

# The Bridging Process: Filipino Teachers' View on Mother Tongue

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**Abstract:** This paper recognized that teachers play the main element in the success of the new language policy, the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) in the Philippines. Their views as implementer on this approach are essential in the attainment of the MTB-MLE objectives. In this descriptive paper, the authors report a comprehensive account of the 35 teachers' perception on the efficiency and effectiveness of MTB approach in teaching at Malvar Central School, Batangas, Philippines for the school year 2016-2017. Using adopted questionnaire, needed data were gathered and statistically treated. The study found out that the respondents moderately perceived mother tongue- based approach as effective and efficient in achieving learning goals. The implications of these findings are discussed within the theoretical and practical issues surrounding the use of mother tongue-based in the Philippines.

**Keywords:** Elementary Education, Multilingual Education, Mother tongue, Language, Teaching and Learning Process

## I. INTRODUCTION

Language, as the heart of communication, is the system of words that people use to express thoughts and feelings to each other. According to Hudson [1], language is the main medium of education; literacy as the mode of education is one of the foundations of education; verbal intelligence is one of the most-used predictors of educational success; foreign or second languages are traditionally an important part of the school curriculum; language has a profound effect on education. With these connections, the importance of teaching in indigenous and vernacular languages surfaced in the 1950s [2]. Vernacular language is defined as a language which is the mother tongue of a group which is socially or politically dominated by another group speaking a different language. Indigenous language, on the other hand, is "the language of the people considered being original inhabitants of an area" [2].

Today, there is a growing movement of the Mother Tongue (MT) instruction in the elementary years of a child's education all over the world. This initiative was anchored on United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) [3] policy paper recommending that every pupil should begin formal education in his or her mother tongue. UNESCO has clearly supported initial reading, writing, and learning in the language of the learner on psychological and pedagogical grounds. [4] This position has since been strengthened by abundant researches that students learn to read and write most efficiently and effectively when

instruction takes place through the medium of their mother tongue [5]. In brief, there is an overwhelming evidence that pupils learn to read more quickly when taught in their mother tongue; students who learn to read in their mother tongue also learn to read in a second or foreign language more quickly than those who initially are taught to read in a second language or foreign language, and students taught to read in their mother tongue acquire academic content and skills more quickly [6].

Affirming to this is the 2011 results of Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) wherein Singapore, Republic of Korea, Hongkong, China, Taipei, and Japan topped its said examination [7]. It is worth noting that these countries do not use English as medium of instruction whereas, the Philippines who use English as medium of instruction ranked among the fifth from the bottom in Math and Science excellence [8]. Despite this finding of TIMSS, the Philippines still uses English as medium of instruction in the past years. Learning the language seems to be one of the top priorities in Philippines Basic education. However, this practice can be an obstacle in developing functional literacy since English is not the native language of the learners [9]. This situation made apparent the rising number of efforts in the educational programs in the Philippines to utilize MT as an approach in teaching. Nonetheless, Philippines is the only country in Asia to have instituted a national policy calling for the mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) in the elementary years. This is one of the changes in Basic Education Curriculum brought about by the new K-12 program, specifically in Kindergarten, Grades 1, 2 and 3 to support the goal of "Every Child- A- Reader and A -Writer" by Grade 1" [10].

MTB-MLE refers to "first-language-first" education that is, schooling which begins in the mother tongue and transitions to additional languages particularly Filipino and English. It is meant to address the high functional illiteracy of Filipinos where language plays a significant factor. Since the child's own language enables her/ him to express him/herself easily, then, there is no fear of making mistakes. It encourages active participation by children in the learning process because they understand what is being discussed and what is being asked of them. They can immediately use their mother tongue to construct and explain their world, articulate their thoughts and add new concepts to what they already know [11].

It is used as a Medium of Instruction (MOI) for Grades 1, 2 and 3 in teaching Math, AralingPanlipunan (AP), Music, Arts, Physical Education and Health (MAPEH) and EdukasyonsaPag-uugali (EsP). Mother tongue is taught as a separate Learning Area in Grades 1 and 2, as specified in the background of the study (DepEd Order #31s.2013). Cummins as cited by Banks and Banks [12] cited that whatever the learners first language, students who are literate and bare had prior formal schooling in their first language have been found to outperform students who have not been taught in the mother tongue. Kolawole [13] discovered that students in Owo local government area of Ondo State perform better whenever they are taught some basic concept in Yoruba. Abiri [14] stated that Mathematics and Science taught in a child's mother tongue has lot advantages, like overcoming limited knowledge of foreign mathematical and science vocabulary.

Moreover, the uniqueness of mathematics and science languages has distinguished them from other subjects. Anyone that cannot cope with imperial and native language which is based on verbal reasoning may likely get lost easily in quantitative reasoning where the use of these languages is necessary. Further, it will help students to generate, retain, retrieve, and transform well-structured visual image into subject appreciation with the aid of the said language [15].

Despite evidences on the positive effects of the MTB-MLE in instruction, it is still not yet fully accepted by the teachers. One potential explanation is that such policies are directly undermined by what Tecson [16] describes as "Western language ideologies", including an "ideology of contempt" for indigenous languages. Shohamy as cited by Spolsky and Hult [17] has explained this idea further. He argues that five specific mechanisms result in the disregard of mother-tongue based education in some nations: rules and regulations, educational language policies, language testing, public language use, and ideology, myths, propaganda and coercion. This statement is an important matter to take account because the success of this approach relies on the hand of the teacher-its implementer.

As Nolasco et al. [8] mentioned, teaching in the MTB-MLE requires deep background on varied teaching strategies. The teacher plays the most crucial role in the education of the child as a mentor and facilitator of learning. However, the teachers should make sure that they are empowered well enough to implement these approaches and these are aligned with the changing needs of times. As cited by Freeman and Freeman [18], teachers' abilities to clearly articulate their precepts, and opinions, about what makes learning happen in an integral part of their effectiveness as educator. There precepts become the vessel within which all future teaching ideas are contained and the perspective through which new ideas are filtered.

With the aim of having a functional literate and with the recognized significance of the MTB approach that is crucial for the success of instruction which were previously discussed

motivated the researcher to conduct this study. The perception of the teacher towards the use of MTB approach in teaching is highly significant in determining the maximum benefits of using the approach. The main purpose of this study was to determine the perception on the mother tongue-based approach in teaching in terms of efficiency and effectiveness of the public elementary teachers of Malvar Central School, Malvar, Philippines

As an educator handling professional courses for teacher education programs, the conduct of this study that focused on Filipino teachers' perception on MTB-approach in teaching is essential as this can reinforce obligation and commitment among faculty members in preparing elementary education students to be a good deliverer of this new language program policy. Further, educators will be able to better identify and appreciate their role in the educative process, thereby, become more efficient and effective implementers of MTB-MLE.

## II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This paper aimed to determine the 35 elementary teachers' perception on MTB approach in teaching at Malvar Central School, Malvar, Batangas, Philippines for the School Year (S.Y.) 2016-2017. Specifically, this study revealed their view on the efficiency and effectiveness of the said new language policy.

This study is only limited to the responses made by the respondents in the administered adopted questionnaire. Moreover, it did not determine their personal profile or their teaching performances.

## III. METHODOLOGY

### *Research Design*

The researcher considered the descriptive method as the most appropriate method considering the nature and scope of the study. According to Adanza et al. [19], it is a process of gathering information about prevailing conditions or situation for the purpose of description and interpretations. Further, this method will also seek accurate data about an existing condition, nature and characteristics of the subjects. This method best suit this study for this described the perceptions of the teachers on mother tongue as an approach in teaching in terms of its efficiency and effectiveness.

This study surveyed 35 elementary teachers' perception on MTB approach in teaching at Malvar Central School, Malvar, Batangas, Philippines, for the S.Y. 2016-2017. The researcher utilized the whole population.

Planning, data gathering, and analysis were the three-phases this study had undergone. The researcher was able to formulate the research problem through examining a number of resources and existing studies on mother tongue. Her long years of experience handling courses relevant to mother tongue encouraged her to conceptualize this study.

### *Instrumentation*

In order to get the needed data, the researcher used an adopted questionnaire. It has undergone content validation to ensure that this is appropriate to the context and background of the target respondents. Cronbach's Alpha was used to measure the reliability of the questionnaire. Through the help of the statistician, the instrument was found to be reliable.

To facilitate the interpretation of the computed mean for respondents' view on mother tongue, the following mean ranges with their corresponding interpretations were used:

For the numerical value of 4 and mean ranges of 3.51-4.00, it will be interpreted as Strongly Agree/ Highly Perceived as Efficient/Effective; for 3 and 2.51-3.50, Agree/ Perceived as Efficient/Effective; for 2 and 1.51-2.50, Slightly Agree /Moderately Perceived as Efficient/Effective; and lastly, for 1 and 1.00-1.50, Disagree/Not Perceived as Efficient/Effective.

### *Data Collection Procedure*

Data gathering stage started with seeking approval from the authorities concerned to float the questionnaire. Obtaining the total number of respondents was also done to prepare the needed numbers of questionnaire. With proper consultation, the researchers obtained schedule for the administration of the questionnaire. Distribution and retrieval were personally executed by the researchers. The elicited quantitative data had undergone checking, scoring, analysis and interpretation with the help of the statistician. Every item in the questionnaire was painstakingly analyzed and interpreted. The researcher utilized Mean in order to analyze and interpret the data so as to provide answer to the specific problems posed in this study.

## IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This part of the study aimed to reveal the perception of the respondents towards the mother tongue based approach in teaching. The succeeding tables present the generated information of these matters.

### *Respondents' Perception on Mother Tongue-based approach in terms of Efficiency*

The perception of the respondents towards the efficiency of MTB approach in teaching was presented in Table 1.

Generally, it shows that the respondents moderately perceived MTB approach in teaching as efficient with the computed composite mean of 3.13. The moderate result may be attributed to the fact teachers' acceptance of the new approach is inflexible because of the transition period from the bilingual education to the mother-tongue based education as part of the k to 12 curriculum reform of the government. This result supports to the statement of the Department of Education undersecretary Quijano, as cited by Ladic [20], when she said in an interview that not all teachers will abreast the implementation of the MTB – MLE on its first and second year of implementation particularly to those teachers who

experience difficulties in adjusting and don't want to change their traditional ways of teaching.

Specifically, it can be gleaned from the table that the respondents agreed that using the approach, objectives are clear, achievable, time bound and easy to facilitate as reflected by the weighted mean of 3.22. This was the highest rated item. Further, the least rated item, garnered a weighted mean of 3.00, verbally interpreted as agree, which was the assessment of the respondents on learning tasks and topics can be easily covered within the allotted time. The data implies that set learning tasks were achieved efficiently by the students. Maminta [5] claims that research and experience have shown that use of mother tongue in education has shown to facilitate acquisition and literacy skills and provide the foundation for continuing autonomous learning.

Table 1. Perception on Efficiency of Mother Tongue-Based Approach in Teaching

Statements	Mean	Interpretation
With the use of the approach...		
1. objectives are clear, achievable, time bound and easy to facilitate.	3.22	Agree
2. instructional materials are appropriate, accessible and easy to prepare.	3.06	Agree
3. individual and group activities can enhance the skills of learners to achieve the desired objectives.	3.21	Agree
4. activities which are suitable for achieving the desirable objectives can be easily planned.	3.15	Agree
5. delivering the lessons, presentation of activities can be carried effortless and is not time consuming.	3.13	Agree
6. learning tasks and topics included in the curriculum and course outline for the subject can be easily covered within the allotted time.	3.00	Agree
7. learning tasks and topics can be easily organized sequentially for the ease of smooth transition of the lesson	3.09	Agree
8. delivery of the lesson is simpler and easier.	3.21	Agree
9. connecting previous lesson to present lesson is easily carried out in a variety of means.	3.18	Agree
10. variety of assessment tools can be easily employed to evaluate students' learning.	3.07	Agree
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>3.13</b>	<b>Moderately Perceived as Efficient</b>

In addition to outcomes associated with learner achievement in the classroom, multilingual education also offers a context for the maintenance of local language acquisition and instruction, and promotes learner integration into the national society without forcing children to sacrifice their linguistic and cultural heritage. It is worthy to mention that mother tongue has a key role in academic success of the students. Huck [21] stated that the most powerful predictor of academic success is the second language is formal schooling in the first language. What the student finds out for himself from his own effort to solve communication problems will improve his own future competence

### *Respondents' Perception on Mother Tongue-based approach in terms of Effectiveness*

The perception of the respondents towards the effectiveness of MTB approach in teaching was presented in Table 2.

The table reveals that the respondents strongly agreed that the approach enables the students to freely and spontaneously ask or answer questions or discuss observation with the teachers and with the peers and encourage maximum participation for both high and low performing students to be actively involved in the learning process. This was reflected by the highest weighted mean of 3.28.

Table 2. Perception on Effectiveness of Mother Tongue-Based Approach in Teaching

Statements	Mean	Interpretation
The approach ...		
1. leads to better understanding of mathematical concepts that make the lesson meaningful for the students.	3.25	Strongly Agree
2. allows the use of a variety of instructional strategies that may enhance student cognitive development and reasoning skills.	3.24	Agree
3. fosters collaboration and supportive interaction inside the classroom through the use of native language.	3.12	Agree
4. enables the students to freely and spontaneously ask or answer questions or discuss observation with the teachers and with the peers.	3.28	Strongly Agree
5. encourages maximum participation for both high and low performing students to be actively involved in the learning process.	3.28	Strongly Agree
6. promotes self-motivation, positive social interaction and active engagement among the learners.	3.19	Agree
7. establishes good relationships among students, teachers, and parents.	3.24	Agree
8. enables the teacher to easily assess students of what has been learned and identify areas where students need further assistance as they express themselves.	3.24	Agree
9. provides opportunities for formulating effective and challenging questions that develop higher order thinking skills of the learners.	3.12	Agree
10. is applicable to different styles of learning that allow constructing, exploring, and learners' own knowledge.	3.12	Agree
<b>Composite Mean</b>	<b>3.21</b>	<b>Moderately Perceived as Effective</b>

On the other hand, it is worthy to mention that the three lowest ranked items obtained similar weighted mean. The respondents agreed that mother tongue fosters collaboration and supportive interaction inside the classroom, provides opportunities for formulating effective and challenging questions that develop higher order thinking skills, and is applicable to different styles of learning that allow constructing, exploring, and learners' own knowledge. It garnered a weighted mean of 3.12. These were the lowest ranked items. These findings show that students involvement in class can be easily achieve using the mother tongue as medium of instruction. According to Nolasco [8], teaching and learning can be done effectively because one's own

language enables a child to express himself easily, as there is no fear of making mistakes. MLE encourages lecture participation by children in the learning process because they understand what is being discussed and what is being ask of them. They can immediately use the mother tongue to construct and explain their world, articulate their thoughts and add new concepts to what they already know. In general, it can be deduced that the respondents perceived the approach as moderately effective in teaching. This was shown by the composite mean of 3.21. Since the approach is newly implemented, this might hinder the teachers in fully implementing it. According to the research of Ilagan [22], teachers are into the trainings with two distinct viewpoints about mother tongue instruction; some were positive towards it and others were negative about it.

Table 3. Summary of Composite Means

Variables	Composite Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Efficiency of MTB Approach	3.13	Moderately Perceived as Efficient
Effectiveness of MTB Approach	3.21	Moderately Perceived as Effective
<b>Grand Composite Mean</b>	<b>3.17</b>	Moderate Perception

It is in this juncture that the researcher concluded that the respondents moderate perceived the approach as efficient and effective. These results served as another account to the assertion of Theory of Change by Kurt Lewin which states that alteration of the status quo cause resistance. The teachers are supportive of the program but were skeptical due to the growing challenges brought by the lack of Mother Tongue (MT) learning materials and books which they have considered as MTB-MLE's biggest challenge.

Reviewed studies of Aranao et al. [23], Ababa-balang [24] and Barcelona [25] served as frame of reference for the findings of this study. Aranao et al. [23] conducted a study to determine the perception of Grade 1 teachers in the use of mother tongue-based multilingual education in teaching mathematics at De La Salle Lipa, their findings proved that MTB-MLE is an effective approach in teaching Mathematics. In the way that learners can easily grasp the lesson; learners are more comfortable in the duration of the class; they are more participative because learners can express their ideas, opinions and answers in their mother tongue and learners are more efficient in attaining their lessons; and learners show progress in their test assessment. Moreover, the study of Ababa-balang [24] stated that through the use of the children's first language students can learn and understand basic concepts, ideas skills and processes. In addition, Barcelona [25] stated that in mother tongue approach have gained mastery of the subject matter. He also proved that the students taught using MTB-MLE performed differently and better than those students who expose to conventional teaching strategy.



## V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

After careful analyses and interpretations of data, it was found out that the respondents had moderate perception on the efficiency and effectiveness of MTB approach. In this light, the author came up with the following recommendations as inputs to strengthen MTB approach based on the findings of this study:

First, the government, specifically, Department of Education, is encouraged to provide additional budget for seminars/trainings on modules and instructional materials preparation aligned with MTB-MLE frameworks. Tracking the background of the teachers in terms of their readiness of MTB-MLE implementation is encouraged. Lastly, more seminars on language awareness are encouraged to increase knowledge on how to implement language development objective of the MTB-MLE.

Second, the teachers are encouraged to attend additional seminars related to MTB-MLE on a regular basis. In doing so, they may also obtain further knowledge on creating instructional/learning materials informed by the MTB-MLE structures. Further, teachers may further enhance their teaching strategies to meet needs of students through proper orientation and training. The use of innovative methods and strategies parallel to the MTB-MLE frameworks like, storytelling, localization and contextualization of lectures may be done.

Third, benchmarking to other schools, considered as MTB-MLE pilot schools must be done to see best practices in delivering instruction. Fourth, continuous monitoring and evaluation of MTB-MLE may be carried out to maximize its benefits and potentials. Lastly, since MTB-MLE deals with numerous concerns, future researchers may conduct other studies related to the present considering other possible variables.

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