

by Mrs. PAZ R. DOROTHEO

DEFICIENCY in both spoken and written English among our college students is as self-evident as the fact that I am not breathing. It calls for no illustration. You have only to hear students recite in class or to pick at random any short written paragraph to understand fully the lament of teachers, English and non-English. Want examples anyway? Listen: "Pedro is always escape his classes because he was accompany his gang."

And for this you'll need a chair to fall back on:

"In the stillness of the night seven years ago I was agonizing—why? Because my mother was died."

Multiply these blunders dozen of times and you'll get a picture of what teachers put up with in their daily grammar classes. But is this only a deficiency or has there been a real deterioration in English in the Philippines? Aren't these examples more convincing than statistical conclusions? An objective proof to support the assertion of deterioration cannot be had. There has been no large scale testing to compare pre-war proficiency with post-war deficiency.

Proficiency? Did I hear myself say that? How much English need a Filipino have to be called proficient in that language? Perfection is impossible; approximation is the best we can hope for, approximation to the language habits of educated native speakers. To communicate ideas is the primary aim of language and so long as we can carry on social and business intercourse on both the national and then international scale, the aim is at least partially attained. Not to be overlooked though is the necessity of English skills with which to seek truth to broaden horizons in the academic world.

It is generally agreed there has been a deterioration. But why the decline now? Why in this generation in particular? To claim authority on the causes of degeneration is presumptuous. But a cursory look into our general educational problems reveal a good many of them. First is the decrease in the length of the daily school sessions. It should be borne in mind that our present day college students include for the most part those public school children who started school with the full imple-

mentation of the Educational Act of 1940. Among other changes, this ill-considered Act provided for the not-too-well loved "double single sessions" which reduced considerably the time for learning and using English from an average of "1600 minutes per week to 800 minutes in Grades I, II, and III; and from 1975 minutes to 1425 minutes in the intermediate level." Pupils since then have had to attend classes only in the afternoon. To complete this tragedy-comedy of educational errors "since the year 1945 the weekly 75 minutes of the precious time left for using English has been given over to the National Language course in Grades I to IV; 150 minutes in Grades V and VI." In short a Filipino child now enters high school after having studied English less than half the time his brother did before the war. This decrease in the number of class hours each day answers the question why graduation from elementary school now is roughly equivalent to completion of the pre-war third grade. And since his total experience with English is limited to the hours spent in class, you can see why the poor student now, the sacrificial lamb, deserves more sympathy than antagonism.

A very close second in point of time among the causes of present day inadequacy in English are the school problems concomittant to the last World War. Devastations intensified Philippine educational problems: razed school buildings, limited reading materials and lack of adequately trained teachers to cope with the unprecedented increase the school population. As a result, most if not all of our college students today, at one time or another, during their pre-high and high school studies were unwilling victims of these failing circumstances. The need of the day is not just a full rehabilitation of war damaged school buildings but the construction of additional ones to absorb all Filipino children of school age. Even today our educational finances seem helpless in the face of a tremendous backlog of school children awaiting admission in our public primary schools. Regardless of official limitations our schools have to resort to overcrowding or else turn away not just 300,000 children of school

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The USC Warriors' LINE-UP

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THE LINE-UP:

DIONISIO JAKOSALEM —

Captain — passboard hookshot specialty.

CHRISTOPHER LOCK —

The "mighty mite" of the Warriors: shoot-ingest forward of them all; his left-handed jumpshot and occasional lay-up shots are steady.

ANSELMO BRIONES —

Interscholastic player; a deadly manipulator under the shaded area, an ex-Diamond Gloves beware.

ERNESTO MORALES —

In spite of his size he is the top recovery man in the scuffles from under fire.

OCABA —

A former mainstay of the Cebu Technical School. When playing he is as cool as a cucumber.

CABREROS —

A ballhandler who can soce from outside. (A magnificent stint from CTS)

MAGLASANG —

The plastic man. He should learn more variety of shots.

ESTENZO —

A little poundage in his frame may put him in the limelight two years hence.

SOLON —

A playmaker too cool on a fast game.

REYNES —

A jumpshot artist. A valuable man against a zone formation.

REYES —

Know-how on pivot shots may place him on the level of Roehl Naturata of UAAP fame.

BARRIA —

A fighting heart and more playing time is what he needs. How about giving him a chance, Coach?

VALER —

A promising deadly shooter but needs a know-how in meeting a proper distribution of ball.

This, in a capsule, is a short pace of the Warriors' formation this year. Unless "they weep too much overspilled milk, they would wind up in meeting places." Whether they will eventually succeed is still a subject for conjectures. Good luck, Boys!

THE EXECUTION

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o'clock; eyes that from time to time glanced at watches and at the clock on the wall on the death chamber. Everything was happening as planned. No reprieve. God, how does it feel to be without hope?

Without hope. The walls moved towards him, wavering before him. His body froze, his legs hesitated to take another step: as though they already knew their future. The guards held his shoulders; their faces were blank. How many times had they escorted condemned criminals through this hall into the death chamber? Tomorrow, they will talk about it to their wives or friends.

Blank looks. People moving about carefully, as though afraid of breaking something. The priest was there; he looked at him kindly and put his hand on his shoulder. He whispered something. He had an ashen look on his face. How many times had he seen death but had never experienced it himself?

Now they strapped him to the huge iron chair. Cold. "I am cold," he thought. The doctor felt his pulse; the priest stood beside him. Now they left him alone. Faces were staring at him; they were thinking: "He is not going to outlast this moment." Someone looked at his watch, looked at the man at the electric switch. Luis' vision began to blur, a fog gathered in his mind. An ominous silence, except for the ticking of the clock on the wall and the undefined, unheard sound of running watches spelling out the passing of time, hovered in the room.

The Phone rang. The Director of Prisons took it up and listened in. At last he looked around and said: "Gentlemen, there is a reprieve," and, turning to the two
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Deterioration (Continued from page 16)

age every year but more. The choice seems to be between "half-bake" students and "illiterates". Common sense picks the former.

The third cause is the deterioration of language models. Before the war, many Filipino teachers learned their English at least partly from American models. Since the last of the noble Thomases has long since left our shores, to content ourselves with our own models was the only re-

course. But an imitator like a carbon copy is never quite as good as his model, his followers are less precise than he, and so on down the line unless something big is done to halt the inevitable decline. Nothing big has been done so far and now we face the expected decline.

Is it any small wonder, then, why our college students consider reading or writing in English an uphill climb?