

CORDILLERA RESEARCH BRIEFS

Research Dialogues Series 1998-1999

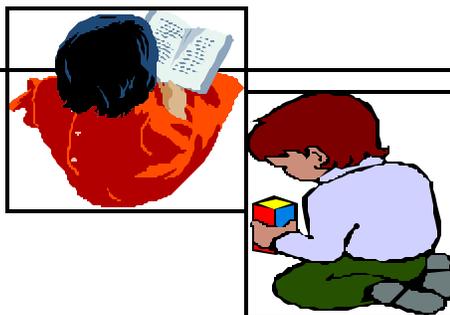
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Literacy for Empowerment: The Cordillera Vernacular Language in Primary Education

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The study pilots the use of two Cordillera vernacular languages – Kankana-ey and Ifugao – in their respective areas as languages of literacy, learning and instruction in the primary grades.

The objective of the study is to validate, in the Cordillera context, the positive findings of the UNESCO studies on the role of the vernaculars in education. If school children “could begin their school life through the medium of the mother tongue, (this) will make the break between home and school as small as possible, reducing the “culture shock” impact brought on by a highly structured school environment.

The Cordillera study pilots the use of Kankana-ey at the Ankileng Elementary School in Sagada, Mountain Province and Ifugao at the Hingyon Elementary School in Hingyon, Ifugao. The Ankileng pilot class learned initial literacy skills and content subjects in Kankana-ey, a local dialect, with Filipino learned as a subject and used as primary medium in *Sibika at Kultura*. English was not introduced at this point.

Meanwhile, the Hingyon pilot class also learned initial literacy skills in Ifugao but learned content subjects bilingually in Ifugao and English, with Filipino and English learned as language subjects.

Another project intervention was the provision of reading materials such as the basic literacy primers of the Summer Institute of Linguistics and supplementary readers produced by the project.

Initial results have been gathered from the initial pilot phase in school year 1997-1998.



This special folio of **Cordillera Research Briefs** carries an abstract of the research paper which forms part of the **Research Dialogues Series of 1998-1999**. It is published by the Cordillera Studies Center (CSC) to disseminate its research results to a wider audience. The views expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the CSC.

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The study aims to validate, in the Cordillera context, the positive findings of the UNESCO studies on the role of the vernaculars in education.

The Ankileng Pilot Class

Literacy Learning. There was a steady and gradual progress in literacy learning in Kankana-ey until the middle of the school year. This was the period when Kankana-ey was used as a major instructional medium in content subjects and as language in literacy learning.

There was a deterioration in the writing performance among a number of pupils when English as a formal subject was started; and vernacular literacy learning was replaced by English. By this time, the vernacular was used as an auxiliary medium of instruction.

Literacy skills acquisition in Filipino was progressive. Beginning in Filipino was taught in June as a formal language subject to develop literacy skills in Filipino. It was also used as primary instructional medium in *Sibika at Kultura* with Kankana-ey as auxiliary medium.

Literacy skills in English were observed after four months of learning English as a second language. By the end of the school term, 76% of the class can read English and 78% can write in English. Oral skills development was progressive in both vernacular and Filipino, although a faster growth was registered with the vernacular.

Socio-Affective Manifestations. The Ankileng pilot class was active and self-confident in both class activities and peer dynamics outside class. Generally, the class members had a high motivation to learn from the teacher and by themselves. The class voluntarily read books and other instructional materials in the classroom. Also, the class members attended class regularly.

The Hingyon Pilot Class

Literacy Learning. Literacy skills learning was erratic in both vernacular and Filipino. It was only in vernacular writing and in Filipino Reading where positive learning was registered in the mid-term and final achievement results. Achievement in reading in English yielded a high mean in the final term. Writing in English was unsatisfactory for the majority of the class. Meanwhile, oral skills development in both vernacular and Filipino was unsatisfactory. The teacher of the pilot class attended class irregularly because of health reasons. Substitute teachers handled the class in her absence.

Socio-Affective Manifestations. Pupils of Hingyon Central School were generally shy and teacher-directed. No voluntary learning strategies were manifested by the students.

On the whole, positive gains in literacy and cognitive learning were seen in the Ankileng pilot class. It was observed further that, although the class was still generally traditional, exposure to the target language and stimuli-rich teaching in the Ankileng pilot class were present. This resulted in a highly-motivated and language acquisition-rich classroom atmosphere. These were found wanting in the Hingyon pilot class and in the Ankileng pseudo-control class.

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