

- Delivered as a speech by the chairman of the committee on education of the Philippine House of Representatives, this piece is a sensible exposition of the unsatisfactory methods used by the Institute of National Language in developing a common language for all Filipinos.

DEVELOPING THE FILIPINO LANGUAGE

The Institute of National Language after these past 30 years has not truly developed a national language. The language which is now called Pilipino is, according to the critics, merely an improved Tagalog — we cannot really say whether the Tagalog has been improved by the Institute of National Language — the Institute having accepted a very insignificant number of words from the other native dialects and has insistently refused to revise the 20-letter alphabet, the ABAKADA, in order to accommodate foreign words.

In addition, there is the present phenomenon which has been variously called the "communications gap" or the "crisis in understanding."

If there is such communications gap, the officials are partly to blame. Sometimes they tend to adopt grandiose poses and use abstruse

phrases, perhaps to promote the building of their own image in the eyes of the public. Instead of using the simple, direct language of everyday conversation, they would rather employ the complicated, roundabout expression of what we may call "officialese" and this special language can be understood only by those who have the patience to master its intricacies.

If there is a communications gap between the people and the government, the mass media are also partly to blame because the mass media are supposed to tell the people what the government is doing — or is not doing — for them. But how can the mass media, particularly the newspapers, convey this information to the people effectively if they use a language that is understood

only by a small percentage of their readers?

A strange feature of the problem is the fact that most of our newspapers are printed in English. The newspaper which has the biggest circulation, *The Manila Times*, is printed in English. The other major newspapers, *The Manila Chronicle*, *The Philippines Herald*, *The Manila Daily Bulletin*, even the principal magazines, *The Philippines Free Press*, the *Weekly Nation*, the *Graphic*, are all written in English.

On the other hand, in other Southeast Asian countries like Japan, Taiwan, India, Thailand, South Vietnam and Indonesia, the newspaper with the biggest circulation is printed in the national language. It is only here in the Philippines where a majority of our people get their news in the foreign language.

I am not, of course, belittling the work of our English language newspapers. But what I would like to point out is that our newspapers in the national language or Pilipino, which is actually Tagalog, and which is not really the national lan-

guage, could play an important role in bridging the communications gap between the people and the government, if, in the first place, they were to make themselves understandable to the people. But how can they be understood by the masses if they insist in using pure Tagalog, which is called by the purists, pure Pilipino? The purists Tagalog is not even understood by all the Tagalogs but only by a select group of writers.

For instance, how can the average reader of a newspaper in Pilipino understand what is "salipawpaw," that is the word for airplane; or "salumpuwit," which means chair, or "dalubhayupan," which means zoology, or "hapnayan," which means biology? Do you think that we would understand "malimtala"? What does "malimtala" mean? That is the word for "astronaut." I am not a Tagalog nor am I an expert on Pilipino and my knowledge of the national language is limited to what I have assimilated in daily conversations with the people who speak this language and with my wife who is a Ta-

gala, but from what I understand the growth of Filipino newspapers has been hampered by the fact that they tend to use a Pilipino that is more purist than free.

The principal function of language, most especially language as it is used by mass media, is to communicate. Language is a tool for enabling us to make others understand our thoughts, and therefore, language fails in its function when it is not understood by the receiving end of the information sought to be conveyed. Dead language are dead because they have outlived their usefulness as vehicles for communication. Greek, for instance, need to be the language of the ancient civilized world. But now it is practically a dead language and at most it is used only by a small portion of the population of the world. Thus we say, Mr. Speaker: "That is Greek to me," when something is said to us which we cannot understand.

The purists, therefore, in a manner of speaking would insist on using Greek in an era where English is the most widely understood lan-

guage in the world. The purist would stifle the growth of a language by imposing unrealistic restrictions on its spelling and grammar. The purists have tried to keep Tagalog pure by refusing to assimilate anything which is not originally Tagalog, or at least which is not Tagalized. And sometimes a word that is Tagalized becomes mutilated beyond recognition. In this way, it seems to me, the purists have done the most disservice to the national language by hampering its evolution and development into a dynamic and living language fit for use everyday, everywhere, and in every field of human endeavor.

In the field of education, especially in the teaching of science, technology and law, a purist Filipino, or to be more accurate, a purist Tagalog, as a medium of instruction, will be a vehicle of retrogression not of progress. I would like to quote from the magazine *Katas* on the attempt to Tagalize some technical terms. I quote:

"There are only 666 root words in the National Language English Vocabu-

lary. This Vocabulary is adequate for fiction writing, tolerable for journalistic language, but impossible for legal, technical and scientific writing. In contrast, Anglo-Saxon has 50,000 words. Modern English has 650,000. Supposing our purists can coin one technical term a day, or 365 terms a year, it will take them 137 years to coin a vocabulary of 50,000 technical terms."

But it is encouraging to note that there are people and institutions who would break down the wall of unrealistic restrictions erected by the purists so that the Pilipino could be developed into a dynamic, living language that can be used for everyday conversation for speeches, for writing and for reading.

I make particular mention of the *Taliba*, the Pilipino language newspaper that has the biggest circulation among the papers in the vernacular, for undertaking a bold experiment. The secret of this experiment is the use of conversational Pilipino — meaning simple Tagalog with borrowings from English and

Spanish — in news stories, in articles, in columns and in editorials.

I would like to quote here a portion of the New Taliba style sheet which gives the justification for the bold experiment, and I quote:

"The extent of the isolation of Tagalog can only be guessed at. Textbooks in so-called Pilipino, which is actually Tagalog, use a restricted number of letters. Substitutes for technical terms ("kapnayan" for instance) are being coined and imposed on teachers and pupils to the detriment of effective teaching and learning. A formal, academic style, whose failure to communicate with large masses of people has been demonstrated, is being taught. In the guise of Pilipino or Pilipino language that is impractical, hard to learn and rigid in its structure is being taught partisans.

"The New Taliba is getting away from these restrictions in its effort at reaching millions of potential readers. 'We believe,' says the Taliba, 'that this pure Tagalog will be read

only by a select few in the Tagalog areas. On the other hand, a newspaper in Pilipino — in simple, direct language which used simple Tagalog as the basis, accepts widely spelling and uses all the letters of the alphabet — is bound to have a readership much bigger than that enjoyed by any English language newspaper in the Philippines."

The results of the experiment have so far been heartening. In December, 1966, before the changes in Taliba style were made, the average daily circulation of the Taliba was 19,000. After changes were introduced last January 9, the circulation of the Taliba jumped to an average of 25,000 daily. Last month, the average paid circulation was 30,000. On a single day — last February 27 — the circulation went up to a record high of 65,453.

The increase in circulation simply means that more people now understand the language used by the Taliba thus gaining more and more readers.

In undertaking this experiment, what has the New Ta-

liba done? The level of writing in the New Taliba is conversational Pilipino which uses simple Tagalog as the main basis, with heavy borrowings from English and Spanish.

Let us read some of the news items in the issue of the New Taliba dated February 27, 1967. For instance, we have this, and I quote: "Inalisan ng baril ang limang pulis sa Gordon." Another news item: "Defensa kay Gov. Villarama. Ipinagtanggol ng mga Liberal ang suspendidong Governor Jose M. Villarama ng Bulacan." Another news item, Mr. Speaker: "Joint session sa Carta. Magtitipon uli ngayon (Lunes) ang Congress sa isang joint session para tiyakin kung magkakasundo ang Senado at ang Camara sa mga pagbabagong gustong gawin sa Constitucion."

"Sinabi ni Espiker Jose B. Laurel, Jr., na ang nadarama niya ang maraming Senadores ang ayaw pumayag sa ilang pagbabago na minungkahi ng bi-partisan committee na gumawa sa mga amendments na dapat gawin."

Another news item: 10,000 aliens ang mapag-alisan ng pagka-Pilipino." The lead sentence of the item headlined "May pag-asang maging Pilipino" reads: "May pag-asa ang may 10,000 (sampung libung) extranjera na kasal sa mga Pilipino na maging Filipino citizens o mamamayang Pilipino uli. Nilalakad ng Attorney ng extranjera ito na kinabibilangan ng dalawang international beauties na mari-consider ng Supreme Court ang decision nito sa Cita-Ngo case." That is not Filipino. "Ngo" must be Chinese or Siamese.

Another newspaper item: "Huling balita sa sports. Champion si Hsu sa 1967 RP Golf Tournament. Hsu Ching Chang (that is the name of the champion), amateur sa golf sa Nationalist China ang naging champion ng 1967 sa Philippine Open Golf Championship na idinaos sa Wack-Wack Country Golf course na nagkaroon ng 283 a score, may limang under par pagkatapos ng final round sa 1967."

These are samples of the language being used by the New Taliba and we have

here a liberal infusion of English words such as "order" or Spanish words such as "grave," "situacion," "ciudad." English words again such as "control," Spanish words such as "cuerpo ng pulisya." In this news item on sports, the New Taliba adopted the English words, "sports," "champion," the English words, "RP Open," the English words "Philippine Open Golf Championship," "Wack-Wack Country Golf Club course."

In another news item which I quoted, the following words were used: "aliens," "extranjera," maging "Filipino citizens," Supreme Court, dalawang 'international beauties' marereconsider ang "decision." These are some of the words, Mr. Speaker, from English and Spanish which were adopted into the Filipino or Tagalog being used by the new Taliba.

I think that all these sentences, Mr. Speaker, will be understood by at least 90 per cent of the readers from Aparri to Zamboanga. Where before, the old Taliba was understood mostly by people in Rizal, Bulacan, Nueva

Ecija, Laguna, Batangas, Bataan, Zambales and Quezon, now the New Taliba could be understood even by people in Batanes or readers in Sulu.

The conversational level of writing employed by the New Taliba is characterized, it seems to me, by directness, clarity and simplicity. It avoids words and phrases used in literary works or in essays in pure Tagalog. It also avoid coined words as a rule except those which have gone into common usage.

The basic principle governing the style of the new Taliba, which the Institute of National Language may adopt as a basis for the development and evolution of our national language, is to use the simplest words available.

An example given is the word "mayor" to designate the chief executive of a municipality. The coined word in Filipino is "gatpuno" which is understood only in Manila and perhaps, in the suburbs. I understand that some people have also coined another word for "gatpuno" and that is "gathukay" be-

cause of the proliferation of diggings in Manila now.

Not everybody in the Philippines knows the meaning of "gatpuno" but everybody understands the meaning of the word "mayor." And another consideration, apart from the factor of comprehension, is the fact that the word "mayor" links the Filipino, the language being used, with English and Spanish. This linkage is what experts in linguistics call "a linguistic junction with the major languages of the world."

But not all English or Spanish words are borrowed or used by the new Taliba. In some instances it prefers the adopted version or the corruption of Spanish or English words which are Tagalized and which have gone into common usage. An instance is the word "sibuyas." This is a corruption of the Spanish word "cebolla." Or the word "kabayo." You understand the meaning of the word "kabayo" — horse. It is, of course, derived from the Spanish word "caballo."

The draft style sheet of the new Taliba lists other words which are preferred

over all others, being simple and understandable words. For instance, the Taliba uses the words "no parking" in preference to "bawal humimpil," or "emergency exit" instead of using the words "lagusang pangkagipitan," the word "diario" or "periodico" to the word "pahayagan," "customs," instead of "adwana," "pinatay" instead of "pinaslang," "extranjero" to "banyaga" or "dayuhan," "barrio" to "nayon," "departamento" instead of "kagawaran," "Corte Suprema" or "Supreme Court" instead of using the words "Kataastasang Hukuman," "committee" or "comite" to "lupon" and "demanda" instead of "sakdal."

The Constitution and the law which created the Institute of National Language provide that steps shall be exclusively and purely one of the major language or dialects of the country.

The new Taliba, therefore, in adopting a realistic policy with respect to style in Filipino writing, is encouraging the development of such a language — a truly national language to be understood by all the people.

The language or, to be more accurate, the language mixture called 'Pilipino' should be the natural result of the search for a practical working means of oral communication in a country which speaks different languages. Pilipino, or what ought to be the national language, is a language mixture, in the same way that English is a language mixture with Anglo-Saxon as its main ingredient and with liberal infusions of Latin, French, German and words from other languages as its other ingredients. Pilipino is a developing language and is far more dynamic than scholarly Tagalog. Scholarly puristic Tagalog has tried to keep itself pure by refusing to assimilate anything which is not originally Tagalog or Tagalized.

The Tagalization has taken two forms. One school would assimilate foreign words only after they have spelled the words in the Tagalog way. For instance, we have the word "molecule." They will spell the word "molecule" as follows: M-O-L-E-K-I-Y-U-L. Or "battalion" as B-A-T-A-L-Y-O-N.

Another school would coin an entirely new word although its non-Tagalog equivalent is already widely accepted and understood. This school would say "salumpuwit" instead of "silla," "sipnayan" instead of "mathematics," and "dalubhayupan" instead of "zoology."

For instance, in the teaching of science, we may have this sentence, and I quote: 'If we assume that the molecules of hydrogen and chlorine are equally distomic, the same number of hydrogen and chlorine molecules will be needed for reaction.' One way of translating this into Tagalog or Pilipino is as follows, and I quote: "Kung ipalagay natin na ang mga molecule ng hydrogen at chlorine" — they are spelled as they spelled in English — "ay parehong distomic, kasing daming molecule ng hydrogen at chlorine ang kailangan para sa reaksiyon."

But the purist who would Tagalize the spelling would say that same thought in the following words: "Kung ipalagay nating na ang mga molekuyul ng hydrodiyen at klorayn ay parehong dayatomik, kasingdaming molekuyul ng

hydrodiyen at klorayn ang kailangan para sa reaksiyon."

But a pure-blooded purist would say it this way and I quote: "kung ipalagay natin na ang mga mulatip ng mulatub at gamutub ay parehong dalamulapik, kasindaming mulatip ng mulatub at gamutub ang kailangan para sa bago kem." That is the rendition in very, very pure Tagalog as incubated or manufactured by the Institute of National Language of the English sentence mentioned a while ago.

The result is confusion of the kind which has impeded progress in the adoption of a common tongue and the isolation of Tagalog or so-called Pilipino from the major languages of the world.

The purists' group refuses to use the entire existing range of letters in the English and Spanish alphabets. And that is why foreign words which have to be assimilated into Tagalog, in the view of this group, should be rewritten and spelled to conform to the Tagalog way of spelling.

The new Taliba, and any mass medium, however, would not and should not be

bound by this restriction. While the purists' alphabet has only the 20 letters of the Tagalog alphabet, the new Taliba alphabet of the national language has 31 — the 20 of Tagalog plus the c, f, j, q, v, x, and z of English and Spanish and the ch, ll, ñ and rr of Spanish.

This "expanded" alphabet would give any mass medium, such as the new Taliba, a more flexible tool for assimilating words in the international vocabulary for use in its conversational style of writing. The use of the "expanded" alphabet is premised on the presumption that the readers of the Taliba have had some schooling and would readily recognize borrowed foreign words and know their meanings when he comes across them in articles on the newspapers: Thus, instead of using "aksiyon," spelled A-K-S-I-Y-O-N the new Taliba uses the original Spanish word "accion" spelled A-C-C-I-O-N; instead of "kombensiyon," spelled K-O-M-B-E-N-S-I-Y-O-N, the Taliba uses "convencion," C-O-N-V-E-N-C-C-I-O-N; instead of "pabor" the new Taliba uses "favor."

This seems to me, to be a reasonable rule in spelling. It will avoid the curious spelling of borrowed foreign words which have been Tagalized and at the same time render these words immediately recognizable and understandable. For instance, the word "chlorine" would be spelled K-L-O-R-A-Y-N and that would not be immediately recognizable as meaning chlorine in English. And it would be worse should we use the incubated or manufactured Tagalog words such as "mulatip," "mulatub" and "gamutub."

Therefore, the Taliba is to be congratulated for embarking on this bold experiment in the use of language in a mass medium. By embarking on this bold experiment, the Taliba has provided us with practical proof of what method we should adopt to develop and evolve a living and dynamic national language.

To be sure, this experiment is bound to trigger off a heated controversy among partisans of the purists and liberal schools. This is all for our own good because such a controversy would

awaken us to the need for adopting a practical, dynamic, and growing Pilipino language, bound by as few restrictive rules as possible, as our national language.

After all, a language grows not through the dictation of arbiters of language, but through usage. This is the natural way a language should grow, and as shown

by the bold experiment of the new Taliba, this is the way our national language, the Filipino, should evolve and develop in order that it shall become a useful and practical tool of communication among the people. — *From a speech in the House of Representatives, March 6, 1967, by Representative Aguedo F. Agbayani.*

POETIC JUSTICE

What is meant, for instance, by *poetic justice*? It does not mean a justice that differs by its object from the ordinary justice of human jurisprudence, for then it must be confessedly a very bad kind of justice; but it means a justice that differs from common forensic justice by the degree in which it attains its object, — a justice that is more omnipotent over its own ends, as dealing, not with the refractory elements of earthly life, but with the elements of its own creation, and with materials flexible to its own purest preconceptions. — *Thomas Dequincey.*