

Preface

Intent, attention, interpretation

Attention is virtue. To the attentive, the past may present a different picture and historical narratives may lead to startling new conclusions. With the advent of new media and information technology, however, not only has attention become a scarce commodity it has also evolved into currency to buy the attention of others (Hagner, 2003).

In this issue of the *Philippine Social Sciences Review*, five articles tackle attention and how it relates to language evolution, historical anachronism, missionary work, and legislative policymaking.

Media attention, in particular, is at the heart of Alphonse Samson's investigation on how the level of media coverage on proposed legislation significantly determines their enactment into law. The conventional wisdom, of course, is that salient legislative measures are enacted much faster due to the greater amount of media attention these types of bills receive. Samson argues, however, that increased media coverage can actually be detrimental to a bill's passage because attention pulls in more actors, subjects issues to scrutiny, and prolongs deliberation. Employing regression analysis to a total of 234 bills from the 14th to the 15th Congress, he shows how media invites conflict of interests and how such conflict causes instability that slows down the policy process. But media by itself does not give the whole picture. For instance, despite the implications media's impact pales in comparison to the agenda setting power of Philippine presidents. It is best for lobbyists and policy peddlers, Samson suggests, not to rely on media attention solely but to explore other political and institutional resources that are known to facilitate the legislative process.

Media arguably is not just a conduit of public attention to pressing social concerns but a mirror of our collective cultural and

linguistic transformations. Employing corpus analysis of articles that appeared on a leading Filipino magazine, Maria Kristina Gallego looks at the evolution and development of the mainstream usage of the Filipino language across generations and shows the dynamism of the language. Gallego notes how certain affixes and sentence constructions have been eased out of contemporary usage and replaced by forms that reflect the interaction of the Filipino language with other languages such as English. Employing both descriptive and linguistic analysis, she demonstrates how rough or course language can evolve into standard over time. Her study reminds that like any living language, Filipino is in a constant state of flux despite efforts to standardize it into a national language.

How Filipino as a language evolved through the years is also the focus of Janus Cabazares' metalexigraphic analysis of the *Diksiyunaryong Monolingual sa Filipino (DMF)*. Cabazares, however, specifically takes stock on the limitations of the dictionary to reflect appropriately the developments in the lexical usage of many Filipino words. The article is detailed in its analysis of the macro and micro structures of the lexicographic work and demonstrates a familiarity with the discipline's analytical methodologies. When disagreements on the form and definition of a word come up, people are usually quick to refer to a dictionary as the final arbiter on lexical usage. The article reminds that dictionaries, like all works subject to human fallibility, are not immune to the politics of language and the challenges to standardization. Dictionaries after all, are works of art susceptible to linguistic aptitudes and attitudes, as much as they are scientific products that have to comply with the rigors of diverse methodologies and techniques.

Raymund Arthur Abejo's historical account of the development of Korean missionary work in the Philippines not only invites our attention to the growing but still largely understudied religious denominations in the country but gives a nuanced view of intercultural exchange between Filipinos and Koreans. The Philippines has been a favorite destination among Christian missionaries from Korea since the 70s due to strong diplomatic

and economic ties between the two countries. Through the years Korean Presbyterian and Methodist churches have actively engaged in pastoral work by building churches, training pastors, baptizing members, and establishing schools. However, unlike the Korean Methodist Church which worked closely with the United Methodist Church of the Philippines, Korean Presbyterian mission workers did not forge ties with their Philippine counterparts and rarely engaged in interdenominational cooperation. Abejo looks at Korean missions, not just as transnational religious actors but as vectors of intercultural interactions. Protestant churches in the Philippines generally regard Korean missions highly but lament the lukewarm effort of their missionaries to engage communities and to be mindful of ethnic values and the cultural context.

Finally, Jayme Paolo Guiang explores the interplay of intent and attention in the process by which historians interpret events and draw conclusions from the actions of historical figures. Guiang takes stock at Renato Constantino's application of Marxist framework which, he argues, resulted in an inadequate and historically anachronistic image of Jose Rizal. Guiang contends that the inattentive historian would be easily swayed by Constantino's rigid use of Marxist historiography and miss out the inaccuracies and misinterpretations that came with the account. Guiang clarifies, however, that his study is not a critic of Renato Constantino's framework and is meant only to point out the apparent, often inevitable, implications of rigidly applying social theories to produce historical narratives. Guiang invites historians to be cautious in adopting frameworks and make sure evidence is not clouded in the process of integrating theories into the narratives. Social theories after all are meant to facilitate historical inquiry and not to recreate an entirely different past.

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References

Hagner, William. 2003. Toward a history of attention in culture and science. *MLN* 118(3): 670-687.