

# Bridging the Gap: The Development of Appropriate Educational Strategies for Minority Language Communities in the Philippines

*Diane Dekker and Catherine Young*

*SIL International, Philippines*

There are more than 6000 languages spoken by the 6 billion people in the world today – however, those languages are not evenly divided among the world's population – over 90% of people globally speak only about 300 majority languages – the remaining 5700 languages being termed 'minority languages'. These languages represent the ethnolinguistic diversity of our world and the rich cultural heritage embedded within cultural communities. Within the Philippines, language-in-education planning reflects issues associated with the needs of a culturally and linguistically diverse nation. This paper examines language policy and planning at national level as it relates to elementary education for ethnolinguistic minorities. It includes a case study of one innovative community based approach being implemented by a northern Philippines language community to provide multilingual education using the first language of the learners as a foundation for quality language education in the national and international prescribed languages of instruction in the Philippines.

**Keywords:** language planning, vernacular literacy, Philippines, linguistic diversity, multilingual education

## Linguistic Diversity in the Philippines

Kaplan and Baldauf (1998: 355) describe the Philippines as 'linguistically heterogeneous with no absolute majority of speakers of any given indigenous language'. Grimes and Grimes (2000: 598) list 168 living languages within the Republic of the Philippines. McFarland (1980) suggests that there are 120 languages spoken in the country while Dutcher (1982: 6) describes the linguistic situation as comprising 'from 70–150 mutually unintelligible vernacular languages'. However, approximately 90% of the population (Sibayan, 1974: 25) speak one of the eight major languages – Tagalog, Cebuano, Ilocano, Hiligaynon,

**Table 1** Major indigenous languages of the Philippines and numbers of speakers

Tagalog	16,911,871	Waray (Waray-Waray)	2,400,000
Cebuano	14,713,220	Pampango	1,897,378
Ilocano	8,000,000	Pangasinan	1,164,586
Hiligaynon	7,000,000	Maguindanaon	1,000,000
Bicolano	3,500,000	Tausug	651,000

Source: Grimes and Grimes (2000)

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Bikol, Waray, Pampango and Pangasinan (see Table 1 for full list of major indigenous languages).

While the Philippines is a linguistically diverse nation, policies for literacy development in education have focused primarily on a bilingual approach using only Filipino and English. For learners from minority language contexts, this is problematic as they often enter school without oral skills in either English or Filipino, and the languages of school are foreign. In order to provide optimum educational opportunities for learners from minority language communities, it would appear that a structured use of the home language on entry to school, systematically progressing to the languages defined in the Bilingual Education Policy would provide a firmer foundation in language education for minority language students. Although minority language education programmes are supported in a number of policy documents, current practice in the Philippines indicates that these are generally in initial stages of development or localised and not yet widely implemented. This paper will review policies related to language education for minority language communities in the Philippines and present a case study of a first language education programme in order to examine the process for establishing a viable multilingual education programme in the Philippines context.

### **Language and Education for Minority Language Communities**

Information from intergovernmental agencies, such as UNESCO and other UN-related groups, indicates that there is increasing social and political support for multilingual education. International agencies have, for a number of years, recognised the close link between language and cultural identity. Articles 14<sup>1</sup> and 17<sup>2</sup> of the 1994 UN Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the 1996 UNESCO Barcelona Universal Declaration on Linguistic Rights both promote the desire to foster the capacity for linguistic and cultural self-expression of ethnolinguistic communities and the need to provide educational structures which will help maintain and develop the language spoken by the language community. Education should be at the service of linguistic and cultural diversity. The UNESCO paper 'Education in a Multilingual World' affirms that:

While there are strong educational arguments in favor of mother tongue (or first language) instruction, a careful balance also needs to be made between enabling people to use local languages in learning, and providing access to global languages of communication through education. (UNESCO, 2003: 7)

The World Declaration on Education for All (EFA) adopted in 1990 in Jomtien, Thailand, promoted an expanded vision of basic education, calling for a learning environment in which everyone would have the chance to acquire the basic elements which serve as a foundation for further learning and enable full participation in society. This implies equity in access to education for all, irrespective of language, and strategies which meet the diverse learning needs of children, youth and adults from all communities within a nation. EFA initiatives espouse broad and deep partnerships between government agencies, NGOs and civil society.

Research and experience (Baker, 2001; Cummins, 2000; Dutcher, 2001; Dutcher & Tucker, 1996; Kosonen, 2004; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000; Thomas &

Collier, 1997, 2002) have shown that quality language education occurs most effectively when the learner begins to read and write in their first language – the language of the home and community – and when the learner transitions in a structured manner to other languages of wider communication used for education in the nation. Use of the first language in education has been shown to facilitate acquisition of literacy skills and provides the foundation for continuing self-learning. Studies in the Philippines by Bernardo (1998) provide evidence that cognitive maturity and resultant critical thinking skills are advanced by the initial use of the first language as medium of instruction in the early grades of elementary education.

International documents such as those discussed above can indicate trends and approaches adopted elsewhere and give direction for national policy, and, if multilingual education including the use of minority languages is to become an integral part of the formal system of education in the Philippines, it would appear that there is a need for significant policy change at national level. This paper considers the development of appropriate educational strategies for the linguistically diverse nation of the Philippines in the context of both the position of international agencies and also the history and nature of language policy in the Philippines.

### **Philippine Language Policy**

Historically, Spanish was the primary language of instruction during the Spanish colonial period, which began in 1565 and, at this time, the public use of vernaculars in any domain was forbidden. Later, the Educational Decree of 1863 ordered the teaching of Spanish, however, for political reasons, the teaching of the Spanish language was not widely implemented. As a result, even after 300 years of Spanish colonialism, the Spanish language had not been widely propagated. The American 'conquest' of the Philippines in 1898 brought a new system of public education with an emphasis on the English language (Act. No. 74, 21 January 1901). Brother Andrew Gonzalez comments that, although:

President McKinley's rhetoric at this time recommended the use of local languages, efficiency and expediency and ease for the foreign teachers turned the system into a monolingual system. (Gonzalez, 2001: 4)

In fact, from the time that widespread education became established in the Philippines (1900) until 5 December 1939, classes in all schools in the country were taught monolingually – using English only and the use of Philippine languages was not permitted in the schools (Sibayan, 1985). At that time, almost 85% of Philippine trade went to the United States and by 1932, the language of business had become English, although the judicial language was still Spanish. English remained the sole medium of instruction in schools until 1954 apart from a brief period during Japanese occupation when *Niponggo*<sup>3</sup> took the place of English.

The 1935 Philippine constitution (article 13, section 2) stated plans for 'the development and adoption of a common language based on one of the existing native languages'. Tagalog was proclaimed as the basis of the national language and Commonwealth Act No. 570 declared this Tagalog-based language as one of

the official languages of the Philippines, along with English. In 1959, Education Secretary Jose Romero issued a Department Order stating that the national language would be called *Pilipino*<sup>4</sup> to distinguish it from its Tagalog base and give it a national identity. The 1973 Constitution designated *Pilipino* as the new national language and as an official language, along with Spanish and English. The 1987, post-People Power I Constitution declared Filipino (now spelt with an F) as the national language as well as one of the official languages along with English and Spanish was dropped as an official language. The 1987 Constitution (in force as of 1994) also stipulated the creation of a new language body, *Komisyon ng Wikang Filipino* (Commission on the Filipino Language). Three Constitutions (1935, 1973, 1987) have therefore decreed that the national language is Filipino; however, there seems a clear intent that English should remain as an official language.

### Language in education

In 1974, the current official policy on bilingual education in the Philippines was instituted by Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS) Order No. 25 and subsequently revised in 1987 as DECS Order No. 52s (Quisumbing, 1987). This policy states that Filipino and English are the official languages of literacy for the nation, while allowing for the use of the local vernaculars initially as 'transitional languages' for initial instruction and early literacy up to Grade 3. In the revised 1987 policy, community languages were elevated to the role of 'auxiliary languages'.

The purpose of the policy was that the Philippines should become a bilingual nation with a population competent in both English and Filipino (Gonzalez & Sibayan, 1988). This has been seen as a more realistic interpretation of the 1957–1974 practice which gave freedom to school administrators and teachers to choose and develop their own curriculum to suit local conditions and needs (Gonzalez, 1998). Education policy from 1957 until the early 1970s provided for the use of the vernaculars as media of instruction in Grades 1 and 2, with the teaching of English as a separate subject from Grade 1, and the shifting to English as the medium of instruction from Grade 3 on to college. The vernaculars were to be auxiliary media of instruction in Grades 3 and 4, while the national language was the auxiliary medium in Grades 5 and 6. However, this approach was highly dependent on the availability of materials in the local vernaculars and, in a country with limited educational resources, it was perceived to be difficult to produce materials in a large range of minority languages. The revised 1987 Bilingual Education policy, focusing on Filipino and English was seen as logistically and pedagogically more manageable, although some (e.g. Gonzalez, 1998) described it as a compromise solution, developed to incorporate the demands of both nationalism and internationalism. The Bilingual Education policy has continued, using both Filipino and English but in the process, local languages have been neglected although on paper they continued to be an accepted auxiliary medium of instruction (Gonzalez, 2001: 5).

The teaching methodology described in the 1987 revised language policy prescribes that the teacher use either Filipino or English, depending on the curriculum content: English for English language classes, Science, and Mathematics while Filipino is used for all other subjects. However, observation has

shown that teachers initially use the official language (either English or Filipino) for the curriculum matter and then repeat the same content using the vernacular to ensure that the students understand the material or they may codeswitch within the same utterance (Gonzalez, 1998; Young, 2002). In practice this often means that local languages are used to explain the curriculum to students rather than using them intentionally as the media of instruction. This approach is particularly prevalent in Grades 1 and 2, although it seems to diminish as students progress through the educational system and become more familiar with Filipino and English. In 2004, President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo initiated a return of the English language as the primary medium of instruction in schools. One of the main reasons indicated for such move is to regain the competitive edge of Filipinos in the international labour market, the country being a top supplier of labour force, particularly in the field of information and communications technology, which are viewed by the government as foundations for future development.

### **Language-in-Education Policy in the Philippines**

Issues relating to multilingual education and, specifically, the use of vernacular languages in elementary education, are of significant interest in a nation as linguistically diverse as the Philippines. Former DECS Undersecretary for Programs and Projects, Isagani Cruz, says:

There is no question that the language policy of the Department of Education is a question mark. Enough emotion has been uselessly spilled by nationalistic or xenophobic and by misguided or colonially-minded Filipinos on this issue . . . (Cruz, 2004: 61)

An examination of a chronology of language policies of the Philippines (Brigham & Castillo, 1999) reveals pendulum-like swings from one language to another – with the inclusion of Filipino, English, regional languages and the learners' first language in various proportions and for differing purposes. There have been frequent efforts at incorporating vernacular languages into the curriculum of the Philippine elementary education curriculum and innovations such as attempts at vernacularisation (1903–9) and vernacular experiments in the Visayas region from 1948 to 1954 are particularly significant in relation to the social and political climate of those years. More recently, in April 2000, the recommendations of the Presidential Commission on Educational Reform (PCER) were published, giving renewed impetus for the national use of *linguae francae* and vernaculars. The preamble to Specific Proposal Seven of the reform agenda reads:

While reaffirming the Bilingual Education Policy and the improvement in the teaching of English and Filipino, this proposal aims to introduce the use of the regional *lingua franca* or vernacular as the medium of instruction in Grade One. Studies have shown that this change will make students stay in, rather than drop out of, school, learn better, quicker and more permanently and will, in fact, be able to use the first language as a bridge to more effective learning in English and Filipino as well as facilitate the development of their cognitive maturity. (PCER, 2000: 60)

In the spring of 2001, consultants appointed by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) examined the feasibility of implementing the innovation described in Proposal Seven and the infrastructure required to support the successful expansion of pilot programmes that were in place. This study found that the elements which teachers, administrators, parents and other stakeholders considered important included teacher training in the use of the pedagogical idiom of the vernacular, materials development in vernacular languages and the development of strategies and approaches for optimising the skills that students have developed in the *linguae francae* or vernacular languages in learning Filipino and English.

In the last decade, Secretary Andrew Gonzalez instituted (DECS Memo No. 144 s. 1999, expanded by DECS Memo No. 2433 s. 2000) the use of the *linguae francae* in an attempt to implement a national bridging programme from the vernacular to Filipino and later to English to develop foundational literacy skills (Cruz, 2004). In his role as DECS Undersecretary for Programs and Projects, Isagani Cruz expanded the use of the *linguae francae* by adding more schools to the initial pilot phase of the project and adding more languages (DECS Memo No. 153 s. 2001), in effect expanding the 1974 Bilingual Education Policy to a 'still-unnamed and unacknowledged Multilingual Education Policy' (Cruz, 2004). The Basic Education Curriculum (DECS Order No. 25s 2002) as implemented by Secretary Raul Roco maintained a focus on the central role of language in education and retains the multilingual policy begun in the expansion of the Regional *Lingua Franca* Program.

### **Attitudes towards other vernacular languages**

The major languages of education – English and Filipino – are frequently discussed in the literature relating to languages in education; however, there is comparatively little written about the many vernacular languages of the Philippines. This may itself be indicative of the value assigned to the languages of the provinces and the cultural minorities by language policy developers. During the early part of the 20th century, a push for English in education led to a flourishing of 'Speak English Only' campaigns, which led to:

a feeling of insecurity/inferiority for those, largely the uneducated, who continued to speak their native languages. English was the language of the educated (the elite) and so the language came to represent a dividing line between the elite and the masses. (Brigham & Castillo, 1999: 48)

Dr Clemencia Espiritu (Brigham & Castillo, 1999: 25) surveyed teachers' attitudes to the use of vernacular languages in the classroom as recommended in the 1991 Congressional Commission on Education (EDCOM) and discovered that teachers were not in favour of a recommendation concerning the use of the vernacular in the three early grades as it would promote regionalisation. It would seem that the divisions found in the earlier part of the century may still exist.

The linguistic diversity of the Philippines, mixed with cultural, ethnic and economic diversity, leads to a complex situation, particularly when viewed in relation to issues of nationalism/nationhood and economic development (PCER, 2000; Sibayan, 1985). Sibayan suggests that minority language communities are marginalised politically, socially and educationally:

Threatened with the loss of his ancestral land . . . to 'unscrupulous lowlanders' or to the government or to multinational corporations . . . unable to get a school education or to receive news in his own language through radio or newspapers and magazines and deprived of the privileges that the majority enjoy, the member of the linguistic minority, wherever he may be in the Philippines, lives a life that should be entitled to all the possible help and understanding from non-governmental and governmental organisations and individuals. (Sibayan, 1985: 527)

In another article, Sibayan suggests a socio-political argument against literacy in the vernacular:

In a democracy, all citizens should have an equal opportunity to rise and the present language for attaining the better life, because it is the language for a good education and a good job, is English. The poor should have access to the language that provides for these opportunities. (Sibayan, 1999: 291)

However, the UNESCO October 2002 position paper 'Education in a Multilingual World' suggests that the process of beginning education in the community language of the learner enhances educational opportunities and that literacy for lifelong learning will be effectively achieved only when it is planned and implemented in local contexts of language and culture.

### **The Lubuagan Kalinga First Language Component**

The Lubuagan<sup>5</sup> Kalinga First Language Component project is a response to the need for piloting innovative approaches to literacy and education for minority language communities. Over the last century, many people who speak minority languages have become aware of the rapid changes that are taking place in the world outside their communities. They would like to have access to new information and technologies and to government education programmes. However, such ethnolinguistic communities often face two major problems – the community language is not used as the medium of instruction in government programmes and the curriculum is culturally distant from the worldview and experience of the learners. Therefore, in order to succeed in the education system, learners are often forced to sacrifice both their linguistic and cultural heritage in favour of national and international language education.

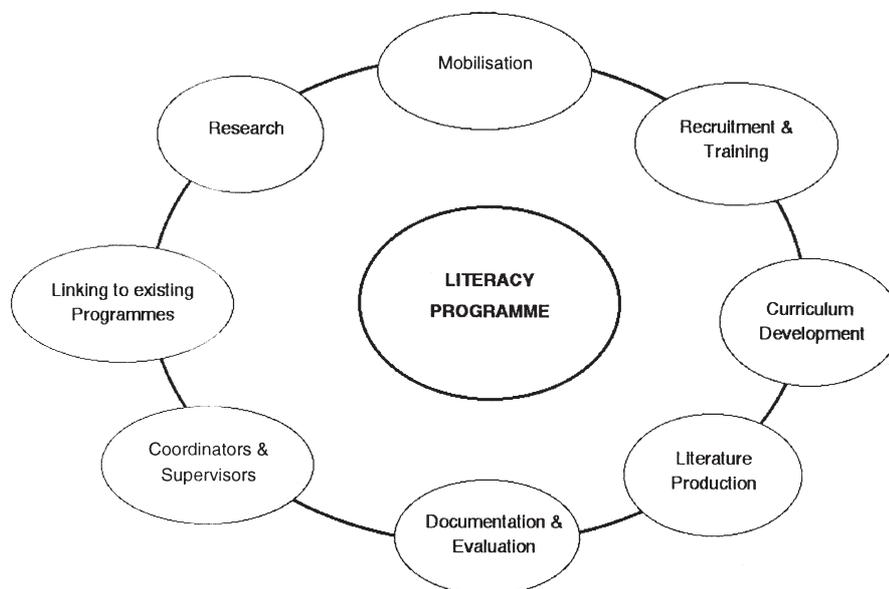
The municipality of Lubuagan lies in the province of Kalinga in the Cordillera mountains of northern Philippines. Lubuagan and its surrounding barrios have a population of around 12,000 situated in parts of two different valleys, hosting one school district with 13 elementary schools. There are also two private high schools and one public high school, opened in 2002. Lubuagan is a monolingual municipality with few 'outsiders' residing in town. Newcomers who move to the area for business purposes or through marriage learn and use Lilubuagen. The language of wider communication in the northern Philippines, Ilocano, is primarily used when one travels outside the language area. Therefore, the children in Lubuagan usually begin school speaking Lilubuagen but no other language.

The Lubuagan Kalinga First Language Component is a pilot project for multilingual education among a minority language community in the northern Philippines, which has been implemented within the formal educational system in

partnership with the Department of Education at local, regional and national level. This pilot project has demonstrated that there are strategies that can be developed in order to use community languages as a foundation for effective, quality education in the national and international prescribed languages of instruction. The Lubuagan Kalinga First Language Component project aims to incorporate cultural content and the use of the learner's mother tongue in order to optimise use of the knowledge and skills learners bring to the formal education context.

### Developing the project

In 1998, in cooperation with the Provincial Superintendent of DECS,<sup>6</sup> an initial three year pilot programme was implemented to address the use of Lilubuagan in school and develop a structured method of bridging from the local language to the national and international prescribed languages of instruction. The starting point of the project was the work of Greg and Diane Dekker, members of SIL International, who lived and worked in Lubuagan from 1987 to 2000, analysing Lilubuagan phonology and grammar, and working together with members of the local community to begin production of local language literature (Dekker, 1999). Through discussion with members of the Lubuagan community, they identified challenges in the educational practice within the government schools affecting the achievement of children from the Lubuagan community. On this basis, the complex processes of developing a systematic and sustainable approach to developing the first language component project involves a number of significant factors (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1** Components of a sustainable multilingual education programme (based on Malone, 2004: 8)

Figure 1 indicates some of the factors that should be considered when implementing a systematic and sustainable approach to first language education. Each component needs to be considered in the local context and in relation to the leadership that is available within the community. In developing the Lubuagan Kalinga First Language Component programme, therefore, the community had to consider each factor within the cycle of programme development and determine the means by which they could address the issues within the community. Some of these issues will be discussed below.

### **Community mobilisation**

In 'The Treasure Within', the report of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first century, published by UNESCO, Delors (1994) says:

Local community participation in assessing needs by means of a dialogue with the public authorities and groups concerned in society is a first and essential stage in broadening access to education and improving its quality.

For a multilingual, community-based literacy programme to succeed it needs to be a community-managed programme where the skills and motivation for the continuation of the programme lie with community members. In mobilising a community for participation in a language development initiative such as a multilingual education programme, minority language speakers themselves must be convinced that the programme will meet the needs of learners in their community. It is important that strengths and skills are identified within the community and that the language community can also identify agencies that can help support the innovation. It is important to wait until the participants are ready to be involved and give their own response rather than rush people towards a decision. The challenge is often waiting for the moment to 'move'. At one point a significant Lubuagan community leader said, 'We do not give our input because this is so new and different and we need to think about it'.

Beginning in 1997, SIL International conducted a series of personal consultations and meetings in Lubuagan with teachers and parents. Through relationships that had been built within the community, the Dekkers were able to share information and ideas about first language education as the foundation for improved quality education. They shared stories of what was happening in neighbouring language communities and sample materials from Tuwali Ifugao, another mountain community where first language educational approaches were being piloted (Hohulin, 1993, 1995; Young, 1999). They shared theoretical studies that gave credibility to the approach that was being discussed. Through both formal and informal dialogue, they learned the concerns of the community regarding language and culture change issues. However, it required a young teacher named Rose, working in a private school in the mountain town to be willing to take a risk – she was offered the opportunity to take a course at an Institute of Technology for MA credit that included a component focusing on multilingual education strategies. Rose tried this innovative approach in her classroom – she used the mother tongue of the students as the basis for teaching Filipino and English, the national languages of education. The general opinion of the school

administration was that the children in this class demonstrated the best results (in standardised tests) for 25 years.

As the community vision grew, it was realised that, if there was to be community participation and ownership, then the leaders needed to be the ones to be the decision makers. Within the Philippine local political system, there are committees at local level addressing community social and economic needs and so it seemed appropriate to the community that they form a steering committee of educated people who brought particular skills and expertise to the group. The community selected people of influence and good reputation to be members of the committee in order that they would have a voice in the area for bringing such innovation to the education system. The steering committee launched a series of district-wide teachers' seminars on the First Language Component (FLC) bridging programme. The intent of these seminars was to share information and case studies related to first language education in the Philippines and in other parts of Asia, raising awareness in the minds of teachers, parents, community leaders and other key stakeholders of the potential of first language education and the inclusion of culturally related content in the elementary curriculum (Dekker & Dumatog, 2004). Awareness-raising for local teachers focused on affirming the teachers' cultural identity through shared reflection and shared insights on restoring or remembering one's lost cultural identity and unlocking the rich resources of the Lubuagan language by writing traditional stories in the vernacular that relate to the cultural world of the community. The teachers and those involved with the local steering committee also organised singing contests, word context contests, and riddle contests, demonstrating to the community the richness of the Lubuagan language and culture (Dekker & Dumatog, 2003).

The impact of the development of a community based steering committee was to place the ownership for the local level innovation in the hands of teachers and community leaders who were concerned about both the educational achievement of children and the maintenance and vitality of the local language. However, it is noteworthy that community mobilisation was not contiguous with the initiation of the educational innovation. Nearly two years after the formation of the steering committee, it was agreed that the pilot project should begin and the framework for implementation of the project was established. The issue of sustainability of literacy and language development programmes is a complex, multifaceted topic. The good start made by many literacy-in-development programmes needs to be maintained and developed on a sound methodological base in order that community based literacy is not simply a 'sprint' but an effective marathon. Educational innovation begun before the community is ready to respond may be self-defeating. Demand, as much as delivery, must be people driven, involving community members (Young, 2003).

### **Implementation of the First Language Component**

The FLC programme was initiated in 1998 in five schools: Pudpud, Mabilong, Dongoy, Uma and Ag-agama. The curriculum followed the Philippines Department of Education curriculum in subject matter with language adjustments to include the first language (Dekker & Dumatog, 2003). Table 2 shows the curriculum developed for the project and the allocation of teaching for the three languages and for the various content areas.

**Table 2** Lubuagan Kalinga First Language Component curriculum

	<i>Lilubuagen</i> <i>4½ hours per day</i>	<i>Filipino</i> <i>1 hour per day</i>	<i>English</i> <i>1 hour per day</i>
First semester	Language development through study of grammar, vocabulary, concept development integrated into reading, writing, culture study	Listening skills in Filipino taught through TPR – 6 weeks	Listening skills in English taught through TPR – 6 weeks
	Reading 80 minutes per day	Oral Filipino continued through listening comprehension, vocabulary building, and conversational skills	Oral English continued through listening comprehension, vocabulary building, and conversational skills
	Writing 45 minutes per day		
	Study of indigenous culture including arts, music, oral language styles, etc. 1 hr weekly	Oral Filipino through grammatical comparison between Lubuagan sentence structure and Filipino	
	Math 45 minutes per day	Bridging to reading Filipino at end of semester	
	Science 45 minutes 3 days a week		
	Social studies 45 minutes twice a week		

The most important consideration in the design is that a child's cognitive and affective development is closely related to the intimate relationship between the learner, his first language and his culture milieu.

Decisions about teaching methodology reached by the steering committee in the Lubuagan programme were based on the following premises:

- by using the students' first language in the classroom to teach literacy skills as well as subject content, the students' cognitive skills would be developed (Baker, 2001; Cummins, 2000);
- by teaching concepts in the first language, the students would be exposed to comprehensible input (Krashen, 1991, 2000) and enabled to develop concepts further.

Separating content learning, new language learning, and acquisition of literacy skills would enable the students to focus on one discipline at a time. Thus,

basic literacy skills and content were to be mastered through the first language, and Filipino and English were to be taught as foreign languages, rather than used as media for learning subject matter or acquiring literacy skills. In the Filipino or English language lessons, content already mastered in the mother tongue would be used in order to focus on acquisition of additional languages.

### **Teacher training**

Grade 1 teachers in the five schools which were identified as pilot schools were equipped with both an understanding of the theoretical underpinning of a multilingual approach in the classroom and pedagogical implications of implementing such a strategy. Part of the rationale for identification of pilot schools included the willingness of the teachers to be involved in the pilot programme, to be trained in participative strategies using the first language and to implement the innovation within their classes. Such participation is crucial in the planning, execution and management of innovative approaches to education in minority ethnolinguistic communities. This participation should include training in skills, promoting access to resources and institutional development. If foundational skills and knowledge are retained only by the initiator of the programme, it will never be sustainable, particularly if the programme initiator is an outside agency – either a government agency or an NGO. From the beginning, local people should be seen – and see themselves – as co-workers in the achievement of a vision for change internal to their context. From the outset, the philosophy of the partner organisation in innovation should be as an equipper of others to become interdependent workers.

Most public school teachers in Lubuagan have limited access to in-service training and refresher courses (Dekker & Dumatog, 2003). This lack eventually results in a significant loss of passion for teaching and it is a constant struggle to sustain and improve children's interest, attention, and comprehension. Participation in the planning and development of an approach to education using community language and cultural resources has produced motivation for professional growth and there are an increasing number of requests for seminars and workshops addressing issues associated with language in education.

### **Orthography development**

Critical to effective development of instructional materials and literature for the development of reading fluency is an unambiguous writing system. Greg and Diane Dekker worked together with partners in the community to develop an orthography based on descriptive linguistic research and community input. Such participatory research and collaboration in the process of linguistic research encouraged the local teachers and community leaders to identify strongly with the orthographic choices that were made.

### **Curriculum development**

The languages and cultures of the communities of the Philippines and issues of national language policy impact directly upon the development of appropriate curricula for literacy education in these communities. The indigenous peoples of the Philippines are communities bringing ideologies, values and cultural systems to the educational process that defines them as distinct from

mainstream Filipinos. Such cultural information integrated into the curriculum strengthens the connection that the learner can make between their community worldview and the culture of the classroom. Simple exposure to experiences does not lead to learning. The cultural activities of the community are incorporated into the learning process, making the children aware of and involved in what is happening in the community. This cultural content is related directly to the children's real-life experiences and builds on what they know rather than on expecting them to memorise information from textbooks, which have mostly urban-based, and thus alien, content and context. The teacher takes advantage of actual cultural objects or appropriate visual aids when introducing cultural events or information. In addition, when local cultural events are incorporated into the curriculum, students and teachers can participate together in field trips rather than merely focusing on foreign concepts included in national level textbooks. Thus, curriculum development for the Lubuagan First Language Component incorporated principles noted by Hohulin (1995) when describing a first language programme in the Ifugao province of the Philippines:

- a child's cultural model of the world should be used for helping him to process perceptual information, understand concepts, and form new ones;
- new concepts and skills should be built on existing knowledge structures rather than bypassing them by using a rote-memorisation methodology.

The teachers in the pilot schools and members of the steering committee worked together to identify themes and topics on which the the curriculum content could be based, ensuring that curriculum reflected what was familiar, relevant and interesting to the learners (Malone, 2004). The teachers used these themes to organise classroom activities and as a guide for the development of instructional materials. The development of a community calendar by the teachers proved useful when choosing themes for teaching. The calendar showed how activities in Kalinga were related to changes in the seasons, natural environment and other areas important to local people.

The pedagogical approach adopted in the Lubuagan pilot schools incorporated an adapted multi-strategy method (Stringer & Faraclas, 1987). Based on the global-linear model, the multi-strategy method accommodates both global and linear learners teaching basic literacy skills via two main approaches:

- the story track incorporates strategies from interactive whole language approaches, a holistic approach where the teacher emphasises the meaning of words and sentences in the context of a 'story', that is, any kind of text, and the creative aspects of writing an interesting 'story' for others to enjoy reading;
- the workbook/primer track emphasises parts of words and sentences, and the mechanical or technical aspects of writing such as correct spelling and clear handwriting.

The story track accommodates holistic learners – working from the top of the language hierarchy down to the word level, while the workbook or primer approach can accommodate linear learners – working from letter level up the hierarchy toward the story level. Many people learn to read without fluency and understanding and to write without creative expression. Fluency, understand-

ing, and creative oral and written expression are actively taught as a basic part of the multi-strategy method at every stage from the beginning to the end. As learners begin to express their thoughts in writing each day, they develop the power to communicate original thoughts so that others can read, understand, and enjoy. Dekker and Dumatog (2003) noted that the Lubuagan teachers identified a constant struggle to sustain and improve children's interest, attention, and comprehension of reading material in a second or third language. However, the multi-strategy method is participative, involving an increased amount of oral interaction between students and teacher and has a strong focus on the development of oral language. The development of oral language is a strong value within a structured bridging programme.

### **Materials production**

The availability of appropriate literature and instructional materials is a constraint often identified in the development of a localised curriculum and Sibayan (1985) notes that some of the problems associated with effective bilingual education among the linguistic minorities in the Philippines are related to a lack of reading and instructional materials in the language. The Council for the Welfare of Children (1999) report states that schools must change to serve the Filipino child – locally developed learning materials using vernacular language are suggested in order to maintain pupils' interest in the curriculum. This would serve to build the children's perception of the value of their language, increase their self-esteem and promote continuing involvement in the education process. Baguingan (1999) highlights the significant financial investment and teacher training required preparing instructional materials for the many languages of the Philippines (Young, 2002).

Initially, the quantity of reading material was minimal and teachers had to write stories on flip charts to give the students more opportunity to read. The teachers of Lubuagan prepared a series of bilingual traditional stories of Lubuagan for use as a reader by students in the elementary school. These stories reflect the culture and lifestyle of the students and encourage comprehension development and reflection on the content by including familiar situations and increased contextual clues. These books have been successfully used with both early elementary children and non-readers in the upper grades of elementary school to motivate and interest the students. Some of the stories included in the readers were written by the teachers themselves, while others were written by members of the Lubuagan community at writers' workshops. In addition, the multi-strategy method described above uses children's experiences to develop experience stories for shared reading. Each experience story adds to the corpus of reading material that is available in the classroom.

### **Evaluating the project**

If the model developed in the Lubuagan Kalinga community is to be considered for adoption in other minority language communities, there appears to be a need for a detailed evaluation of transitional education strategies and the ways in which these impact on children's early educational experience. In association with the Department of Education in Kalinga, other educational agencies in the Philippines and the Lubuagan Kalinga first language education programme

described above, SIL International is beginning a 10-year longitudinal study to examine the impact of a structured approach to language education, bridging from the learners mother tongue to the national and international languages of education. The critical question, motivating this extensive research project concerns the educational outcomes for Lubuagan students. Will the introduction of first language literacy and interactive instructional strategies in the Lubuagan educational system improve educational outcomes for Lubuagan students? Included in the study are an examination of general academic performance, language acquisition issues and participatory measures. In the Lubuagan first language education programme, interactive strategies are incorporated. An attempt will be made within the study to assess whether interactive strategies independent of language of instruction improve educational outcomes or whether the addition of a firm foundation in the home language provides the basis for a strong bridge to improved literacy skills in the additional prescribed languages of instruction.

The high attrition rate, especially in non-Tagalog speaking parts of the Philippines attests to the failure to meet the educational needs of a significant percentage of the population. At a presentation to the Congressional Oversight Committee on Education, Acuna and Miranda (1994) confirmed that the children from the poorer areas of the country are those less well served by the educational system. More recently, the Philippines Education for All (1999) report stated that, although the Philippines has had few problems or deficiencies with respect to access and participation in the primary education level, the children who have been left out are precisely those in the hard-to-reach areas and marginalised communities. Through tracking learners over their school careers, researchers will measure whether the first language bridging programme and the interactive teaching strategies employed in the classroom raises the persistence of students in school and results in a higher proportion continuing to High School.

## **Conclusion**

Learners from the ethnolinguistic minorities in the Philippines often enter school to experience an environment where the language of instruction and the environment of the classroom are alien. In order to offer these children optimal conditions for learning, it would seem important to incorporate their home language and pre-school experiences into the curriculum. From this firm foundation, a strong, sequential bridge is built from the mother tongue to the prescribed languages of instruction within the Bilingual Education policy. The need for appropriate language education for minorities in the Philippines has been recognised in policy, as shown above, but neglected in practice. Pilot programmes such as the Lubuagan First Language Component indicate that community based innovations using the language of the learner can be successfully developed. Strengths of the Lubuagan project include consultation with the community leading to active involvement of community members in the planning, development and systematic evaluation of the programme.

Offices involved in language planning and policy development are located in a number of Philippine institutions. Interagency dialogue is essential to promote a unified approach to the use of the first language in education. For the Philip-

pires to respond effectively to the demands of globalisation and the responsibilities of Education for All, it is necessary for educational, social and economic agencies to cooperate in an analysis of research findings on the impact of first language education and the implications of a review of language policy issues in the Philippines.

### Correspondence

Any correspondence should be directed to Catherine Young, Summer Institute of Linguistics International, PO Box 2270 CPO, 1099 Manila, Philippines (Catherine\_Young@sil.org).

### Notes

1. Article 14: Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalise, use, develop and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems and literatures, and to designate and retain their own names for communities, places and persons. States shall take effective measures, especially whenever any right of indigenous peoples may be affected, to ensure this right and to ensure that they can understand and be understood in political, legal and administrative proceedings where necessary through the provision of interpretation or by other appropriate means.
2. Article 17: Indigenous people have the right to establish their own languages. They also have the right to equal access to all forms of non-indigenous media. States shall take effective measures to ensure that State-owned media duly reflect indigenous cultural diversity.
3. i.e. Japanese. During the Japanese occupation of the Philippines, *Niponggo*, along with Tagalog, was declared an official national language.
4. *Pilipino* was the spelling of the name of the national language used until Constitutional reform in 1987 ratified the spelling as *Filipino*.
5. Lilubugan is the term used for the language; Lubugan is the place name.
6. Now, Department of Education.

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### **The Authors**

Diane Dekker is a member of SIL International and began working in Lubuagan, Kalinga in 1988. She and her husband Greg have worked closely with the Lubuagan school teachers and community members to initiate a Multilingual Education Programme that begins with the students' mother tongue and bridges students to the national language, Filipino and the international language, English. Most of the credit for this programme goes to the Lubuagan teachers.

Catherine Young is a Multilingual Education consultant with SIL International. She has worked in the Philippines and various parts of southeast Asia to help facilitate community-based multilingual education programmes. Currently Catherine is based in the Philippines and serves as Associate Director for Academic Affairs for SIL Philippines.