

SOME RESEARCH PRIORITIES FOR LINGUISTICS IN
THE PHILIPPINESANDREW GONZALEZ, FSC
De La Salle University0. INTRODUCTION¹

In summary form and in rather rapid strokes, I would like to give a brief view of the state of research as well as point out areas needing further investigation in Linguistics, taking as my frame of reference the traditional division of Linguistics into the following sub-disciplines or fields of specialization: Descriptive Linguistics; Historical and Comparative Linguistics; the Hyphenated Disciplines of Anthropological Linguistics, Sociolinguistics, Psycholinguistics, and two new areas of investigation for which I would like to coin words, Politicolinguistics and Juridicolinguistics; and finally Applied Linguistics.

1. DESCRIPTIVE LINGUISTICS

Most of the languages of the Philippines and Philippine-type languages outside of the Philippines have already been described, thanks to the work of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) and to Graduate Schools offering MA's and Ph.D's in Linguistics here and abroad and requiring dissertations.

Occasionally, a 'new' (in the sense of special variety or member of a particular existing sub-group) language may be 'discovered': e.g. Llamzon a few years ago learned of 'Sinauna Tagalog', which turns out to be a Dumagat language; Reid found another Northern language to add to his tree a few years ago; Elkins came across another variety of Manobo in Palawan. By and large, future 'discoveries' will be varieties of existing languages more or less mutually intelligible with languages already well-studied.

Where further research would be of significance is in the use of these languages a test-cases to verify the suitability of theories of language and more recent linguistic models. For example, case-grammar has proven to be a boon to Philippine linguistics because of the close fit between the model and the structure of the Philippine languages and their interesting process of topicalization or subjectivalization. Some aspects of generative semantics (Lakoff *et al.*) prove attractive for describing and explaining aspect marking in certain negatives of the Bisayan languages through a process called 'predicate raising'. The rearrangement of clitics in the surface structure of the Philippine languages has been used to prove the necessity of singularly transformations without semantic import; moreover, the ordering of these clitics demands that transformations take place even after phonetic realization has taken place since the ordering depends on whether or not the clitics are monosyllabic or disyllabic – again, phenomena with important theoretical implications for the linguistic models being used.

¹An earlier draft of this paper was given at a symposium sponsored by the Linguistics – Anthropology Section of the National Research Council of the Philippines at Vinzons Hall, University of the Philippines, on May 24, 1980.

What we need therefore in the area of descriptive linguistics is in-depth analysis of features of the Philippine languages which can be theoretically model-enriching or model-verifying.

2. COMPARATIVE LINGUISTICS

In the tradition of Dempwolff, there are half-a-dozen practitioners of comparative and historical Austronesian linguistics in the world today. Their work has resulted in the reconstruction of Proto-Austronesian (improving upon Dempwolff as a result of new data) and Proto-Philippine (as one main group in the West Indonesian branch).

In the area of sub-grouping, Dyen and his students (including McFarland, who is a Philippinist) have used various techniques (qualitative and quantitative) to create family trees to enable us to see the relationships between the language families better. These groups have been given spatial correlates through McFarland's linguistic atlas.

The most significant project that is needed in this area would be the completion of an etymological dictionary of the Philippine languages, with focus on Tagalog, because of its importance as the base of Pilipino. Zorc has come up with fifteen thousand reconstructions and entries in his *Core Etymological Dictionary*. These entries have to be increased.

In grouping and sub-grouping, although the main outlines are now clear, thanks to the work of Reid in Northern Luzon, McFarland in Southern Luzon, Zorc for the Bisayan languages, and SILists such as Elkins, Gallman, Walton, and Pallesen for the Southern Mindanao groups, we would need details to confirm and consolidate our hypothetical groupings at present.

One specific area of comparative linguistics which needs looking into and which can be done by local linguists is the area of dialectology. Using various features for our isoglosses (adding to structural and lexical data the results of mutual intelligibility testing, which has been pioneered in by the SIL linguists), we need to look at the actual boundaries of various language groups, the effects of languages in contact in boundary areas where several languages are spoken, and the distinctive features of dialects of the same language (especially Tagalog, again because it is the basis of Pilipino).

3. THE HYPHENATED DISCIPLINES: ANTHROPOLOGICAL LINGUISTICS, PSYCHOLINGUISTICS, SOCIOLINGUISTICS, POLITICOLINGUISTICS, JURIDICOLINGUISTICS

Offering the most interest to Philippine linguists are the hyphenated disciplines because of their interface with the social sciences and their practical implications for Philippine life and needs.

As I mentioned earlier, straight linguistic data gathering leading to grammatical sketches and descriptions and word lists of relatively unknown and minor languages would perhaps not be too useful at this stage because these studies have already been done by other ethnologists and linguists. More important would be the collection of texts (chrestomathies, especially of folklore and oral literature) valuable to us in searching for a

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usable past and in seeking an authentic Philippine culture. What would be needed would be critical and annotated editions of these texts (with translations) for wide circulation.

Under the rubric of 'ethnography of speaking', *who* speaks *what* to *whom*, *when* and *where*, there have been significant language surveys conducted in various parts of the Philippines (Dagupan, Paniqui, Greater Manila, Surigao) and national surveys of different types, which provide us with baseline data to observe sociolinguistic change and for planning purposes.

In the area of the psychology of language, we have barely begun our investigations of the ontogenesis of language (the pre-language stage, child language acquisition, child bilingualism, acquisition of more complex structures in preschool and the school years, the acquisition of a second language among adults and children, common strategies in learning a second language and evidence of interlanguage; experimental studies on bilinguals, their brain lateralization and dominance configurations, their special characteristics; studies of Philippine aphasics).

In the Philippines, the one field which has been quite systematically explored the past ten years has been sociolinguistics with regard to topics relating to problems of language planning and implementation and problems concerning the national language. Except for the Cebu area, we now have reliable data on almost all major urban centers in the Philippines, data on language preferences, attitudes, and patterns of multilingualism and language use among our people; this provides us with the necessary data base for language planning and the quantitative measures needed for programming and implementation. We also have studies on language standardization and language cultivation and elaboration. On a pilot basis, many creative faculty members are beginning to write in Pilipino and are thus contributing to the intellectualization of the language. We have data on language domains and needs and the perceptions of people on which languages are needed for social mobility as well as studies on indicators of language welfare and their relation to socio-economic development.

Still needed in the sub-discipline of language planning are the completion of a Tagalog reference grammar in Pilipino (supplementary to the excellent Schacter and Otones reference grammar) and an update of the Lope K. Santos *Balarila*. We also need a monolingual dictionary, preferably with etymological entries. We need lexical frequency counts of Tagalog usage for teaching materials preparation. We still need data on the dialects of Tagalog (or Pilipino), the dialect boundaries of Tagalog, data on what is happening to Pilipino in other urban centers outside of Metro Manila, descriptions of the styles and registers of Pilipino.

Politics cannot be separated from Linguistics, especially in this country, where so many aspects of our lives are governed by political decisions. We need studies on the history and the development of the national language and our problems with it, arising from regionalism and inter-ethnic rivalries and political compromises. This area is relatively new as an area of investigation even outside of the Philippines. It bears looking into since we can develop theories and models which can enrich not only Philippine intellectual life but scholarship and research abroad. For example, what political decisions influence the selection of the language of mass media programming and the extent of the use of vernaculars, Pilipino, and English in the Philippine mass media? Which political messages in which languages have the most impact and credibility? How does government policy with regard to language affect not only educational policy but actual Philippine

life? Or is this an area where law has to mirror reality rather than try to change it? What political implications would the slogans *Isang Bansa, Isang Diwa* or *Isang Bansa, Isang Wika* have in terms not only of efficiency of communication but the management of news on the part of the civil and military authorities?

A final area, again a relatively undeveloped one, now finding new applications in the United States especially with regard to the legal rights of minorities and culturally disadvantaged people, is the area of jurisprudence and language. Why is it that the language of the courts, in a period of rapid social change, is the most resistant to changes in language policy? For example, Spanish continued to be a major language of our courts during the entire American Period, and it took the Second World War to finally eliminate it (after 48 years). One predicts that English will stay in Philippine courts and legislation for a long time even if Pilipino expands its domains. How does the administration of justice suffer from the fact of the imposition of a foreign language as the language of deliberation and even sometimes of testimony (although here we do better than the Americans since we have always used interpreters especially when taking the depositions of witnesses who do not speak one of the major languages)? How effective for law and order and the conduct of life is the use of signs on our streets and other public places? Will a new code (a picture or sign system instead of a verbal one) be more efficient or create more of an impact?

4. APPLIED LINGUISTICS

In this field, our country represents one of the most advanced in Asia and the World. We have had a lot of experience teaching foreign languages (especially English) and in the process have learned to think for ourselves and to judge what works and what does not work. We have thus become more critical of the latest fads in language approaches and pedagogy and have learned to be quite skeptical of new proposals without being reactive or unduly conservative.

With the recognition of the right of Third World Englishes to exist, we have gathered data on the standardization of a local variety of Philippine English and have competent descriptions of the distinctive features of this local variety. More interesting is the documentation of language change and the prediction of the directions that this change will take in the next quarter century. Thus even language has undergone the scrutiny of the futurists.

We have likewise compiled sociological data and documented the spread of languages (especially of Pilipino) and in the process have learned to extrapolate on the future of this language.

If we are going to continue to use the vernaculars and other languages, then the work of linguistic description aimed towards application or practical usage must continue through the publication of bilingual dictionaries (using Tagalog or Pilipino rather than English as the other language) and through the compilation of reference grammars and eventually a pedagogical grammar, for use in the production of materials.

Moreover, we have expertise and experience in the production of teaching materials, both of English as a second language and of Pilipino as the national lingua

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franca. We continue to hone our skills in this area but will now need to produce materials aimed towards communicative competence and practice since we have found inadequacies in the structural approach.

We still need to do further research in reading in Pilipino and in the development of listening, speaking, reading and writing skills in Pilipino. Likewise we need to develop better instruments or tests for measuring competence in Pilipino and not merely in English. We have expertise in the area of achievement, proficiency and aptitude testing, but this expertise is more or less aimed at measuring general ability, quantitative and qualitative (and therefore language dependent) reasoning; we need to focus more on communicative competence testing and language use.

We also need to test our theories on methods, for although we have an intuitive feeling regarding what works and what does not work in the classroom, we have to be able to document the process and control the teaching variables to give our teaching a scientific basis.

5. CONCLUSIONS

In this all-too-rapid view, I have tried to pinpoint lacunae or gaps which call for investigation in the Philippines in the various sub-disciplines of linguistics.

The harvest is great but the laborers are few.

Organizations such as the National Research Council of the Philippines and the Linguistic Society of the Philippines will hopefully provide the necessary laborers through their members to work as researchers to gather this rich harvest.