THE “ENGLISH ONLY, PLEASE” EDUCATION AND ITS PROS AND CONS

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The ability to speak good English is a measure of intelligence. This has been a fraud connotation that many Filipinos opt to believe. For some, if you can speak the language fluently, then you are definitely a smart kid.

English is our second language here in the Philippines making it as a required subject in our educational system. Teachers and students are expected to speak the language, not only during English subject. As embodied in the DECS Order No. 25, Pilipino (changed to Filipino in 1987) shall be used as medium of instruction in social studies/social sciences, music, arts, physical education, home economics, practical arts and character education. English, on the other hand is allocated to science, mathematics and technology subjects.

However, there have been observations that most students are noticeably quiet during these subjects, for they are afraid to commit mistakes in speaking the language and be the ‘laughing stock’ in the class, especially for those grammar Nazis teachers with ‘English only, please’ rule. According to a research of Moll, Estrada, Diaz, and Lopes in 1980, they forlornly described the pain and frustration that English language learners sometimes feel when taught in an English-all settings. Students may fail to understand what the teacher is talking about, and may become frustrated when they have an idea but cannot adequately express their thoughts in English, particularly when they are being rectified with their inaccuracies.

Correcting mistakes is never an off-beam, for this is where the students learn, but not to the extent of sacrificing your students’ self-confidence.

Also, there are an array of learners: the fast-learners, average-learners, and the struggling ones. It is without a doubt that the fast and average learners can cope up with
this kind of rule yet not impeccably. And how about the struggling ones? Are we just going to let them be ignored just because they cannot speak or are afraid to speak the language? Here enters the “code switching” or the use of two or more languages alternately while speaking or sometimes tagged here in the Philippines as Taglish. Using this as an alternative, the struggling students can at least express or voice out their opinions and ideas; and in the long run, with a lot of practice, they will be able to use their second language in a much improved manner.

English is undoubtedly very important in our educational system nowadays and in the years to come, for one of its aims is to produce globally competitive leaners, and learning the universal language is the stepping stone in achieving this goal. It is quite auspicious for Filipinos.

Nevertheless, it shouldn’t be overlooked that encouragement is different from incumbent. Encouraging the students to speak and use English instead of forcing them can help eradicate their fear of the language.

Keep in mind that the capacity to use English language fluently will never ever be a valid measure of intelligence.

References: