The End of Bilingual Education in the Philippines?

T Ruanni F Tupas

It has been 25 years since the adoption of the Philippine bilingual education policy. Filipino language scholars reflecting on the state of bilingual education in the country today are cautiously pessimistic about the policy's success. But they also appear to subscribe to the pragmatic argument for its maintenance, in spite of its weaknesses. This essay discusses the limits of this attitude to the bilingual education policy, and casts doubt on long-held assumptions about the Filipino bilingual and language use in the Philippine classroom. The essay proposes as an alternative paradigm the adoption of multilingualism in Philippine education.

INTRODUCTION

THE BILINGUAL EDUCATION POLICY OF THE PHILIPPINES WAS put in place in 1974 through Department Order No. 25. The policy, which stipulates the use of English in the teaching of mathematics and science and Filipino in the teaching of all other subjects both in the elementary and secondary schools, forms the basis of the bilingual education program of the Philippine government today (Sibayan 1999). This essay seeks to: analyze the thoughts, convictions and visions of Filipino scholars and educators as they reflect on the past 25 years of bilingual education in the country; discuss the complex realities of education in a multilingual context; and suggest an alternative paradigm for language education in the Philippines.

CAUTIOUS PESSIMISM

A quarter of a century since the adoption of the bilingual education policy, a feeling of cautious pessimism appears to be dominant among

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language scholars as they interrogate the effects of bilingual education in the country. Sibayan (1999), a stalwart in the field and a member of the committee that drafted the final version of the implementing guidelines of the bilingual policy, in a paper presented during the Centennial Congress on Philippine Bilingualism from a Multidisciplinary Perspective held on January 21-23, 1999 enumerates the 'multifarious tasks' that students, teachers and implementing institutions engage with in the multilingual classroom. He ends his paper with what he calls 'disturbing thoughts' on how 'English and the vast majority of public schools especially those located outside the urban areas, have become the very instruments of socio-economic stratification!'

Indeed, the 1974 bilingual education policy seems to have resulted in more questions than answers to issues concerning Philippine society and education in general. Bernardo (1999), in a paper read at the same congress, says he 'deliberately tried to lead us all to a higher level of confusion' through 'questions related to defining the domains and levels of literacy development among Philippine bilinguals, even for the basic question of which language to assess literacy development in.' DE Dekker (1999), on the other hand, seeks to know why first language education for literacy development has not been duly implemented in the schools despite the fact that we all seem to realize the need for it and that both educators and politicians have developed a policy to implement it (see also PG Dekker 1999). Drawing on her experience with a minority community speaking a minority language in Lubuagan, Kalinga where she, her husband and their four children have lived and worked since 1988, DE Dekker also asks whether the bilingual education program in the country has empowered or disabled minority language children.

Tupas (1999b) poses the question, 'How should English be taught?', and asks whether Filipinos are being trained in English 'just so we can send them abroad to work... and eventually help revitalize our economy' or whether English is being taught for Filipinos 'to have better and greater access to some knowledges of the world.' Villacorta (1999), on the other hand, laments the continuing dominance of English in Philippine society (which gives undue advantage to only a few powerful Filipinos) despite the fact that the present constitution already provides

for Filipino as the major official language of the country: *'Bakit ganito ang nagaganap sa larangan ng wika sa lipunang Pilipino? Nakaugat ba ito sa sokilohiya ng Pilipino?'* ('Why is this happening in Philippine society? Is this rooted in the psychology of Filipinos?'). Quoting Jose Villa Panganiban, former Director of the Institute of National Language, who said, *'Ang wikang pambansa hanggang ngayon ay naghahanap pa ng sariling bansa'* ('The national language continues to search for its own nation.'), Villacorta asks, *'Hanggang kailan kaya ang paghahanap na ito?'* ('When will the search end?')

LEGITIMIZING THE *STATUS QUO*

OBVIOUSLY, all has not been well in the 25 years of bilingual education in the Philippines. As Gonzalez (1999) succinctly puts it: '...the state of bilingual education in the Philippines is perhaps more muddled now than it was in 1974.' However, many language scholars attempt to legitimize the *status quo* in the bilingual program. They talk about the teaching of Filipino in the social sciences, the changing perceptions of Filipinos (especially the Cebuanos) of Filipino as the national language, and the appropriation of English as a liberative language.

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Scholars teaching the social sciences in Filipino exude a subdued triumphalism that may be interpreted as satisfaction not only with Filipino as the medium of instruction, but more generally with the whole idea of the bilingual education program itself (since, for the most part, they are silent about it, despite a few classroom- and materials-related issues that they raise). Dy (1999) says: *'Ang pilosopiya ay buhay, at higit na makahulugan ang buhay sa sariling wika.'* ('Philosophy is life, and life is more meaningful in one's own language.') The Filipino language, he says, is a window that opens up or reveals the Filipino world. Manacsa (1999), quoting Randy David, states that teaching political science in the national language provides us with new ways of seeing the world. He enjoins teachers to partake of the new possibilities thus: *'Nawa ang mga guro ay maging tunay na tagapagbukas ng kamalayan at hindi mga tagapinid ng malayang kaisipan ng ating mga mag-aaral.'* ('May the

teacher liberate the consciousness of his students rather than shut the door to free thinking.') Manacsa's paper assumes the view that it is language that structures the world and consciousness and that because Filipino is indigenous to our own culture and English is not, the choice of the medium of instruction is a choice between structures of domination and structures of liberation. This view represents the strong version of the Sapir-Whorfian hypothesis of linguistic determinism which is characterized by the absence of a concept of agency among speakers of any language (see Sapir 1949). Jimenez-Hallare (1999), in teaching history, subscribes to the hypothesis in a subtle way: '*...sa paggamit ng wikang Filipino sa silid-aralan, sinisikap na hukayin ang ugat ng ating pagka-Pilipino at dalhin sa pag-aaral ng ating nakaraan ang buong kaluluwa ng ating lahi.*' ('In using Filipino as medium of instruction, the teacher seeks to trace the root of our Filipino-ness and to bring to the study of our past the soul of the Filipino race.')

Some scholars in the sociolinguistics of bilingualism, on the other hand, show how the changing attitudes and perceptions of Filipino students toward English and Filipino may reveal 'the country's aim of making the Philippines a bilingual nation whose people can speak both the mother tongue and the second language with fluency' (Fuentes and Mojica 1999). Filipinos, especially Cebuanos, now tend to look at Filipino as the national language in a much more positive way than before. Surveying a group of students from a tertiary institution in Cebu, Kobari (1999) reports that 'some changes in Cebuano students' attitudes to Filipino have taken place.' Espiritu's (1999) paper documents the Cebuano response to the language issue in the Philippines after dialogues between members of the Executive Board of the Committee on Language and Translation of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) and Cebuanos of Cebu and Davao. Cebuanos, Espiritu recounts, are not really against the development of Filipino as the na-

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tional language, although they firmly resent development through forced legislation as this 'ignores the language sensibility and culture of the different ethnolinguistic groups.' Not amenable to monolingual education in Filipino, the Cebuanos seem to be open to a 'bilingual compromise—'that of maintaining the bilingual education program.'

These surveys point to monolingual education in the national language as the site of the fiercest resistance from many Filipinos (not only Cebuanos). They recommend the maintenance of the bilingual education policy in the country, where English is used to teach science and mathematics and Filipino to teach all other subjects. Thus, the surveys affirm the triumphalist reflections of social science scholars and experts on the advantages of using the national language in their courses. But as will be shown later, all these deflect attention away from many ideological and political problems with bilingual education in the country, and instead work within an ahistorical rendering of micro-practical issues in the bilingual classroom. For one, why is almost everyone silent about the seeming mismatch between 'bilingual education' and the multilingual context within which it operates in the Philippines?

Still another way of legitimizing the *status quo* in bilingual education is the appropriation of the English language thus: English was a colonial tool, but Filipinos now use the language in different ways; in fact, Filipinos have 'destroyed' English already and we must celebrate this liberative accomplishment and/or potential in language use.

This argument contrasts with the deterministic view of language because it grants to language users complete agency and ignores to a large extent the critical linguistic belief that much of social meaning is implicit, perpetuates ideologies, and helps (re)structure 'the world' (cf. Fowler *et al.* 1979; Birch 1995). Such an argument follows the ideological tendencies of postcolonial theory which has lately been assiduously scrutinized by various scholars from many fields (e.g., Gordon 1997; Loomba 1998). It celebrates English supposedly as a language of liberation and resistance through the process of 'nativization' and acculturation while ignoring to a large extent the continuing role of the language as a perpetuator of inequality in society. Tupas (1999b), for example, declares: 'We should not look at English solely as a colonial tool, always ready to attack us and bombard us with usually useless and harmful Western

ideas. Rather, we should also look at our own use of English as a way to change it, to assert our identity, to create our own meanings.'

Linguistically, such an assertion is theoretically sound in the sense that it views language not simply as a structuring mechanism that acts as blinkers through which we see only the things it allows us to see, but also as a culturally-laden communicative tool that changes according to the demands of its speakers. Nevertheless, this view (if seen from the vantage point of English in the Philippines, for example) may lead us to think that all is well with the English language. The fact is that those who are able to change the language, assert their identity, and create their own meanings are, to start with, those who have learned the language well enough to 'destroy' it. Almario (1999) writes:

> Unlike the Spanish language which was almost withheld from the majority, English was immediately made available to all. It was used at all levels within the system of education and the young writers who were products of the exclusive schools quickly showed mettle in literature written in English. The educated classes became attached to the foreign language which became the primary cause of the contradiction within their society.
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> And yet, after almost a century in the Philippines, English has not penetrated the real life of the majority of Filipinos. It remains a foreign language, and it has no direct bearing on the lives of the majority of the people.

Indeed, the use of English in the country (which scholars refer to as Philippine English) has liberative potential. But it is also the case that such use is deployed across relations of inequality and power in society perpetuated partly or largely by social institutions such as the bilingual education policy itself. Whether or not the 25-year-old bilingual education program has succeeded, we still need to ask the question, 'Who has benefited from it?' An earlier comprehensive evaluation of the program conducted by the Linguistic Society of the Philippines (Gonzalez and Sibayan 1988) indicates that those who perform best in English and other content subjects such as science, are those whose teachers are highly paid

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and competent in what they teach, who usually go to expensive schools (usually in urbanized centers), who have access to excellent and up-to-date learning facilities, etc. In short, academic excellence appears to be a function not of medium of instruction alone.

Marquez's (1999) work on the rhetoric of Philippine English in the context of letters by students of the University of the Philippines and Martin's (1999) work on the roots of bilingualism in the country allude to the same ideological dilemma. The disappearance of the respectful *po* in the English language, Marquez asserts, may be reclaimed in the various ways Filipino students subvert norms of writing in English (i.e., redundancy or use of 'irrelevant' information' is a form of respect because it minimizes assertiveness). She concludes thus: 'In the continuing struggle between the forces of globalization and the need to keep our national identity, an understanding of how the nuances of a cultural system remain in a foreign linguistic system is necessary to free ourselves from the so-called Linguistic Imperialism of English.' Similarly, Martin (1999) speaks of English as 'the language we have colonized... [I]n a nation of widespread economic and social powerlessness, we speak of having appropriated the language for specific purposes and being empowered by it. On a wider scale, we are even bold enough to declare it as an Asian language, with each country in the region having its own variety of English.'

PRAGMATISM

THE *status quo* in bilingual education in the country is maintained partly through our appropriation of English as a language that empowers its users. But it is necessary as well to ask who among our students bilingual education has empowered and who it has, consequently, disempowered.

Gonzalez's (1999) response to the polemics of bilingual education in the country, constituted in part by the issues tackled in the preceding sections, is that of pragmatism. At this stage in his life, he says, he is 'no longer excited by new data since the data from our specific language situation consists of more of the same': low achievement results mainly from poor school conditions, not from the language policy itself; ethnicity is not a significant predictor of academic success since

some high performers are anti-Tagalog Visayans; sociolinguistic changes, not language policy, result in missed targets; Filipino is now a powerful literary language, while cinema, painting, and other art forms in Filipino have also seen fast and immense development; Filipinos who are highly proficient in English also enjoy and admire music, drama and cinema in Filipino; the contexts of English have now been limited only to the academe and international relations. It is only in the intellectualization of Filipino where the language needs vigorous 'cultivation', Gonzales says.

As the current Secretary of the Department of Education, Culture and Sports, Gonzales occupies a strategic and powerful position in the implementation of what he perceives to be relevant changes in the educational system. He is also a recognized language expert (with a doctorate in linguistics) and educator by profession who has influenced the formulation, implementation, evaluation and revision of the 1974 bilingual education program. During the most recent World Congress of Applied Linguistics in Tokyo in 1999, he was the only Filipino invited to address the assembly of around 2,000 language experts from all over the world on the subject, the intellectualization of Asian languages. Thus, his most recent pronouncements on bilingual education in the country carry a formidable weight and merit serious attention and scrutiny: These pronouncements in brief are:

1) Content more than medium of instruction has become my primary concern, and the development of higher skills to free the Filipino mind to be critical and judgmental.
2) What I am now obsessed by is how to make Filipinos linguistically competent to be able to think deeply and critically in any language; thus, education may be either monolingual or bilingual as long it leads to critically thinking Filipinos.
3) Education will be done well if teachers who teach our young are themselves well educated with a broad liberal perspective and an inquiring critical mind bent on discovery and research. All else is secondary.
4) We need English for our intellectuals and scholars; but not everyone needs it, provided we allocate enough resources to develop Filipino as a language.

Is this the end of bilingual education in the country?

On the one hand, Gonzalez, who calls himself a 'pragmatic educator,' asserts that quality education does not rely inherently in the bilingual education program. On the other hand, he agrees with the idea of maintening the *status quo* in the language policy, despite a lack of resources and political will, 'since change may just confuse people and exacerbate problems.' It is better, he says, to follow the rules of sociolinguistic change (i.e., changing linguistic loyalties, perceptions of people toward particular languages and groups of speakers) rather than resist them 'unless we can channel them towards working with us instead of against us; this channeling is not always possible.' This last remark assumes that rules of sociolinguistic change have a kind of transcendental status that puts them beyond the reach of speakers, and that they exist independently of social tension and contradiction which, partly or largely, make conversation and communication possible in the first place.

Gonzalez is correct in his assertion that education should develop critical thinking among Filipinos. However, in the light of their intermingling histories, the languages of education in the Philippines (English, Filipino, the vernacular languages, the mixture of such languages) still do and *should* matter. Critical thinking in the educated population develops only through the mediation of language and education. In a neocolonial society like the Philippines (Bello 1997; Enriquez and Protacio-Marcelino 1989; Pomeroy 1970), these are a crucial concern in the light of the intricate relationship between language, education and history, where history is characterized both by continuities and discontinuities of subjection and agency. Gonzalez's pragmatic prescriptions regarding education may become more meaningful if they engage head-on with the political and ideological underpinnings of the bilingual education policy (in English and Filipino) which took root as soon as the Americans started teaching English during the Philippine-American War and used the language as a means of pacifying the Filipino people (R Constantino 1975; Pomeroy 1970). Language is a critical component in educating a people whose lives have been influenced by a history of colonization and other forms of subjection.

TOWARD A POLITICS OF REMEMBERING

SPEAKING of materials development in a bilingual educational context through the translation of Philippine literature in English to Filipino, Puente (1999) explains the need to 'memorialize the fact of colonization and neocolonization for a people notorious for its short memory, for a people with a tendency to forget the wounds inflicted by colonization in order to avoid dealing with it.' Puente's paper historicizes the language problem in education today by emphasizing the continuities of the colonization of education in the Philippines. This politics of remembering challenges the dominant ways of glossing over the intricate relationship between the past and the present because, as the argument goes, the needs and the circumstances of the present are no longer the same as the needs and circumstances of the past. [The latter argument is exemplified in Sibayan's (1999) declaration that 'Everything has changed' in his account of his personal experience as a student during the 1920s of the agonies of immersion in the English language in completely non-English communities where the vernacular languages were prohibited from being used in school.]

Martin (1999) likewise traces the roots of bilingualism to the imposition of an English-centered colonial educational system early in the 20th century but ultimately depoliticizes the past in favor of 'the present context of an interconnected global community.'

The question is not whether the pragmatic uses of English are real (for indeed, English is the language of business and international relations), but whether or not the pragmatic argument displaces the centrality of other issues—a tendency that characterizes many of the studies on bilingualism and bilingual education in the past (see, for example, Pascasio 1977). As a logical consequence of such displacement through imperial forgetfulness—a political and ideological act that has plagued colonial memory and history since the Philippine-American War at the turn of the century—Martin (1999), not surprisingly, challenges language

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educators to 'transcend political concerns and emotional issues and act beyond, or even *in spite of*, the language education policy' (italics in original). It is as if such a pronouncement to go beyond politics is devoid of politics and ideology.

The polemics on 'the Filipino bilingual'. The first question that must be asked is: Who is the Filipino bilingual? According to Bautista (1999),

> The Filipino...is bilingual, and, depending on where he or she was born and resides, even multilingual. In addition to speaking a mother tongue, he or she also speaks a language of wider communication or regional lingua franca, and, if schooled, the national language Filipino, and the international language English.

The Filipino speaks minimally a mother tongue and a regional *lingua franca*, but does the 'Filipino bilingual' of the bilingual education program really share in the same signification, since the program was legally instituted in 1974 with Filipino and English as the media of instruction? Scholars whose papers deal with the teaching of the social sciences in Filipino, for example, capitulate to this 'official' signification of the term. Even DE Dekker (1999), who supports vernacular education and first language literacy in the early grades, works within the naturalizing discourse of language use in the country's classrooms (which recognizes English and Filipino as media of instruction) while adding the vernacular dimension to it. This explains why the use of the vernacular in the early grades yields to the discourse that the first language is simply the transition or bridge to the official languages of instruction. Bautista (1999b) notes that '[e]ven the Summer Institute of Linguistics, which is concerned with encouraging the development and use of minority languages and preserving them, accepts the reality that vernacular literacy is oftentimes only a bridge to literacy in a regional language or Filipino or English.'

This is certainly a far cry from the earlier pronouncements of the UNESCO Report on the use of the vernacular languages in education (1953), which affirms the centrality of the vernacular in the education of any child in the world. For as long as we work within a bilingual education paradigm that relegates the vernacular languages to secondary status by treating them as at best transitory languages toward the

languages of education (this despite advances in first language literacy education), the speakers of other mother tongues in the country will continue to suffer from a lack of educational opportunities and 'a sense of self-esteem' (DE Dekker 1999).

Indeed, the 'Filipino bilingual' in the context of bilingual education in the Philippines normally refers to the one in school who is taught in the Filipino and English languages and who belongs, strictly speaking, to a minority of people. The 1990 Philippine census reveals that Filipinos who speak Tagalog as their mother tongue constitute only 27.93 percent of the total number of speakers of the eight major mother tongues of the country (86 percent of the whole population). The percentage would certainly be lower if we add the rest of the population who speak the 'minor languages' (Bautista 1999b). The picture that we get is a country whose norm is the Filipino multilingual. Of course, the issue of competence in the spoken languages will be raised but this is similarly present in a dominantly bilingual context. It may be of interest that in a 1994 Social Weather Stations survey (see Bautista 1999b), 56 percent percent of respondents report being able to speak English, and more can read, understand and write in the language—certainly more than the total number of bilinguals in Tagalog-dominant areas.

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Thus, in addressing issues related to bilingual education, we need to construct a multilingual paradigm. We must move out of the present *status quo* in order to ultimately and legitimately promote Filipino as the national language and the vernacular languages (including Filipino and/or Tagalog) as languages of instruction and as basis of literacy development. This is one way of addressing 'real sentiments about the maldistribution of national power' (Espiritu 1999) which is best articulated by Cebuano writer Resil Mojares (quoted in Espiritu 1999) thus: 'If you do not speak the language of the center...or the dominant class, you will find yourself consigned to the periphery, marginalized and excluded.' Espiritu concludes: 'Given the chance, all Filipinos, whatever their ethnolinguistic group, wish to take part in building their country and also to co-exist in shaping their future.' This can be done if we

recognize not only the practical inadequacies of the present bilingual education program, but more importantly, the political and ideological framework that sustains it.

Discourse of English and Filipino as media of instruction. We also need to scrutinize the discourse with regard to Filipino and English as the media of instruction in the schools. This discourse includes the dichotomous treatment of English and Filipino as media of instruction for science and mathematics and all other subject matters, respectively; the common belief that English is a global language in the age of rapid technological and scientific advancement fuelled by the processes of globalization during the middle part of the 20th century; and the equally common belief that the Filipino language serves as the symbol of nationhood and identity—a perception that legitimizes the bilingual program in English and Filipino.

These propositions assume that domains of language use are to a large extent independent of each other, that 'society' is cut up into smaller 'worlds' signified by one particular language. The Philippines is assumed to be highly crystallized, where identities that emerge from the nuances of 'hybridity' do not exist. Moreover, the propositions seem to flatten out unequal class relations by putting English and Filipino alongside each other. As noted, the standard argument for Filipino as a national language is the need for a unifying symbol among Filipinos of various languages and local histories (Gonzalez and Sibayan 1988).

This argument, however, excludes the possibility of re-imagining language distribution among Filipinos of different classes, regions and politics, which ultimately will help lead to a redistribution of power and wealth in society (see also Mazrui 1997; Phillipson 1992). Languages are deeply enmeshed in the struggle for resources and knowledges in society. Thus the question of Filipino as the national language and medium of instruction (even in mathematics and sciences) is, to repeat our major argument, of political and ideological importance since access to a particular language means access to such resources and knowledges as well. As Bumatay-Cruz (2000) notes, one crucial question that we need to ask is: 'How do various social groups wield bilingual speech as a power tool?'

English as a neocolonial language. The argument that English is a global language and is thus a legitimate medium of instruction in a 'bilingual' educational context, also needs to be reviewed. Is English really a global language? Or is it more accurately viewed as the language of globalization? There are more people in the world who do not speak English than those who do; even in the Philippines, the recent Social Weather Stations survey reveals that at best only 56 percent of Filipinos speak English (see Bautista 1999b). The issue of English lording it over other languages in the world today (Phillipson 1992) needs careful consideration in the light of the fact that English is the language promoted by mouthpieces of capitalism and wealthy nations such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Bank (Mazrui 1997). The globalization of capital after World War II, including the ideologies of liberalization/privatization/free trade/capitalist democracy, has given rise to a widening gap between the rich and the poor both within and among countries. The much-touted 'global village' in the age of information and communication is characterized by uneven access to the world's resources.

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The problem is much more complicated in formerly colonized nations such as the Philippines where, according to Pennycook (1998), English continues to embody the cultural constructs of colonialism that influence our daily lives. Pennycook strongly affirms the historical interconnectedness of colonialism, English and its teaching today, where English, the language of prestige and power, continues to perpetuate structures of inequality put in place by colonial regimes in the past in order to structure or restructure societies for the benefit and profit of (neo)colonial projects. In the Philippines, English was deeply imbricated in the ideologies of the Philippine-American War in that it was used as a tool to pacify the 'rebellious' Filipino masses through the cooptation of the Filipino elite in exchange for limited access to economic and political opportunities during the American colonial civil governance of the country. The realities of neocolonialism—political, economic, military, ideological, educational, etc.—still haunt all of us

today (Pomeroy 1970), from the immediate post-war parity rights granted to Americans in the Philippines which gave them equal access to the exploitation of the country's natural and other resources, to the much more recent Visiting Forces Agreement; from American support of martial law in order to protect American interests in the country, to nuclear waste contamination of the waters of Olongapo City; from the disastrous structural adjustment programs imposed by international monetary lending institutions as one of the conditions for loan packages and debt bail out strategies in the 1980s, to skin whitening deodorants and lotions which point to 'the fact that colonization is not, finally, a mere function of the clothes we wear and the things we consume, nor even the ideas we take to be the truth, but the stuff of our dreams, the very structure of our fantasies' (Hau 1999).

Thus, in the context of language and education, and contrary to Sibayan's (1999) claim, so much has not changed. The ideological foundations of much of our thinking and lifestyle continue to show traces of colonial influence, although the conditions of control and hegemony are definitely different now since all aspects of our daily life are more and more influenced by the inescapable clutches of global politics (L Constantino 1987). The bilingual education program itself may be seen against this neocolonial backdrop as a political compromise between the *status quo* in education toward and during the 1970s and the emerging nationalist tide in education that led to a victory for Filipino and Philippine 'nationalism' in the midst of the dominance of English and western imperialism. This is similar to pockets of successful attempts by various anti-capitalist nongovernmental organizations and other activist groups to prevent the World Trade Organization from formulating a new agenda for the next round of talks to further open up the 'Third World' to a global economy which, ironically, has marginalized even more this group of poor nations in the economic and political affairs of the world.

Codeswitching and the politics of multilingualism in the Philippines. Then again, with the preceding discussion on the medium of instruction, we may likewise be guilty of perpetuating the separation of languages in a society where many 'worlds' merge to create new 'realities'.

The question of medium of instruction in schools in a multilingual context is a question of overlapping demands and domains not only of language but of experience and politics as well. Discourses on English are oriented toward 'globalist' arguments; those on Filipino toward 'nationalist' concerns; and those on other vernacular languages toward 'ethnic' reasons—thus pitting one argument against another, one experience against another experience.

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Codeswitching by Filipinos has not been adequately dealt with (but see, for example, Bautista 1999a, 1998; Pascasio 1978), especially in the context of the politics of multilingualism in the country (but see Tupas 1999a), where the mixing of languages to express legitimate thoughts and feelings emerges out of the entangled 'realities' of Filipinos in the midst of global, neocolonial, nationalist, and ethnic concerns while it delegitimizes monolingual and monocultural politics as well as myopic views of Philippine society that assert only one 'reality' when, in fact, there are many. Indeed, given these contending realities, the languages of instruction in actual practice are not English, not Filipino, not any other vernacular language, but a combination of all available linguistic resources for reaching out into the social world as significations of multiple and contending identities—some dominant, some dominated—which in turn construct and are constructed by the speakers themselves.

Cruz (1994) contends, for example, that a largely uncodified yet legitimate national language, *Filipino*, is currently shared by many Filipinos of different regions and languages. Roughly, it is a combination of Taglish (which is a mix of Tagalog and English) to start with and vernacular/regional languages. It is a misconception to think that everyone switches codes through Taglish only; people from a much more

multilingual context also converse in Ceblish (a mix of Cebuano and English), Ilokish (Ilokano and English), and so on, as well as through a mix of a local (say, Aklanon) and a regional (say, Ilonggo) language, except that such modes of communication have not been studied as much as Taglish for the obvious reason that most of our language scholars are either English- and Tagalog-dominant speakers or do their work in one or two of the major universities in Manila (e.g., UP, Philippine Normal University, La Salle, Ateneo). As mentioned earlier, we see here the political and ideological dynamics of power working for and against particular languages (as well as particular versions of 'reality') in the country. Indeed, the realities of the classroom are much more complex than are projected by dominant discourses on bilingualism and bilingual education issues. If our students need to learn the 'content' of education through a medium that they are most comfortable with, Cruz argues that they need to be taught in such a medium, which is not English, not Tagalog, not any vernacular language, but a combination of all these.

Codeswitching is at the heart of multilingualism in the Philippines, yet the forces of monolingualism and monoculturalism continue to dominate much of current discussion on language and education in the Philippines. For example, Dy (1999) states: '*Sa unang semestre, ginamit ko ang Taglish; isang malaking pagkakamali ito dahil nasanay ang mga mag-aaral at tuloy sa ikalawang semestre nahirapan silang gumamit ng wikang puro Filipino.*' ('In the first semester I used Taglish. This was a big mistake because the students became used to it and they has difficulty using pure Filipino in the second semester.')

Pure Filipino? One culture? One reality? The polarization of languages and realities is evident in this formulation. However, while arguments are made for or against particular languages in the country in favor of particular ideological positions, what students (even teachers) speak in and outside the classroom constitute a much more different and complex linguistic-ideological landscape in the country, where contending languages, to repeat, signify overlapping realities and concerns, and/or where the various powerful (homogenizing) forces of globalism, neocolonialism, nationalism and ethnicity manifest in the microforms of speech and conversation through which education is mediated and

transformed. Gonzalez, Sibayan and many other scholars of language in the country have consistently maintained through empirical as well as observation studies that virtually no classroom in the country is completely monolingual (e.g., Gonzalez and Sibayan 1988; Gonzalez 1984). Gaerlan's (1998) discussion of issues related to the language of instruction in the University of the Philippines reveals that, despite her earlier assumption of a demarcation between classes taught in English and classes taught in Filipino, 'actually very few classes could be described as using only English or Filipino for instruction.' Despite vehement complaints from UP faculty who 'would like their students to speak good Filipino and good English but not to combine the two... [a]ctually, I observed that language code switching is done very, very frequently at UP in *oral* discourse both by faculty and students' (italics in original).

But codeswitching as a legitimate mode of discourse among Filipinos needs to be taken seriously as well, especially when we see it as having emerged from the highly political and multicultural experiences of Filipinos.

Nolasco (2000), former chair of the Department of Linguistics of UP, contends that it is Taglish—not *Filipino*, which is still Tagalog and where contributions from other vernacular languages have been extremely minimal—that is the national language of the Philippines because this is the actual medium of communication that is used by many Filipinos. Of course, in this context competence in English and 'Filipino' is a critical issue that needs to be addressed. But codeswitching as a legitimate mode of discourse among Filipinos needs to be taken seriously as well, especially when we see it as having emerged from the highly political and multicultural experiences of Filipinos. Even linguistically and sociolinguistically, codeswitching (say, between Tagalog and English) is not a whimsical changing of words and sentences from one language to another; as Bautista (1999a; 1999b; 1998) and Pascasio (1978) have shown, switches between languages are systematic or rule-governed. They normally occur at predictable positions in sentences and function like ordinary languages. We do not codeswitch anytime we want; there are both structural (linguistic) as well as contextual (functional) constraints

to codeswitching practices in the Philippines (see also works from other contexts such as Romaine 1994; Gumperz 1982; Poplack 1980). Codeswitching (never mind if this refers to Taglish or Taglish *and* other vernacular languages) is a linguistic, sociolinguistic and political phenomenon that problematizes the monolingual and monocultural subtleties of the present bilingual education paradigm (especially the whole debate on the medium of instruction), and leads us to a more realistic view of the classroom and its occupants.

TOWARD A PARADIGM OF MULTILINGUALISM IN PHILIPPINE EDUCATION

MARTIN (1999) is right in saying that we need to go back to history to understand the present challenges in bilingualism and bilingual education in the country, which took root during the first few decades of American colonial education through the public school system. Ultimately, however, like much research done in the field, she repudiates history by overemphasizing discontinuities rather than continuities: 'Today, 100 years later, English takes on a different role. We no longer talk of English as the language of the colonizer, but the language we have colonized. We no longer identify English as the language of access to civilization; rather, we attribute to English access to knowledge, which is a precondition to power.' Thus, she argues, we need to 'transcend political concerns and emotional issues and act beyond, or even *in spite of*, the language education policy' and 'focus where it really matters—the teacher and the learner.'

This paper takes the opposite position: The whole idea of a bilingual education in the Philippines is a political and ideological issue through and through. The status of languages in education and in society cannot be separated from the economic, political and ideological conditions of Filipinos who continue to grapple with the challenges of globalization and capitalism, the complex realities and relations of which are deeply imbricated in the various ways Western powers, especially the United States, exert their control over less developed countries such as the Philippines.

We cannot forget the past (or pretend that we have forgotten it) since much of what we need to address today can be adequately an-

swered by history. The whole idea of a bilingual education problem was much simpler during much of the colonial period since it revolved around the use of English and/or the vernacular languages in the schools. But because of the mediation of a national language in the 1930s—largely a linguistic response to calls for political independence from the United States—ethnic rivalries emerged (Gonzalez 1991). The whole idea of a fragmented Philippines was introduced by the Americans as a way of rationalizing the introduction of English in the country as a unifying language for Filipinos (though nowhere and at no time in the history of the country has English ever served to unite all of the Filipino people). It was therefore no longer an easy task to deal with the issue of vernacular education after World War II even if an influential UNESCO Report (1953) proposed the use of the mother tongue in the schools for the longest possible time. The mother tongues have gradually assumed secondary status in education, as merely bridging or auxiliary languages, although the UNESCO Report gave a much more positive view of them, even declaring that second languages must be approached through the first language. Thus, when the bilingual education policy stipulated the use of Filipino and English as media of instruction in 1974, even proponents of first language education and literacy would be constrained to develop their arguments within the dominant discourses of bilingualism and education in the Philippines.

As discussed above, we need to question the significations of a 'Filipino bilingual', 'bilingualism' and/or 'bilingual education' in the context of a highly multilingual context in order to construct a paradigm which:

1) highlights the historical interconnectedness of past and present problems in language and education;
2) uses the 'multilingual' Filipino as the norm of education;
3) recognizes structures of inequality (social, economic, etc.) across which languages and educational resources are deployed;
4) seeks to solve problems of language use within the broader context of development and human rights;
5) works within conceptions of cultural heterogeneity where many realities and homogenizing discourses simultaneously create and recreate experience and language use; and thus

6) puts codeswitching at the heart of the debate on medium of instruction in a multilingual situation; and
7) views education as the process of producing critically thinking Filipinos in which language has a central role (both in pedagogical and political terms).

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