsky, but he likewise critiqued himself — at least implicitly, in his retheorization of communicative competence. He works out his ethnography of communication in a broader framework of narrative and social inequality. Discourse analysts who were once steeped in the belief that discourse beyond the sentence is functional, and thus, must be studied as such, later revised their own linguistic assumptions to include the ideological underpinnings of any function. Caldas-Coulthard and Coulthard, Hoey, van Dijk (*Principles*): they are only a few who went beyond their own functional frameworks of language and ventured into much more politically explicit projects on language and discourse. van Dijk (*Foreword*) states:

> ... the bulk of research in contemporary studies of language and discourse has been decidedly "uncritical" if not "apolitical," even when it has focused on the social dimensions of language use. Such studies typically have aimed to describe the world, and ignored the necessity to change it. In that respect the choices of this mainstream research have been no less political than those of a critical approach (131).

Fowler (*Essays; Languages; Style)* not only realized the inadequacy of structuralist stylistics as influenced by Chomsky and Jakobson, even if he was, to start with, a major proponent of transformational-generative grammar (*Transformation; Understanding*); he more importantly saw the need to reappropriate Halliday within an ideological framework, where functions are never innocent (*Linguistics*; *Social Discourse*) but are in fact socially motivated and determined partly or largely by structures and negotiations of power. Thus the introduction of "critical linguistics" (Fowler et al.; Hodge and Kress; see also Fowler, *News*).

And there are, of course, still more, if we include applied linguists like Candlin, whose plenary speech "What happens when applied linguistics goes critical?" during the World Congress of Applied Linguistics in Sydney in 1987, has directed applied linguistics towards "the amelioration of individual and group existences through a focus on problems of human communication, a study of the socially constituted nature of language" (462); or Pennycook (*Critical*), who describes a critical applied linguistics as a broadening of "possibilities for the way in which we can investigate questions of language and education" (25):

> If we are concerned about the manifold and manifest inequities of the societies and the world we live in, then I believe we must start to take up moral and political projects to change those circumstances. This requires that we cease to operate with modes of intellectual inquiry that are asocial, apolitical or ahistorical[5] (Pennycook, 25).

This echoes what Hymes (*Foundations*) wrote more than two decades ago about the necessity for linguistics to transcend its concern with "the structures of ways of speaking" and move into the question of explanation and the question of liberation (205):

> If linguistic research is to help as it could in transcending the many inequalities in language and competence in the world today, it must be able to analyze these inequalities (204).

But, how are we to explain these "inequalities"? How are they produced? Who are involved? What *specific* theoretical frameworks can explain them? Or should this preceding question rather be asked in another way: how do specific instances of inequality, rooted and imbricated in the various sites of historical and other types of contestation and legitimation in the country, inform and reconstruct Western paradigms of linguistic and discourse

analysis? Modern linguistics, functional linguistics, critical linguistics, and sociopolitical and critical discourse analysis, largely assume a monolingual context for the study of language and discourse. And the theoretical frameworks of the papers in this journal — all working within a multilingual context — are certainly enmeshed in such a decisive theoretical and political issue. Answers to the questions posed certainly must go beyond this journal as they require collaboration — as in most disciplines today and as mentioned earlier in this paper — among experts in sociology, history, social psychology, postcolonial and postmodern theory, economics, and political science, to name just a few. One of the greatest challenges for language studies in the Philippines is to localize — if not resist, refashion, and recreate — dominant Western paradigms of understanding and analyzing language use *within* a multilingual context, (historically) produced largely by competing discourses of (neo)colonialism, globalism, nationalism, and ethnicity.

Although the Philippines gained political independence from Spain on June 12, 1898; from the United States on July 4, 1946; and from the Marcos dictatorship during the 1986 February revolution, these political/historical markers are in no way indications that power and influence no longer permeate what Pennycook (*Discourses*) calls the "micropolitics of daily life." Democracy may simply have made more implicit what are otherwise material/physical uses of force. It is in this light that language (e.g., in media and political speeches) plays a very important role in reproducing and maintaining the status quo in Philippine society because much work is done implicitly. A focus on the microstructures of language (e.g., functions, speech acts, forms, and interactions) may as well be a focus on its macrostructures (e.g., history, ideology, power, and resistance). It *may* be arguably true, politically or materially, that Filipinos today "have taken over their own affairs including what to do with English" and "are doing with English what they want to do and not from any dictation of outsiders (foreigners)" (Sibayan and Gonzalez, 165); however, these may not be viable observations culturally, especially in matters that

involve language use and interaction, since cultural constructs of colonialism (see Pennycook, *Discourses*) and other modes of control may still impact on the ways Filipinos speak and behave today. What teachers do in the classroom, for example, the speech acts they produce, the materials they use, as well as the language researchers' tacit view of the relationship between teachers and students, are potent markers for language analysis. We need a closer scrutiny of the nuances of language use in the Philippines, its Filipino users, and its relationship with Philippine history, culture, society and politics, including the broader framework of globality and the politics of English as a global language, before we can say — if indeed we can say at all today — that "linguistic imperialism (on the use of English) in the Philippines is a thing of the past ..." (Sibayan and Gonzalez, 165).

The papers in this issue therefore constitute and are constituted by various theoretical, historical, and sociocultural changes in the Philippines and in the world. Our multicultural and multilingual experiences within a broader "modern global order" find their voices in part in the way each writer deals with his or her material and language. Keeping this in mind, we can say that *language* in language studies in English in the country is never monolingual, never monologic, never one. Language is more than just a passive site of stabilizing/homogenizing forces as well as all sorts of resistance and struggle from its speakers; it is by itself a homogenizing and resisting mode of social action. Perhaps this same ideological rubric can help explain the dialogic nature of this journal issue — the inconsistencies in language and theory themselves help construct the transformative value of linguistic theory and Philippine society in general. Taken as a whole, the papers disengage from one another in order to confront the various theories, practices, contexts, and politics of language studies in English in the Philippines today.

NOTES

1. The language problem, according to Samonte, was concerned not really with what languages should be taught in the schools, but rather with what languages were appropriate media of instruction in elementary, in high school, and so on. This included specific issues involving time allotment for each language — English, Tagalog, and the vernacular — and the number of units for Spanish to be required in some degree courses like education, foreign service, law, etc. From August 31 to December 14, 1968, the Philippine Association for Language Teaching with the UP Institute for Language Teaching sponsored a series of lectures on "What Language of Instruction for the Philippines?" which was clearly a response to the growing demand to address such issues (see *Notes* 1968: 63). Alongside these issues, however, were related topics concerning competence in English, language teaching methodology, and Philippine English (e.g., de los Reyes; Hidalgo; Knowlton; Ruiz).

2. To avoid much confusion, the use of "Tagalog" or "Pilipino" must be clarified. Pilipino - a Philippine national language that was to be created out of existing languages of the Philippines with Tagalog, the language of Manila and neighboring provinces, as basis — was *officially* proclaimed in Commonwealth Act No. 570 as one of the national languages of the Philippines effective July 4, 1946 (see Samonte).

3. This is a very important notion because "liberative" theories from the West are still located within the ideological and historical positions of their proponents. One such clear example is critical discourse analysis, which, despite its critique of modern linguistics, traditional sociolinguistics, and even critical linguistics, with its political avowals of social reform and justice, nevertheless contributes a lot of sense to marginalizing concerns of neocolonial countries such as the Philippines. The seeming lack of historicity in the analysis and the agentiveness of language users disengages critical discourse analysis from, let us say, Filipino speakers of English and the potentialities of their resistance and struggle in language use.

4. Two major polemical essays of Derrida on Anglo-American speech acts theory are in this book, "Signature Event Context" and "Limited Inc a b c..." The first, which concentrated on Austin's speech acts, was written in 1971 for a conference, but whose first English translation (from French) was published in the first volume of *Glyph* in 1977, to which John Searle gave his reply, "Reiterating the Differences: A Reply to Derrida" in the second volume in the same year. The second essay was a rejoinder to Searle which is far more frank and bold. Derrida's deconstruction of speech acts theory though powerful in its obliteration

of the truth/falsefood preoccupation of the philosophy of language, as well as its reification of the concept of language as performance — reveals that the theory is nevertheless dangerously anti-language because of its treatment of context, in Derrida's words, as "ever absolutely determinable" (2) and/or "exhaustively definable" (15). Of course, Derrida's critique is not only very useful theoretically, but is, more importantly, *potentially* damaging to many a homogenizing force in Philippine society today.

5. It is unfortunate that much research in the Philippines — linguistic, sociolinguistic, and applied linguistic — has dealt with "modes of intellectual inquiry that are asocial, apolitical or ahistorical." Research in Philippine English and codeswitching, for example, though potentially a great source for liberative discourses on/from language, has been confined to the constraining (abstract, scientific, "neutral") limits of modern linguistics, thus unable to draw concrete connections between language uses in the country and its various socioeconomic, political, historical, and ideological realities.

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