

The Impact of Government Policies on the Indigenous Languages of the Philippines

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1. INTRODUCTION

To conclude Kaplan and Baldauf's (2003) exposition on the history of language development in the Philippines, they noted that language planning has for a very long time been enmeshed in politics; instead of being drawn from the wisdom of linguists, policies are almost always of politicians' makings entirely.

Policies are instituted to direct a polity towards the attainment of the often-elusive common good—a task that becomes all the more daunting in a country like the Philippines where what is common is itself a question. Where diversity is the rule of day, the presence of a large number of ethno linguistic groups is just the beginning of the story.

The state, having the function of regulating social interaction has the capacity if not duty to mediate competing, even conflicting interests within the public sphere. This however is best achieved in a multicultural setting not by centrist control but by decentralized governance that enables the state to respond to the needs of communities in its various levels.

Why language is a key subject in the discourse of policy setting in the country need not be explained to the attendees of this conference. In a nutshell, language is a vessel that is both necessary and consequent to the flourishing of culture and identity, which in turn is essential to nation building. Presently, the Philippine situation is looking glum.

Indigenous languages in this paper refer to the native tongues throughout the country. This and the term vernacular are used interchangeably.

2. OUR DYING LANGUAGES

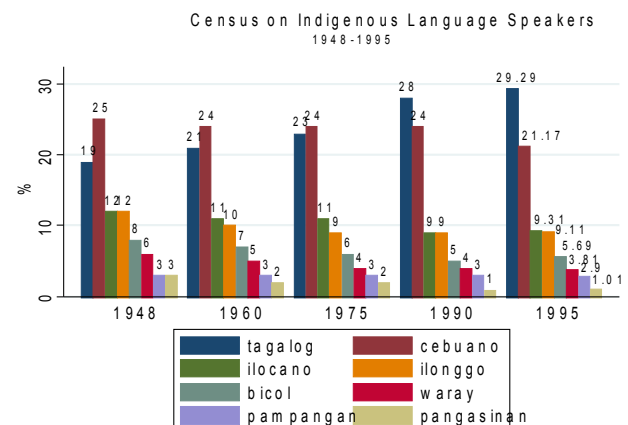
At this point it is important to distinguish between extinction—the loss of a language, and death—the degeneration and remarkable decrease in dynamism of a language, which in most instances is a prelude to extinction.

Obviously, a language with no living user left is extinct. The term is also used to refer to languages gone with very little or no documentation. What qualifies the death of a language on the other hand is not as clear, but there are a couple of accepted propositions. For one, a language is dead even when there are

still people who know the language but do not use it. It may continue to exist in a recorded form or archive but if it is no longer used, no longer evolving, it is dead. The same is true even though there is still one speaker left. Quoting David Crystal (2000), “as speakers cannot demonstrate their fluency if they have no one to talk to, a language is effectively dead when one speaker is left.”

He then goes on to ask, “But what do we say if there are two speakers left, or 20 or 200?” He observes that there is very little consensus on what the threshold is for declaring a language dead. According to an article published in the Manila Times in September 2007, Language experts are agreed that languages spoken by less than 300,000 persons are endangered as these can disappear soon (Bas 2007).

Where the Philippines stand in the midst of this language death-extinction phenomenon is quite appalling. Following is a graph of census data from the National Statistics Office showing the percentage distribution of the country's major language speakers:



Even without looking at the numbers, one can see a rising trend in one language—Tagalog. In a span of five decades, the number of Tagalog speakers has grown by 54.16% of its original figure. Another very noticeable detail though is that it is the reverse for the rest of the vernaculars; Cebuano, formerly more widely spoken than Tagalog by 6%, is now lagging behind by 8.12%. All other languages represented here are falling. In fact, the same Manila Times article reported that it is projected that 20 years from now, the bottom two—Kapampangan and Pangasinan are already dead. This carries dire implications for the rest of the other 110 languages of the islands, which is already a far cry from the original 175.

A more recent tabulation came out in 2000 where the languages were categorized differently. Separate counts were made for additional categories; Bisaya/Binisaya, Bicol, Waray, and Boholano. As there is a controversy about the new grouping, whether all added are proper languages or some are mere dialects of one another, we stick to the old dataset. But even in the new system, Tagalog towers with a 15% lead over the next in line.

The predominance of English goes without saying. It is the language of government, media and the academe. The disparity between the status of Tagalog and English on one hand, and the indigenous languages on the other, can be traced through the course of history.

3. HISTORY OF LANGUAGES IN BRIEF

Predating this is a long saga of political instability. Numerous foreign and local administrations have come and gone, each with unique agendas furthered by language-related directives.

As the history of Philippine languages is as old as the history of the Republic itself, as reference for the discussion following, below is a concise timeline of major policies that surfaced over time. From the first republic to the present constitution, listed are years, specific policies, and dominating language of the period (in italics). Note that letters of policies do not always correspond with reality and practice. Explanatory footnotes are provided in such cases.

Pre-1897	<i>Spanish, vernaculars</i> ²
1897	Provisional Constitution of Biak-na-Bato Article VIII: “ <i>El Tagalog sera la lengua official de la Republic</i> ” (Tagalog shall be the official language of the republic) <i>Tagalog</i>
1898	Malolos Constitution Article XCIII: The use of the languages spoken in the Philippines is optional. It can only be regulated by law, and solely as regards acts of

¹ Figures by Edwin Camaya of Defenders of the Indigenous Languages of the Archipelago (DILA)

² While Spanish was the official language, it was not readily available to the masses. The ilustrado class was the only Filipino group that gained competency in Spanish. Native languages remained largely unregulated.

public authorities and judicial affairs. For these acts, the Spanish language shall be used for the present.

*All existing languages (vernaculars) plus Spanish*³

1901 American Period, Ordered by McKinley Instruction is “...to be given in the first instance, in the language of the people...”
*English and Spanish*⁴

1935 Constitution of the First Republic
Article XIII Section 3: The National Assembly shall take steps toward the development and adoption of a common national language based on one of the existing languages. Until otherwise provided by law, English and Spanish shall continue as official languages.
*Tagalog*⁵

1943 Constitution, Japanese Occupation
Article IX Section 2: The government should take steps toward the development and propagation of Tagalog as the national language.
Tagalog

Post War, Third Republic

English medium of instruction, Tagalog subject
English and Tagalog

1959 National language called Pilipino
English and Pilipino (still mainly Tagalog)

1960’s Youth anti-Imperialist movement⁶
Anti-English, pro-Pilipino
Pilipino (still mainly Tagalog)

1973 Constitution
Article XV Section 3 (2): The National Assembly shall take steps toward the development and formal adoption of a common national language to be known as Filipino.
(3) Until otherwise provided by law, English and Pilipino (Filipino) shall be the official language.
Pilipino (still mainly Tagalog)

1987 Constitution
Article XIV Section 6. The national language of the Philippines is Filipino. As it evolves, it shall be further developed and enriched on the basis of existing Philippine and other languages.

³ Kaplan and Baldauf explains that “the effect of this article was to displace Tagalog as the official language, to declare all Philippine languages equal, and to designate Spanish as the language of ‘acts of public authorities and judicial affairs’ at least for the time being”.

⁴ This has been contradicted by The Organic Law of 1902, where it is provided that the official languages were to be English and Spanish. Another major event that brought about fast popularization of English was the institution of the public school system, which was more available to less affluent Filipinos.

⁵ The ‘one of the existing languages’ clause referred to Tagalog. While English and Spanish continued to be the *official* languages, a *national* language was already identified.

⁶ At the time of then President Marcos, a boom in the youth population in tertiary schools led to increased mass action against ‘economic and cultural imperialism’. This also entailed a repulsion of the English language.

Subject to provisions of law and as the Congress may deem appropriate, the Government shall take steps to initiate and sustain the use of Filipino as a medium of official communication and as language of instruction in the educational system. Section 7. For purposes of communication and instruction, the official languages of the Philippines are Filipino and, until otherwise provided by law, English.

The regional languages are the auxiliary official languages in the regions and shall serve as auxiliary media of instruction therein.

Spanish and Arabic shall be promoted on a voluntary and optional basis.

English and Filipino

4. JACOBINIST BEGINNINGS

As expected of a country previously subjected to foreign rule and suppression, patriotism became the banner cry of Philippines post Spanish era. Nationalist sentiments peaked and this was reflected by government policies introduced at the time. To seal off breaking away from the old colonizer, a national identity had to be established. Needless to say, a national language—as opposed to the elitist Spanish, the language of the peninsulares and ilustrados, likewise became a popular notion.

It can be argued that the first Filipino-led efforts toward language planning, the deliberate guiding of language development in view of social change (Alisjahbana 1974, as cited in Atienza, Constantino 1996), was during the time of President Quezon. It was when initial steps towards the concretization of the 1935 Constitutional directive of adopting and developing a national language were taken.

While technically it was the Revolutionary Constitution of 1897 that saw the first provision on language, Brillantes and Marler (2007) comment that it was merely a product of bias as all revolutionary leaders who wrote the constitution were Tagalog speakers. Short of saying that no consideration had been given to other local languages, other ethno linguistic groups were not represented in the assembly. The selection being arbitrary, it can hardly be called planning. The succeeding Malolos Constitution was more considerate of ethno linguistic difference, arguably the best in this regard, but it was never concretized.

It was during Quezon's administration that Executive Order 134 was signed, declaring Tagalog as the *basis* of the national language, as recommended by the Institute of National Language, which was then tasked to direct the propagation and development of the national language. The national language was later incorporated into the school curriculum with the passing of Executive Order 263⁷ and Bureau of Education Circular No. 26⁸ in 1940 (Espiritu 1991).

The development of the national language, however, seemed to translate to the development of Tagalog only. With the coming

⁷ Ordered the teaching of the national language in all public and private schools in the country.

⁸ Department Order issued by the Secretary of Public Instruction to implement EO 263. States that “effective June 19, 1940 the national language shall be taught forty minutes a day as a regular, required two-semester subject”.

of the Japanese forces in 1942 and the prohibition of the use of English, Tagalog was further thrown into the limelight. It became the principal medium of instruction. Previously used in fourth year of high school only, Tagalog became part of the curriculum at all levels in lieu of English. Massive training of teachers, both Tagalog and non-Tagalog speakers commenced. In the midst of the entire hubbub, the rest of the local languages have taken a backseat.

5. ATTEMPTS AT BREAKING MONOLINGUALISM

The next notable development came in 1957 when the Board of National Education put forth the Revised Educational Program. Under this scheme, the local vernacular was used as medium of instruction in grades 1 and 2 of elementary school. Brillantes and Marler recount an influential event that brought about this policy:

Jose V. Aguilar, Superintendent of Schools in Iloilo in 1948 conducted a controlled experiment, which ended in 1954, in that province. He compared the academic achievement of a controlled group which was instructed in English and of an experimental group which was instructed in the vernacular, in this case Hiligaynon, in their first two years of formal schooling. The experiment concluded that after the first and second grades, those of the experimental group “were significantly superior” in reading, arithmetic and social studies than those of the controlled group.

Further:

After the second grade, both groups were taught in English and after each year, their academic achievements were compared. After the third grade, the academic performance of both groups was statistically indifferent. Thus, instruction in the vernacular in the first and second grades did not affect the experimental group's ability to learn English in the higher grades. After the sixth grade, there was no statistically significant difference between the academic achievements of both groups. Furthermore, the students in the experimental group “were more emotionally stable, more emotionally mature than those in the control group” (Bernabe 80-82). Clearly, from this experiment, instruction in the first and second grades should be in the vernacular.

The use of the vernacular in lower primary education was indeed very promising. As the Iloilo experiment proved, it poses enormous benefits for the learners. There was, however, a fault in the 1957 multilingual scheme. On top of the vernacular, Tagalog and English were taught at the same time, not to mention Spanish, which was still the language of a good number of educators then. The use of no less than four languages proved

to be problematic. Four languages in a child's first year of schooling is overwhelming, to say the least.

The multilingual policy eventually gave way to a bilingual policy a year after the 1973 Constitution came to being. Department of Education, Culture and Sports Order No. 25, series 1974⁹ defined bilingual education as the separate use of Pilipino and English as media of instruction in specific subject areas from grade I in all schools. Social Studies/Social Science, Work Education, Character Education, Music, Health and Physical Education were covered with Pilipino while all other subjects were taught in English. The succeeding 1987 Constitution all but reinforced the Bilingual Policy. Following this, Department Order No. 52, s. 1987 provided:

The policy on Bilingual Education aims at the achievement of competence in both Filipino and English at the national level, through the teaching of both languages and their use as media of instruction at all levels. The regional languages shall be used as auxiliary languages in Grades I and II. The aspiration of the Filipino nation is to have its citizens possess skills in Filipino to enable them to perform their functions and duties as Filipino citizens and in English in order to meet the needs of the country in the community of nations.

6. DECLINING VERNACULARS: THE IMPACT

As of most recent figures in 2000, the Philippines boasts of a 92.3% simple literacy rate. The Functional Literacy, Education and Mass Media Survey (FLEMMS), a survey conducted by the National Statistics Office (NSO), defines *basic literacy* as the ability to read and write with understanding simple messages in any language or dialect.

However another test, of *functional literacy*, reveals a much lower statistic, 84% in 2003. Functional literacy, again according to FLEMMS, "represents a significantly higher level literacy which includes not only reading and writing skills but also numeracy skills. These skills must be sufficiently advanced to enable the individual to participate fully and effectively in activities commonly occurring in his life situation that require a reasonable capability beyond oral and written communications."

The second figure, if accurate, is lamentable. While a 16% non-functionally literate mass is not exactly terrifying, what about a headcount of 11,200,000¹⁰ individual Filipinos? Given FLEMMS' minimalist definition of literacy and that census figures are approximations only, it is not all too unreasonable to say that the count in reality may be much bigger.

⁹ Titled "Implementing Guidelines for the Policy on Bilingual Education."

¹⁰ Sixteen percent of 70 million, only a ballpark figure of 2003 population.

Gudchinsky (1974) even argues that a person should not be called literate or truly capable of reading or writing if he cannot express *everything* that comes to his mind in writing (emphasis supplied). The same is true if he cannot understand everything he reads as if it is spoken to him. From this, two inferences can be made. First, that if a strict and meaningful conception of literacy is to be considered, the country's literacy rate is bound to be less than projected. Second, as Consuelo Paz (1996) points out, a person's ability to read and write, or to learn reading and writing, rests on his aptitude for the language used. In other words, a person cannot be truly literate using a language he does not fully understand and because the Philippines' official languages and medium of instruction, English and Filipino are not native tongues of roughly 70% of the national population, there is something very wrong with the current bilingual policy.

7. ON EDUCATION

Noam Chomsky, one of the foremost linguists in the world is renowned for his theory on language acquisition. In an interview called *Things No Amount of Learning Can Teach*, he discusses his belief in a genetically preprogrammed language organ in the brain. He goes as far as saying that language knowledge is built in. In essence, people can learn any language with all their complexities because of this built-in aptitude for language, based on a set of common principles he calls universal grammar. Humans then are predisposed to learning language. It is acquired naturally in early years, even preceding school. This goes hand in hand with the development of consciousness for it is language that bridges the gap between the child and his environment. Knowledge is digested in words. It can be surmised that comprehension is not bound to reading and writing; a person, even without the ability to read and write, has the ability to think and understand from what he hears. Undeniably, some people never even get to receive formal schooling but are able to interact socially.

While information reception is limited by lack of training in reading and writing, this only reaches the point of disability when a person is in an environment where terms he hear are unknown to him, coded in a different language. But as children are exposed to limited environments at first where presumably the native tongue is used, this is not a problem. The terms used around him correspond to the elements he finds around him. As the child grows and his horizons expand, both language and consciousness widen, at the same pace.

The trouble with instructing primary graders in a language not naturally acquired by them then becomes apparent. It is a skip in consciousness. Reiterating Chomsky, a person can acquire any number of languages. But obviously, not all at the same time. One has to bridge the learning of the others. And what can do this better than the native tongue through which toddlers make sense of on-goings around them? This section contends that the vernacular cannot be rivaled when it comes to forming the core of literacy and strengthening the foundations of a person's learning. The discussion will later expand to the economic and political drawbacks of limiting the use of vernaculars in formal education, which shows the irony of Philippine language policies—how the insistence on the predominance of English and Filipino results to the opposite of what it is intended for.

It can be said that the goal of bilingualism—achieving competence in both English and Filipino, and raising education quality, is hindered by the policy itself. According to the UP Forum Primer (2008) on the Filipino Language as a Language of Education:

If ever, according to language experts, the students' level of language proficiency has become low both in English and in Filipino. They claim students experienced what they call subtractive bilingualism and not additive bilingualism. The second language is introduced prematurely that the child does not turn into a true bilingual, unable to learn neither the first nor the second language. What could have been done is first to ensure the academic mastery in the use of the mother tongue before the child is allowed to learn a second one. Numerous studies have shown that a child acquires a second language better and faster if the first language is mastered before hand. Also the child learns the other subjects more easily if these are taught in a language he knows by heart.

A study in cognitive neuroscience concluded very recently tells us why. The native language of bilingual individuals is active during second-language comprehension. By studying a group of bilinguals, the researchers were able to demonstrate implicit access to the first language when participants read words exclusively in their second language.¹¹ It turned out that words in the second language were automatically and unconsciously translated into the first language, as indicated by brain activity patterns. This points to the fact that even with the exclusive use of the second language, the mother tongue is also at work, even without the person knowing it. Understanding of the second language thus subconsciously rests on the first.

8. ON ECONOMY AND POLITY

Historically, the choice of the language of instruction (in the Philippines) has always been primarily political, and currently economical, but never educational (Brillantes, Marler 2007). An odd practice given that the importance of education as catalyst to real economic and political growth can hardly be understated. The problem is that there seems to be a culture of “quick fix”—going for immediate gain without really looking at the long run. English is supposed to “meet the needs of the country in the community of nations”. In the age of globalism when most companies are owned or run by foreign entities, fluency in English is definitely marketable. However, if only to supply labor for alien cost-minimizing bubble industries, the nation would have to rethink what the country really is gaining. Sure, this puts food to the table of some but considering the backlash of brain drain and gross underemployment where people get jobs but fail to build careers, ultimately, no real development

takes place. On the side of politics, it seems that language policy, with the imposition of uniform rules, has been seen as a shortcut to fostering unity. But the road to that is so much longer and ironically, appears to be in the reverse direction.

Education is a prerequisite to long-term economic and political productivity. The World Bank-IMF Global Monitoring Report for 2008 relates the outcome of Hanushek and Wößmann's study who, after using a set of international standardized test score of 50 countries for the last 40 years, arrives at two conclusions; first, that educational quality has a strong causal impact on individual learning and economic growth, and second, that the payoff to increasing quality per year of schooling of the population is 80 per cent higher for developing countries than developed countries. One standard deviation increase in these standardized test scores contribute to higher growth in long-term GDP per capita of 2 per cent.

Clearly, better education, whose ties to language proficiency has thus far been illustrated, leads to economic growth, especially in an economically challenged country like the Philippines. Education at a certain level makes people equipped to participate and be at par with the demands of the market. This is also true in terms of political participation; the cornerstone of representative governments like the Philippines. An educated citizenry is better able to take part in public affairs, which in many ways makes governance more effective. An actively participating public also means a legitimately accepted government, a recognized nation-state, which has the mandate of and encompassing its people.

Divisiveness has long been a problem of this country. Apart from the normal conflicts to be expected in any group, there exists a custom of regionalism that is while admirable for advancing respective local cultures, also posits immense challenge to national consolidation. In an ideal world, the Philippines would be a pluralistic nation-state but it can't be a nation-state unless it is pluralistic first. Pamela Constantino (1996) discusses what constitutes the backbone of the nation-state ideology and claims that for it to prosper, it has to satisfy two conditions. First, it must reflect the cultural identity of the people and second, it must be instrumental to the satisfaction of people's needs. The recognition and promotion of the vernaculars is one of the best ways the government can grant this as language has both sentimental and functional value as will be illustrated below.

There are more direct ways in which language freedom translates to a healthier polity. On the functional side, for people to participate actively in public affairs, they must have the capacity to do so. It is a fair bet that a good portion of the population still does not know English or Tagalog well enough to grasp every media report or official document there is exclusively produced in these languages. How these groups are expected to make well-informed decisions come election time, or other exercises of democratic rights and duties, does not make sense. This is just one of the ways in which certain clusters are left out of the loop but bit by bit, this results to the dominance of a few who end up making all political decisions without taking into account the needs of marginalized groups.

¹¹ Guillaume Thierry and Yan Jing Wu conducted the study with a group of Chinese-English Bilinguals.

Apart from performing the function of carrying information, an interesting case study conducted in Catalonia reveals that language plays a part in the process of identity formation, which ultimately manifests in voting behavior. Results show that individuals schooled in Catalan¹² feel a strong affinity for the local Catalan identity. It was found that they are more likely to vote for parties with Catalanist platforms. This is an example of the sentimental reflection of language. This effect of language advancement can be a key to reforming the Philippines' electoral scene where arguably, elections are mere contests of popularity. When people identify with their communities, groups with whom they share common ideals, values and needs, they develop loyalties to causes, instead of personalities. By electing candidates who can also identify with them, they can make the government more representative and more responsive.

In the end, developments in language, education, economics and politics will be mutually reinforcing. A break in the down-heading cycle can start just by paying closer attention to the language used in school and day-to-day dealings.

9. LESSONS FROM ABROAD

Harold Schiffman (2000) observes that France has what can be considered the most centrist of all language policies in the world. This is a product of possibly the most distinct feature of French governance—Jacobinism, the tendency to control everything from the center and espouse uniformity all throughout the nation.

His paper raises the question of whether language can in fact be suppressed, and yields a negative answer; governments cannot realistically expect to control the linguistic habits of its citizenry in any meaningful way. Where policies are oppressive, he points to the existence of a linguistic black market—much like an economic black market where items banned in the mainstream market are available. The government can impose repressive policies but as long as there's a need for the commodity, much like language, people will find ways to acquire and make use of them. Indeed, language suppression has caused civil unrest in a number of countries.

Take Sri Lanka for instance, a country infested with severe ethnic conflict. Its three largest ethnic groups, the Sinhalese, Sri Lanka Tamils, and Indian Tamils all speak different languages; Sinhala, Tamil and Hindu, respectively. There are a number of smaller groups who also speak various languages.

On top of political disputes, language has been a cause of discord. As Oberst (1988) observes, "Tamil discontent has largely been caused by the use of Sinhala as the language of government. The use of Sinhala has led to several allegations by the Tamil leadership. Briefly, they include allegations of job discrimination against Tamil-speakers in government hiring (the main source of white-collar jobs in the society), discontent with a university admissions affirmative action program that has protected Sinhalese-speaking applicants for admission to the university, and a need for regional autonomy".

The birth of Bangladesh has also been spurred by language conflict. Formerly a part of Pakistan, the Bangladeshi secession

has received wide international recognition for the discrimination and human rights violations afflicted by the government. The majority¹³ has been alienated by the ruling faction and the insistence on the sole use of Urdu has become one of the anti-majority policies of government.

Belgium and Spain has, at some point in their history, also faced civil discord due to language differences. In Belgium, there was a contest between French, largely perceived as the language of the aristocracy and bourgeoisie, and Dutch, the language of the common people. While Dutch was more widely spoken, French enjoyed a somewhat higher status as an aftermath of the French Revolution. Spanish life during the Franco dictatorship was characterized by robust attempts at homogenization. Despite the multitude of ethnicities and languages in Spain, policies remained highly centrist.

Yet both managed to overcome these differences through changes in language policy and government at large. Belgium, a federal government today, grants extensive liberties to its autonomous regions for issuing decrees concerning language. Federal laws are also in support of the promotion of Dutch and French as co-equal official languages. Official communications, especially in the capital city Brussels, always make use of both languages. A fifty-fifty membership of Dutch and French speakers in government offices and organizations like the Council of Ministers, Court of Arbitration, the Council of State, the Court of Cassation, the Supreme Council of Justice, is mandatory.

Spain, now governed as a parliamentary democracy, has a constitution that guarantees the self-government of its seventeen *comunidades autonomas*. Three of these are recognized as historical nationalities; the Basque Country, Catalonia and Galicia, where regional languages enjoy full legal status alongside Castilian. In an article titled *A Country in Spain*, Ryser (2007) notes that Spain demonstrates the most substantial example of the principle of subsidiarity, that is, the principle that matters ought to be handled by the smallest competent authority in a system of politics. He further observes that the Spanish political system realistically reflects the cultural and political realities of a multi-national state.

There are a number of similar success stories where accommodation for difference is practiced. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, a product of conquest and fierce resistance, is able to move forward with policy concessions. The parliament recognizes the distinctness of Irish, Scottish and Welsh cultures and languages and took steps toward regional devolution. These constituent countries now have respective assemblies and language is no longer as big an issue. In Wales, for example, there is a Welsh language commission, and a separate Welsh national education curriculum, even a Welsh television channel.

Canada, where linguistic and cultural diversity has been deeply entrenched ever since the settlement of English-speaking

¹² The language of Catalonia, Spain.

¹³ The people later to form Bangladesh were the majority of Pakistan. M. Rafiqul Islam notes that as opposed to most other multi-racial states where minorities are discriminated, it is the contrary in Pakistan.

Protestants alongside the French-speaking Catholics, gives equal recognition to both languages by having the government conduct official business and provide public service using them both. All statutes, journals and records of parliament are published in both languages and having equal status before the courts. The federal government extends this show of support by giving grants to civil society organizations that further the development of both English and French.

India is another case in point. Stepan and Sayre (2003) observes that the presence of thirty different languages, having their own scripts and spoken by at least one million people at the time when India's independence was declared makes it extraordinarily interesting. As it is elsewhere, language has been a problem but thanks to the fore vision of those who composed the Constituent Assembly, future parliaments were given the liberty to eventually reorganize redraw states along linguistic lines.

Being born from an alliance of several diverse communities, Switzerland is much like a conglomerate of units who have come together and agreed to one government that allows them to maintain their independence and govern themselves accordingly. Fleiner (2002) remarks that this is the reason why "at the edge of the three big language groups of Western Europe (German, French, and Italian), some 25 democratic corporations could unite in an alliance around the Alps".

Coming from the apartheid regime where indigenous languages were denied meaningful channels for development, South Africa now has a constitution that expressly provides for the promotion of multilingualism, equal treatment of all languages in South Africa, the development and modernization of African languages, and the official status of no less than eleven South African languages. The more minor languages without official status are represented by the Pan-South African Language Board. Anti-discriminatory and oppressive provisions are likewise in place.

The European Union, composed of 27 member states with impressive success in bringing together diverse nations towards development in various aspects, is an outstanding example of language management. The Article 22 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights adopted in 2000 states that the Union has the obligation to respect linguistic diversity while Article 23 refers to the prohibition of discrimination on grounds of language. It is admirable how by having official documents translated into a number of languages most spoken by member states' locals, the Union reaches out to the people. The Union also promotes the propagation of languages of member nations and encourages everyone to learn as many languages as they desire in recognition of the importance of language in personal development.

10. FEDERALISM MATTERS

The very object of local government is in order that those who have any interest in common, which they do not share with the general body of their countrymen, may manage their joint interests by themselves. – John Stuart Mill

All the countries cited are either federal, or having features of a federal government. As opposed to the Philippine unitary government where powers are essentially allocated in three branches—the executive, legislative and judiciary, a federal state is characterized by vertical power sharing among multiple layers of government. It allows for the allocation of powers and responsibilities for local governments to act on issues close to home.

Consociational theory tells us that the adoption of decentralized forms of governance - notably federal constitutions - facilitates social stability and democratic consolidation in multinational states. Proponents argue that decentralization has many potential advantages for bringing decisions closer to the community, for policy flexibility, innovation, and experimentation, and for ensuring government responsiveness to local needs (Norris, 2008).

In the Philippines, for example, while it is tall order to have all official documents and road signs translated to vernaculars in the country, this is something that a federal government can easily manage. With division of labor, enabling the customization of public communication and service is possible. The national government can mind issues that are national in scope but it makes a lot of sense for local governments, who have deeper insights of what their constituents need, to attend to them. Surely this will be faster and better targeted.

Language directives formulated and implemented at the local level are much less likely to cause discord among the people concerned. There is the marked advantage of easily instituting mechanisms for input and feedback. It would be relatively easy to determine how the community responds to policies set and see what areas there are for improvement.

11. CONCLUSION

Postcolonial Philippines has been all for establishing a Filipino identity and what has in modern times been best represented by the term *nation building*. This has proven to be a big challenge in the face of the country's highly diverse cultural portfolio. Unification efforts have been taken yet up to the present, whether these are on target is still questionable especially in the domain of language.

Nationalism—the idea of a unified socio-political entity can exist only where people can identify with the rest of the populace within the state's bounds. This is possible even in multicultural states as evidenced by countries surveyed above. It does not necessitate a homogenous national culture, just a pluralistic one which gives due respect to the peculiarities of each community within the state.

Language as a vehicle of knowledge and cultural expression should be given top consideration, as it is the first block in a linear relationship with education, economic and political development. More than yet another shift in policy, a shift in governmental mechanism should be instituted. A federal state is better suited to multicultural territories like the Philippines for it allows the concentration of resources in providing first-rate service to citizens and management of local affairs.

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