

HEALING, MEDICINE, AND LANGUAGE Enrico R. Azicate

The concept of the Filipino language as a technical language is not yet widely accepted by many sectors of contemporary society. To this day, the debate and controversy over language still revolve around the concept of Filipino as a national language or a language of instruction. But in many professional sectors, the myth that the English language is superior as a technical language is still accepted. According to those who object to such an idea, English possesses precision and universality of meaning—two characteristics required of a technical language. Consequently, a situation exists where English is recognized as the technical language, and Filipino as merely an ordinary one. It is like an extension of the paired models: English—intellectual language, Filipino—language of the streets; English—learned language, Filipino—ignorant language; English—high, Filipino—low, etc.

Technical language can be described as particular to a group or sector of society that has mastery or expertise in a field of knowledge. Thus, ordinary people may not know much, or may not truly know at all, the vocabulary and particular aspects of using technical language. This is not a simple matter of expanding vocabulary; it is a matter of knowing and understanding a unique world or worldview. An example of this is the scientific and mathematical language of the West. We may know some terms or words, but if we are not experts in these disciplines, we will not understand and be able to use those languages. Because Filipinos learned knowledge and disciplines from the West, and through the English language, it seems the myth was simply accepted that English is not just the only technical language, but the only universal language.

But is this the truth? Are there aspects of technical and scientific language in Filipino? Since part of the emergence of technical language is the teaching of related knowledge or worldviews, can a Filipino consciousness and culture be promoted through the use of Filipino as a technical language?

There are two paths for the language: the common language and the technical language. To properly analyze this concept, it is necessary to examine the Filipino language in an aspect of culture that already has both common and technical forms. One field that has both a common and technical nature is medicine in the Philippines. How do we introduce Filipino as a technical language in medicine?

Objectives of the Paper

This article is primarily an exploratory study on the relationship of language and the traditions/methods of healing or medicine. Our objectives are, first, to showcase the Filipino tradition of medicine; second, that medicine uses Filipino as a technical language (for practitioners) and a common language (used by ordinary people). Medicine is not static, and in the study of its changes, we can also see the changes in the use of language.

To further understand this idea, it is necessary to study the history of medicine in the Philippines, from the ancient traditions to the current scientific tradition. We want to look at the

way health, illness, and healing are explained; who the practitioners are; and their relationship to society. Aside from a historical study of medicine, it is appropriate to contextualize our analysis within Filipino culture.

The change in the tradition of medicine has its own flow and character. Even if it occurs within Filipino culture, it is separate and unique. It is the "independent variable," and the language used in healing depends on the prevailing or dominant tradition of medicine. New ideas in medicine will surely emerge if we investigate changes in the words or the language itself used in healing.

The change in medicine and its related change in language is also a sign of the change in the worldview of the Filipino. The change in perspective is not equal: there is an imbalance because of geography, social class, and the level of knowledge. Our belief that science or medicine in the matter of politics or social change is "neutral" can be proven as just another myth and is not reflective of the reality of Filipino society.

Outline of the History of Healing

There are three traditions of healing in the Philippines: the Austronesian (indigenous); the Judeo-Christian; and the Western-Scientific. In our history of medicine, the indigenous tradition was not completely lost or erased by the later traditions. The first one did not completely prevail because of geography, the policies established by the ruling government, and even the resistance of Filipino healers to the established system of regulations. These conditions provided the way for the borrowing of indigenous healing in the form of foreign methods of healing. The Filipino at present can choose from the three traditions of healing to provide a cure for their ailment.

The traditions of healing can be understood based on their idea or concept of man. We will see, as part of having a sickness or using a specialty in healing based on the type or form of sickness, that it is a way of understanding the formation of man. The nature of a specific type of illness will also appear based on the perspective of the part of the person being used, who is using the medicine, and how the condition is being used. This is based on the concept of "structural analogues." Thus, technical language can be formed at the level of the specialist and the healer.

When the healer and the patient speak, the language they use in their discourse is not technical but common language. We will notice the gap between the language of the healers. In this way, we can say that there is also a hierarchy in the knowledge of medicine that will serve to unify those who treat and those who are sick.

Austronesian/Indigenous Tradition

Indigenous healing has not been fully studied at this time, but there is already enough knowledge to form a framework for this tradition. It can also be said that this tradition is alive in some ethnic families in the Philippines, or is part of what families are familiar with in terms of

healing. Since this tradition is from the ancient Filipino culture if the language is the basis, we can also see its character and proof of this system.

Characteristics and Essence

The primary characteristics of the ancient tradition of healing are their belief in the three components that make up a person: the body (physical part), vitality/interior/liver (the life force); and the soul (consciousness or intellect). Sickness can be classified based on these three mentioned aspects of man. In the conceptualization of man, these parts of the body are not just physical parts, but are used by the specialist in a specific way. Often, the healing is focused on physical methods, such as bloodletting, use of medicine, etc.

Illnesses of the vitality/interior/liver may have physical symptoms, but the medicine is seen as being in the esoteric method, such as through chants, prayers, use of mysterious or powerful words, or possession by the healer of an *anito* or spirit to identify and find a cure for the illness. The attacks of these illnesses are the life force of a person and are often recognized as conditions such as *kulam*, *barang*, *usog*, etc. The specialized healer handles these types of illness. It is true that there are symptoms or signs in the body of the person who is sick, but the healing for these is not focused on the physical field but on the recovery of the life force.

There is a similarity between the illness of the soul and the interior, but often the symptoms of this are like "mental illness" in modern medicine. The recognition of this type of illness is like an attack or deficiency in the consciousness or mind of a person. Madness, loss of self (due to a potion or spell), abduction of the soul, and loss of memory can be classified here. And let us not forget to add that there is a specialist in healing these conditions.

The healer has a specialization that follows the three primary types of illness. Sickness of the body became the cause for the emergence of many specialists: *hilot*, *albularyo*, etc. According to the Spaniards, there were also "bone-setters," "leech-crafters," and apothecaries (medicine makers). The *babaylan* or *katalonan* are specialists for illnesses of the vitality and soul. And if we continue the logic of our analysis, the *mangkukulam*, *mambabarang*, and others of that pair are also specialists in vitality and soul.

Some Observations and Points

In the breadth and number of these ideas, we can say that the indigenous tradition of healing is very rich. More than this, it can be seen that there is a technical language in healing and a common language. A very important proof of this is the concealment of knowledge in healing and the non-disclosure of knowledge to others. Most healers are guided by knowledge as apprentices or followers and not because they were studied in an institution like a school. Until now, we look at this hidden knowledge and often learn it as myths and folk tales only. The concept of the death of a person as the cause of the pulling out of their breath is explained as a story about an *aswang* and not as scientific knowledge about health and medicine. Perhaps, it is not surely necessary to know one's whole knowledge about the complicated view and method of healing. Knowing that he is sick is enough, and what the possible cure might be, and perhaps,

the dangers of treatment if there are any, and if he will be cured. The simple explanation in common language is enough for the patient; the specialist needs to know their technical language to use their knowledge in healing. An example of this is the Bicolano word: what is the equivalent of "gamot" (medicine)? It is "bulong" (whisper/prayer). The knowledge of healing and the healer is not important that the cure is a prayer or a difficult word, but that this "bulong" has efficacy that can lead to a cure.

Before we move away from this topic, I want to remind you that indigenous medicine is a living tradition. Some of the foreign methods of healing that arrived in the Philippines were incorporated into the system of ideas of indigenous healing even if they were from a foreign process or form. In this situation, indigenous medicine can be considered the "matrix" of healing in the Philippines.

The fitting of these foreign elements is the only way for the continuation of the ancient tradition of medicine in the face of colonialism. We can see the borrowing of skewed Latin as part of esoteric healing until the present. In other places, the emergence of "psychic surgery" is a borrowing of surgery that has spread in scientific medicine.

Judeo-Christian Tradition

The arrival of Spain and their establishment of colonialism in the archipelago paved the way for the entry of a new tradition of medicine. This tradition of the conquerors was drawn from their unique history. The world of healing of the Spaniards was influenced by the medicine of the Moors from Northern Africa, from the Jews, and those that prevailed in the knowledge of Western Christianity. Aside from the profound colony of Spain, it was the borrowing from the medicine of the indigenous people of America, especially from the Aztecs, Mayans, and Incas in the civilization of Central and South America. The important result of this mixing was the acceptance and integration of elements of the mentioned traditions of medicine that were proven effective, and at times this avoided the conflict between the new elements of their new system of medicine. In the Philippines, the role of the shortage of Spanish agents of colonialism was large, especially the agents of culture and the education of the Filipinos. A rapid result was the dominance of the Christian Church in the field of medicine that promoted and approved the system of the Church. The most important ideas were:

1. The concept that man is composed of body and soul only (body and soul dichotomy). In this view, illnesses can be classified as illnesses of the body or illnesses of the soul.
2. The care of the sick is part of the spiritual responsibility of a Christian. Caring for the sick is a reflection of Christ's suffering, so the care of the sick is a form of charity.
3. The sick are not just the responsibility of the community but the mission of some institutions of the state. In this era, the first of these missions was the Catholic Church or the religious brotherhoods.

Characteristics and Essence

Illnesses of the body became the field of specialists such as the *sirhiyon* (surgeon-barber), *doktor* (physician), *apotekaryo* (apothecary or herbalist), *manlilinta* (leech-crafter or bleeder), etc. New systems of healing can also be incorporated into the indigenous knowledge regarding the materials used in medicine such as plants. This entry of some elements of indigenous medicine was the result of pragmatic necessity. The need for doctors in the colony was very great and there was no other easy cure but to borrow effective methods.

The result of this pragmatism was the exchange of knowledge and language as well. We can see this in the manuals, dictionaries, and almanacs of Spain where one can see borrowed medical knowledge from the natives. The shipment of new *materia medica* and some plants used medically from the colony in Latin America and other parts of the Empire was the partner of the relationship between the indigenous and the foreign.

Sickness of the soul was the domain of the friar; the sickness of the soul as an action of demons or punishment from God is explained. It is clear that the friar and the *babaylan* would clash in healing. They both used ordinary power to use and have power over sickness. Added to this was the similarity of the technique of the two in healing: the prayer or use of secret words that probably were not understood by the one being treated. It is strongly emphasized in the new state of Christianity that indigenous concepts of sickness are for the ignorant. Sickness may result in the change of the Filipino consciousness towards his body and his understanding of healing.

The arrival of the new tradition of medicine became the cause of the separation of healing because it was no longer only in culture but also in the discourse of healing. The one used and being seen was in the context of the whole body. He was recognized as someone different from other parts of his body, or as a soul only. He was separated from society as a sick person. He deserved to be pitied; the rotation of his life depended on the needs according to Christian charity. This was an obligation to God and not to fellow humans or society.

Conflict of the Indigenous and Judeo-Christian

Geography and medicine would have a conflict: in the centers of colonialism, the Judeo-Christian tradition was strong; at the frontiers and the places not conquered, indigenous healing remained. This does not mean that indigenous healing in the places controlled by Spain was completely lost. There was an "incorporation" or metamorphosis of indigenous healing to mimic the system of the conquerors. The beautiful example of this was the shift from the mysterious language of the indigenous tradition to Latin. This started from the method of healing referred to today as "orasyon" (orison/prayer). We did not learn how to pray in Latin from the friars but instead learned to use Latin in prayers from them. The Latin language that was not formal and taught to the majority of Filipinos and prevailed in the language of the people was corrupt Latin. Consequently, at present, indigenous healing has many similarities with healing through "orasyon." Their difference is the type of language used.

The power of the friar grew in the place where he was the only agent of colonialism. In the places where he became a equivalent of the former *babaylan*, the power of the friar became

political, spiritual, and medical. In pragmatic healing, the friar used indigenous medical knowledge (specifically the *materia medica* here) and the knowledge of Spanish doctors and healers, aside from his knowledge in spiritual medicine. This power grew even more as he became a symbol or characteristic of a powerful kingdom. This was the reason why the power of the friar was very broad. This situation was also the context of some revolts led by *babaylans* (called "revivalist movements" by some historians). The *babaylan*, to be recognized in her spiritual/esoteric power and proven in her capability to use it, the remaining ancient indigenous powers that were not included or did not surrender to the colonial system.

In summary, the language used in healing was identified with the colonial and Spanish state. Some words or indigenous concepts were incorporated there as a result of borrowing or adopting effective methods of healing. Foreign technical language in medicine became effective. In the weak or reached-by-colonialism areas, indigenous tradition in medicine continued, or there was an adaptation to the new order of society through the use of corrupted Latin in the methods of healing. The view was focused on one place of the colonial system and the Christianization of the Philippines.

Scientific Medicine

In this tradition, the idea that illness is a defect of the body or physical happening emerged. A second category of illness based on the head (psyche) related to insanity (*insanity*) was also formed. The result of this system was the Judeo-Christian and indigenous traditions becoming an official innovation in the policy of the colonial government. This started from the tradition in 1805 during the implementation of the vaccination for smallpox. This came out as a result of successive blows of epidemics such as cholera and bubonic plague.

Part of the ideas related to the scientific tradition was the concept of the obligation and responsibility of the state in caring for the health of citizens. Medicine for the sick was part of the progress of state interests and not part of Christian charity. This was a social and not a humanitarian service or spiritual obligation.

Because the body is only a machine (and not a person) that is being used, especially separated from the discourse of culture, medicine, and the doctor, the language used in healing became appropriate only for the specific profession known as and regulated by the state. The surge of technical scientific language started here. Formalization and formation of institutions that would uphold new ideas on health and medicine started. Medical schools were the first place to launch technical language for healers; the hospital was a place where one could receive medical service. This was further strengthened by the Americans when they replaced the Spanish in the Philippines in the 1900s. The basis of scientific tradition in medicine was from what the Spaniards started and the innovations followed from the Americans. The need for qualified personnel in the medical service of the colonial government was solved by the training of Filipinos who would make up one of the first professions and groups in the public service of the government.

New Conflict

Even in the colonial state, the fight of scientific medicine and the prevailing Judeo-Christian tradition was hot. Part of this was the conflict of scientific ideas and the ideas of religion. When the number of Filipino doctors and technicians grew, and the colonial state was established as scientific, the stage for a direct conflict between the doctor and the friar was set. Those who studied in other countries and were historians in our time as "Ilustrados," became the opponents of the friars. Surely there was an element of conflict between the scientific view of the Ilustrados (especially those who were doctors and scientists) and the religious view of the friars, aside from what is known as the basis of the Propaganda Movement.

In the modern system of public medicine established by the Americans, there was an agreement regarding the roles of the state and the Catholic Church. The care for the sick in the field of the state and of recognized medical professionals of the private sector. This is the prevailing system in our health care today.

The Church may participate in the care of the sick as part of its mission of charity. Knowledge as part of its mission was recognized as an important system to be weakened; when only identified as herbalism and "psychic surgery" or "faith healing," in the category of indigenous healing, they were included in their agreement to suppress "superstitious culture" of indigenous healing. To make it a "mapped-out" culture of indigenous healing. It was as if the indigenous tradition of medicine of the state (political power) and of the Church (spiritual power) did not exist. However, indigenous medicine still has a strong follow-through for many Filipinos because its power was and still is for many Filipinos contextualized in their native culture.