

**THE STATUS OF IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 1987  
POLICY ON BILINGUAL EDUCATION  
IN CEBUANO AND HILIGAYNON  
TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS**

**Gloria G. Fuentes**

*University of St. La Salle, Bacolod City*

**1. INTRODUCTION**

**1.1. Preliminaries**

In 1973, the Department of Education issued Department Order No. 9 which stated that the National Board of Education supported the policy of developing a bilingual nation. Since then the Bilingual Education Policy, popularly known as BEP, has been in implementation for the past 25 years.

When the 1987 Constitution was ratified, the Education Department revised the BEP and came up with the 1987 Policy on Bilingual Education. This policy has essentially the same provisions as the 1974 policy, except for some additional provisions such as giving to the tertiary institutions the task of spearheading the intellectualization of Filipino (Gonzalez & Sibayan, 1988).

As stated in the implementing guidelines, the BEP should be evaluated regularly. Thus in 1986, the Bilingual Education Policy had its first summative evaluation conducted by a team from the Linguistic Society of the Philippines. One of the subsidiary studies was that of Segovia, which looked the implementation of the Bilingual Education Policy at the tertiary level (Gonzalez & Sibayan, 1988).

The present study serves to address the need for an on-going evaluation process. The researcher, in her review of related studies, has not come across a study focusing on the extent of the BEP implementation at the tertiary level since the 1986 study of Segovia. Hence, this study is a follow up of Segovia's study but is limited to the Cebuano (Cebu City and Dumaguete City) and Hiligaynon (Iloilo City and Negros Occidental) tertiary schools.

Segovia's study was based on the 1974 Bilingual Education Policy. This study, however, has the 1987 BEP as its basis. Some variables in the earlier study were not included in this study; instead, English and Filipino language proficiency levels (in Writing and Reading Comprehension) of both freshman and senior education students, language use in classrooms, and the attitudes of the parents toward the BEP were added.

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### **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

This study aims to determine the status of implementation of the 1987 Policy on Bilingual Education at the tertiary level in three non-Tagalog areas: Cebu and Dumaguete, Iloilo, and Negros Occidental. Specific questions were formulated for implementing and non-implementing schools. However, this study was able to address only the questions for non-implementing schools since all respondent schools claimed no implementation. Thus, there were only three questions that were addressed:

- 1.2.a What are the concepts and perceptions of administrators, teachers, and students about the BEP and what are their attitudes towards it?
- 1.2.b Is there a difference between the findings of the present study with regard to the Hiligaynon respondents' concepts and perceptions about the BEP when compared with those of the 1986 study?
- 1.2.c What is/are the language/s used in the classrooms?

### **1.3 Scope and Limitations of the Study**

Since the study covered four provinces — Cebu, Negros Oriental, Negros Occidental, and Iloilo — travel imposed some limitations on the data collection procedures. The researcher had to contend with those who were available during the scheduled visit and the observations focused only on teacher talk.

In the interview, the term Filipino was defined as Tagalog-based. This was explained to the respondents only after they asked, "What Filipino?" and they explained that their answers would depend on what Filipino the researcher was referring to.

In some schools, only five instead of six respondents were interviewed because the positions of chairperson and dean were held by only one person.

In the comparison of the 1986 and 1999 results, only the Iloilo-Hiligaynon group was included. The results of the Cebuano group could not be compared because the earlier study involved other Cebuano speaking regions and desegregated data was not available for the Cebu sample. Furthermore, the comparison of findings was done using percentages only because the number of respondents in the studies was not the same.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

The research design was patterned after that of Segovia's 1986 study. The study made use of the survey method to obtain the data. The results are presented either qualitatively or quantitatively.

## 2.1 Sampling

The present study included all the nine schools of the Hiligaynon group and eight schools of the Cebuano group of the 1986 study. However, only seven Cebu schools were actually surveyed because one of the respondent schools was no longer operating. As for the additional eight schools in Negros Occidental, all tertiary schools with teacher training programs in Bacolod City were included in the study together with two other schools from the neighboring cities of Silay and Bago. There were a total of 24 participating schools.

For the survey of perceptions and attitudes toward the BEP, six respondents from each school were interviewed: two school administrators (the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and the Head of the Social Science Department or the unit offering the social science subjects taught in Filipino); two faculty members (one from the Social Science and one from the Natural Science Department); and two student leaders (Chairperson/President of the Student Council and the Editor-in-chief of the student publication). The study also included classroom observations where four schools from each area of coverage, two private and two public schools, were observed. Four classes from each school were observed — two social science classes, one math class, and one natural science class.

## 2.2 Materials

### 2.2.a Instruments

Since the study was primarily a follow-up of Segovia's 1986 evaluation, the researcher used her instruments: 1) Guide for Documentary Analysis and Accompanying Instructions; 2) Interview Guide for Administrators and Faculty of Implementing Schools with Accompanying Instructions; 3) Interview Guide for Students with Accompanying Instructions; 4) Interview Guide for Administrators and Faculty of Non-Implementing Schools with Accompanying Instructions. Since all the respondent schools were non-implementing, only instruments number 3 and 4 were used.

### 2.2.b Procedure for Data Collection

To find out the concepts and perceptions of administrators and teachers about the Bilingual Education Policy of non-implementing schools, the researcher conducted interviews which were recorded for analysis. The interviews with students were mainly on their experiences and perceptions on the use of English and Filipino as languages of instruction and the effects of the BEP on the quality of their education.

To find out the language use of teachers in the classrooms of non-implementing schools, classroom observations were conducted to validate the claims made during the interview. The researcher observed the classes for at least 30 minutes from the beginning of the class session. Observations focused only on teacher-talk and these sessions were taped for analysis.

### 2.3 Data Analysis

Data from the interviews were categorized and simple frequency counts were set up in distribution tables; frequencies were converted into percentages. With regard to classroom observations, the tape recordings of teacher-talk were analyzed using Bellack's classroom discourse categories: structuring, soliciting, responding, and, reacting (Coulthard, 1977).

Lastly, with regards to identifying the dominant language in code-switches, transcription was again not necessary because the dominant language, which was often English, was not difficult to identify. The local language was frequently in words or phrases only (or tags).

## 3. FINDINGS

Since the results of the survey showed that all respondent schools were non-implementing, there were only three questions that were addressed:

- 1.a What are the concepts and perceptions of the school heads, faculty members, and students about the BEP and their attitudes towards it?
- 1.b Is there a difference between the findings of the present study with regard to the respondents' concepts and perceptions of the BEP and those of the 1986 study?
2. What is/are the language/s used in the classrooms of non-implementing schools?

**3.1 *On the extent of BEP implementation.*** Twenty-four schools surveyed revealed that they did not implement the Bilingual Education Policy. These schools were non-implementing in the sense that:

1. There were no on-going programs for the implementation of the policy. English was the only recognized medium of instruction with the other languages as supplementary only as expressed during the interview.
2. Conferences/seminars/lectures were conducted mostly in English except during special occasions such as the *Linggo ng Lahi*.
3. There were no institutional memoranda that specifically instructed the faculty members to implement the policy. Although in some schools the teachers claimed that the administration appreciated any initiatives from them concerning the implementation of the policy, the researcher could not consider this as compliance with the government's bilingual program because of the absence of concrete programs. Having one or two teachers using Filipino was not implementation of the policy.

All respondents during the interview confirmed the status of implementation. Comparing the results of the present study involving nine Iloilo-Hiligaynon schools with those of the 1986 study, the status of implementation was better then because, when these schools were first surveyed, five of them claimed to be implementing the bilingual program. There were many reasons cited, but it was the lack of strong support and campaign from the government that was most frequently given.

**3.2 *On teachers' contributions to the implementation of the BEP.*** It is obvious from the results of the 1999 survey that since 1986, there has been no progress in the following aspects of BEP implementation:

1. teachers who use Filipino as medium of instruction
2. teachers who prepare materials in Filipino
3. teachers who publish scholarly articles in Filipino
4. teachers and administrators who write theses and dissertations in Filipino
5. conferences/lectures/seminars conducted regularly in Filipino

In Cebu and Negros Occidental, not one has been reported in any of the above areas. The Iloilo group has at least one teacher who conducts his social science classes and prepares materials in Filipino. This was also reflected in the 1986 results.

**3.3 *On language/s used in school publications.*** Again not much has happened with regard to the role of Filipino in education. In the case of language/s used in school papers, out of 24 schools, 18 claimed to have Filipino sections in their school publications. However, when asked for the percentage of the paper that is in Filipino, not one gave a percentage of more than 15%. This shows that the inclusion of a Filipino section in the school paper seems to be more of doing what is "politically correct" than appreciation of the language. This result has been observed, too, in the comparison of the responses in the 1986 and 1999 studies involving the Iloilo-Hiligaynon respondents.

The results of the study showed that Cebuanos are generally less positive than Hiligaynons. This was shown by the smaller difference between the percentages of the positive and negative answers when compared with those of the Hiligaynons. Particularly, this was revealed in the responses to questions regarding:

- a) Filipino as a language of unity and national identity
- b) Being a nationalist and facility in Filipino
- c) BEP and the cause of nationalism
- d) Use of Filipino as medium of instruction in math and science
- e) Resistance to the use of Filipino as medium of instruction among administrators, faculty, and students

**3.4 *On Filipino as a language of unity and national identity.*** The majority accepted Filipino as a language of unity and language identity because they believed that many Filipinos now have competence in the language. Those who disagreed expressed the perception that Filipino is synonymous to Tagalog. However, Cebuanos still did not think of Filipino as an appropriate language of unity and national identity. Comparing the responses of the Iloilo-Hiligaynon group in the present study with those in the 1986 survey, it was shown that they have remained positive to the idea.

**3.5 *On being a nationalist and having facility in Filipino.*** Ninety per cent of the respondents believed that they were nationalistic despite their lack of competence in Filipino. Considering the trend among Cebuano respondents, it was not surprising that 100% said Yes to the question. They explained that language was not a measure of one's nationalism. Similar results were observed in comparing the responses of the 1986 and the 1999 Iloilo-Hiligaynon respondents.

**3.6 *On BEP and the cause of nationalism.*** A majority of the respondents (84%) in all three groups, Cebuanos, Ilonggos, and Negrenses, thought that the BEP could help advance the cause of nationalism. However, 33% of the Cebuanos believed otherwise, and this percentage was much higher than the 8% and 9% of Ilonggos and Negrenses, respectively. The figures show Cebuanos being consistently less positive than Hiligaynons. Although the majority said Yes, they still believed that the BEP implementation could not guarantee the development of nationalism; it could only help. Unlike in 1986, where 44% said Yes and 37% of the Iloilo-Hiligaynon respondents were uncertain, the 1999 study showed a very clear margin between the Yes and No responses — 92% and 8% respectively.

Filipino is still not acceptable as a medium of instruction for both Hiligaynons and Cebuanos. That Cebuanos are less positive than Hiligaynons in their attitudes is shown in their responses to the questions on medium of instruction too.

**3.7 *On Filipino as a medium of instruction in college math and science.*** Seventy-two per cent of the respondents believed that it was not possible yet for Filipino to become the medium of instruction in college math and science. If some Hiligaynons found the idea acceptable, none of the Cebuanos did. The problem with vocabulary which could be attributed to the lack of teaching materials in Filipino was the most commonly given reason. The Iloilo-Hiligaynon respondents have not changed their belief that Filipino was not an appropriate medium of instruction in college math and science.

**3.8 *On suggestions regarding language of instruction.*** The results regarding other options for the language of instruction show the acceptance of educational institutions of code-switching. English was still preferred as the language of instruction but for the respondents, code-switching in English, the local language, and Filipino is better. In 1986, the suggestions of the Ilonggos revealed English as the only preferred language in the classroom. In the present study, however, the Ilonggo respondents believed that code-switching is better than English.

**3.9 *On the resistance to the use of Filipino among administrators/faculty members/students.*** A majority of the respondents expressed no resistance to the use of Filipino as medium of instruction except the Cebuanos; 72% of them expressed resistance. The comparison of the 1986 and 1999 results showed a change in the attitudes of Hiligaynons from negative to positive.

**3.10 *On the reasons for resistance to the use of Filipino as medium of instruction.*** The results are quite expected because of the current status of English in Philippine society. The most frequently given reasons were: 1) the need for mastery in English to succeed in one's career; 2) the lack of teaching materials in Filipino; 3) the lack of teachers competent in Filipino. The Ilonggo respondents of the present study no longer considered lack of competent teachers in Filipino as the primary reason, unlike in 1986 when 81% of them believed that this was a major problem. Instead, lack of teaching materials in Filipino was the number one reason of the 1999 Ilonggo respondents for their resistance.

Regarding competence in English and Filipino, responses have revealed the dominance of English in the society. Although students' competence in Filipino was perceived by the majority to be better than their English competence, it was not considered an advantage as far as increasing their chances of improving their lives was concerned. English was still considered as a significant factor in achieving success in one's profession. The improvement in the perception of Filipino competence is not surprising considering the increasing popularity of Filipino, which may be attributed to media. Filipino shows now are popular based on the significant increase in the number of such shows. It is, however, noteworthy that many of the respondents thought that it was more of confidence than pride that they got from their English competence. The respondents in the 1986 and 1999 surveys had almost similar answers where perception of English competence being a necessary weapon in the battle for success was shown.

**3.11 *On the BEP and college graduates.*** The respondents were divided on this issue. The percentage of the non-accepting group is only one per cent more than the accepting group — 48% and 47% respectively. The reasons often cited by those who did not support the idea that the BEP produced better college graduates was the belief that it did not address the need of the graduates to develop competence in English, which implied that "better college graduates" should be proficient in English because it was important in one's success. This is understandable because it cannot be denied that English has remained socially and economically rewarding in Philippine society. Again, there were more Cebuanos who disagreed than Hiligaynons. The results of the present study involving the Iloilo-Hiligaynon respondents showed a positive change in the perception of the respondents when compared with those in 1986. A majority negative response was given in the 1986 survey.

**3.12 *On the likely outcomes of BEP implementation.*** The responses to the question regarding the most likely outcomes of BEP implementation show the concept of Filipino as having a more symbolic function — symbol of national identity. The respondents chose: 1) faster development of Filipino; 2) inculcation of nationalist values through the use of Filipino as medium of instruction in social science classes; and 3) improvement of both English and Filipino competence among students. The third choice is

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at least related to the instrumental advantage of the BEP. Again, Cebuanos have a different perception, particularly in their third choice: “the improvement of Filipino but deterioration of English.” This is a more negative perception of the BEP compared to the first two choices. Comparing the results of the Iloilo-Hiligaynon respondents in 1986 and 1999, it was observed that almost similar choices were reported in both studies.

**3.13 *On the language/s used in the classroom.*** The results of classroom observations showed that all teachers who were observed did their structuring in English. Ninety-six per cent of the lectures were in English and only 4% code-switching – in English and the local language. The use of code-switching was observed to occur usually when giving real-life experiences as examples. In other instances, code-switching was only in the form of tags. Similar behavior was observed during soliciting, responding, and reacting moves: English when it was about the lesson and code-switching or the local language when it was not.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the above findings, the study revealed a failure in the implementation of the Bilingual Education Policy among Cebuano and Hiligaynon tertiary institutions. Developing competence in English is the main objective of the Cebuano and Hiligaynon tertiary institutions and the BEP is perceived as a non-contributing factor to the accomplishment of this goal. This situation is further confirmed by the results of classroom observation which showed English being the main medium of instruction in practically all subjects.

The Bilingual Education Policy was formulated to address the language needs of Filipinos. Like any other developing nation whose one concern is to create a common nationwide, ethnic and cultural identity through a national language (Fishman, 1968), the Philippines has chosen the Filipino language to fulfill this need. English, on the other hand, has been identified as the language needed “to meet the needs of the country in the community of nations” (DECS Order No. 52, s 1987). Based on the findings of the study, Filipino is now acceptable as a language of unity and a symbol of national identity even among Cebuanos, whose resistance has always been evident. However, the results showed that a majority believed that being an appropriate national language did not make it an appropriate language of instruction, in the subjects of science and math. This is because Filipino is perceived to have more of a symbolic than functional purpose in the lives of Filipinos. English is still viewed as the language of success. In addition, the results of the study revealed that a majority believed that they were nationalistic despite their lack of competence in the national language. This finding may be interpreted to mean that in a multilingual society like the Philippines, the people's sense of nationalism is strongly attached to their mother tongue, and so their lack of competence in the national language does not make them less nationalistic. The strong perception is that there are other ways to achieve nationalism aside from having a national language. Thus, the need to attain nationalism through a common language is perceived to be less urgent than the need to achieve economic success, because being a Cebuano or a Hiligaynon is not different from being a Filipino. On the other hand, having competence in English is a major requirement in realizing economic success because it has remained the language of the controlling domains, particularly government, business, and higher education. The school alone, therefore, cannot cause language change, in this case Filipino replacing English in the



controlling domains; it can advance this change but cannot actually cause it. After all, the school's objectives are based on the needs of the society. There are other sectors in the society that have to contribute to bring about this change – such as government and business. Considering the most frequently cited reason for the schools' non-implementation of the policy, which was the lack of government support, it is not surprising that BEP implementation has failed particularly among the Cebuano and Hiligaynon communities.

Furthermore, effecting language change becomes a more difficult task in a bilingual setting where the two languages involved are not of equal level in terms of cultivation and prestige (Gonzalez, 1996). Developing a positive attitude towards the inferior language, in this case Filipino, is not enough to motivate the people to use it as medium of instruction as long as the controlling domains are in the other language, that is, English. The Hiligaynons exemplify this; their not being resistant to Filipino even as medium of instruction did not make them implementors of the BEP. In fact, despite there being no change in their attitude 13 years after the first survey, there has been a sharp decline in the status of implementation – from five schools out of nine to none. Even the claimed improved competence in Filipino among teachers and students did not give them the desire to use Filipino as medium of instruction.

The above observations give an insight regarding the role of second languages (Filipino and English) in a multilingual society such as the Philippines. It must be noted that the Philippines, unlike other multilingual societies in Africa, India, etc., is an archipelago composed of thousands of islands which up to now are still very much separated from each other because of lack of bridges.

The desire to acquire a second language among Filipinos is due more to instrumental than integrative reasons. Filipinos identify more with their regional ethnicity than with the national identity. The integrative function of language is already fulfilled by the mother tongue. Filipino as a language for national unity has a less important function in the lives of Filipinos. English, another second language, is the one which has the instrumental function; thus, it is perceived to be more vital. As long as other sectors of the society, especially government and business agencies, continue to conduct their daily activities in English, the idea of having Filipino replace English will remain a vision.

As pointed out earlier, Filipino is now acceptable as a medium of instruction among Hiligaynons but their not using it is due primarily to lack of teaching materials in Filipino. However, one cannot expect that the availability of materials will naturally result in implementation of the policy. Filipino still has no instrumental purpose in the society and it has been shown in the results of the study that this is the stronger motivating force among the people as far as learning and using a second language is concerned. Hence, creating a functional purpose for Filipino must be given importance in the task of language planning. The cultivation of an intellectually modernized Filipino (as termed by Sibayan, 1991) must be done side by side with the creation of a functional purpose for Filipino. The policy's provision which requires the tertiary institutions to lead in the process of intellectualization must be implemented. However, again this takes a long time to realize; programs for this purpose must be sustained in order for the implementation of the BEP to move forward rather than regress.

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On code-switching, its high acceptability as language behavior in the classroom among educators should not be viewed as a compensatory measure among the students for their deteriorating competence in English. This is a part of the slow process of language cultivation where Filipino is enriched with lexical elements of the languages that compose the language repertoire of the people.

To conclude, education as an aspect of society is not a separate element. As shown in the findings of the study, a policy implemented without the support of the other elements in the society has very little chance of success. Having a bilingual system of education addresses a need vital to the survival of a developing nation like the Philippines. However, as revealed by 25 years of experience in a bilingual educational system, legislation alone cannot bring about the expected results. The cultivation or death of a language depends upon the dynamics of the society. Language develops because people, realizing their need for it in order to survive, use it. This process of cultivation is long and slow. In the case of Filipino, there are evidences of this continuing process and progress, to some extent, has been achieved. As Sibayan has said, it may take a hundred years to realize the vision of having a generation completely educated in Filipino. However, there is hope for this in the near future as long as all sectors of the society do their part.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the researcher offers the following recommendations:

1. The government should make the provision of teaching materials in Filipino a priority among the programs to be developed in addressing the identified problems.
2. The people should be made aware of the work/accomplishments of the Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino in the development of the Filipino language emphasizing the latest lexical additions from other Philippine languages. By doing this, the concept of Filipino being synonymous with Tagalog will be corrected, and so the sense of bias attached to it will be removed.
3. A massive information campaign should be conducted regarding the benefits of bilingual education and how it is to be implemented, especially among schools in the rural areas.
4. There should be a follow-up of the 1986 evaluation of the implementation of the Bilingual Education Policy at the tertiary level involving other ethnolinguistic groups.
5. A similar study at the elementary and secondary level must be made to find out whether claims that social science subjects in these levels are taught in English despite having textbooks in Filipino are correct or not.
6. Schools should develop programs to enhance the perceived improved proficiency in Filipino in order to produce a generation that not only understands but also speaks Filipino competently, especially among the non-Tagalog speakers.

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