BRIDGING RESEARCH AND PRACTICE IN LITERACY WORK AMONG MINORITY LANGUAGE GROUPS IN THE PHILIPPINES

Ma. Lourdes S. Bautista
De La Salle University, Manila
calsb@mail.dlsu.edu.ph

The paper presents the context in which literacy work is being done in the Philippines: extensive multilingualism, a large number of minority language groups, and varying estimates of the extent of basic and functional illiteracy. The work of the Summer Institute of Linguistics and the Education Research Program of the University of the Philippines in addressing the problem of illiteracy especially among minority language groups is then highlighted. The paper concludes with the lessons from both the theoretical and field aspects of literacy work: the appropriateness of the mother tongue as the initial language of literacy, the usefulness of a bridging program from vernacular literacy to national language literacy, the importance of a literate environment and community-based literacy projects in fostering literacy, and the need for political will to achieve the eradication of illiteracy.

Introduction

The eradication of illiteracy is one of the key components of the Philippines 2000 plan of the national government. It is therefore necessary to ask: How is the problem of illiteracy being addressed? What kind of research is being done in the area of literacy? How is research being brought to bear on literacy work in the field especially among minority language groups? In this paper I will first present the sociolinguistic situation of the Philippines as the context for literacy efforts. Then I will document the research and practice in marginal communities of two of the most active groups addressing the problem of literacy in the Philippines, the Summer Institute of Linguistics and the Education Research Program of the University of the Philippines. Reflection on their experience will pave the way for a consideration of lessons learned in promoting literacy among disadvantaged groups, which will form the concluding section of this paper.

The Philippine sociolinguistic situation

In 1990, the latest year for which Census figures are available, the Philippines had a population of 60.5 million speaking a large number of indigenous languages; by one account (Krauss 1992:6 citing Ethnologue 1988, as mentioned by Quakenbush 1997:6), it is 10th in the world in the number of indigenous languages spoken. The number of Philippine languages has been placed anywhere between 80...
to 163, the sliding number being an indication of the difficulty of using mutual intelligibility as a criterion for distinguishing dialects from languages. Eight of these languages have traditionally been called 'major languages' based on a ranking of the number of speakers; each of these languages now has one million or more mother tongue speakers. See Table 1.

Table 1
Major Mother Tongues of the Population
Censal Years 1960 and 1990

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Mother Tongue</th>
<th>1960</th>
<th>1990</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>27,087,685</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tagalog</td>
<td>5,694,072</td>
<td>21.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cebuano</td>
<td>6,529,882</td>
<td>24.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ilocano</td>
<td>3,158,560</td>
<td>11.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hiligaynon (Ilonggo)</td>
<td>2,817,314</td>
<td>10.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bicol</td>
<td>2,108,837</td>
<td>7.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leyte-Samar (Waray)</td>
<td>1,488,668</td>
<td>5.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pampango</td>
<td>875,531</td>
<td>3.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pangasinan</td>
<td>666,003</td>
<td>2.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>3,748,818</td>
<td>13.84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In 1990, the speakers of the eight major languages accounted for 86% of the population (Philippine Yearbook 1995). Three of the major languages — Tagalog (or Filipino) spoken by 28% as a first language, Cebuano spoken by 24%, and Ilocano spoken by 10% — are also regional lingua francas. Of the other languages, generally known as ‘minor languages’, 29 languages have at least 100,000 speakers, and 96 have at least 10,000 (Quakenbush 1997:6). Following Sibayan (1985:152), I will refer to groups that are not native speakers of the major languages as minority language groups or linguistic minorities.
Among the minority language groups are the indigenous cultural communities, sometimes referred to as the tribal Filipinos — communities living in the remote interiors of the big islands, and least influenced by Spanish and American colonization, and by Christianity or Islam. Their numbers have been placed at approximately six million.

The 1990 Census gives information only on mother tongue speakers and therefore does not include figures for speakers of English as a second language. However, a reputable survey group did a small-scale survey after the 1990 Census and placed the figures at 73% being able to read English, 59% being able to write in English, 74% being able to understand spoken English, and 56% being able to speak English (Social Weather Stations 1994).

The Filipino, then, 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 language problem of the Philippines, according to most Filipino sociolinguists, is the problem of reconciling the competing demands of ethnicity (embodied in an individual’s mother tongue or vernacular), nationalism (manifested in having and propagating a national language), and modernization (seen to be synonymous with using an international language). The 1986 Constitution declared Filipino as the national language, official language, and language of instruction; English as the other official language, until otherwise provided by law; the regional languages as the auxiliary official languages in the regions and as auxiliary media of instruction; and Spanish and Arabic as languages to be promoted on a voluntary and optional basis (see Bautista 1996 for an outline of the changes in the Constitutional provision and in the language of instruction policy over the years).

The 1995 UNESCO Statistical Yearbook provides the illiteracy rates for the Philippines in 1980 and 1990, and gives estimates for 1995. For the age group 15 years and over, in 1980, the total illiterate population numbered 4.6 million, or 16.7%, with women at 17.2% compared to men at 16.1%. The difference between the urban and rural populations was pronounced, with the rural illiteracy rate at 23.1% compared to the urban illiteracy rate at 6.9%. In 1990, the figures had improved dramatically: for the age group 15+, the illiterate population was placed at 2.3 million, with the total illiteracy rate at 6.4%; male illiteracy was at 6.0% and female illiteracy at 6.8%; the urban illiteracy rate was down to 2.7% while the rural illiteracy rate was at 10.3%. The estimates for 1995 for 15 year-olds and above put the illiterate population at 2.2 million (53% of whom would be female), and the illiteracy rate at 5.4%. See Table 2.

These figures appear to be unrealistically low, and the question must be asked as to how literacy was defined and how the figures were determined. Doronila & Acuña (1994: 2) of the Education Research Program of the University of the Philippines, giving higher rates of illiteracy compared to UNESCO’s figures,
Table 2
Illiterate Population 15 years and above (1980)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4,626,922</td>
<td>2,200,485</td>
<td>2,426,437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>753,247</td>
<td>310,429</td>
<td>442,818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>3,873,675</td>
<td>1,890,056</td>
<td>1,983,619</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,349,731</td>
<td>1,095,697</td>
<td>1,254,034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>500,063</td>
<td>211,186</td>
<td>288,077</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>1,849,668</td>
<td>883,711</td>
<td>965,957</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2,234,000</td>
<td>1,047,000</td>
<td>1,187,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


pointed to an important dimension of the problem: 'The illiteracy rate in the Philippines was established in 1989 at 10.2 percent, or about 6 million of the population. The functional illiteracy rate was pegged at 26.8 percent, or about 13 million of the population, 10 years old and above'. In a later publication (UP-ERP Research Team 1996:2), the discrepancy was spelled out: 'The gap of 16% between our basic and functional literacy rates suggests that basic literacy skills do not expand and become functional to people’s daily activities'. Still one more figure needs to be considered, the figure for the tribal Filipinos, the Filipinos living in the most remote and inaccessible areas of the country. According to the Literacy Coordinator of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, the non-governmental organization that works on the most sustained basis among the minority language groups
of the Philippines, the illiteracy rate for the country's six million ethnic (or cultural community) population has been placed at 75% (West 1993). At the same time, the Congressional Commission on Education (1991:11) underscored the fact that the functional literacy programs of the government and non-government organizations reach only a few illiterates; the estimate in 1989 was that these programs served only just a little over one percent of the estimated number of functional illiterates.

It is against this backdrop that literacy work with minority language communities is taking place. I will focus on two groups that, in my opinion, best exemplify the attempt to bring theory into practice in literacy work.

The experience of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL)

SIL is an international, private, volunteer agency that has been in the Philippines since 1953 working with indigenous cultural communities. SIL volunteers live in the cultural communities, learning their languages and cultures. In partnership with the community, they prepare orthographies and dictionaries, implement literacy programs, facilitate production of vernacular literature, assist with health and other community development projects, publish linguistic and anthropological research, and translate literature of high moral value. In the Philippines, SIL has published over 800 titles in 75 Philippine languages, researched 90 Philippine languages, and is currently involved in some 50 language projects (Johnson 1994; SIL 1996 Annual Report).

The link between research and practice in literacy work is seen clearly in SIL's planning framework (West 1991):

Step 1 - Research: This is a two-year period of intensive language and culture study together with research on demography, language and identity, literacy rates, educational facilities, health factors, economic factors, social structure, traditional religion, moral values, aspirations, and felt needs.

Step 2 - Goals and strategies: These are developed after considering the following factors: a) the particular segment of the population to target — men, women, youth, children, civic leaders, etc.; b) the focus of activities — a literacy program, promoting vernacular reading, a health program, etc.; c) involvement of the local community.

Step 3 - Activities: These are developed to implement the strategies and involve considerations of motivation, personnel, materials, and funding.

From its extensive experience, SIL has evolved literacy programs that address the needs of different types of cultural communities, as follows (West 1991; Porter 1992):

Among highly literate groups (those with 65% or above literacy as in some Cordillera communities) — the strategy is to produce literature to test the orthography and to give practice in reading the vernacular, and
also, if needed, to prepare basic literacy materials for those in the population who need them.

Among semi-literate groups (those with 30 - 65% literacy rate as in other Cordillera communities) — the strategy is to prepare primers and other pedagogical materials (readers, song books, health books), to develop a curriculum for pre-schools, to act as a catalyst for non-formal education classes, to teach small adult literacy classes.

Among under-literate groups (those with less than 30% literacy, as in the Negrito communities of Luzon) — the strategy first of all is to build motivation for learning to read and write and then to serve as a catalyst for programs for school-age children and for adults: for children, by directly providing a teacher and getting a school started, which can then be turned over to the Department of Education, Culture and Sports (DECS), or by setting up vernacular pre-schools and providing simple work-sheets, the rationale being to prepare minority language children to compete in the school system; for adults, by providing flexible classes and schedules that accommodate the lifestyle of a semi-nomadic people.

In terms of school-based literacy work, SIL’s First Language Component-Bridging Program (FLC-BP) deserves notice; it is a program that SIL wishes to pursue in more communities with the aid of DECS. The program was first tried out in Hungduan, Ifugao in 1985 to address the problem of poor test performance of grade school children in that area. As designed by the SIL team (Hohulin 1993), in cooperation with DECS, the program adds one hour of first language instruction to the Grade 1 and 2 curriculum to provide the children with a ‘bridge’ from their mother tongue to the two languages of instruction, Filipino and English. During the additional hour of instruction, the children are introduced to concepts in their mother tongue that they will encounter as concepts and words in the Filipino, English, and Math classes. Alternatively, the first 15 minutes of the 40-minute period in, for example, Social Studies, can be devoted to a discussion of a concept in the mother tongue, and the rest of the period can discuss the concept in Filipino, the medium of instruction for Social Studies. It should be pointed out that the FLC-BP is a transition program, a program that bridges from the home language to the school languages, and not a vernacular education program.

The formal testing that was built into the pilot project showed the experimental groups performing significantly better than the control groups. In the years since 1987, the classes using the FLC-BP have not had counterpart control classes and therefore no statistics for comparison purposes are available. But, based on SIL reports, the feedback from teachers, parents, and pupils consistently shows that the program works.

The success of the original program prompted the Nueva Vizcaya State Institute of Technology (NVSIT) to include the FLC methodology as part of a course in the Master of Education program with specialization in Language, Reading, and Numeracy (Baguingan 1995). Workshops organized by SIL and
NVSIT have been conducted in the Cordilleras to train teachers in the FLC methodology and to prepare instructional materials in the vernacular. The methodology is now being used not only in the lower grades but also in remediation programs in the upper grades. However, the FLC-BP occasionally meets resistance from some administrators who believe that the vernacular is not a suitable language of instruction or who believe that a standard curriculum must be followed in all schools.6

With regard to adult literacy programs, SIL is guided by the following principles (West 1993:2): Programs are long term because it takes time to motivate participants, to train teachers, to develop materials, and it takes time to learn how to read and write. Programs are community programs; local people decide where classes will be held, who will be trained as teachers, who will be included in the classes; furthermore, teachers and eventually supervisors are members of the cultural community. The local language is used; basic reading and writing are first taught in the vernacular with provision for transition to a language of wider communication. The programs use materials relevant to the people’s life and livelihood concerns and materials that instill pride in their culture. The programs build on each other, following basic literacy with fluency classes, leadership training, health education, etc.

SIL is prepared to stay in a community until the project has become self-sustaining, that is, it ‘has gained sufficient momentum in three vital areas ... necessary for on-goingness: (1) motivation and general interest, (2) materials production, and (3) trained personnel’ (Porter 1990:37). In 1996, for instance, SIL considered its involvement among the Botolan Sambal people and the Umiray Dumeget people complete — two projects that were begun in the early years of SIL in the Philippines, i.e., in the mid-fifties.7

The experience of the Education Research Program (ERP) of the University of the Philippines (UP)

The ERP is one of four programs of the Center for Integrative and Development Studies of the University of the Philippines, a research unit created in 1985 ‘with the mandate of mobilizing the multidisciplinary expertise of the UP in search of new paradigms, policies, strategies, and programs that will help the nation overcome constraints to its development’ (UP-CIDS Chronicle 1996). It is understandable, then, why an important concern of the ERP is illiteracy.

A major research project of the ERP focused on the elements and factors constituting the dynamics of functional literacy in marginal communities of the Philippines. Commissioned by the Literacy Coordinating Council of the Philippines and the Bureau of Non-Formal Education of DECS, the project was accomplished within the time frame January 1993-February 1994, with field work lasting from October 15 to December 15, 1993, and it produced a monograph series of 16 volumes entitled Learning from Life: An Ethnographic Study of Functional Literacy in Fourteen Philippine Communities, by Maria Luisa C. Doronila and Jasmin Espiritu Acuña.8 Its ethnographic approach included document review,
individual interviews of participants and non-participants of non-formal literacy training, group interviews of community members and officials, life histories of individuals who became literate on their own, literacy tests, and psycho-social scales to obtain the needed information.

Functional literacy and literate practice in the Philippines was studied in the context of marginal communities (marginal in terms of access to basic services and economic opportunities, and in terms of participation in economic and political governance), classified by ‘lifestyle’ or cultural life into six categories:

(1) traditional (a community of sea nomads in Tawi-Tawi);
(2) transitional (a tribal group in Bukidnon practicing swidden agriculture, a tribal group in Ifugao practicing rice terracing agriculture, a tent city in Pampanga, a resettlement area in Zambales);
(3) Muslim Filipino (a municipality in Lanao del Sur);
(4) marginal Christian majority (a hill monocrop (sugar) community in Negros Occidental, two lowland farming and fishing communities in Oriental Mindoro, a lowland farming community in Sorsogon);
(5) urban poor (two poor communities in Metro Manila); and
(6) developmental (one organized and participatory community each in Quezon and Rizal).

The study examined how communities across the different community types viewed and used traditional knowledge (derived mainly from oral traditional and consisting mainly of practices, beliefs, norms, attitudes, values and world views) and literate knowledge (generally learned in school, from printed material or requiring some form of reading or writing) and how they made or were making the passage from an oral tradition to a literate tradition. It found that the process could take place more easily if the community folk used their own language and coined new word combinations to express new concepts, consistently encouraged literate practices, combined traditional and literate knowledge into new forms, and incorporated characteristics of their oral expression into the written mode (Doronila Forthcoming, 262).

The study also considered the question of the acquisition, retention, and loss of literacy skills. Doronila and Acuña (1994:88) found that in general, ‘where the medium of instruction is familiar to the learners, literacy acquisition occurs earlier (in the second semester of Grade 1) than predicted by DECS (at Grade 3); where the language is foreign, it occurs later than predicted (at Grade 4)’. Retention of literacy skills was ascribed to: (1) involvement in community activities where literacy skills are practiced and new ones are learned; (2) continuous application of these skills, and (3) expansion of these skills because these are required by their work and other community activities (Doronila Forthcoming, 263). The study concluded that reversion to illiteracy happens when literacy skills cannot be used in the daily lives of learners, and when reading materials and broadcast media are unavailable.
Doronila’s findings have been substantiated and extended in another ERP study, the one done by Bernardo 1995 on the cognitive consequences of literacy.9 Bernardo used a quasi-experimental design to determine whether there were differences in the thinking processes of formal literates, non-formal literates, and illiterates in five marginal communities included in the original study. A noteworthy finding is that there are no direct effects of literacy on the cognitive processes of adults; instead, the cognitive consequences of literacy are indirect and are mediated by literate practices in the communities to which the adults belong. Furthermore, the effects of literacy on thinking are not global but specific only to those cognitive skills associated with activities which incorporate literate practices. Thus, according to Bernardo, it is not enough to make individuals literate; what is needed is literate communities where literate practices are an integral part of community life and activities. This was most obvious in one research site where community members have organized themselves to secure their interests as fisherfolk. This organization holds discussion sessions, conducts training workshops, publishes a community newsletter, and runs a day-care center. These activities incorporate literate practices, which in turn have transformed the nature of community activities and community members themselves. In the words of Bernardo (p. 137), ‘At the risk of oversimplifying, the flow does not seem to be from literacy to changes in thought to community development. Instead, it seems to flow from community development to literacy to changes in thought’.

The ethnographic and basic research of the ERP has been extensive, producing comprehensive baseline data and important analyses. The question is: How has the research been used? One way has been to incorporate the research results into the framework of the DECS-Bureau of Non-Formal Education/UP-ERP Research and Development Program for functional education and literacy, continuing education, and capacity building, which has received assistance from the Asian Development Bank. Thus, the outputs from the studies have been used in (1) preparing a package of instruments for Rapid Community Assessment and training at the community level, (2) developing a curriculum, including a taxonomy of literacy-numeracy skills, for each community type, (3) preparing instructional materials, including the development and field-testing of exemplar modules, that build on existing literacy materials and the research outputs of the ethnographic study, and (4) conducting additional basic research on the consequences of literacy and on indigenous learning systems. Eight research projects done within the framework (including the one of Bernardo described above) have been collated in Studies on Functional Education and Literacy: A Handbook and User’s Guide (UP-ERP Research Team 1996) for research dissemination conferences of the Bureau of Non-Formal Education.

In addition, the UP-ERP itself, in collaboration with the municipal government, DECS, and the Literacy Coordinating Council, is implementing a comprehensive education and community development program in Valencia, Negros Oriental (a majority language community) which has four components: (1) agricultural development and livelihood training — integrating education and literacy in enhancing agricultural productivity; (2) eco-tourism development — using liter-
acy to preserve tourist spots in Valencia and to promote them among local and foreign tourists; (3) social services and ID system — encouraging the use of the ID among residents to be able to avail of social services, and orienting people on voters’ education, basic environmental education, primary health care education; and (4) community resource development — building capability among local people to run their own education and community projects. At the same time, the UP-ERP is working with UP College Baguio and DECS to enrich education programs in the Cordillera Administrative Region, specifically in the provinces of Ifugao and the Mt. Province (minority language areas), through the inclusion of indigenous knowledge in the formal and non-formal curricula. The team is collecting research materials on the Cordilleras, systematically validating traditional knowledge according to various classification systems, and incorporating such knowledge in the curricula. Thus far, several modules in Social Studies and in Science for use in elementary and secondary schools have been prepared incorporating basic information on the Cordilleras, indigenous terracing technology, and the social organization of terracing and the rituals associated with it. Pilot testing of the new curriculum and instructional materials has been planned for school year 1999-2000 (Briefing kit for field researchers 1998).

Conclusion

A concrete finding of the studies is the appropriateness of vernacular literacy. The SIL and ERP experience indicates that for minority language groups, the language of literacy should be the mother tongue, because literacy in a familiar language is easier to achieve than literacy in an unfamiliar language. This too is the recommendation of the Congressional Commission on Education (1991:14): ‘The home language shall be used as the language of learning from Grade 1 up through Grade 3, with Filipino gradually becoming the medium from Grade 4 through high school’. Thus, primers and readers incorporating local folktales and customs and traditions should be prepared for the smaller language groups and preferably by the community members themselves. The use of the mother tongue as the initial language of literacy, together with the requirement of producing indigenous learning materials, builds cultural self-esteem and makes the symbolic statement that the mother tongue is a suitable vehicle for the transmission of knowledge and therefore is worthy of respect. For practical purposes, there will perhaps be need for bridging to the regional language or the national language, which is the language of wider communication and the language of a sustainable supply of reading material. Bridging from the home language to Filipino is relatively easy — compared to the great difficulty in bridging to English — because of the similarities in the phonology and phonotactics of the local languages. In this light, the strengths of the First Language Component Bridging Program are evident and therefore its adoption should be encouraged in marginal communities.

The resistance of some school administrators to the use of the vernacular as a bridging medium for early literacy because it is ‘not suitable’ for instruction is regrettable. It is apparent that this attitude is shared by many people who believe that to be educated means to be able to talk about concepts in English, a kind of
‘language magic’ where cognitive skills are assumed to be inextricably linked to the language used in acquiring and executing the skills. The result is that a large block of the literate population, i.e., those formally educated, have difficulty reading and writing in their native language and the national language. This attitude, which is quite widespread, of course has implications for minority languages, which are ascribed marginal status, particularly as they are not perceived as having a legitimate place in literacy practice. Even 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 often times only a bridge to literacy in a regional language or Filipino or English.

The ERP studies have shown that motivation for literacy in marginal communities is seldom intrinsic, i.e., that one wants to read and write because it is empowering in some abstract way to be able to read and write. Instead the motivation is extrinsic — it usually comes from a literate environment, that is, an environment in which being able to read and write allows one to participate in the economic, cultural, and political activities of the community and, at the least, to avoid exploitation. The literate environment, in such an instance, includes not only broadcast media and reading materials for instruction and leisure, but, more importantly, community development projects and activities that incorporate literate practices. In marginal communities, then, the task becomes more difficult because promoting literacy is not just a matter of establishing and sustaining a literacy program but a matter of enhancing the community’s capacity to organize for development, advocacy, and reform. The importance of being organized, and organized not simply around an occupational or social basis but around an issue or concern, is thus highlighted. Both the ERP and SIL studies show the need for community-based literacy projects that show continuity between learning and earning, between school and life.

There may be a difference, however, in the driving force for literacy acquisition among the groups served by the ERP team and those by SIL. ‘Pride in our culture’ seems to be a stronger force on the part of indigenous cultural communities than in other marginal groups, in which more pragmatic concerns are more salient. Indeed, communities are not identical and their exposure to so-called global interests might vary. The drive to preserve one’s cultural heritage might be the foremost concern in some communities while other communities might be all too willing to give up that heritage.

The happy development for the country as a whole is that the experience of SIL and the ERP was incorporated in the 1997 Blueprint for Action of the Literacy Coordinating Council, the body created by law in 1991 to provide policy and program directions for literacy endeavors in the Philippines. The principles on which the Blueprint is based include

- preference for community-based projects which means that literacy programs should be rooted in the needs of the people who actively participate in the planning and management of literacy-related activities;
- stronger partnership among national and local government agencies,
non-government organizations, and other important sectors of society; integration of literacy in ongoing development programs or projects rather than ‘selling’ it as a direct intervention; and intensified social mobilization and advocacy to emphasize that literacy and education is the responsibility of all sectors (Blueprint for Action 1997, Foreword).

Needed to actualize the Blueprint for Action (with its research-based policies and strategies to achieve literacy) in the marginal communities (with their aspirations for a better life through development) are political will and forceful action by government, non-government, and people’s organizations. There is some evidence that the impetus for literacy has reached the level of the local government: The promotion of literacy will be included in the performance audit of local government units. And the Annual Literacy Congress of the Literacy Coordinating Council will feature the participation of provincial governors and city/municipal mayors. It can therefore be said that signs abound that research and practice are being bridged in literacy work among minority language and other marginal groups in the country.

NOTES

1 A revised version of the paper read at the Conference on Literacy and Writing Systems in Asia sponsored by the Center for Advanced Study of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and the Language Education Center of Chonnam National University, held on May 1-2, 1998 at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. I would like to thank Steve Quakenbush, Anne West, Jenny Golden, Catherine Young, and Grace Tan of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, Allan Bernardo and Erwin Vargas of the Education Research Program, and Rosa Sese and Norma Salcedo of the Literacy Coordinating Council for their assistance in the preparation of this paper. I would also like to thank Braj Kachru and Larry Smith for their moral support.


3 Using a total of 110 minor languages, Sibayan (1985:155) found 34 minority language groups being bilingual in Tagalog, 23 bilingual in Cebuano, 26 bilingual in Ilocano, 12 bilingual in Hiligaynon (Ilonggo), 10 bilingual in Bicol, 2 bilingual in Pampango, 2 in Samar-Leyte (Waray), and 1 in Pangasinan.

4 There is some discussion on two points. The first point is whether Filipino is equal to Tagalog plus borrowings from other Philippine and foreign languages or whether Filipino is ‘the common national language [still to be developed and formally adopted] to be known as Filipino’ in the 1973 Constitution, implying a language that was still in the process of becoming. The second point is whether the term ‘regional languages’ refers to all the indigenous languages other than Filipino or only to the major languages used as lingua francas in particular regions, e.g. Cebuano and Ilocano. The first interpretation, i.e., that the term refers
to the different indigenous languages, is found in the 1974 Implementing Guidelines for the Bilingual Education Policy (DECS Order 25, s. 1974) which states that ‘in Grades I and II, the vernacular used in the locality or place where the school is located shall be the auxiliary medium of instruction’. However, the 1987 Bilingual Education Policy (DECS Order 52 and 54, s. 1987), points to the use of the major vernaculars [emphasis mine], left undefined, as languages for initial schooling and literacy.

5 The principles underlying the program, according to the main proponent (Hohulin 1993:2), are: (1) the child’s first language should be used as an instrument for teaching and learning in Grades I and II; (2) the child’s cultural model of the world should be used for helping him to process perceptual information, understand concepts, and form new ones; (3) new concepts and skills should be built on existing knowledge structures rather than bypassing them using a rote-memorization methodology.

6 An encouraging development is the position of the current Director of the Bureau of Elementary Education of DECS that, under the principle of devolution, schools are free to try out innovations in the curriculum provided the Minimum Learning Competencies are met (Dr. Lidinila Santos, personal communication).

7 SIL received the Ramon Magsaysay Award for International Understanding in 1973, in recognition of its ‘inspired outreach to non-literate ethnic people ... enhancing their participation in the larger community of man’.

8 Doronila’s book Contexts, Constraints and Possibilities of Literacy: An Ethnographic Study of Functional Literacy in Marginal Philippine Communities (in press), a shorter version of Volume I (The Main Report), was selected as the First Prize Winner of the 1994 UNESCO International Literacy Award because of its innovative and multi-dimensional perspective of literacy, its exploration of the social meanings of literacy in different contexts from an ethnographic point of view, its interdisciplinarity, its approach to needs assessment that challenges the traditional ‘mapping of illiteracy,’ its analytical conclusions and recommendations, and over all, because of its high relevance to other countries.

9 This study won the 1996 UNESCO International Literacy Research Award. The citation highlighted ‘its innovative investigation of the effects of literacy acquisition, the generation of a new perspective on formal and non-formal literacy practices, the in-depth and critical analysis of the research findings and the relevance it entails for different cultural contexts’.

10 I owe the observation given in this paragraph to Allan Bernardo.

11 The difference among communities in the source of their driving force for literacy acquisition was brought to my attention by Allan Bernardo.
REFERENCES


Briefing kit for field researchers. January 1998. Enrichment of the education programs in the Cordillera Administrative Region through the incorporation of usable indigenous knowledge in the formal and non-formal curricula. A DECS-CAR/UP Collaborative Project. (Manuscript.)


PORTER, D. 1990. SIL literacy programs in the Philippines: Where we came from and where we are going. Notes on Literacy 61:1.55-61.
BAUTISTA: BRIDGING RESEARCH AND PRACTICE 217


UP-CIDS Chronicle. July-September 1996. Activities of the Programs/Projects of the University of the Philippines-Center for Integrative and Development Studies.


