Reflections, Assertions and Speculations on the Growth of Pilipino

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Introduction
There is nothing ambitious nor very profound about the thrust in this essay; there is no theory but suggestions or hints on hypotheses. Some of the things I say are assertions intended to stimulate some of my readers. The speculations I think are quite interesting. In this essay I use Filipino (spelled with a F) to refer to the people of the Philippines who speak the language and Pilipino (spelled with a P) to refer to the language.

Most Filipinos thought that the search for a national language ended in 1936 when Tagalog was declared the basis of the national language. They were wrong for in 1973 the framers of the new constitution wrote into that document the collective sentiments of non-Tagalog Filipinos that Pilipino which is Tagalog-based excludes their participation in the building of the national language. So they wrote that the Filipino people, through their elected representatives, shall take steps towards the formation of a national language where all Philippine language shall participate in its building. This future national language shall be called "Filipino". To the writers of the constitution it would seem that Filipino as the national language would include the aspirations of all Filipino via the symbol of language. Pilipino, the Tagalog-based language which the nation had been working on since 1936, was declared an official language. The constitution was written in Pilipino and in English; in case of conflict, however, the English text would prevail. In effect the Filipino was in search once more for a national language.

In my opinion, however, I think a way will be found to eventually recognize the present Pilipino as the national language by simply renaming the language "Filipino". Most Filipino do not really care that much whether it is called Pilipino or Filipino. Those who advocate "Filipino" based on all Philippine language participating in its development should be satisfied that the ideal was written in the fundamental law of the land. Maybe an academy will be established to replace the present Surian ng Wikang Pambansa (SWP) (Institute of National Language) or perhaps representatives of the major languages and the important minor languages may be appointed to the SWP to help 'build' the future national language. Whatever steps are taken the future national language will substantially be the present Pilipino which has for its best and most prestigious variety today the Manila variety (see discussion on the dialects of Pilipino later in this essay).
Some Achievements

Contrary to the prediction by a group of Americans who evaluated the Philippine educational system in 1925 that there was no prospect for the development of a national language from the various Philippine languages much less the use of one for educating the Filipino (which in a sense justified the continued use of English in the schools), in less than fifty years (surely a very short span in the development of a language) the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports issued an order that Pilipino would be used as a medium of instruction in all grades from the first to the university.

I list below some of the most important achievements in the development and growth of Pilipino during the last forty-eight years.

1. Pilipino has replaced English as the language across Philippine language boundaries. Before 1936 practically all Filipinos who did not speak each other's native language communicated with each other in English (notable exceptions were those Filipinos who spoke Ilocano and Cebuano in addition to their native languages; Ilocano and Cebuano, then as now, being two of the "influencing" Philippine languages, "influencing" used here in the sense of a Philippine language learned freely as a second language). Today that has changed. There are more Pilipino than English speakers today prompting many who do not know the difficulties of using a language in various domains to say that Pilipino can handle everything from education to government to the intellectual domains such as science and mathematics. Many Filipinos do not know how long and how hard the work is in developing a language so that it may be capable of making the world's knowledge accessible in that language.

2. Pilipino has become the main language of oral communication in government especially in the capital region. The move to have it used in written communication has not progressed as much as desired. Practically all government documents are still in English except some for symbolic purposes such as the language used in money (bills and coins), the names of offices in buildings and in government stationaries. Slowly but surely, however, Pilipino is taking over in many written documents. All oaths of offices, by law, are administered in Pilipino.

3. The language of identification with the mainstream of Philippine life has become Pilipino. People who come to Manila from the provinces speak Pilipino with their relatives thus "abandoning" at least in the environs of the city their ethnic language. Before the war many Filipinos were embarrassed if they did not speak some English. Today they get embarrassed if they do not speak some Pilipino. In many situations today Pilipino is the language for signalling that one is "in" and not an outsider. I predict that the time will come when to be a monolingual speaker of English, even among Americans, will not do. Filipinos should look forward to the day when foreigners will find it not only necessary but a mark of culture to speak Pilipino.

Nationalist, Decision Makers and the Common People

Many people have contributed to the growth and use of Pilipino. In this essay I would like to comment at length on the contribution of nationalists, not-so-genuine nationalists and some people who find nationalism a convenient "tool" for advancing their own interests. I also want to say something about the work of people who believe in Pilipino without being nationalists.