

GONZALEZ, ANDREW B. F.S.C. 1980. *Language and nationalism: The Philippine experience thus far*. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University Press.

Reviewed by Richard A. Benton, New Zealand Council for Educational Research

Must a nation have its own national language? If it must, how is such a language to be chosen and developed? Filipinos, with over eighty indigenous languages and several imported ones to choose among, have been debating these questions for over a century. Gonzalez's book discusses many of the disparate answers which have been given, analyzing both the causes and effects of attempts to intertwine the development of national consciousness and the solution of the ever present 'language problem'.

The book *Language and Nationalism* begins, most appropriately, with a foreword by the late Cecilio Lopez, the doyen of Philippine linguists and a person intimately involved in early attempts to develop a single national language for the Philippines. This is followed by the author's preface, which outlines the structure of the book, its purpose, and the methodology and theoretical assumptions which inform the analysis of the data presented. The study proper is divided into five sections, each covering a time-span bounded by significant events in Philippine political history: chapters on developments (1) during the period leading up to and including the Aguinaldo Republic, (2) the Commonwealth era, (3) the Second Republic under Japanese hegemony, and (4) the Third Republic (1946-1972), concluded by an epilogue looking towards the Fourth Republic and seeking to distill the essence of the Filipino experience thus far.

The stated purpose of the book is to 'glean insights into the problems of nation building and language development, and to draw conclusions on language policy and implementation . . . from the Philippine data' (viii). The Philippine data – and the Philippine experience – provide a rich harvest, and the insights gleaned in this volume will surely be of value to those concerned with national language policies in any multi-lingual country.

Gonzalez, however, has carefully confined his comments and generalizations to the Philippine situation except for one or two sentences in the final paragraphs of the book. Throughout the study he has remained very close to his data – almost in the manner of a Bloomfieldian linguist – so that he has produced a study which is grounded very much in real events, and contains few speculations about what might have been.

This attentiveness to facts, and the wealth of bibliographical detail, greatly enhances the value of this work, as it provides a secure anchorage on which later more free ranging studies may be moored. This in itself is a great service to Philippine scholarship, and indeed to scholars anywhere who are interested in the interconnections between nationalism and language. The author has steered clear of direct commentary on very recent developments, although these of course were foreshadowed by the events of the 1960s and the debates in the Constitutional Convention, which are fully and excellently discussed in the fourth chapter (by far the longest in the book). This chapter also clarifies the role of the Institute of National Language in the decades following the war, showing that the Institute was frequently a victim of unjustified attacks from critics (among whom this reviewer could be numbered) who relied on often grossly distorted journalistic accounts of the Institute's policies, and failed to examine for themselves what policies the Institute was in fact following.

A number of themes tie together the frequently contradictory courses of action which have been adopted by politicians and officials who have attempted to determine Philippine language policy since the beginnings of the movement for independence from Spain. Most of these are rooted in the events and the personalities of the leaders described in the first chapter of the book – the oppositions between Manila and the provinces, the Tagalogs and non-Tagalogs (particularly Visayans), the elite and the masses.

Gonzalez demonstrates in his analysis of the policies of the early revolutionaries, that for both the Propagandists (essentially an elite group with non-Tagalog backing) and the Katipuneros (who were mostly Tagalog workers and peasants) language policy was a given, not an issue. The members of the Katipunan equated the Tagalog area with the Philippines (their leader, Andres Bonifacio, spoke and wrote of *Katagalugan* – ‘Tagalogland’ – rather than *Philippines*), and, naturally, assumed that Tagalog would be the official language of any Philippine nation. The Propagandists, many more comfortable in Spanish (and other European languages), and also drawn from both Tagalog and non-Tagalog backgrounds, assumed that Spanish, the language in which they had received their education and through which they had first encountered the revolutionary ideas which they propounded, was the logical choice as the first official language for the government and education of the new nation.

The tactical victory of the Propagandists at the Malolos convention became meaningless after the Americans succeeded in suppressing the Republican government, and imposed English as the unifying language of the country. The phenomenal success of the Americans in promoting English, Gonzalez points out, was made possible only through the enthusiasm of their Filipino students who then became teachers – at no point did the number of Americans in the Philippines come near to equalling the number of Spaniards (themselves of course only 0.2 percent of the total population), but within a generation the number of speakers of English had exceeded tenfold the number of Spanish speakers.

What the Propagandists had done at Malolos, Quezon did in reverse at the 1935 Constitutional Convention, and, as the third chapter of the book illustrates, set in motion again the Katipunero policy which was given powerful technical and logistic backing during the Japanese-supported Second Republic. The tensions remained, however, and the delegates to the 1971-1972 Constitutional Convention succeeded in negating on paper at least Quezon’s apparent victory won 37 years before.

Meanwhile, Gonzalez’s analysis makes clear, events had taken their own course. Tagalog, renamed Filipino, and in the substantially de-ethnicized form of the variety spoken in Manila, had in fact become widely accepted as a lingua franca in many parts of the Philippines. It had not, however, become accepted as the national language. This had been recognized by the Constitutional Convention, which, as the author says, came up with ‘a formula more than a reality, that the various ethnic groups can live with’ (149). This it seems was a very sensible compromise – the proposed new national language, Filipino, since it does not yet exist, offends no one, and in the meantime Filipino can spread in a much more natural manner as a lingua franca with official status, rather than as in the past a symbol of but an obstacle to national unity.

Gonzalez sees four important lessons implicit in the Philippine experience. First, ‘nationhood and national language are not tied together by a necessary law of association’. Secondly, language will have a unifying function only when unity has already been

achieved — attempts to impose a single language to create unity are likely simply to intensify disunity. Thirdly, national economic development has proceeded with a borrowed language — the development of an indigenous language in the economic context has little practical importance. The fourth lesson may be the most important — the elite will tend to favor the language most useful to their ends.

It is perhaps unfortunate that the most recent developments in language policies in education in the Philippines are barely touched on in this book, and not discussed in the light of the fourth lesson. Gonzalez is optimistic about the future of both English and Pilipino — in one of the few really speculative comments he anticipates that by the year 2000 most Filipinos will be able to speak Pilipino, and three quarters will speak English too. I am not so sure that this latter assumption is as well grounded as the former; my own interpretation of current developments would be that a segment at least of the elite regards widespread competence in English as inimical to its purposes, and is taking steps to reduce the role of English to that played by Spanish during the 1930s. This of course is speculation based more on intuition than on hard data — precisely the kind of speculation that Gonzalez has so wisely, in a work of this kind, avoided. The data certainly bears out his observation that most current language planning models are inadequate in the Philippine situation, and that 'for some countries', including the Philippines, 'benign neglect is a better alternative to deliberate and explicit language planning' (157).

This is a beautifully presented book. Each chapter is preceded by a brief outline and concludes with a summary of the main themes discussed. The writer's style holds the reader's attention, and the investigation of the linguistic and social backgrounds of the protagonists in the drama described not only serves its scholarly purpose but also adds considerable human interest to the narrative. The inclusion of a comprehensive index is also very helpful.

There is no mention of the attitudes of the Chinese communities in the Philippines and the ways in which the various language policies have affected them socially and educationally. It would also have been interesting (to this reviewer at least) to have had more information on the status of Spanish as an elite and official language after the 1920s — this is alluded to, of course, in accounts of the two Constitutional Conventions, but never discussed in detail. But these are minor quibbles. This study is of great significance for everyone concerned with the role of language in Philippine society, whether citizen, scholar, educator, or politician. I can unreservedly endorse the recommendation made by the late Cecilio Lopez in his foreword — this is indeed a book which all who are concerned with language in the Philippines should read, and which every school should have on its shelves.