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Filipino, as we call it today, was instituted as the national language of the Philippines in 1937. It was taught in schools as early as the 1940s but the Department of Education did not adopt the name Pilipino until 1959. Before that, it was just called the National Language.

In previous articles we talked about some of the advances that were made in the last century toward developing the national language. Some of the words that were borrowed or invented were so well received that today most people think that they were Tagalog words all along – words like *bansa*, *lungsod*, *katarungan*, *kalayaan* and *bantayog* (nation, city, justice, freedom, monument).

Many of these words are the legacy of one man who passed away in 1919, almost two decades before the official birth of the national language. He was Eusebio T. Daluz and he was one of the founders of the *Akademya ng Wikang Pilipino* (Academy of the Filipino Language).

The Academy's aim was to establish a common Filipino language even though Leon Ma. Guerrero (grandfather of the late writer and diplomat of the same name) had quashed a 1908 bill that had proposed the founding of a similar institute because he felt it would be better to unite Filipinos under a foreign language such as English or Spanish. In many ways, the academy's vision for a common national language was far more radical and inclusive of local languages than that of any of the institutes, *surians* or commissions that were set up later in the century.

#### ***A new dictionary for a new language***

As secretary of the academy, Daluz began to compile its official dictionary in 1910 – a task that would take him five years to complete. In the introduction to his

## The Filipino language that might have been

1915 Filipino-English Vocabulary, he said:

*[The vocabulary] is a mixture of different Philippine dialects with the Tagalog as basis. Most of the words, of course, are Tagalog, but a large number are also taken from the Bisayan, Ilokano, Bikol, Pampangan and other native dialects, all of which are Tagalized.*

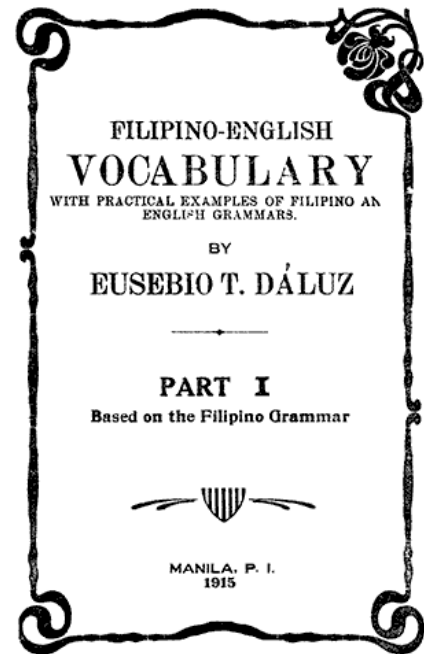
This pretty much describes what the official Pilipino or Filipino language was supposed to be, but none of the language authorities ever lived up to the ideal that was displayed in the *Academy's Vocabulary*.

It is fascinating to leaf through this old book and see what the Filipino language might have become. The spelling was similar to what we know today. The reforms that Jose Rizal and others had proposed were widely accepted by that time. The letters *k* and *w* were used instead of the old and awkward Spanish conventions that spelled those sounds with *c's*, *qu's* and *o's* or *u's*. *Ng* was used too, but it always had a tilde ~ above the letter *g*, as did the word *mga*.

Some of the words, though, seem strange to us today and some of the sentences look like a completely different language. Reading the grammar section is particularly baffling because the grammatical terms are not the same ones that are taught in Filipino classes today, which were invented by Lope K. Santos in the 1940s. The Daluz vocabulary for grammar includes terms like *nama*, *badyâ*, *halipinama*, *lampibadyâ* and *sugnó* for noun, verb, pronoun, adverb and adjective.

#### ***Fewer double meanings***

Especially interesting is how Daluz proposed to make the language more precise by reducing the number of words that have double meanings. For example, instead of using the Tagalog word *araw* to mean both day and sun, he borrowed the Bisayan word *adlaw* to take on the meaning of sun and retained *araw* for day. Similarly,



*Title page of the Akademya ng Wikang Pilipino dictionary. Published in 1915, it was far ahead of its time.*

*buwan* still meant month but *bulan* meant moon. A *dahon* was a leaf, while a *bayhon* was a page.

*Takna* is listed as the word for “a period of time,” which would have left *panahon* as the word for weather only, but curiously, it was still listed with both meanings.

*Daan* retained the meaning of a road or passage, but as the number 100, it was replaced with *gatos*, the Bisayan word for hundred and, ironically, the forgotten Old Tagalog word for million.

Speaking of numbers, the Academy's proposed vocabulary had words that went far beyond millions, billions and even trillions. It had words all the way up to *turuangaw* or one decillion. That's the number one followed by 33 zeros – or in Europe, one followed by 60 zeros.

#### ***Forgotten inventions***

So many words in the dictionary were potentially useful, if only they had been adopted into general use. *Gamlang* was the word for industry. *Kadám* was proposed as the word for senate and a senator would have been called a *kadamnin*. *Bansa*, of

course, meant country, but there was also *himansaan*, which meant state. *Dunà* took the meaning of “being,” which made a fine companion to the word *diwa*, meaning spirit or consciousness. A human being was a *dunang tao*.

Even the simple conjunction “or” was adapted from the Visayan *ug*, which became *og* to replace the Tagalog/Spanish *o*. It was even used throughout the dictionary in the headings and explanations.

Daluz not only made excellent use of native words to enrich Filipino, he also borrowed Visayan grammar to make derivative nouns and adjectives. For example, *lungsod* meant city, just as it does today, but there was also *lungsuron* for civic, *lungsurunan* for civics, *lungsuranin* or *lungsudnin* for civil, and *linungsudnin* for civilized. Filipinos were called *Pilipinos*, the country of the Filipinos was called *Pilipinhan* and the adjective, Philippine, was *Pilipihin*.

#### ***A truly national language***

Of course, the Pilipino language in the Daluz dictionary was not the same Pilipino that was later adopted as the official national language. That version of Pilipino had fewer borrowings from other Philippine

languages and the grammar was based almost exclusively on Tagalog. Perhaps that was why some non-Tagalogs resisted the official Pilipino language and accused members of the *Surian ng Wikang Pambansa* (National Language Institute) of being Tagalog purists. And perhaps some of them were aware of the Daluz model of the Pilipino language, which was much more inclusive of other Philippine languages.

Today the Philippine government is expending very little effort to develop the Filipino language. Instead, it is pressing for more English education in the schools under the pretext that it is needed to satisfy the demands of foreign companies operating in the Philippines. Meanwhile, the official regulating body of the national language, the Commission on the Filipino Language, is widely regarded as ineffectual.

But the vision of Eusebio Daluz and the old *Academya* is not dead. Today, just as in their day, the real force behind the advancement of the Filipino language is not the government of the Philippines. Following the model of Oxford University as the authority for the

English language, the University of the Philippines System has now assumed that role for the Filipino language. Its *Sentro ng Wikang Filipino* (SWF) has spearheaded many projects that are really working to develop a consistent and inclusive national language.

In 2001, the SWF produced the first edition of the ambitious *UP Diksiyonaryong Filipino*, which is one of the first major Filipino dictionaries written completely in Filipino without English definitions. Although the UP dictionary contains many English and Spanish words that are in common use today, it also contains many Old Tagalog words and thousands of words from languages all over the Philippines. It brings together the linguistic wealth of the entire country. Perhaps the coming generations that pass through the education system will discover this treasure and use it to form a Filipino language that is truly national.

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