

THE QUEST FOR LANGUAGE UNIVERSAL IS ON¹

Al Q. Perez

Distinguished guest, Sec. Ople of the Department of Labour who is representing the President, Director Pineda of the Surian ng Wikang Pambansa, selected linguists, professors of language and educationists of participating nations, friends and fellow students of languages:

In 1972, to be exact, December 18-22, we started formally the language forum in Asia by staging and participating in the First Conference on Asian Languages. The countries that took part then: Malaysia, Indonesia, Japan, Thailand, Nationalist China, Israel and the host country - the Philippines. We discussed then the Language Policy and Language Development of Asian Countries as the theme of the conference. We could say with utmost humility that we achieved a degree of success in moving toward the goals of that language forum.

A tangible result of that forum has been the publication of the different papers dealing on the language policy and language development of the participating nations. Now you have that book with you.

But the more important fruit of that forum is the academic insight that we gained during the plenary sessions of the conference, which we could truly say was - immeasurable. Through those academic discussions and exchange of ideas regarding the varied language situations in this part of the world, at least we would claim, that we were able to enrich our perceptions regarding the language discipline of the Asian. And those of you who were present in that conference could attest to what I said.

The Asian indefatigably pursues his search for his indigenous identity through his quest for language universals, his is going in this direction

¹The Opening Address read at the opening of the Second Conference on Asian Languages held at the NSDB Conference Hall, on December 16, 1974.

because he is sure that man is better identified through his language.

And so my friends, we are gathered here in the same hall where we staged the First Conference on Asian Language to continue our quest for language universals. This is the beginning of the culmination in part of the several months and years of preparation for the continuation of the first concourse. The Second Conference on Asian Languages bears this: *THE STANDARDISATION OF ASIAN LANGUAGES*. We could say that this aspect of standardisation is one of the more difficult tasks to perform in language discipline. But it must be done. So we are going to commence this language forum with the following objectives clear in our mind's eye:

1. To know the status and progress of the development of language standardisation in Asian countries.
2. To assess the status of the standardisation of Asian languages.
3. To continue the discussion regarding Asian languages that was started in the First Asian Conference held in Manila on December 18-22, 1974.
4. To foster harmonious relationships among the peoples of Asia.
5. To surmount language barriers so as to enable Asians to be understood and accepted by other peoples as sharers of progress through language.

These are relevant to the welfare of the Asian who is trying to look sincerely for solutions to his varied problems in different fields of endeavour. And one of these problems is the language aspect which is playing a significant role in the discipline of education.

I would like to reiterate my hope and wish that I expressed two years ago in this same august body during the first language forum, that the affair would only be the beginning of more and bountiful discussions on Asian languages. And for the Second Conference on Asian Languages, I am happy to say again that in the future we hope we would be able to carry on a similar language forum, no matter how minimal the outcome may be with the very limited resources at our disposal, but with the utmost co-operation of all as you may have exhibited today. Let us show that we can pool our energies to come up with solutions on the language standardisation problems in this hemisphere with greater patience, understanding and efficiency than if we were to grapple with this problems separately and individually.

I thank you.