

Drafting the 1987 Constitution

The Politics of Language

*Ma. Ela L. Atienza**

The provisions (Art. IV, sec. 6-9) of the 1987 Constitution of the Philippines proclaim an already established fact, i.e., that the Filipino language is the lingua franca understood by Filipinos. The Filipino envisioned by the Constitution is a highly-liberalized, open-ended language, prepared and willing to accept contributions from Cebuano, Ilocano, Pampango, and all the other languages of the country. What is important to remember here is that the national language will still have to undergo further evolution to truly embody the national character of the country. In addition, there is due importance accorded to the regional languages, giving them equal opportunities to enrich the national language and at the same time priority over Spanish.

Art. XIV, section 6 also states that the government will have to take measures necessary to initiate and sustain the use of the national language as the medium of communication and of instruction in the educational system, "(s)ubject to provisions of law and as the Congress may deem appropriate." This means that although Filipino is already existing and its use widespread, its formalization still has to be done in the educational system.

Section 7 provides for Filipino and English as the official languages. This reiterates the coexisting role of the two languages as media of official communication and instruction. There is an acknowledgement of the fact that at present, English is still being used as a medium of instruction. However, English is of secondary status to Filipino since the former can cease to be an official language if Congress decides to do so. Spanish, which is no longer an official language, will be promoted, together with Arabic, on a voluntary and optional basis. The regional languages can also be accepted as official languages and media of instruction in their respective regions.

Section 8 mandates that the 1987 Constitution will be promulgated in Filipino and English and will be translated into major regional languages, Spanish and Arabic. There was an attempt in the 1986 Constitutional Commission (ConCom) to include a provision which states that the Filipino text shall prevail in case of conflict but was withdrawn due to the fact that Filipino at present, according to the commissioners, is not yet highly developed and that the issue was best left to the evolution of the Constitution.

* Instructor of Political Science, University of the Philippines, Diliman, Quezon City.

Finally, Section 8 provides for the establishment by Congress of a commission to replace the Institute of National Language (INL). This will be composed of representatives of each region and will make overall control of the implementation of the new policy. With this provision, the 1987 Constitution is the only fundamental law of the Philippines to include in the language provisions the creation of a commission which will be in charge of the development, propagation, and preservation of Filipino and the other languages. It clearly shows a commitment, at least in paper, towards the full development of the common national language.

The following sections are an attempt to construct an overall view of the whole process of drafting the language provisions in the 1987 Constitution. The period of consultations with the public, the proceedings and debates, and the resolution of the language issue in the ConCom are located within the context of the long-lived disputes over language and the country's history and experience.

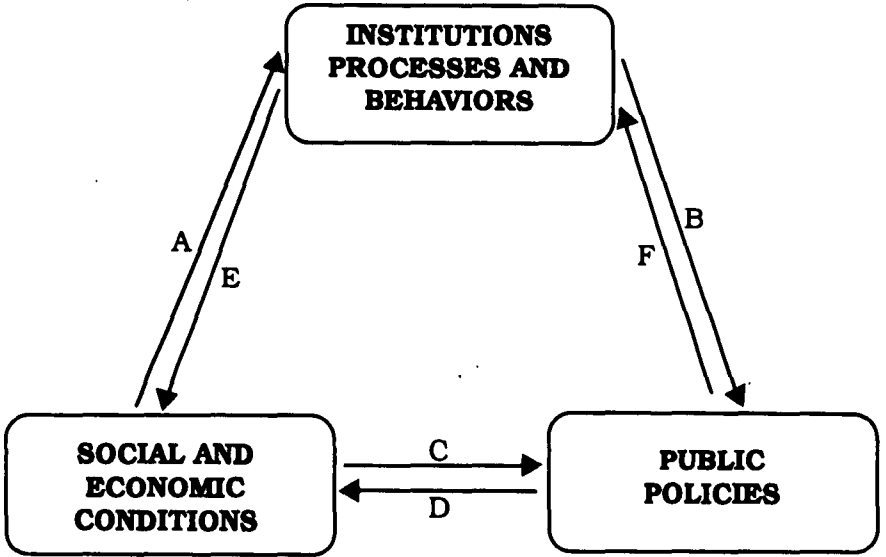
This study is guided by the hermeneutical approach, with policy analysis as framework, in looking at the politics of language in the ConCom and interpreting the underlying sense of the whole political process. By analyzing the political process, we get a glimpse of the relationship and linkages between society, the political system, and the context of public policy. Furthermore, there is an effort to find out any possible coherence or sense to all these interacting elements in terms of the cultural, social, and historical context within which they are formed. In using Dye's model of policy analysis shown in Figure 1, the study focuses on Linkages A, B and C. First of all, what are the effects of the environmental forces and conditions on political governmental institutions, processes and behaviors (Linkage A)? Second, why was the resulting language policy in the 1987 Constitution formulated the way it is (Linkage B)? And third, what are the effects of social, economic, and cultural forces and conditions in shaping public policy (Linkage C)?.

Linkage A: Relationship Between Society and the Political System

There are a number of linkages that can be seen between the social and the economic conditions, on the one hand, and the Constitutional Commission, its processes, politics, and behaviors, on the other.

Composition and Nature of the ConCom

A number of factors were responsible for the composition and nature of the ConCom. First of all, the political considerations of the then newly-installed Aquino government resulted in the Commissioners being appointed rather than



Including:
 Economic System
 Educational Levels
 Class Structure
 Racial or Ethnic
 Concentration
 Geography
 Culture
 Ideology
 Consciousness

Including:
 Constitutional
 Commission
 Structure
 Membership
 Patterns of
 Participation
 Processes
 Committee System
 Interest Group System
 Internal Politics

Including:
 The Language
 Provisions in the
 1987 Constitution
 (Art. XIV, sec. 6-9)

Figure 1: The Political System

Source: Thomas R. Dye, Understanding Public Policy (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1987), p.6.

elected. And given that at that time, the moderate middle forces were at the helm of the administration, the composition of the ConCom was clearly elitist and predominantly conservative. Had the delegates been elected, the same result, or an even more elitist or conservative ComCom might have resulted, given the nature of Philippine politics and the electoral system. However, because the "Rainbow Coalition" was still existing during the selection of members for the ConCom, a number of progressives managed to be appointed. If these same progressives ran for election, they might have very little chance of winning, because they lack national exposure, resources, machinery and the other requirements for a successful campaign. Thus, what we had in 1986 was an elitist ConCom which was predominantly conservative but with a small but highly-principled, dedicated bloc of progressives. Furthermore, since the primary consideration for appointment was sectoral rather than regional representation, the Commission was predominantly Tagalog in composition.

Secondly, the heightened consciousness of the eighties was reflected in the politics and processes in the ConCom. The 1986 Constitutional Commission was hailed as the most ideologically oriented in the nation's history. Nationalist issues dominated the discussions, leading to the polarization of the body into two opposing camps: the conservatives and the progressives — both of whom claimed that they were nationalists and that they represented the sentiments of the people.

Approach of the CHR on the Language Issue

On the specific issue of language, the influence of the societal environment on the processes, behaviors and politics of the Commission is evident in a number of instances. One area is in the work of the Committee on Human Resources (CHR) — the constitutional committee where language was one of the primary concerns — specifically in its approach towards the language issue. The CHR realized that the Philippines is as multi-lingual, multi-ethnic country and that the issue of language has been very divisive, based on the history of language in the country. The committee members were well aware how explosive the language issue was in the past, especially in the 1960s and during the 1971 Constitutional Convention. Therefore, what the CHR did was to invite all the scholars, linguists, and the diverging interest groups on language to participate in the public consultations of the committee. Knowing that any purist or extreme stand would result in harsh reactions from various ethno-linguistic groups in the country, the CHR's approach was non-purist and conciliatory, made in the context of Philippine realities.

Different Perspectives on Language

Two significant areas which clearly reflect the language politics in the country are the interest/lobby group system and the internal politics within the Constitutional Commission regarding language and Philippine society in general. There are several perspectives or schools of thought which became apparent during the whole process of framing the language provisions in the 1987 Constitution. These are: (1) the Cosmopolitan perspective, focusing on the benefits to be gained with the use of foreign languages, specifically Spanish and English, as medium of instruction and of official communication; (2) protection of regional languages; (3) Pilipino as the national language; and (4) Filipino as the national language. The first school of thought focused not on the national language issue per se but on the medium of instruction and official communication. These schools of thought represent several facts regarding the language situation in the country and Philippine society in general.

The cosmopolitan perspective was represented by the Spanish and the English groups. The noisiest and the most persistent among the lobby groups on language was the Spanish group. The lobby group was composed mostly of Spanish teachers whose work was threatened should the language lose its status as a compulsory subject in the schools. But a more significant characteristic of this group was its association with traditional influence, having cultivated the help of the head of the Roman Catholic Church and one of the most influential persons in the country — Cardinal Sin — to put pressure on the Commissioners to retain the compulsory teaching of Spanish. In the ConCom, the Spanish lobby was represented mainly by Commissioners Ambrosio Padilla and Gregorio Tingson. They were evidently a minority but they nevertheless showed determination in pushing for the promulgation of the Constitution in Spanish and the retention of Spanish as an official language pursuant to Presidential Decree No. 155 of Marcos, and in constantly reminding the body of the many legacies of the language. These two, particularly Padilla, supported their arguments by delivering speeches and conversing in the Castillian tongue, to the annoyance of some of their colleagues.

It was a losing battle for the pro-Spanish group within the ConCom. This observation was conceded by Padilla himself (Padilla, 1993). The Spanish group, despite their influence, failed to succeed in their efforts because, first of all, the Spanish language never managed to penetrate the great masses of Filipinos. It remains confined to a very small fraction of Philippine society, in particular, the old prominent and influential families in the country. This situation was due to the fact that the Spanish colonial government never took actual and specific steps to teach the people the foreign language. Spanish also became associated with exploitation and oppression, reminiscent of the experience of

the Philippines under Spain. Secondly, English has edged out Spanish as the language of government and the elite. In fact, as early as 1970, less than five (5) percent of Filipinos speak Spanish. (See Table 1.) It has virtually disappeared, with the younger generations no longer speaking it.

As a result of the state of the Spanish language in the Philippines, very few commissioners shared Padilla's position. Moreover, a great majority, if not technically all the commissioners (Ibid.) did not know Spanish anymore. Nevertheless, the Spanish language did make a number of contributions to Philippine culture, e.g., the Penal Code, the Civil Code, and literature written by Rizal and other prominent Filipinos. Thus,

TABLE 1
TOTAL NUMBER OF SPEAKERS
OF FILIPINO, ENGLISH AND SPANISH
CENSUS TOTALS FOR 1970

Language Spoken	Number of Speakers (Based on whole population: 36,684,486)
Pilipino/Tagalog	20,257,941 (55.2%)
English	16,409,133 (44.7%)
Spanish	1,335,945 (3.6%)

Source: Andrew Gonzales and Ma. Lourdes E. Bautista, Language Surveys in the Philippines (1966-1984) (Taft Avenue, Manila: De La Salle University Press, 1986), p. 59.

by virtue of the historic value of language and its practical value in facilitating relations between the Philippines and Spain and Latin America, majority of the Commissioners were agreeable to the provisions that Spanish should be promoted on a voluntary and optional basis.

The specific concern of the English group was the retention of the language as a medium of instruction. The English lobby was composed of educators from Catholic and commercial private schools, represented primarily by the Catholic Educational Association of the Philippines (CEAP). In the ConCom

deliberations, Commissioners Christian Monsod and Joaquin Bernas were the ones who often reiterated the need for the coexistence of Filipino and English as media of instruction and official communication. In fact, majority in the Commission acknowledge that English is still being used as medium of instruction and as a bridge to the outside world. Given that English has long been the medium of official communication and instruction, the English lobby succeeded in its goal.

The nature and behavior of the English group underlie several facts. First, English is still the dominant language of education and official communication. Furthermore, it is the language of the intellectual, political, and economic elite of the country. This can be attributed to the American colonial government's policy of teaching the Filipinos their language with the introduction of a system of secularized public school education and the unfortunate fact that the national language remains relatively under-utilized due to the divisiveness of the issue of language and the lack of political will on the part of government to undertake steps leading to the cultivation and development of the national language.

A second related but more significant explanation to the importance being accorded the English language in the Philippines is neo-colonialism which is a product of four decades under formal American rule in the country. In such an instance, an alliance between the ruling sectors of the two countries helps in maintaining the dominant position of some sectors of the population of the powerful nation over the weaker one. A natural area where neo-colonial instances are evident is education (P. Constantino, 1991: 66). An important element of maintaining the neo-colonial status is the English language. This is the reason (1) why English is very strong in the education sector in the Philippines and why this sector does not accept that there is already a national lingua franca, and (2) why the bilingual education policy persists in giving importance to English despite studies proving that the use of the national language as the medium of instruction would be more effective (Ibid.). Given the elitist composition of the ConCom and the strong lobby of the educational institutions, the debate on the issue of the medium of instruction was more prominent than the national language issue per se. Ernesto Constantino comments that the vernacular or the regional languages were just being used by some people but in truth, there were fears that English will be replaced by Filipino as language of instruction (E. Constantino, 1993). In the ConCom, the position of English was therefore secured.

A second perspective which was not that evident among the lobby groups but was active during the deliberations was the protection or defense of the regional languages. Very prominent among this group were the Cebuanos — Commissioners Hilario Davide, Jr., Regalado Maambong, and Napolen G. Rama. They argued

(1) that there was no basis yet for a common national language; (2) that the existing lingua franca cannot be called Filipino; and (3) that the Committee formulation enshrines Pilipino which is Tagalog-based as Filipino. The contention was that enshrining Filipino as the national language would be unfair to the other regional languages of the country. Even if Filipino as the national language is recognized, its imposition should not be rushed because it might cause further disunity. Most of the proposals of the Cebuano group, such as the resolution to reconsider the recommendations of the CHR, caused animated debates and heated discussions within the Commission.

The sensitivity of non-Tagalog ethno-linguistic groups, particularly Cebuanos, with regards to the language question can be explained by historical reasons. Regionalism is a greater problem in the Philippines than in Indonesia which is also multi-ethnic and multilingual (P. Constantino, 1991: 53). There are several reasons for this: (1) the multi-lingual diversity of the Philippines; (2) the geographic set-up; and (3) the "divide and rule" policy of the Spanish colonizers (Ibid.). Regionalism was further strengthened by a centralized but weak system of governance in the country which resulted in the neglect of the regions far from the capital, thereby resulting in the contempt for the center — the "imperial" Manila.

The regionalistic character of the country is evidently manifested in the area of language. Contempt for the center becomes more specific, i.e., Tagalog "chauvinism"; it is directed at the superiority being enjoyed by the language of the center of government and education.

Reviewing the history of language politics in the Philippines, succeeding language policies had often been met by resentment and even rejection by non-Tagalogs, mainly because Tagalog was chosen as the basis of the national language after the promulgation of the 1935 Constitution and the other linguistic groups thought that their respective languages were being neglected and discriminated against by policy-makers. The reluctance of the non-Tagalogs in the ConCom to accept the Committee proposal is an indication of a seeming distrust against what might be another attempt at imposing Tagalog and disrespect for their own languages.

There were many controversies surrounding the selection of Tagalog as the basis of the national language (Ibid.: 56-59). Two appear to explain the negative reaction of the non-Tagalogs. The first was the clandestine revision of the multi-language-based proposal of Delegate Vinzons to the mono-based national language in the final draft of the 1935 Constitution. Second, it is questionable whether the INL did conduct a survey proving that Tagalog was the most widely-spoken language in the country. In the 1971 Constitutional Convention, the multi-

language based bloc were motivated by the argument that the Tagalog-based national language has created a cultural, educational, economic, and political elite based on the language one is born into.

There is a reason behind most Cebuanos' defensiveness and over-protectiveness toward their regional language. In the area of regionalism per se, history, geography, regional economic and class interests, racial and ethnic concentrations, and cultural vitality contributed to Cebu regionalism (Atienza, 1992: 58-60). Geographically, Cebu's natural harbors and its strategic location at the center of the Visayas make it an ideal transit point for both local and international trade. However, during the Spanish colonial administration, Cebu was a secondary area compared to Manila. Nevertheless, Cebu had since grown autonomously and is now enjoying an edge in economic growth among the regions. This led to a Cebuano sentiment of self-sufficiency and pride in its achievements, despite the political powers being centralized in Manila. In addition, Cebu has remained a small city oriented towards families and such parochial attitude would be a major hindrance to the development of national consciousness (Ibon, 1989: 2).

Historically, Cebuanos were the perennial complainants of every language policy. This is so because when Tagalog was chosen as the basis of the national language, it was the Cebuanos and not the Tagalogs who were the numerically-superior ethno-linguistic group. In fact, as shown in Table 2, it was only by the 1970s that Tagalog began to gain more speakers than Cebuano and then finally, in the 1980s, it established itself as the most dominant mother-tongue based on languages spoken in private households.

However, this resentment of the Tagalog-based national language comes mainly from the political elites of Cebu. As pointed out earlier, some may just be using the Cebuano language to show disagreement over the national language issue but in actuality, they were mainly concerned about the fate of English as medium of instruction and official communication.

A third perspective is that Pilipino is the national language, a point of view represented by the Institute of National Language (INL) under Dr. Ponciano Pineda and supported by the Language Education Council of the Philippines (LEDCO). The group's position is that Pilipino with a "P" is the national language because it was the one cultivated as such and is the official language. It already has its own grammar, vocabulary and literature. However, in the latter stages of the work of the ConCom, the group shifted its position with a conditionality. This is its final position: Filipino is the lingua franca and national language but its nucleus is Pilipino which, in the beginning, was the national language originally based on Tagalog. Within the ConCom, there was no delegate who clearly espoused

TABLE 2
MAJOR MOTHER TONGUES OF THE POPULATION:
CENSUS YEARS 1960, 1970, 1975 AND 1980
(IN PERCENT)

Major Mother Tongue	Speakers			
	1960	1970	1975	1980*
Tagalog	21.02	24.48	23.82	29.66
Cebuano	24.11	24.11	24.39	24.40
Ilocano	11.66	11.31	11.14	10.30
Hiligaynon,Ilonggo	10.40	10.21	9.99	9.16
Bicol	7.78	6.83	6.69	5.57
Samar-Leyte	5.50	4.82	4.62	3.98
Pampanga	3.23	3.30	3.43	2.77
Pangasinan	2.46	2.28	2.26	1.84
Others	13.84	12.64	13.39	12.51
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

*Figures are based on language/dialect generally spoken in private households.

Source: National Statistics Office. Philippine Yearbook, 1989.

Pilipino as the national language. Tagalog delegates like Commissioners Teodulo Natividad, Francisco Rodrigo, and Jaime Tadeo spoke in Pilipino in defense of their positions but they were all espousing the liberalized Filipino as the national language. They were only speaking the language in which they were accustomed to use.

The relative weakness of the Pilipino group can first of all be attributed to the development of the national language. While Pilipino began as purist in the sense that it was Tagalog-based, it has evolved through the years as the lingua franca that is now called Filipino. Hence, Pilipino has been superseded by Filipino. Secondly, the INL has earned several criticisms in its role in the development of the national language through the years (P. Constantino, 1993). First of all, members of the INL were political appointees and not experts in the area of language; thus, they do not have adequate research capabilities. This partly explains why Tagalog was chosen as basis of the national language. Second, the teaching of Pilipino was conservative, purist, and ineffective. Emphasis was placed on

grammar and memorization which were not very attractive methods of instruction. In addition, teachers using Pilipino lacked the proper training and were therefore, ineffective and inefficient.

The most comprehensive and most influential perspective during the language deliberations in the ConCom was that Filipino is the national language. At the core of the lobby work for "Filipino" was the group of linguists and experts, primarily the University of the Philippines group headed by Dr. Ernesto Constantino. At the same time, progressive national organizations and cultural minorities — Kilusang Mayo Uno (KMU), Association of Concerned Teachers (ACT), people from Mindanao, the Cordilleras, and the Lumad — provided the support base. Within the Commission, the primary spokespersons were the CHR — in particular, Commissioners Villacorta, Bennagen, and Gascon, plus Commissioners Blas Ople, Rodrigo, Tadeo and Natividad, among others.

These Filipino advocates represented a growing recognition that there is an existing lingua franca that can be called Filipino and that this should be the basis of the evolving national language. Furthermore, the national language should be based not on one but on the languages of the Philippines. It was this group which lucidly stressed the need for the country to have a national language which will be the dominant language of official communication and of instruction due to a number of realities. First, foreign languages, primarily English, have led to the underdevelopment not only of Philippine languages but more accurately, the underdevelopment of national culture and identity. Secondly, English has become an obstacle separating educated Filipinos from the masses. Third, Filipino languages belong to the same linguistic tree; therefore, it is possible to build upon these languages a common national language. And finally, a national language is a prerequisite for developing nationalism, facilitating national unity and emancipation, and promoting democracy and people's participation in nation-building and development.

Languages are not mere emblems of nation-ness. To quote Benedict Anderson, the most important thing about language is "its capacity for generating imagined communities, building in effect particular solidarities" (Anderson, 1983: 122). What the "Filipino" lobby offers is a comprehensive, democratic imagining of who comprise a nation — the Filipino nation to be exact. By recommending a common national language which welcomes the contributions of the different languages of the Philippines, the Filipino group envisions a nation composed of different ethno-linguistic groups each with equal and substantial contributions and responsibilities to fulfill in nation-building and at the same time having a basis of common identity as Filipinos. By recommending the national language to be the sole language of government, the group destroys the barrier separating the masses from the intellectual, economic, and political elite, and in turn

democratizes governance. Equipped with the language of power which is no longer foreign or alien but common, the people can more effectively take part in the affairs of the state. By recommending the national language to be the foremost medium of instruction, knowledge can be made more accessible to the grassroots, thereby further empowering the people. Knowledge, therefore, is no longer limited to a small elite. By broadening the base of power and knowledge, the Philippines will have more people actively participating in the affairs of the state and therefore accelerating the process of nation-building and development.

Indeed, there is some truth in Pineda's statement when he described the Filipino and the Pilipino lobby groups: "Parehong maka-Pilipino pero magkaiba ng paningin kung ano 'yung Pilipino" (Pineda, 1993). This observation can also be extended to the other groups who participated in the language debates. The cosmopolitan perspective, by insisting that a foreign language be maintained as language of government and the schools preserves the status quo. In maintaining English as the language of government and education, the masses who cannot understand it will remain powerless. Thus, the Philippines will remain a country where a small elite dominates a powerless majority.

The regional languages group, meanwhile, emphasizes the importance of the different ethno-linguistic languages of the Philippines. While there is basically nothing wrong with this, stubborn and misplaced loyalty to one vernacular to the detriment of the national community reflects an image of the Philippines as a loose collection of separate "nations" with very little basis for cooperation and identity.

The Pilipino group, while emphasizing the need for a national language, encourages the pre-eminence of one language or ethnic group over the other. Thus, it creates an image of a Philippines not unlike that of the cosmopolitan group. This time, we imagine a nation where one ethnic group dominates the economic, political, cultural, and intellectual life of the nation over all the other groups.

It is only the Filipino group which evokes a nation recognizing the multidiversity of its inhabitants, but at the same time emphasizing the importance and bases of commonality of all, regardless of ethno-linguistic group or class, in nation-building and development.

Level and Prominence of Language Debates

Compared to the deliberations on language in the 1971 Constitutional Convention, the discussions in the 1986 ConCom were not as adversarial and emotional. Nor did the issue polarize the Commission. This can be explained by the fact that there were no language controversies during the seventies and the eighties that matched the level of the language wars which preceded the 1971 ConCon. Second, the language issue was not one of the controversial issues in 1986. And third, the commissioners approached the issue of language with more tact and maturity, keeping in mind the lessons of the history of the national language in the Philippines.

Linkage B: Relationship Between the Political System and the Content of Public Policy

Several relationships can be established between the ConCom as an institution, the processes involved, and the internal dynamics and behaviors, on the one hand, and the resultant provisions on language of the 1987 Constitution, on the other.

First, the deliberations of the whole Commission on the draft Article on Education, Science, Technology, Arts, and Culture submitted by the CHR and where the language provisions were included came after the return of the five Commissioners who walked out over the issue of the extent of Filipino participation in public utilities. Therefore, the mood when the issue of language was being taken up was one of reconciliation. Villacorta recalls that before the members of the nationalist or progressive bloc walked out, they were being bullied and pushed around; but the walk-out changed the temper of the ConCom (Villacorta, 1993). He considers it a stroke of fortune that all the concerns of the CHR — his Committee — took place after the incident (Ibid.). Had the Committee proposal been taken up before the walk-out, most of the recommendations of the CHR would have been defeated. The shift in the mood of the Commission was instrumental in making the inquiry on language relatively more smooth-sailing compared to the other issues in the ConCom, although as we have seen, the deliberations were not without difficulties.

Second, the fact that the Commissioners were appointed rather than elected also had something to do with the language policy that was drafted. This has two corollary implications. The first is that had the delegates been elected, and given the fact that majority of the regions are not Tagalog-speaking, the Tagalogs would only be a minority and the language provisions in the Constitution might have been different. There is a predominance of Tagalogs in the 1986

TABLE 3
PERCENTAGE OF TAGALOGS AND NON-TAGALOGS
IN THE 1934-35, 1971 AND 1986
CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTIONS

	1934-35	1971	1986
Tagalogs	23 %	28 %	56 %
Non-Tagalogs	77 %	72 %	44 %
Total	100 %	100 %	100 %

Source: Andrew B. Gonzales, Language and Nationalism in the Philippines: The Philippine Experience thus Far (Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila University, Press, 1980), pp. 45-46, 135; Official Directory of the Constitutional Commission of 1986; "Know Your ConCom Delegates," Malaya, 28 May - 1 June 1986; and Interviews with Ambrosio B. Padilla, Padilla and Associates Law Offices, Pasig, Metro Manila, 21 July 1993 and Francisco A. Rodrigo, Rodrigo Law Office, Quezon City, 1 September 1993.

ConCom. Contrast this with the percentage number of Tagalogs in the 1934-35 and 1971 Constitutional Conventions in Table 3. The Tagalog majority in the ConCom may not have been very crucial in facilitating the easier acceptance of Filipino as the existing national language; the multi-language based Filipino was also accepted as the future national language in the 1971 ConCon which was predominantly non-Tagalog. But this unequal regional distribution of delegates led to the creation of a number of compromises with regards to the other language provisions. For example, the Constitution vests in Congress the power to determine the pace of the language reforms. This was a compromise which, according to Ople, he mediated in the Commission (Ople, 1992: 7). He explained that

This was the only way we could persuade the Visayan delegates to agree to a categorical declaration of Filipino as the national language. I also realized the unfairness of imposing Filipino as the medium of official communication and of public instruction without qualifications, since the Constitutional Commission, for some reason, was strongly dominated by delegates from the Tagalog region.

... I knew that Congress, where the regions would be more equitably represented than in the 47-man appointive Commission, would be better placed to exercise this power equitably. (Ibid.)

Another implication of the fact that the Commissioners were appointed rather than elected was that they were not obligated to act in the interest of particular constituents. Instead, they had to deal with the different independent lobby groups which represent not particular regional languages but different perspectives regarding the language issue. It was the dialogues with the Filipino, English, Spanish and "purist" Tagalog groups which served as the basis for the writing of the language provisions.

Third, the Commission was the most ideologically-oriented among all the Constitutional Conventions of the Philippines. The main concern was not language or even the form of government *per se* anymore. The issues were foreign domination, economic independence, nationalist issues, etc. The conservative majority wanted to show that they were also nationalistic, if not more nationalistic than the so-called nationalist or progressive bloc. Having opposed the proposals for the immediate removal of the US bases in the country and the 75-25 percent local equity on industries, the conservatives did not want to appear anti-nationalistic by also obstructing the use of Filipino as the national language. Thus, the conservatives were more tolerant in the case of the language issue.

Fourth, the language issue cut across ideological barriers. Two facts attest to this. First, the main opponents of the CHR and the pro-Filipino group on the language issue, like Davide and other Cebuanos, were not opponents on other issues but were in fact allies or sympathisers of the nationalist bloc. For example, except on the language issue, Davide was all along on the progressive side (Villacorta, 1993). In fact, he was the one who proposed the 70-30 percent local equity for industries. However, on the language issue, Davide's regional loyalty to his native Cebuano was very strong. As seen in the debates, he was very much against Filipino which he considered to be still very much Tagalog-based. But because Davide was a comrade of the nationalists, it was much easier to talk with him. Even if occasional outbursts ensued between Davide and company, on the one hand, and Villacorta, the CHR, and the other pro-"Filipino" delegates in the Commission, on the other, compromises and settlement of the debate came afterwards.

In addition, there was division within the conservative camp regarding the language issue. Some of them were clearly pro-Filipino, such as Francisco Rodrigo, Blas Ople, and Teodulo Natividad. In addition, Villacorta's appointment of Rev. Cirilo Rigos as Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Language later

proved to be an asset for the pro-Filipino group (Ibid.). Rigos was part of the conservative bloc. Hence, if the rest of the conservatives attacked the CHR's proposal on language, it would appear as if they were attacking a member of their group. The progressive group, on the other hand, with a few exceptions, were natural supporters of Filipino.

Fifth, the Commission, particularly the CHR, did not take any extreme stand. Another factor which helped in facilitating the passage of substantial components of the Committee proposal by the whole Commission was the comprehensive and dedicated committee presentation of the research findings of linguistic experts. Those whose expertise and research findings were used included the Constantino group of the U.P., the Pineda group or INL, Ateneo de Manila University, noted linguists Bonifacio Sibayan and Andrew Gonzales, and public and private school teachers' groups. To reiterate Villacorta's words, the CHR offered a package which in itself was a compromise of the different groups who participated in the public consultations. Had the CHR insisted that Tagalog be the basis of the national language, the results would be far from the final provisions.

In a way, acceptance and compromise on the language issue were boosted by the fact that the CHR's main advisers were the Constantino group who were for a highly liberalized, evolutionary and open-ended national language ready and eager to accept contributions from different languages rather than the INL which is associated with purism. In addition, had the CHR insisted that Filipino be the sole medium of instruction, dropping English altogether, the Committee proposal would have been severely attacked and defeated. Moreover, had the CHR insisted that regional languages should not be given the importance which is due them, violent protests would have ensued and again, the Committee recommendations would have gone to naught. Instead, the Commission acknowledged the fact that what has been usually referred to as regional "dialects" are not really dialects but languages. It is also the duty of the State to promote not only the national language but also the regional languages. Due respect was accorded the regional tongues. In a sense, Tagalog arrogance or Tagalog parochialism was checked. The Commissioners of the 1987 ConCom had a much broader outlook and perspective in the discussions on language.

Sixth, the Filipino advocates, both within the Commission or outside, represented a broad spectrum of Philippine society which cannot be accused by opponents of being pro-purist or dominantly Tagalogs, elitists, ultra-nationalists, or intellectuals. Within the CHR, five (5) were Tagalogs; the others were Ilonggos, Ilocano, Kapampangan, and Maguindanao. Most of the resource persons whom the CHR had consulted were non-Tagalogs: namely, Dr. Constantino, Dr. Bonifacio Sibayan, and Dr. Paz are Ilocanos; Dr. Teresita Maceda, a Cebuana; Dr. Andrew

Gonzales and Prof. Anicia del Corra, Kapampangans; and Prof. Ramos, a Bicolano (Record of the Constitutional Commission 4, 1986: 478) . Within the ConCom, it has already been observed that there were both progressives and conservatives in the pro-Filipino group. Commissioners Adolf Azcuna of Zamboanga and Minda Luz Quezada who is Cebuana-Tagala were on the pro-Filipino camp. Furthermore, lobby groups for Filipino were not merely composed of linguists, scholars, teachers, and prominent personalities. Included among the Filipino lobby were the militant labor group KMU, the teachers' group ACT, and ethnic minority groups. The comprehensive range of these advocates not only helped in facilitating the passage of Filipino. It also might have convinced skeptics to support Filipino since the clamor for its use was nation-wide.

Seventh, credit also goes to the Committee on Human Resources for its dedication, tenacity and resilience in maintaining the substantial portions of its recommendations. Every time there was a motion or resolution from opponents of the Committee proposals, for instance, to reconsider the recommendations for the sake of Spanish, or to delete them, members of the CHR took turns to defend their proposal. There was no reversal of stands or going against the original proposal. After all, it was the belief of the Committee that there was not much need for compromise on the floor because what the CHR had presented was in itself already a compromise between all sectors concerned with the language issue. In the end, the CHR was successful in warding off some of the toughest pressures. Spanish is no longer an official or required language. English, however, remains.

And eighth, in the area of medium of instruction and official communication, conservatism and elitism were heavily at work. Because majority of the commissioners were elitist and conservative, coupled with the strength of the private educational institutions, English retained its place in education and government.

Linkage C: Relationship Between Society and Public Policy

The Constitution of 1987 settled the national language issue which has occupied and troubled the nation and its political leaders since the beginning of this century. However, in so doing, it merely ratifies an existing reality. In the 1934-35 Constitutional Convention, Filipinos were still in search of a national language. In the 1971 Constitutional Convention, the non-Tagalogs had a very strong animosity towards Tagalogs because of the purist development of the national language; therefore, the language issue was truly divisive. In 1986, there

was already a lingua franca that can be called Filipino. The people, including many of the commissioners, were more receptive to the fact that there is already this lingua franca which will be the basis of the national language.

According to a survey of the Ateneo de Manila University, as of February 1989, 92 percent of all Filipinos throughout the country, regardless of distance from Manila, could speak the national language. Nevertheless, those who said they could speak English remains an impressive 51 percent, while those able to communicate in Visayan stood at 41 percent. According to former DLSU president and reknowned linguist Bro. Andrew Gonzales, by the end of this century, 98 percent of Filipinos would be able to communicate in the national language (Ople, 1992).

Second, the whole process of drafting the national language provision in the 1987 Constitution is a representation of the complexity of the language situation in the Philippines. The nation is endowed with a diversity of over a hundred languages and four hundred dialects. Looking back at Table 2, there are contending languages within the country with substantial number of speakers. Hence, the language question and national language development must be carefully approached in this context. Otherwise, as attested to by succeeding language policies and controversies in the past, the divisiveness of the issue will again emerge and jeopardize the future development of the national language. Fortunately in this ConCom, the approach was conciliatory and accomodating; there was an evident effort to integrate all the ethno-linguistic groups and regions of the country. There was the underlying effort to build and develop among these diversities a common national language which will serve as the basis for national identity, unity, empowerment, and national development.

Third, as regards the provisions on the medium of instruction and official communication, the central issue is no longer language but power relations in society. According to Ernesto Constantino, language only became a manifestation of the political struggle between the elite and the masses (E. Constantino, 1993). The elites were concerned about their privileged position in society. The English language has been instrumental in this status. If this situation will be changed, the privileged position of the elites will be gone. Thus, language was merely incidental. The real issue was not the insufficiency of one language, its lack of development, and other related arguments being put forth by the opponents of Filipino. The conservatives in the ConCom, composed of the older ones who dominated the Commission and who were already well-established in their lives, wanted to preserve the status quo.

Constantino recounts that some of the support for Filipino were merely rhetorical; it was very hard to get actual or substantial support (Ibid.). Substantial support means making Filipino the primary, if not the sole, language of government and education. However, this was not to be so. The conservatives used rhetorical devices to hide their opposition, saying that they support the Filipino language but suggesting the inclusion of qualifying phrases as subtle opposition.

Fourth, the debate over the basis of the national language once again goes back to the concept of a nation. According to Commissioner Chito Gascon, the mentality of the politicians who dominated the ConCom and Philippine society in general is that the Philippines is and has always been one nation (Gascon, 1993). But the debate continues. This reflects the inability of the ConCom, the politicians in particular, to appreciate the real contributions of the different ethnic groups in the Philippines. This is related to the language issue where the cultural imperialism of Manila is at work. If one cannot understand why we need a national language based on all the existing languages of the country and insists on the existence of one national language based on Tagalog, then, he or she will never understand the struggles of the indigenous peoples of the country searching for recognition and equal rights. Gascon continues,

Majority of the ConCom were more interested in political stabilization, control from the center, control of a strong national state. They were afraid that the nation will break up. But what we have now is a nation based on the imposition of the center. The majority in the ConCom lacked creativity and imagination. (Ibid.)

As we can see in the records of the proceedings of the Commission, some members consider the debate over Filipino and Pilipino as a waste of time, not understanding how substantial the difference was between the two. For most of the commissioners, there is a need for a national language, at least in principle. But with regards to the reason why it has to be multi-language based rather than mono-based, there is not much agreement. Others simply did not consider such debates and arguments substantial.

Summary and Conclusions

Out of this complex picture of the process of drafting the language provisions of the 1987 Constitution, what factors helped in declaring Filipino as the national language? They can be summarized as follows:

- (1) the timing of the deliberations on the draft proposal of the Committee on Human Resources;
- (2) the appointive nature of the ConCom leading to Tagalog dominance but nevertheless more broadly based concerns of the Commissioners;
- (3) the Commission being the most ideologically-oriented of all constitutional conventions in the Philippines;
- (4) the nature of the language issue as cutting across ideological barriers;
- (5) the comprehensive and non-extremist approach of the CHR;
- (6) the much broader outlook and perspective of Commissioners regarding the language issue;
- (7) the strength and resilience of the advocates of the use of "Filipino" within and outside ConCom;
- (8) the dedication, tenacity and resilience of the CHR, particularly Committee Chair Villacorta;
- (9) the overwhelming fact that a lingua franca called Filipino understood by all — which in itself is a compromise language — already exists; and
- (10) the genuine effort of the more progressive commissioners to have a common national language which will serve as the basis for national identity and unity, people's empowerment, and national development.

However, the underlying cause of the triumph of Filipino in the ConCom is the series of language controversies in the past. The stormy history of the development of the national language conditioned the outcome of the 1986 language deliberations to the point where the Filipino advocates in the process clearly would like to avoid the purist, elitist, and divisive character of the national language which spawned the great language wars of the past.

Nevertheless, the triumph of Filipino was not total. The conservatism of majority in the ConCom and the strength of the powerful lobby groups led to a series of compromises in the area of the medium of instruction and official communication. English, thus, remains protected.

Based on this study, three conclusions can be drawn up. First, the national language issue is a complex one, given the ethnolinguistic diversity of the Philippines. Hence, any successful approach towards a satisfactory conclusion of the creation of a policy on language must always keep in mind the heterogeneous nature of Philippine society. The various ethnolinguistic groups must be accorded due respect and importance, as well as equal participation in policy-making, so as to avoid the ever-present divisive potential of the language issue.

Second, the language provisions in the 1987 Constitution was a result of a compromise between the various interest groups within and outside the ConCom. From the public deliberations of the CHR to the deliberations of the Commission as a whole, various lobby groups and personalities representing the whole spectrum of language groups and schools of thought in the Philippines made their presence felt. It was from these diverging points of view that the final provisions were based. While the national language provision upheld Filipino, the rest of the provisions were products of compromises.

And finally, the whole process was reflective of the language situation in the country and Philippine society in general. The interplay of perspectives regarding language was reflective of the effects of the whole experience of the country at different points in its history: the colonial period under Spain and then under the United States, the struggle for independence and national unity, the search for a linguistic symbol of this unity, and the deep resentment of ethnolinguistic groups because of what they perceive as Tagalog purism in language and the neglect of their respective languages. The whole process was also reflective of how language can be used as a tool for empowering and/or disempowering various sectors in society. However, the constitutional mandate declaring that there is already a national language was a result of the fact that there is indeed an existing lingua franca understood by majority of Filipinos. Despite the slow development of the national language mainly as a result of the numerous language controversies and wars in the past and the lack of political will on the part of succeeding governments to develop the national language, the Philippines already has a national language. More importantly, the language provisions of the Constitution are proof of the growing recognition in the country of the linkage between a common national language and national culture and identity, democracy and development.

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