

Evaluating the progress of bilingual education

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The Linguistic Society of the Philippines, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Institute of National Language, and the Philippine Association for Language Teaching, organized a national conference from October 18 to 20, 1978 to assess the implementation of the Bilingual Education Policy since 1974, when Department Order No. 25, series 1974 was enacted as policy.

Held at the Philippine Normal College, the conference was attended by language supervisors of Pilipino and English from the thirteen regions.

It was highlighted by a keynote address by the Minister of Education and Culture himself, Juan L. Manuel, who underscored "the separate use of Pilipino and English as media of instruction in specified areas" and disapproved of the "practice of teachers switching from English to Pilipino or vice versa, at their convenience"; the Minister discouraged the "use of an adulterated language which is neither English nor Pilipino".



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At the closing of the conference, the group was addressed by Deputy Minister of Education and Culture, Felicita G. Bernardino, who addressed the assembly in Pilipino and emphasized that *ang nais ng pamahalaan ay makalinang ng mga mamayang mahusay sa pakikipagtalastasan sa Pilipino at Ingles.*

Preparatory to the conference, selected supervisors were requested to answer a questionnaire on aspects of implementation for their respective areas.

During the conference, representatives from each region and agency presented oral reports, supplemented by reaction and comments from other regional representatives.

In addition, spokesmen for the Institute of National Language, the Educational Development Projects Implementing Task Force, the Philippine Association for Language Teaching and the Linguistic Society of the Philippines reacted to the findings reported and suggested ways in which their respective organizations could cooperate in further implementation.

From the reports from the field, it would seem that the implementation of the policy is on schedule; the use of Pilipino for social studies, work education, music and art, physical education and the use of English for mathematics and science began in Grade I in 1974-1975, with the vernacular or Pilipino as auxiliary medium of instruction. Except for Region VII (Central Visayas), where there is administrative resistance, and parts of Region IX (where the political situation has caused a slow-down) and parts of Region I (Kalinga-Apayao and Ifugao) where there is parent resistance, the implementation is on target.

In fact, in many places, the implementation is ahead of schedule; Pilipino is used in the subject areas specified by the policy

all the way to Grade 6 in certain areas.

At the tertiary level, Gregorio Araneta University Foundation, under the leadership of Dean Gonzalo del Rosario, the chief exponent of Manguyng Pilipino, there is a full-scale program and a twenty-year plan of developing scientific terminology for Pilipino. Certain state colleges have taken the leadership in the region in organizing seminars and workshops for teachers on the implementation of the bilingual education policy.

Although all non-Tagalog teachers feel the need for more training in the use of Pilipino as a medium of instruction, most teachers have taken up the challenge without complaint and often without instructional support by way of textbooks, teaching materials, and aids.

Most administrators accept the policy and pose no objections or present no obstacles, although some do not understand the policy and its rationale.

Among private schools, the pace of implementation is much slower; some private schools have begun implementation only in school year 1974-1975.

The report from EDPITAF highlighted feedback on the use of the materials developed by the Textbook Project and the field testing done with the materials thus far. Evidence was given that Pilipino is a more efficient way of incrementing knowledge (measured by differences in pre-test and post-test results among Tagalog and non-Tagalog students alike); in terms of knowledge increment, the results with Pilipino materials were always more favorable than those with English materials. Undoubtedly, this can be readily explained by the linguist on grounds of linguistic similarities between the vernaculars and Pilipino and the already known fact that English is a second language for Filipinos. This finding, certainly not un-

Gloria Baylon of the Philippine Normal College leads the opening discussion during the conference on "Bilingual Education Four Years After and Beyond" held at the Philippine Normal College October 18–20, 1978. Panelists (left to right) are: Melania A. de Torres of Region III; Pamfilo Catacata of the Institute of National Language; Gonzalo del Rosario of the Araneta University Foundation; Porfiria Parker of the National Capital Region; and Erlinda San Juan of the Palawan Teachers' College.



expected but useful to focus on, forces us to reconsider the use of English for science and mathematics in the lower grades. For purposes of citizenship and development, it is more important that our children (especially those in the rural areas who will not stay long in school) learn concepts rather than language. And if Pilipino is found to be a more efficient way of imparting knowledge, even in science and mathematics, we might have to rethink our exclusive use of English (at least on paper) in the teaching of science and mathematics in the lower grades.

The universal problem reported in every region is the lack of teaching materials (textbooks and teaching aids and devices) and the uneven distribution of available books.

The EDPITAF staff gave an enlightening account of the textbook writing project and its operations. However, textbook writing takes time. The EDPITAF timetable extends up to 1984 and thus far only the science and math books (Grades 1–3) and the Pilipino books (Grades 1 and 2) are in the field. The usual time frame for a volume is four years (one year of writing, one year of try-out, one year of revision, and a final year of printing and distribution). Historically, the Bilingual Education Policy and the EDPITAF textbook writing project were independent. When the policy was formulated in

1974, EDPITAF switched its Social Studies textbooks from English to Pilipino, a switch which necessitated time for translating the materials. Ideally, of course, the two projects should have been coordinated by the National Board of Education, and under the most optimal decision-making arrangements, perhaps the implementation of the policy should have been phased in slowly enough to ensure the production of the textbooks before actual implementation. However, in real life and in the complicated bureaucracy of government, this is not always possible, as it was not in this case.

In the field, from the survey results, there were complaints of 'an innovations overkill' in certain regions. Because of the demands of various innovative projects in certain areas (e.g., the learning continuum scheme and the Experimental Elementary Education Program launched by the Bureau of Elementary Education), problems have arisen on reconciling the demands of these other new programs. While theoretically, the programs can be made compatible, in actual classroom use, problems of coordination do arise.

There is clear parent resistance in certain areas (Bicol, Ifugao, Kalinga-Apayao, Central Visayas) to the widespread use of Pilipino. There is likewise worry that the children's learning of English will suffer as a result of the Bilingual Education

Policy.

The self-perception of many non-Tagalog teachers indicates lack of confidence in using Pilipino as a medium of instruction for content subjects; the teachers all feel the need for more training. Under recommendations in this article, some ideas on the structure and content as well as activities of such training programs are suggested.

In the use of Pilipino as a medium of instruction, especially in the upper grades, the lack of terminology poses a considerable problem. The problem is made even more acute by competing proposals made by various bodies (Institute of National Language, Lupon sa Agham, private individuals) on technical and scientific terminology.

Moreover, much teaching of Pilipino is grammar-oriented; the materials teach about language rather than lend themselves as aids towards practical mastery. In non-Tagalog areas, few techniques and hardly any materials have been proposed to enable non-Tagalogs to make the transition from the vernacular (or home language) to Pilipino.

With the emphasis put on Pilipino, problems with English instruction and the use of English for science and mathematics at the initial levels have arisen. Because of the reduction in time allotment, and the trend towards wider use of

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Pilipino, the rate of mastery of English has slowed down. Moreover, the integration of science with English communication arts, while theoretically attractive, presents actual problems in the classroom: science materials are often too technical and advanced for students in Grades 1 and 2, who are merely at the stage of starting to learn basic patterns and the vocabulary of English. Thus, problems of comprehension and conceptualization merge with problems of language skills acquisition. There is a backlog of science and math terms to be learned in Grades 1 and 2; English for Special Purposes is still not understood by most English teachers. Lack of suitable materials which will facilitate communicative competence in the language and facilitate the learning of science compounds the problems. There are no graded and supplementary readers in science and mathematics, the EDPITAF materials in Communication Arts are not yet in the field (although the University of the Philippines-Science Education Center materials, Grades 1 to 3, are already available). Obviously, teaching English with science and math content will necessitate reorientation and retraining of English teachers not only in science and math concepts, but in the integration of content with language skills; this demands intensive monitoring and follow-up as well as the preparation of more supplementary materials.

In areas which cannot as yet be supplied with teaching materials in sufficient quantities, at least one set of materials (e.g., the EDPITAF training and research editions) should be provided so that writers at local levels can develop improvised materials based on these models and circulate them in mimeographed form.

Training programs for teachers should

be content-oriented. Probably the best way to prepare a teacher to teach a subject in Pilipino would be to have the teacher re-learn the same subject matter he is teaching in Pilipino; that is, if a teacher is supposed to teach Philippine History in Grade Five using Pilipino as a medium of instruction, the best way to prepare him to do this would be to have him take a summer course in Philippine History taught in Pilipino.

The utility of seminars and workshops consisting of lectures and discussions is doubtful if the purpose is not information dissemination but training.

Teachers should be provided with dictionaries, glossaries (for technical terms) and vocabulary lists as teaching aids in the use of Pilipino as a medium of instruction.

It is unrealistic to expect older teachers to shift medium of instruction from English to Pilipino. Older teachers, unless gifted in the use of Pilipino, should be assigned to subjects taught in English. The new training programs in the use of Pilipino as medium should be geared primarily for the new generation; for this new generation, the Ministry of Education and Culture should fund scholarships for summer and full-time study. In re-training programs, kindergarten and prep teachers should not be neglected.

The teaching of Pilipino Communication Arts needs reorientation from a grammar-dominated approach to conversational and functional Pilipino and to its use as a tool for conceptual learning in the social sciences.

The educational system needs a central bureau for the translation of teaching materials into Pilipino. Materials production should be synchronized and coordinated to avoid duplication.

To balance the implementation of the Bilingual Education Program, now geared heavily in favor of Pilipino, activities should be organized for the assessment of English teaching for science and mathematics and new training programs to meet the current problems encountered in English teaching. In this area, English for Special Purposes (especially English for Science and Technology) assumes a crucial role.

There should be coordination between English and Pilipino teaching through the investigation of the complementary functions and domains of the two languages in Philippine life. This complementation should be reflected in actual classroom teaching objectives and in teaching materials so that needless repetition and duplication can be avoided. However, where repetition might be useful (for example, in the first two grades, when language skills in English have not as yet been fully acquired and when concepts in science and mathematics may need explanation in both English and Pilipino as an auxiliary medium), one medium can reinforce the other.

Incentives should be provided to put a premium on teachers 'competent in both Pilipino and English'; perhaps the 'master teacher' category in the new scheme of promotions could demand this competence.

Workshops and seminars thus far have been geared primarily for classroom teachers and language supervisors. However, actual decisions at the local level are made by the Regional Directors and the Superintendents. Complementary workshops for these line-administrators should be organized so that these decision makers will prove to be helps rather than hindrances to program implementation. •

A representative from Mindanao State University raises a point during the discussion of problems encountered in bilingual education in non-Tagalog.

