

excitement. The bloom upon my cheeks is gone. The sunset of my life has indeed come. The greying mists of the evening are upon me. Oh Lord, Thou who hast been borne this Christmas Eve, give me a few days to live that I may have the chance to atone for the sins of my wickedness. Give me the opportunity to tell Rasul that my love for him had never changed, but yet to tell him that I seek his forgiveness. His pure, great love I no longer deserve. Give me a chance to tell him so, and then, and then I shall be ready to go"

Rasul was there with her, on the way to church.

"Myrna, I am here. I came to spend my Christmas Eve here in the City. Aren't you glad? It is so good to see you, but what has happened to you? You have thinned so, the bloom of your cheeks is gone!"

"Rasul, go away. I shall only break your heart if I tell you. I lost my soul in the City; I had forgotten my promises to you. If you could but forgive me, that is all I ask. I do not deserve you and your love. I am going to ask God to take me with Him. The sunset days of my life have come."

"But, my love, whatever has happened to you in the City, whatever has passed, — that cannot be more important than my love for you. You could not have escaped the evil of this City, and so I have come to take you away from it."

"You do not understand, Rasul, I am no longer worthy of your love. I have been false to my promises. How can you ever forgive me?"

"This is Christmas, my dear. Everything is forgiven. For Christmas is charity; Christmas is forgiveness."

The Vernacular in the Schools

MARCELINO BAUTISTA



THERE IS INCREASING interest in the proposition to make the vernaculars as the medium of instruction in the primary grades. The CETA (College English Teachers Association) in its last conference in Manila advocated through a resolution that the vernaculars be used as the medium of instruction in the first two Grades. It is very well known, of course, that the Iloilo experiment has been instituted

mainly to determine the feasibility and practicability of using the vernacular as medium of instruction in the primary grades. A phase of the Iloilo experiment, probably the most important one, was that of determining to what extent a functional knowledge of the vernacular would be a help to the learning of English. The hypothesis set up was to the effect that if a child learns to read and write

the vernacular, he will be better equipped to learn English somewhere in the upper primary grades or in the intermediate grades.

A basis of all this agitation for the use of the vernacular as medium of instruction, at least in the primary grades, is the assumption that pupils learn more through the use of the vernacular. That seems to be a very valid assumption, and we said so in the very much criticized article we published in the *Philippine Educator* (July, 1950) entitled "For a Less Muddled Thinking on Educational Problems." We said in that article that it seemed so obvious that a child learns much more readily through his mother tongue than through a foreign language. What we had claimed to be also obvious is that if a child learns the vernacular only, there will be very little transfer to ability to learn English. It appears that the Iloilo experiment, which has been going on for four years, tried to prove the hypothesis that there is transfer of training from learning the vernacular to learning English.

The Iloilo experiment seems to show that when the learning of English is introduced somewhere in the primary Grades to pupils who have been studying the vernacular only, these pupils will show achievement in English over pupils who have been studying English only. At least this has been found to be true when evaluation was made of the relative achievement in English of the control and the experimental groups at the end of the Third Grade. (English was introduced as a second language in the Third Grade.) An unpublished evalua-

tion of the experiment after the two groups had finished Grade IV seems to show that the control group (the group that has studied English only) fared better in English than did the experimental group. This has not been expected by the experimenters. For if there have been gains by the experimental group over the control group at the end of the first year of the introduction of English as a second language, it had been expected that the gains would increase. The latest evaluation of the experiment does not confirm to expectation. The control group was shown to be superior to the experimental group in the acquisition of English Language ability.

The question that readily comes up is: At the end of the fifth year and the sixth year of the experiment, will the experimental group catch up again and/or exceed the achievement of the control group? That is the question that remains to be answered. Our way of thinking convinces us that if at the end of the fourth year of the experiment, the control group has shown a decided advantage over the experimental group in the learning of English, what new factor that has not yet been considered would enter in favor of the experimental group, which will enable that group to catch up with or exceed the control group? Just now we cannot pinpoint such a factor. Our way of thinking tells us that the control group will continue to exceed the performance of the experimental group insofar as learning English is concerned, because this is so evident at the end of the fourth year of the experiment. But let us wait until

the results of the fifth and the sixth year of the experiment have been evaluated.

One factor that is to be considered with respect to the experiment and its evaluation is the extent to which the constituency of the two groups can be kept intact through the years of the experiment. If there is fluidity in the composition of the two groups due to transfer of pupils, the results will be difficult to evaluate.

The second basis of the agitation for the use of the vernacular is the claim that if the child learns English only, he will revert to illiteracy or semi-illiteracy even if he completes the intermediate grades. In the CETA conference, Dr. J. Villa Pañganiban, an authority in linguistics and on the Filipino National Language, cited studies made in the Philippine Normal College which allegedly show that there is such a reversion to illiteracy or semi-illiteracy on the part of people who studied in the intermediate grades in English. We admit that we are not familiar with these studies. We are, however, familiar with a study made in Laguna sometime before the war which indicated that a large portion of the pupils who were in Grade Four could read and write in the vernacular, without having studied anything but English. If this Laguna study was valid, it would seem safe to presume that the average Fourth Grade graduate is literate in his native tongue. If there should be a reversion to illiteracy or semi-illiteracy during the lifetime of the individual, what would be the cause of such reversion? Is it the

fact that he had studied English only? That cannot be the answer, for the Laguna study showed that the average Fourth Grade graduate can read and write in his native tongue. Then to what other cause would such reversion be attributed? Might it not be suggested that the reversion to illiteracy or semi-illiteracy would be due, in specific cases, to failure to **keep on reading and writing in the native tongue or in English**, which ever has been the language of instruction? Having previously acquired some degree of literacy in any tongue, a person reverts to illiteracy or semi-illiteracy if he **does not continue reading and writing**. The language in which he had acquired some degree of literacy does not matter. And of course the ability to continue reading and writing in that tongue depends upon the availability of reading materials and the opportunity and the need for communication. If these factors are not present, and they are likely to be absent in certain areas and in the case of specific persons, there is reversion to illiteracy.

The foregoing statements try to show that reversion to illiteracy or semi-illiteracy does not depend to any great extent upon the language in which one had formerly acquired some degree of literacy; rather, it depends upon the extent to which such literacy would be used in the future. If the arguments advanced here are valid, then there is little basis for the present agitation to use the vernaculars in the primary grades for the purpose of insuring literacy or of enabling the Filipino children to learn English more effectively

when they take up this subject later in the Grades or in the High School. It is admitted that the Filipino child can acquire literacy much more readily in his native tongue than in a foreign tongue. After literacy has been acquired, and we are claiming here on the basis of the Laguna study referred to that the child who learns English also becomes literate in the native tongue, the duration of literacy depends upon the extent to which that literacy is used.

Now, is it likely that the child who learned English only and also became literate in his native tongue will continue to be literate in his native tongue or in English? The answer to that question is not so obvious. It all depends upon the opportunity and the need, and this is difficult to ascertain in specific cases. These other questions are involved: Is there more opportunity to read and write in the native tongue or in English? Which language materials are more available to the average person? Are there more opportunities to write in the vernacular or in English? (The question of speaking the language is not of much concern here, because reading and writing to insure literacy is our main concern. And it is so obvious that the child speaks more in his native tongue than in a foreign language.)

There are many problems related to this proposal to use the vernacular as medium of instruction in the primary grades. Here are some of them:

1. Which native tongue shall be used in cosmopolitan areas such as Tarlac, Davao, Nueva Vizcaya,

and other places in which there is a conglomeration of dialects?

2. Preparing curriculum materials and textbooks for the various vernacular regions would be a tremendous expense. It is obvious that it would be more expensive to prepare a book in one language, say English, than in several languages. Publishing houses have cheaper rates for large orders than for small orders. Considering the fact that even now, when we are using English as the medium of instruction there are not enough copies of books for children, would not the situation become worse under the vernacular system?

3. Training teachers of the vernaculars would also involve considerable time and money. We would have to start all over again, and our work would be set back many, many years. Even development of vernacular terminology for teachers' use will take many years. Even as Tagalogs have to study (from Grade I through College) the Filipino National Language, which is mainly Tagalog, the teachers will have to do the same for their respective vernaculars. And we shall have to set up National Language Institutes for each of the dialects identical with the present Institute of National Language! And we shall have experts in the various dialects who would be set up in the General Office to help the local people prepare their curricula and materials of instruction! In the meantime what shall be done with the present experts in English?

4. There would be no fluidity of movement of teaching personnel

among the regions as at present because an Ilongo teacher, for instance, would be practically useless in the Mountain Province, if he knows only Ilongo. School officials will have to be assigned in their respective dialect regions. We know that the fluidity of movement of teaching personnel from region to region has contributed to the unification of our people. This fluidity has contributed toward effecting some kind of social homogeneity to such an extent that we no longer know or care to know whether this or that teacher or school official belongs to this or to that dialect group. The use of English has erased at least one barrier that obstructs more effective socialization. The people themselves in their intergroup communication now possess some knowledge (no matter how little) of a common language (English, and possibly the National Language in due time). If an Ilocano Fourth Grade graduate, for example, goes to Mindanao and meets a person who knows a little English, they can communicate with one another to some extent. This would not be so, if the two had studied only their dialects up to Grade IV.

5. All the arguments for English as the most widely used language in science, art literature, diplomacy, public affairs, international relationships, etc. also argue against the use of the vernacular. More reading materials available in the Philippines are published in English than in any of the vernaculars. It stands to reason that the average Filipino, no matter how limited his ability in English, would have more contact with Eng-

lish-written materials than with vernacular material, and therefore there is greater insurance that he will have greater opportunities to continue reading and writing in English.

6. The world, even the Filipino world, is becoming more science—and technical-minded. Since the vernaculars do not have enough concepts, words, and terms that are equivalents of these in science and technology, it will be a serious hindrance to the scientific and technical advancement of our young people for them to wait until we can produce our own terminology in dialect terms. Of course, it can be argued that we could adopt the scientific and technical terms, but then why go through all this trouble when we already have them in the English language? The cutting off of our learners from the rich store of literature, science, and technology through confirming our instruction to the vernaculars would be a serious drawback to their intellectual and cultural development.

In passing, we might touch upon a point stressed in the speech of Dr. J. Villa Pañganiban at the CETA conference to the effect that many great European nations introduce the vernacular in their schools and in all instructional levels sometime in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. We can only say that this movement was tied up with the gradual change from humanism to realism in the thinking philosophers and schoolmen. Before this movement gained any popularity, there was too much importance and emphasis

given to the Latin and Greek languages. The thinkers began to wonder why, since English was spoken in England, German was spoken in Germany, Spanish in Spain, and French in France, why there was still emphasis on Latin and Greek even in the elementary schools. The realists looked at the study of language, not for its beauty of phrase or as vehicle of noble emotion but chiefly as the carrier of information. As such, language was therefore looked upon as a practical tool for use by the people and not as a cultural subject for the elite classes. For this reason the vernacular movement became popular.

What should be borne in mind in connection with the vernacular movement in Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is the fact that the national languages of Europe were already widely spoken within the respective countries. English was already a well-developed language, and so were the other national languages. The European countries did not have the difficulty of multiple dialects within their respective national boundaries. The question in their cases was very simple: "Since we already have a national language, one spoken by a large majority of the people, why continue teaching Latin and Greek in the schools?" That is not our main language problem here. Our problem is tied up with the reality of very many vernaculars.

And now, may we venture once more to suggest what we recommended before in some of our art-

icles. The recommendation is as follows: First, since we believe that the child can learn more by using his dialect, why don't we use the vernacular in teaching certain subjects that are easily amenable to the use of the vernacular? Social studies, for instance, could be more effectively taught through the vernacular. And so is character education, health education, physical education, even perhaps the practical arts (gardening, carpentry, home economics). But meanwhile, let us teach English as thoroughly as we can, since this is a language that has to be made the basis of education in the higher levels. For those who do not go to school in the higher levels, let us aim to give them functional literacy through the use of the vernacular.

Second, English should be made as sharp a tool as possible, and it should be taught beginning from Grade I. The longer the exposure, the better. (We predict that this last statement will be borne out by the Iloilo experiment; there are already indications of the validity of this prediction.) The tool cannot be made so sharp with children who do not go beyond the primary or elementary grades, but they will have some knowledge of a language (English) that they can use for communication with other dialect groups, and they will have the rudiments that will enable them to carry on educating themselves in a limited way through the use of the most widely available material for continued literacy — English materials.