

National Consultation on Updating the Teaching of English in the Philippines

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With the promulgation of the Bilingual Education Policy in 1974, almost exclusive attention has been given to the dissemination of Pilipino and the use of this language as a medium of instruction. Judging from the feedback from different language supervisors who attended a national conference evaluating the implementation of the Bilingual Education Policy in 1978, the teaching of the other language involved in the Bilingual Education Program was being neglected. It was the consensus at that time to hold a conference focusing exclusively on the teaching of English with a view to its updating and revitalization.

Even at that time, it was a foregone conclusion that a program of updating had to have a sufficient period of gestation and development and could not be confined to a single conference or workshop. What was desirable was an updating plan of conferences, seminars, workshops, training sessions at various levels, planned over several years.

At the suggestion of several interested educators, a preliminary conference to sketch the outlines of a long-term plan, with participation from various sectors of the educational community, was organized, under the title "National Consultation."

Purpose

The purpose of the national consultation was to obtain feedback from English language supervisors of the 13 Ministry of Education and Culture regions on the state of English teaching and achievement in the country. A simple questionnaire was circulated, the basis for the oral report of each supervisor during the actual consultation. Officers of various scholarly societies and agencies (the Linguistic Society of the Philippines, the College English Teachers' Association, the Philippine Association for Language Teaching, the Educational Development Projects Implementing Task Force, the National Capital Region, the Bureau of Elementary Education, the Bureau of Secondary Edu-

cation, the University of the Philippines and the Science Education Center, and the Ministry of Education and Culture) were requested to react to these reports and to come up with their own suggestions for lines of action.

The purpose was to reach a consensus on what should be done, in the form of a series of recommendations which in turn were to be the foundation for a long-term plan.

The national consultation was held at the De La Salle University Graduate Seminar Room on September 13 and 14 and with participants from twelve of the thirteen MEC regions (Region IV was not represented) and from the City Division of Public Schools as well as officials from the central bureaus of the Ministry and representatives of scholarly organizations and the private sector.

Findings

The Bilingual Education Policy of 1974



is often interpreted as the dominance of Pilipino and has led to the neglect of English as a major preoccupation among many administrators in the field.

In beginning classes where science and mathematics are supposed to be taught in English, teachers have to use gestures and context clues but more often translations in the local language. Hence, extensive code-switching and even language-mixing is used in the classrooms. This seems to be the most frequent strategy used for the period of transitional bilingualism.

There are varying opinions on how long it takes for a Filipino child to reach the lower threshold level for English, operationally definable as the level of basic competence in English whereby the child is able to follow a science or mathematics lesson taught in English. The opinions range from two years to seven years; no research has been done to determine this level and hence, the estimates have to be based on impressions. Non-linguistic social variables have to be considered and account for the wide range.

The only EDPITAF materials available thus far are Elementary Science (1-4), Elementary Mathematics (1-4), High School Science (1-2), and High School Mathematics (1-3). English books available from EDPITAF are solely for try-out classes. In the meantime, the old

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Bureau of Public Schools guides and Philippine Center for Language Study materials are still in use.

Based on different evaluation instruments, the achievement in English at the end of primary and secondary schooling is not encouraging. Students seem unable or unwilling to express themselves orally. Reading is below desired grade levels; writing is quite poor. At most, one can expect passive comprehension. By 1984-1985, the first group of students who have been educated totally under the Bilingual Education Program will be entering college; one can predict even less proficiency in English with this group.

There is a reluctance on the part of pupils to use English outside the classroom because of the lack of a supportive English-speaking community especially in the rural areas. Even in class, students often respond either in Pilipino or the local language during classes supposedly using English as the medium of instruction.

General recommendations

Programs across levels should be articulated and integrated from Grade One to Freshman College.

The use of total immersion classes in English for set periods and as a transitional device for learning in English should be explored. (This is being done experimentally by the Division of City Schools of Manila).

The formal teaching of Science and Mathematics (Arithmetic) in English should probably be postponed until beginning competence in English is attained. The requirement to teach content in science and arithmetic may be met by using science and arithmetic reading materials in the language class.

To take care of the temporary lack of materials (the English books of EDPITAF are due for distribution beginning in 1980) for the elementary level (Grades 1 and 2) and in 1981 for the secondary level (Year 1), writing workshops should be organized to develop usable and inexpensive materials, using home and community resources and recycled materials. Even with the eventual availability of the EDPITAF materials, support materials (including reading readiness materials) would still have to be produced. Every region should

have a center for local materials development to complement the core materials from EDPITAF.

Curriculum revision should include realistic goals for language learning (the perfectly balanced bilingual in Pilipino and in English is an unattainable ideal), with a clear decision on which skills to emphasize at different stages. The domains for English and Pilipino perhaps need to be re-examined and made clear so that a region's program to attain competence in these domains can be pursued. At the upper levels, English for Special Pur-

Specific recommendations for human resources development policy

The salaries of teachers have to be made more realistic to attract new talent into the profession. In addition to salary incentives, realistic demands on time should be guaranteed to minimize disincentives in this area.

Teachers should be left free to do their teaching work instead of being saddled with extra administrative and non-education tasks beyond their teaching duties.

Non-academic activities distracting



Dr. Faustino Quioko of FAPE confers with the participants to the National Consultation Workshop on Updating the Teaching of English in the Philippines which was jointly sponsored by the Fund for Assistance to Private Education and the Linguistic Society of the Philippines held at the Graduate Seminar Room of De La Salle University, Manila.

Others in photo are from left: Thelma Soriano of the National Capital Region, Leandro Sanchez of Region VII and Josefa Pacis of Region I.

poses (for science and mathematics) has to be the main focus of the program. To make up for the reduction of class time, self-learning materials (for those who can profit from such materials) and the mass media (TV shows and movies) should be used as supplementary aids. The curriculum should plan for the transfer of certain skills from one language to another, to avoid duplication and repetition or to ensure reinforcement where this is needed.

At the elementary and secondary school levels, Developmental Reading Centers for skills build-up should be established as a regular facility for each school.

The most crucial component for updating will be the component of human resource development or manpower training and re-training.

teachers from carrying out their functions should be phased out; one of the main reasons for lack of achievement in learning academic subjects in schools is the lack of time for actual teaching resulting from distractive activities of a non-academic nature. Schools have to get back to the five-day class week.

There should be a moratorium on systems-wide innovations to enable teachers to return to basics, specifically, competent teaching in the classroom according to a set syllabus and for the full amount of time prescribed. The move to integrate content into as few subjects as possible is welcome.

The best teachers in terms of serving as adequate language models should be deployed in the lower grades where the

THE FILIPINO CLERGY AND THE REVOLUTION

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groups saw the untenability of their position and accepted Bishops Dougherty and Rooker on their arrival in 1903. Their lay counterparts had submitted to the Americans when they saw the new government promised, if not independence, at least the means to come to it eventually, and meanwhile a substantial share in the governing of the country. So too, perhaps, the clergy saw the main goals of their struggle — the right to hold the parishes, and the end of the policy aimed at nullifying the Filipino clergy — to have been achieved. In the ecclesiastical order, however, the trauma of the schism was to lead to a reaction which would long delay the Filipinization of the Church, even when political independence had been achieved. To endanger the unity of the Church once more would seem to most priests too high a price.

New perspectives

The prominent role of the Filipino clergy in the entire nationalist movement from the days of Pelaez to the im-

position of American rule demands a new look at many aspects of the Revolution. It seems clear that one must speak not only of the *one* national Revolution, but also of *several* revolutions within the Revolution. Though nationalists in all parts of the country gave their allegiance to the Malolos government in 1898-1899, the character of the nationalist movement in different parts of the country differed considerably at times from that which tended to dominate in Malolos, particularly in its religious character. Even at Malolos there were more varieties of opinion among nationalists than is often said, and it would appear that the imposition of what was essentially a minority religious policy did much to divide the unity of Filipinos.

Outside the territory directly controlled by the Malolos government, where its religious policy alienating the clergy had not been applied, the Filipino priests proved to be one of the major forces sustaining the struggle against the Americans. Often at great personal cost, it was to a great extent the clergy who made

possible the financing and supplying of the guerrillas, as well as providing the inspiration which kept the ordinary soldier loyal to the struggle against the Americans. There is considerable evidence to indicate that had the Malolos government's religious policy showed more consideration for the feelings and the consciences of the Filipino clergy, with their participation the guerrilla resistance might have been more widespread and more enduring, perhaps even to the point of making the war no longer politically profitable for the Americans.

These are only two considerations to which the study of the role of the Filipino clergy gives occasion. At least they should make clear that there is need of a broader base from which to study the nationalist movement of the 19th century and the Revolution. Too long has that study been colored by the stereotypes and slogans which owe more to the preoccupations and prejudices with which the national Revolution has been approached than to a thorough study of the vast documentation.

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most crucial period for language learning is situated. Incentives for teaching at this level should be given.

A coordinated and systematic testing program for measuring language achievement should be reinstated, together with a system of supervision of classroom teaching and a predictable plan of classroom visitations. Again, this will be possible only if language supervisors are not burdened with other administrative jobs having nothing to do with language teaching.

Training and re-training

The pre-service teacher training program should screen English majors for language ability. The curriculum should include personal language-building skills (Oral English, Reading, Writing, Scientific and Mathematical Concepts). In-

cluded in the program should be a course in Reading Skills Building and English for Special Purposes.

The feasibility of double majors (English and Science/Mathematics) should be explored so that at the Elementary level at least, English teachers would likewise be able to teach Science and Mathematics competently.

For in-service training, special classes for teachers to build up their competence in English should be organized; the training should include Oral Expression and Conversational English, Reading Comprehension, Spelling and Penmanship, Rhetorical Writing, Concepts in Language Learning, Science and Mathematics. The difficulty and expense of organizing prolonged training sessions of this type is recognized, however.

An alternative system would be to provide criteria for promotion and hence

motivation to improve oneself and to make fulfillment of these criteria a precondition for promotion. This should be tied in with the proposed performance appraisal system of MEC. Under this scheme, self-improvement becomes the sole responsibility of the individual teacher.

Research should be undertaken on the optimal time for an effective training session. In general, the effectiveness of two to three-day 'echo' seminars devoted to the building of skills is doubtful; in fact available studies and research confirm this. Smaller groups over a longer period at the local level might be more effective. Initiatives at the school and district level should be encouraged: monthly workshops in the local school, after-class training sessions during the week, etc.

A long-term retraining plan at all levels should be established and implemented.