

Minority Language in Tertiary Literature Classes: Basis for Strengthening Multicultural Education

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ABSTRACT: Tertiary literature classes cover major literary works which reflect cultural viewpoints, shown through realistic connections to current events. Within the exposure of local literature, this study fosters variety and inclusiveness in its efforts to give weight to Philippine culture and raise awareness of minority languages. The aim of the study is supported with the viewpoints and judgments through Focused Group Discussion of 25 tertiary students enrolled in literature classes. Based on the results, most of the participants considered multilingual education as their opportunity to embrace their local cultures and developed more of their linguistic use through the integration of minority language in the local texts. Some participants felt that the said integration may also concern with the production of materials and possible changes in curriculum. Hence, supporting minority languages still ensures that majority languages such English is necessary for job competencies and opportunities.

KEYWORDS - Multilingual Education, Minority Language, Contact Literature

I. INTRODUCTION

The Philippines is a multilingual country with over 120 different spoken languages. It is, without a doubt, an important aspect of Filipino connections. In addition to communicating thoughts and feelings, gaining experience, and knowledge, it builds friendships, cultural links, and economic relationships across communities, nations, and even human beings. A language which is one spoken by a small percentage of a territory's people is called as minority language. The individuals are referred to as linguistic minority or language minorities. Many of these languages are Malayo-Polynesian or native variations of Malayo-Polynesian, which are spoken by the archipelago's various communities. Because of the enormous dispersion and duplication of languages spoken across the country, the 1987 Constitution designated Filipino as the national and official language alongside English.

A bilingual research of Baker and Jones (1998) claimed that the evolution and changes in human society are inextricably linked to the existence of languages inside a country. Through language, we are bound together. That priceless sense of community, like the sense of its holiness, should not be something to be lost. It entails a betterment of people's life culture in all aspects. According to Marfany (2004), literary movements are the beginning of a country's resurrection. It provides us a strong sense of belonging to others who speak the same language as us, as well as a strong sense of distinction from those who do not. It contributes to the preservation of cultural affinity.

Although the government is primarily in English, Filipinos are widely represented in the country's multiple linguistic groups and popular culture. Some languages are accorded official supplementary status in their respective localities by the constitution, but no specific language is listed. Some of the languages spoken in these areas are unknown. This is visible in the different local literature classes.

In students' linguistic concepts and attitudes, the role of mother-tongue education in minority language maintenance is deteriorating. In the school community, several languages coexist, and students are encouraged to compare languages and the cultures that go with them. They are unlikely to be exposed to local culture for the most part. The increased popularity of English-only policies in almost all schools, particularly private institutions, could result in a major decline in minority language users.

In order to face the issues of revitalizing and working on intercultural competence, higher education must support minority ethnic literary education, with a focus on teaching reading in the local dialect and developing reading material. Local prose and poetries shall be written down and incorporated into the teaching-learning repertory. The goal is to adapt the literature on Cebuano/Visayan materials to the local environment and language.

This study encourages diversity and inclusiveness in its pursuits to give bearing to the Philippine culture and expand awareness of the minority languages through exposure of local literature. This study aims to answer the following:

1. How important is it to preserve minority languages?
2. How does minority language encourage diversity and inclusiveness to Philippine culture through exposure of the local literature?
3. How does the cultivation and elaboration of multilingual education deepen the indebtedness of linguistic use?

II. METHODOLOGY

This study revealed the students' minority language and its role in tertiary literature classes as basis for strengthening multicultural education. It is a qualitative study which follows phenomenological research design. Given the nature of qualitative research, phenomenological study do not provide consistent and widely applicable conclusions. These studies, on the other hand, may provide examples, explanations, and personal experiences that will help us better understand and recognize the phenomenon (Yldrm and Imşek, 2005). The goal of phenomenological research is to learn what individuals think about an idea or a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). As a result, the researcher chose to utilize this method.

Participants

In the selection of participants, the purposive sample strategy was selected, which allows for in-depth analysis of instances deemed to have extensive knowledge of the studied phenomenon (Yldrm and Imşek, 2005). There were a total of 25 participants in this study. Informed consent was obtained from participants prior to data collection and processing for ethical reasons.

The researcher's criteria for selecting participants was the tertiary students enrolled in literary classes. Students from the English Program of a public Higher Education Institution in Misamis Oriental was chosen as participants. Only their minority language was asked in this study, which had nothing to do with ethnic origin. No questions about the participants' ethnic backgrounds was included in the semi-structured inquiry form.

Data Collection

Focused Group Discussion (FGD) is the primary source of data for the phenomenological perspective. FGD was done through virtual video conferencing via google meet. The goal of the interview is to uncover a common shared experience or occurrence among a group of people (Marshall & Rossman, 2011); thus, questions evoking the participant's experiences, feelings, beliefs, and convictions regarding the topic are asked (Welman & Kruger, 1999). Virtual Recording was also employed to keep track of what the researcher heard, saw, felt, and thought while collecting data.

Data Analysis

Interview data was analyzed using thematic analysis. First, all interviews were transcribed and thoroughly read. The second step is to interpret and evaluate the first data. The information acquired was converted to digital format, and the responses to the questions were organized to form a whole. The data was then examined several times to detect similar and dissimilar opinions, as well as statements that were unrelated to the research issue. The evidence offered in the transcripts and the literature review were used to create descriptive categories.

The researcher took extra care in obtaining data as it has done in categorizing the claims based on similarities and differences. Prior to the analysis, the participants were assigned random numbers instead of using their real names and letters for genders as M for male and F for female. For example, the quotation from a statement of a student was represented as (12F)

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The results of the study were presented in terms of each statement of the problem. Hence, emergent themes in the interview were coded.

1. How important is it to preserve minority languages?

Minority Language is as important as Majority Language

According to the participants, who viewed minority language as a way of embracing cultural identity, language has an important role in passing on a society's culture and values from one generation to the next. "If we continue to use our minority language, our customs and traditions continue to live", (16F). Since the Philippines is undergoing a period of language integration, there has been extensive borrowing from major languages such as English and Tagalog. As a result of this process, some languages become utterly obsolete and extinct. The importance of minority languages was highlighted by Majidi (2013). It has the same value as majority languages. It protects both one's ethnic culture and identity and one's national heritage. Minority languages are more than just a means of communication; they also serve as a source of connection and inclusion for people who speak them, improving social mobility and opportunities for those who speak them. "When people are enslaved, as long as they remain fast to their language, it is as if they had the key to their jail," Daudet (2015) wrote in his book *The Last Lesson*. The same may be said about minority languages. It helped us stay connected to the culture we live in. Rai (2018) asserts that if minority languages are lost, so is a major portion of the literature related with them. We will have a richer world with more colors, cultures, and viewpoints if we preserve them, giving us many more reasons to enjoy.

Language profile of the Filipino students

Out of the 25 participants in the study, 24 of them are using their minority languages in communicating at their individual homes. "Kinamigin (Camiguin dialect) has always been our language at home. I only use Filipino and English in school because we are required to" (8F). This is also prevalent to the rest of the students in Philippines. According to Mbaleka (2014), the linguistic profiles of Filipino learners usually show at least two dialects. The person in question may use dialects or lingos as part of their learning process. This situation has created serious problems for both students and teachers, particularly in the Philippines, where there are hundreds of different dialects. The academic use of the first language reflects students' desire to enhance public persona in light of a justified concern for social heritage preservation.

2. How does minority language encourage diversity and inclusiveness to Philippine culture through exposure of the local literature?

Suggestion for integration of localized literary texts using the minority language

Because tertiary literature classes welcome students from a wide range of linguistic origins, it is critical that language materials exposure be as adaptable as possible, allowing students to develop a minority language that is tailored to them personally. This is in accord with the school's individual development language policy, acknowledgment of internationalism, and multicultural awareness, as well as allowing the person to study and provide recognition of their home tongue. However, the participants claim that they did not come across any local literary writings in prose or poetry throughout their literature lesson. "So far, I haven't encountered such language during our literature class. We use the majority language texts such Tagalog and English to discuss with" (23M).

Contact literature is applied for cultural manifestation

The unavailability of localized texts written in minority languages leads to the insertion of contact literature on its behalf. Contact Literature is using the English language in literary contexts for purposes of basic communication by people with no common language. According to Stockwell (2002), when groups of individuals interact for an extended period of time, a hybrid language known as a pidgin can emerge. These usually happen when one language is dominant and there are two or more other languages available. Undeniably, English has always been one of the official languages in the Philippines even after the independence we received from the American colonization. We give so much value and importance on the language. English is widely used in the education field. Hence, it is evident in the integration of the language in the different subjects in school and is used as a medium of instruction from basic to tertiary education. Furthermore, English is widely used in the Philippines by media. Most school textbooks for subjects are printed in English and are rarely has Filipino versions. It is evident that even local news print loaned English words in their articles. In fact, government bureaus are named in English and does not have equivalent dialect translation. However, participants stated that the use of contact literature has not been leading them to think that one language is more dominant than their minority language. "Although we are forced to use majority language in school such English, I don't believe I am not going to preserve my minority language because I am always using outside school. I am going still to share in the future generation" (17F).

3. How does the cultivation and elaboration of multilingual education deepen the indebtedness of linguistic use?

Supporting minority language for linguistic rights

It is notable that minorities around the world have begun to seek linguistic rights, despite growing requests for other languages; yet, they will need outside assistance in this process. Language, according to linguist Joshua Fishman (2011), is not just a means of communicating a community's ideas, views, attitudes, and values; it is also a fundamental manifestation of social identity. The emancipation of minority languages demands generations of effort from today's generation. We may honor the work of those who, in their own time, acquired complete linguistic rights by assisting minorities who still face issues with their rights. The more minority languages are spoken, the more likely both the languages and the people who speak them will prosper. "I'd want to read local books in our minority language in this way." It might also motivate us to become authors in our own communities" (2F). As a result, the benefits of studying literature in a minority language are clear. Local themes, languages, creeds, places, cultures, identities, and lifestyles, as well as national issues and perspectives, can all be identified by students and adults.

Strengthening Multilingual Education in tertiary school setting

Multicultural literature in their own minority languages, according to the participants, is a useful instrument for developing a deeper awareness of their own culture as well as the cultures of others. Students in the twenty-first century must be culturally sensitive because they are global citizens. According to Norton, students are better able to grasp current international issues when they can connect global events to themes, conflicts, and characterizations found in their local literature (2009). As a result of learning to engage with and critically assess the information they read, students develop stronger cognitive skills.

IV. CONCLUSION

The personal assessments and judgments of tertiary students on minority language in their literature classes and its basis for multilingual education are reported in this study. Individuals' subjective knowledge of themselves, their environment, and what is going on in this environment is formed by personal evaluations and judgments. Affective and cognitive factors are also present in these perspectives. The findings of this study, although are limited to the perspectives of a certain group of participants, are sufficiently comprehensive to provide an overview of the topic from multiple perspectives. The current study is only a window through which to view the entire picture for possible language policy planning.

One of the study's most important findings is that participants viewed multilingual education as their opportunity to embrace their local cultures and developed more of their linguistic use. According to various academics, one of the most influential aspects in the education is the usage of local language in the classroom. Furthermore, language use, literacy, and development are not restricted to the classroom. In a social context, literacy encompasses not just the fundamentals of reading, writing, and speaking, but also the ability of an individual to construct meaning through personal experience. Before reading and writing, a native language student's experience has an impact on their learning. Continuous exposure to localized texts using their minority language is the key to success in honing comprehension in this regard.

Concerns were also expressed with regards to the production of localized texts. Since there was not yet an integration of local literature using minority languages among the participants' literature classes, there would be a need to create another policy for this. After all, curricula are devised and delivered centrally, with little regard for demographic characteristics, cultural, social, or economic situation of different regions.

Hence, in spite of the emphasis of supporting minority language in literature classes through integration of localized literary texts such prose and poetry, participants are more aware of how English language is specially treated in higher education settings. It only prepares the college students, most especially, in landing a good job in the future. Many people are required to speak English at work, which implies that English competence has become a pre-requisite for employment and promotion, forcing people to acquire English at any costs.

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