

ETHNOLINGUISTIC CONCERNS IN THE PHILIPPINES

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"Ethnography without linguistics is blind. Linguistics without ethnography is sterile."—Charles Hockett.

Of the various interdisciplinary studies of language that have crystallized into fields of specialization, ethnolinguistics, or anthropological linguistics, or linguistic anthropology, has not received as much attention here in the Philippines from either linguists or other social scientists. Understandably, sociolinguistics and psycholinguistics have recently been in the forefront of much talk about the language situation in our country (much of it rather heated and tending to fly off) because of controversies related to our fragmented language policies. But because its immediate relevance to such language teachers, ethnolinguistics has remained largely identified with the study of the cultures of our less populous groups.

Furthermore, as it equivocates in its own name as a field of specialization, it is also saddled with the problem of defining itself apart from the other interdisciplinary studies of language. For example, one may take into account the ten topic headings in Hymes' anthology (1964). Excluding the first, which deals with general considerations, and the last, which puts such studies in a historical perspective, the remaining eight easily gets apportioned to studies other than primarily ethnolinguistic. The field of sociolinguistics can lay claim to studies of language and the socialization process, social structure and the formation of speech communities, and the effect of social factors on linguistic change. These, in fact, are at the core of sociolinguistic studies. On the other hand, the classification and interpretation of resemblances among language, especially within a historical framework, could very well belong to historical-comparative linguistics. Even studies of speech play and the so-called "verbal art" may well be claimed by anthropology, by folklore in particular.

What remains therefore as distinctly ethnolinguistic in Hymes' classification would be studies on equality and relativity, particularly as highlighted by translation problems; studies of

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Weltanschauung or *Weltansicht* on the basis of linguistic data as correlated with general ethnographic data; and studies of cultural foci, lexical areas, and semantic fields. That this list does not seem very substantial can readily be offset by the fact that ethnolinguistics may claim as within its scope those studies of language and culture that have tended to develop apart from the foregoing topics. One is the study of place names, which is a very good meeting point for both descriptive and historical linguistics and anthropology. Another is the study of writing systems, particularly palaeography, the implications of which point to cultural origins as well as to early linguistic forms. Then there is the exciting yet highly problematic field of semantic reconstruction, which cannot solely rely on linguistic forms and cognatic relationships (as does phonemic and morphemic reconstructions) but must consider cultural as well as environmental data very meticulously, and from a historical viewpoint.

With the field of ethnolinguistics thus sketched, allow me to pick from the still meager ethnolinguistic fare in the Philippines for my presentation this morning.

We may as well begin with a contrast between a linguistic study, and an ethnolinguistic one, by way of describing ethnolinguistics as a distinct field of specialization in language studies. Presumably, ethnolinguistics requires the meeting of two disciplines, and one may be primarily an anthropologist with a good knowledge of linguistics, or vice-versa. Yet it does not simply mean, for example, an anthropologist doing linguistic work, or the reverse. Rather, it has particular preoccupations which are apart from those in linguistics. Thus, Cayari (1963), in a study of Tagalog adverbs of time, concerned herself with a structural classification, a substitutional classification, and a distributional and functional study of adverbs of time in relation to verbs, nouns, adjectives, and other kinds of adverbs. On the other hand, Troyer (1969) studied Gaddang adverbs of time in relation to the general topic of Gaddang time segmentation, a kind of hypothesizing which a purely linguistic methodology cannot lead to.

I resorted to the above contrastive example as a means to describe, yet not exactly define, ethnolinguistics. The matter of definition should properly come from theoretical studies, and it is primarily this kind of speculation which ethnolinguistics in the Philippines does not have much of. One can note McCarron (1967) as offering some statements, rather loaded, that appear to be of a theoretical sort. For instance, he states thus:

... the several systems of patterned behavior ... are correlated and not necessarily connected with a specific culture. Specificity through arbitrariness therefore gives an independence to the several overt systems of culture behavior. In a word, a particular language is not necessarily bound to a particular culture. It is independent of such a specific culture though it is necessarily circumscribed under the general definition of culture ... We can conclude further that any significance can be given to a specific language but the language is not specific on the basis of this assignation and signification. (pp. 211-1)

While these statements certainly are debatable, taking issue with them in this paper is improper. One must simply read the article, and understand the above statements in the context of translation, cross-cultural understanding and cooperation, and language teaching, for which the statements on the independence of language from culture seem to be the rationale (or rationalization).

In the area of world-view studies, Mercado (1974) is a good example; that is to say, its limitations are characteristic of attempts at defining the world-view of a people on the basis of their language. This very week, the *Pambansang Samahan sa Sikolohiyang Pilipino* is having a seminar-workshop on the *Weltanschauung* of the Filipino, and last Monday afternoon's affair had Enriquez speaking on Tagalog, Mercado on Sebuano, Constantino on Ilokano, and Manuel on Manuvu. The discussions showed clearly the need for a definite and common methodology. Even the basic question of the necessary connection between language and thought was not asked, the positive view simply being assumed. Manuel was certainly correct in demanding ethnographic validation of any statement made about the world-view of a people. One can add that such validation should also include the differentiation between what is particular to that language and culture, and what is regional or universal, for it becomes short-sighted to talk of the world-view of a people when the hypotheses offered are applicable to man in general. Furthermore, such hypotheses should be based on well-defined theoretical grounds, especially in terms of resolving the apparently circular reasoning involved in saying that the world-perspective of a people is such because of their language and culture, and then explaining that their language and culture are such because of their world-perspective.

Less abstract, and therefore more secure in empirical footing than world-view studies, are studies on cultural foci in relation to lexical areas and their internal organization and external implications. Quite well-known among these studies is Conklin's article on Hanunoo color categories (1958). Equally meticulous and well

reasoned out is Frake's analysis of the diagnosis of disease among the Subanons (1961). Other notable studies in this ethnolinguistic area (which I had the chance to examine) are Scott's study of the religious terms in Sagada Igorot (1967), Rayala's analysis of color terms in three languages spoken in Zambales, that is Tagalog, Ilokanon, and Sambal (1970), and MacDonald's demonstration of meal categories of a Palawanon group being operative as a kind of general perspective even for the categorization of the environment (1974). My own modest contribution is a research monograph on the concepts of self, society, and beauty among the Botolan Aytas (1975), as defined by the respective lexical areas. My feeling is that this type of ethnolinguistic study should be the first concern of researchers who wish to make cultural and cognitive inferences from linguistic data. At the moment, the rather elusive, because very abstract, concept of *Weltanschauung* should perhaps be left to other disciplines which may have firmer bases for hypothesizing, and which may have a more definite methodology, such as comparative literature.

As for studies on speech play, the only published articles which have come to my attention are those by Conklin, the first being "Tagalog Speech Disguise" (1956) and the second being "Linguistic Play in Its Cultural Context" (1959). It seems that Conklin thus far has been the only one to concentrate on ethnolinguistic topics in the Philippines. One awaits further publications by MacDonald, even as she now has returned once again to Palawan to work on the texts of oral literature she has gathered. And certainly, the field of ethnolinguistics awaits the work and dedication of more Filipinos, particularly those who will see to it that their findings get circulated for the examination and enlightenment of all interested students and scholars.

One may note, sadly, that there is hardly any thread that runs through the different ethnolinguistic researches done in the Philippines, such that they seem to be as isolated from each other as the population groups that they have focussed on. Whatever theoretical statements have been offered have not necessarily fueled the studies on world-view, cultural focus, and speech play. Even those who have essayed world-view studies have not made full use of cultural focus studies.

At least, the field of palaeography has shown a continuing line of scholarship, from Pardo de Tavera (1884), to Francisco (1973) where it has stopped so far. It can easily be granted that the cumulative improvements in the methodology, and the

deepening insights into Philippine palaeography that characterize this line of scholarship have all the markings of good scientific inquiry.

The prospects of ethnolinguistics in the Philippines are many. One only has to think of linguistic studies *per se* and corollary ethnolinguistic work easily comes to mind. Yet a *caveat* is in order. As in any inter-, multi-, or pluridisciplinary study, one must bring into ethnolinguistics the necessary expertise in two disciplines, lest one presume too much about the other discipline involved only to be invalidated by that discipline. It is easy enough to make inferences of different sorts from linguistic data (folk etymology offers myriad examples), but to make valid and comprehensive inferences requires science, which necessitates a good comprehension of theory and methodology, and a skillful use of research instruments. Thus, even as I sound the call to advance in ethnolinguistics, I must also sound the call for preparedness to advance.

And now to particulars. Our preoccupation with translation problems can lead to studies of the relativity and equivalence of languages. Proposed and actual translation centers would be good homegrounds for this type of ethnolinguistic study. The translator-researcher will then be in constant contact with his data, and while his work as a translator makes him confront the problems of relativity and equivalence of words and phrase-structures, his inquiry into the nature and solution of the problems involved would in effect make him produce better translations. Also, one should not think only of translation work involving English and Philippine languages, or other foreign languages, but also of inter-Philippine translations. The latter can even validate the studies done on a typological classification of Philippine languages, which have relied largely on a basic word list and perhaps a few grammatical categories. Thus, the relative ease by which one translates may be used as an indicator of the close relationship of the languages involved (excluding, of course, the fluency and intelligence of the translator).

For those with historical predilections, they could draw inspiration from the extensive work done by very few scholars in phonemic and morphemic reconstructions, and attempt semantic reconstructions. Such "reconstruction" so-called could still be considered moot and problematic, but it does call for tightly knit arguments and present rather revealing things about the history of a language and of the people that speak, or spoke it. This field

calls for inputs from archaeology and cultural history as well as historical linguistics. By interrelating and integrating them, one may try to describe the habitat of the early Filipinos, and perhaps even pinpoint the various areas of early settlement, as what has been attempted for proto-Indo-European. The study of place-names must also necessarily take a historical perspective. For this, one has to go beyond folk etymology and place-name legends. Aided by historical-comparative linguistics, one should be able to offer new insights into the problem of the peopling of the Philippines. One may take such oddities as there being a Cagayan Valley, a Cagayan island, and Cagayan de Oro which are distant from each other; or of the suggested cognates Manila or Maynila and the French Manille. Particularly interesting are place-names which are no longer meaningful in the language of the people currently in the area, such as Banicain, Binictican, Mabayuan, Tapinac, and Bajac-Bajac in Olongapo City.

Any one involved in lexicography may as well branch off into the analysis of lexical areas in relation to cultural focus. And while at it, he may also look into the unevenness in the size and specificity of lexical areas, even across languages. For example, one may note the following positive terms for feelings or emotions:

love, attachment, devotion, infatuation, affection, passion, liking, fondness, inclination, desire, regard, admiration, yearning, adoration.

yet these are dwarfed by the negative terms, as follows:

hate, detestation, abhorrence, abomination, loathing, anger, ire, rage, fury, indignation, wrath, malice, malevolence, ill will, spite, malignity, spleen, grudge, enmity, hostility, antipathy, antagonism, dislike, disgust, repugnance, intolerance, animosity, rancor, impatience, annoyance, irritation, vexation, disaffection, disfavor, alienation, estrangement, coolness, resentment, umbrage, pique, venom, bitterness, acrimony, implacability, odium (etc.).

and this phenomenon seems to be true of languages in general. Why? the lexicographer turned ethnolinguist should be in the best position to answer.

The last prospect I will note here concerns our busyness with grammatical studies. Perhaps, the wealth of grammatical analyses that Philippine linguistics has spawned are already old enough or stable enough to give birth to serious research on grammatical categories in correlation with, or as determining, the conceptualization of a people. For example, one may well try to find out the ethnological implications of the fact that Tag. *-um-* can only co-occur with one other affix, thus:

- 1 tumakbo
- 2 pumaroon

whereas *mag-* can co-occur with various affixes and other morphemes that at least 28 different forms are possible (excluding changes due to aspect), as follows:

- | | | |
|--------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| 1 nagbayad | 11 nagsipagtindigan | 21 nagkatuwaan |
| 2 nagsi-alis | 12 nangagsipagkantahan | 22 nagpatihulog |
| 3 nangagbihis | 13 nag-umaral | 23 nagpabili |
| 4 nangagsitakbo | 14 nagkang-iiyak | 24 nagkapera |
| 5 nagsipag-aral | 15 nagpagabi-gabi | 25 nagka-utang-utang |
| 6 nangagsipagbihis | 16 naglulundag | 26 nagmarunong |
| 7 nagtakbuhan | 17 nagsulat | 27 nagsakit-sakitan |
| 8 nagsialisan | 18 nagsulat-sulat | 28 nagsa-matsing |
| 9 nangag-awitan | 19 nagpakababa | |
| 10 nangagsisayawan | 20 nagkasabay | |

Of course, grammatical analysis may first sort out the above constructions as possibly involving different principal affixes and not simply *mag-*.

No doubt, there have been discussions along this line, but before the discussions get out of hand, those interested in this type of study should first determine their theoretical footing, particularly on the nature of the relationship which they are positing as holding between linguistic and non-linguistic data. They will have to find out whether their conclusions only reflect correlations or diagnostic correspondences, or whether they, in effect, show the connection to be causal in nature, and for that matter, whether it is language which is the determining factor. Greenberg (1954) warns that

Causality should not be confused with predictability. Perhaps only a predictability relation is discerned in some cases, without any claim to knowledge of the causal factors involved. Or it may be that the connection is merely a statistical probability of more than chance correlation between some aspects of language and extralinguistic phenomena. (p. 5)

Without having settled these theoretical considerations first, one is simply guessing, supposing, or playing around.

A postscript. I eagerly await the coming of age of semantics in Philippine linguistics. Whether it be discursive, componential, or generative, or whether the conclusions are validated by ethnographic data, by grammaticality of sentences, or by the truth values of logically related statements, it does offer tremendous possibilities in prying open man's mind, as it were. The scarcity of time adverbs may no longer hinder studies of time segmentation, for time is a semantic component in many verbs, nouns, and even

adjectives. In the word sequence *kalabit, tapik, hipo, akbay*, and *yakap*, for example, one feels the lengthening of time and the broadening of body space involved in their successful realization. Such data can certainly contribute to studies on the conceptualization of time and space.

These considerations give the image of linguistics and anthropology as expecting parents (with linguistics presumably the impregnator). What is yet to be born is the greater part of ethnolinguistics, and to my mind the more exciting. The ethnolinguistics that has been born is still undergoing adolescent crises — identity, integration, and direction. Yet, it certainly is alive and well, even as it has momentarily dropped out of the urban milieu in order to live mostly in our hinterland communes.

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