

REMARKS

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The Second Conference on Asian Languages participated in by delegates coming from the rank and file of the teaching profession in the Philippines and by invited speakers who represent the different countries in the Asian region is about to be concluded.

I know I have to make my remarks very briefly because most of you are probably in a hurry to leave so you could still do some shopping downtown for 'aguinaldos' and 'pasalubong' before you go home to your beloved ones in celebrating Christmas.

May I make just two general observations:

1. **First Observation.** This conference is a manifestation that the Asian has now found himself. He is no longer a lost soul as he used to be in this part of the earth. In the field of language, his obsession now is not only to have an indigenous national language but to have its functions elaborated, standardised, and modernised.

2. **Second Observation.** The Asian, as a consequence of fate, embarks on a path leading towards bilingualism. In other words, he keeps the Language of Wider Communication which is English or Mandarin or Dutch or French as the case may be, and at the same time nurture his indigenous national language - develop and standardise it to keep it at par if at all possible with the languages of his former colonial masters. How to implement bilingualism and at the same time standardise his national language is a problem that still overwhelms him. But he is trying his best because he knows that to be truly independent in thoughts, in words, and in deeds, he must develop and standardise a national language of his own.

Allow me now to shift into other matters.

We should confess that we admire the ability of some of the delegates in adjusting themselves to the situation. We are sure many of you are of a speaker's caliber, judging from the data and all the nice things we have heard and read about you. If we have reduced you to either a chairman or a rapporteur of plenary sessions, if not to a mere consumer of ideas, it is because this conference has its limits.

Some of you have asked us how we can hold conferences of this kind, obviously marvelling at the courage and determination of whoever is the person or persons behind all these. Questions like "Where did you get the funds?" are common. Really, knowledgeable people will tell you that holding an international conference such as this entails so many problems; all of them, however, boil down to only one factor - funds.

Well, actually, if there is anybody at all who should receive the plaudits, it should be none other than one person who is a thinker and a doer in the real sense of these words - and he is no other than Dr. Alejandrino Q. Perez, the President of two associations: the Pambansang Samahan sa Linggwistikang Pilipino, Ink. (PSLP) and the Asian Association on National Languages (ASANAL). (May I invite you all to give this leader a big round of applause?) To Dr. Perez should go all the commendations, the praise, or any compliment that should accrue in the holding of this conference.

Of course there are other equally important people without whose support this conference could not have been possible. And with your permission, may I mention the names of the following who composed the planning and advisory committee:

1. Atty. Ponciano B.P. Pineda, Director of the Institute of National Language, and co-sponsor of this 2nd Conference on Asian Languages, who is always behind the activities of the PSLP - either as Board Member, as an adviser, as legal counsel (he being a lawyer - all rolled into one).

2. Dr. Ernesto Constantino (the proponent of UP Pil), Professor of Linguistics at the University of the Philippines, one of the few linguists in the Philippines, a human dynamo of ideas in planning conferences of this kind.

We should also like to mention the names of other people who have so kindly given us the moral support that we needed very much:

1. Mrs. Fermina G. Gatal, retired Chief of the Pilipino Division, Bureau of Public Schools, the charming 'Mommy' of the PSLP who radiates sunshine in all her ways.

2. Dr. Bonifacio P. Sibayan, President of the Philippine Normal College, who goes out of his way if only to help other people, the 'Godfather' of sociolinguists in the Philippines, the man whom Dr. Perez

runs to when he needed some pieces of advice in running conferences of this kind.

3. Dr. Cecilio Lopez, the Dean of Philippine Linguistics, who also have given us the pieces of advice that could come only from a mature thinker like him.

4. Dr. Gregorio C. Borlaza, who inspite of the fact that he has already retired from the government service, has not retired yet in being of service to Pilipino. We occasionally come to him for advice.

From here I will stop mentioning names of the other equally important people who have given their share in contributing to the success of this conference, as I might be robbing Dr. Perez the honour of thanking them. I am referring to the invited speakers and guests who were able to find time to come here in spite of their hectic schedules; the chairmen and the rapporteurs who have done their jobs so well; the members of the different committees who are actually the 'unsung heroes' of this conference as they have been working without the floodlights of the cameras, working backstage on the props, so to speak, while others are performing the lead roles on stage; and lastly, the delegates who come from the different parts of the Philippines, from the farthest school division up north to the farthest school down south who, we hope, have enjoyed participating in this conference.

The PSLP, if I might mention in passing, is comparatively a young organisation. It was organised by Dr. Perez and a dozen others barely four years, seven months and twelve days ago. It started modestly by holding seminars in Manila and suburbs for teachers in Pilipino. Then, from this quiet beginning, it started holding seminars in the different parts of the country. Then, after two years of actively holding seminars on topics which were aimed to help the teachers in the field, it embarked on a bigger and more ambitious activity - the holding of the First Conference on Asian Languages on December 18-22, 1972. During that conference another association was born - the Asian Association on National Languages (ASANAL) - wherein Dr. Perez again emerged as President.

The First Conference on Asian Languages has been followed by another one, two years after. And I am referring to this 2nd Conference. But this is not yet the end of the story. This morning, I was told that last Thursday, December 19th, to be exact, Dr. Perez chaired a meeting of the ASANAL attended by the speakers to this conference to explore the possibility of holding the 3rd Conference on Asian Languages in any country in Asia other than the Philippines. And if plans do not miscarry, the Third Conference on Asian Languages will be held at Jakarta in 1975 through the proposal of our friend Dr. Amran Halim.

Well, so far this is the story of the PSLP. It is an organisation which is self-propelling, receiving no aid whatsoever from Foundations or other moneyed groups.

This is all, my friends. Before I leave the stage, may I wish all the guests and speakers, most especially the delegates who have sacrificed so many things just to be able to attend this conference, a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.