

The Extent of the Effect of Mother Tongue on Productive Language Skills Among Grade 5 Learners

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ABSTRACT

This study looked at the extent of the effect of Mother Tongue on Productive Language skills, specifically – speaking and writing, among Grade 5 learners at San Francisco Elementary School in Panabo City, Davao del Norte. This study used a descriptive-correlational research approach with a sample of 107 public elementary learners. and writing skills, which were then subjected to content validity and reliability testing. Quantitative research was used where the researcher used two sets of checklists to collect data about the respondents' and writing skills, which are then subjected to content validity and testing. The findings showed that the learners' exposure to the mother tongue is high, which means that their productive language skills were significantly affected by the learners' exposure to the mother tongue. Furthermore, it was recommended that learners be exposed to English, such as speaking and writing activities, to compensate for the exposure to Mother Tongue. Finally, it is also recommended that further research be done in different contexts using different variables to see what other factors affect the Productive Language skills of learners, especially at the elementary level.

Keywords: mother tongue, productive language skills, exposure, elementary, Philippines

INTRODUCTION

For many centuries, English has been a vital component of our educational system. Nonetheless, whether we should acquire English as our first language or keep using our mother tongues is still very important. However, that cannot be the justification for abandoning the English language. The most common language in the world now is English. There are English speakers all around the world. Owing to its immense popularity and global reach, English holds the primary claim to be the language of international communication. Therefore, as stated in Letters to the Editor: The Importance of Learning English, we cannot discount the significance of learning the language at a fundamental level (2022).

Many students in English departments who study the language as a foreign language need help to speak and utilize English correctly. According to Akef Alsalihi (2020), this issue can be linked to specific challenges they encountered during their school years, which impeded their attempts to learn and master the language. According to the study of Akef, it was revealed that the challenges faced by students when learning a language, including the way society discourages learning English, the learners' shyness, which keeps them from speaking the language out of fear of making mistakes, a lack of motivation, and the impact of crowded and small class sizes.

Cummins (2009) also mentioned that the mother tongue is the foundation of speaking skills. Children can

quickly become familiarized with it when they hear similar sounds in an unfamiliar language. Eventually, the child can use these new words effectively and skillfully. They emphasize the importance of mastering the mother tongue to become competent in another language.

In the Philippines, according to Social Weather Stations (2008), about three - fourths of Filipino adults (76%) said they could understand spoken English; another 75% said they could read English; three out of five (61%) said they could write English; close to half (46%) said they could speak English; about two fifths (38%) said they could think in English; while 8% said they were not competent in any way when it comes to the English language. The statistics show that the ability to speak English also deteriorates as competence decreases.

The study aimed to determine the effect of exposure to the mother tongue on productive language skills in English among Grade 5 learners of San Francisco Elementary School. More specifically, it sought to answer the following questions: What is the extent of exposure to the mother tongue of the grade 5 learners? What is the level of productive language skills in English of Grade 5 learners in terms of Speaking and writing? Is there a significant difference in the exposure to the mother tongue of Grade 5 learners when grouped by gender? Is there a significant difference in the level of productive language skills in English among Grade 5 learners when grouped by gender? Is there a significant relationship between exposure to the mother tongue and productive language skills in English among Grade 5 pupils in terms of Speaking and Writing?

The null hypothesis is the following: There is no significant difference in the exposure to the mother tongue to productive language skills in English when grouped by gender.; There is no significant difference between the productive language skills in English and exposure to the mother tongue when grouped by gender. There is no significant relationship between exposure to the mother tongue and productive English language skills.

The report by the United Nations Educational, Statistics and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2008) study entitled *Mother Tongue Matters: Local Language as a Key to Effective Learning* encouraged the use of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction. UNESCO reiterates its position on the importance of the mother tongue in the early years of schooling.

Mother tongue, as stated by Cummins (1999), "Children who come to school with a strong foundation in their mother tongue develop stronger literacy abilities in the language used at school. When parents or caregivers can spend time with their children and tell stories or discuss issues with them in a way that develops their mother tongue vocabulary and concepts, children come to school well prepared to learn the language of their immigrant country and succeed educationally." The ability to communicate in a target language is developed through the mother tongue. Having a solid foundation helps the learner learn another language faster.

Furthermore, a study by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization UNESCO (2011) entitled *Mother Tongue-Based Bilingual or Multilingual Education in the Early Years* stated that parents and other primary caregivers have the most decisive influence on children's first language acquisition in the early years. These first teachers' attitudes, goals, and behaviors related to their child's initial language development influence children's developing language skills, language socialization, and perceptions of the value of L1 or the mother tongue.

In her recent study, McCabe (2015) presented that exposure to the mother tongue helped other language

development, such as English. She further quoted,” The best way for a child to excel at English is to be good at their native language. The message from academic research is that at home, intelligent parents should stick with the language they know best- English will take care of itself in time -and be better as a result.” She added., “If you downgrade your heritage language, you deprive a child of access to many enriching experiences that can also impact their ability and access to the school curriculum. Multilingual children develop separate but related linguistic systems allowing the children to learn a new language without interfering with the first development”.

Also, Benson (2005) stated that the affective domain, involving confidence, self- esteem, and identity, is strengthened using the L1, increasing motivation, initiative, and creativity. Mother Tongue classrooms allow children to be themselves and develop their personalities and intellects, unlike submersion classrooms where they are forced to sit silently or repeat mechanically, leading to frustration and, ultimately, repetition, failure, and dropout.

Furthermore, Golkova and Hubackova (2014) mentioned that nowadays, there are more innovative and lively ways to practice active skills in the Internet age. However, some are accepted only by foreign language users, not their language instructors. International students in their courses claim that Czech as a foreign language is difficult to master around proper noun and adjective endings. The situation with verbs is even more complex, with changes in prefixes and suffixes. In short, the advent of technology offers many ways to develop, practice, and improve productive language skills.

Additionally, Goldenberg et al. (2006) stated that whether in the native language or English, parental education correlates with the development of academic English, as learning any language begins long before children enter the school through engagement in activities with parents and caregivers who support language and literacy development.

Heinzmann, Seraina, Hilbe, Schallhart, and Mirjam (2023) examined how language exchange programs affected elementary school students' acquisition of functional foreign language abilities. According to the results of a C-test, the intervention improved the students' speaking abilities and general language competency. On the other hand, the intervention had no appreciable effect on their writing abilities. The results imply that if they are didactically embedded, even brief interactions with beginners at the elementary school level may promote language development.

There are many things that could be improved in teaching English to non-native speakers. Teaching the language to extremely young students whose first language proficiency is still somewhat fragile is more complicated. Making them able to communicate orally and in writing is more complicated. Many students need more exposure to the English language because it is only taught as a subject in schools. According to Mohtar, Mohani, Singh, and Mat (2015), many secondary school students have low competence, and, in some situations, undergraduate students have low proficiency.

On the same note, Aneela, Shaker, and Kashif (2019) argued that speaking is thought to be a valuable and productive language-learning skill. This ability is typically called intricate and knotted because of the difficulties communicating clearly. It shows what the learner wants to say. Speaking is typically defined as accurately and fluently expressing oneself in a foreign language.

The research is anchored in the study of Thorndike’s Behaviorist Theory, Watson, and Skinner, which states that First and second/foreign language acquisition theories, including behaviorist, innatist, cognitive, interactionist, and creative- construction theories, as well as theories of language acquisition in the context

of learning a new language for career prospects, mainly English as a second language, are all examples of communicative competence models that emphasize cultural knowledge and awareness. Furthermore, a study on proficient language users in the millennial period discovered several language learning techniques for enhancing English speaking, listening, reading, and writing abilities.

The result of the research hopes to shed light and determine the extent of the effect of Mother Tongue on Productive Language Skills and hopes to help learners, teachers, and school administrators to create and craft compelling and sustainable methods and approaches that would help learners develop and become more proficient and prepare the learners in their future career.

This study utilized quantitative non-experimental descriptive correlational research to describe the quantitative data gathered regarding the extent of the effect of the Mother Tongue on Productive Language skills. A fact-finding study allows the researcher to examine participants' characteristics, behaviors, and experiences. Additionally, correlational research is a quantitative, non-experimental design in which the researcher uses correlational statistics to assess and characterize the degree of relationship between variables or sets of scores.

METHOD

The study was conducted at San Francisco Elementary School, located at the heart of Panabo City in the province of Davao del Norte. The school was selected as a respondent as it is one of the schools situated at the center of the city.

The study's respondents were learners from San Francisco Elementary School at San Francisco St. Panabo City, Davao del Norte. Specifically, Grade 5 pupils are deemed fit for the study because this would be the time or transition where no courses use their mother tongue. There were three (3) sections in Grade 5 pupils with a total number of 107 individuals. Thus, one of the most essential steps in the study was the selection of respondents. The researcher excluded Grades 1- 4 and 6 and focused on English subjects only. Additionally, the study used Raosoft to determine the number of learners used in the research. There were 107 respondents to make the data more reliable for the study.

Table 1. Distribution of respondents

Subject	Grade & Section	No. of Respondents
English	5 – Aquino	32
English	5 - Gabriela Silang	35
English	5 – Aguinaldo	40
TOTAL		107

This quantitative study used a checklist method to gather data from its subjects. A checklist was used to measure and identify the extent of exposure to the mother tongue to productive language skills in English subjects using the Mother tongue while trying to be proficient in English. This study also determined the extent of exposure to the mother tongue to productive language skills in English among Grade 5 pupils when grouped by gender. These pupils were exposed to their mother tongue from Grade 1 until Grade 3.

This would also help the researcher determine the demographic factor- gender- in their exposure to mother tongue.

Researcher-made questionnaires and downloaded images or pictures from the internet were used and administered to the Grade 5 learners. Also, the researcher selected a picture taken from the internet for the picture talk with a researcher-made rubric for speaking assessment, then had a researcher-made questionnaire with a standardized rubric, and made a checklist for exposure to the mother tongue. This study used standardized rubric and questionnaires as the research instrument.

The following scales which are researcher-made and validated by experts were used to determine the exposure of the Mother Tongue to Productive Language skills in English.

Scale	Descriptive Equivalent	Interpretation
4.21 - 5.00	Very High	This indicates that exposure to the mother tongue is very extensive.
3.41 - 4.20	High	This indicates that exposure to the mother tongue is extensive.
2.21 - 3.40	Moderate	This indicates that exposure to the mother tongue is relatively extensive. s
1.81 - 2.20	Low	This indicates that exposure to the mother tongue is less extensive.
1.00 - 1.80	Very Low	This indicates that exposure to the mother tongue is not extensive at all.

The following scales which are researcher-made and validated by experts were used to determine the Productive Language Skills in English: Speaking and Writing.

Scale	Descriptive Equivalent	Interpretation
4.21 - 5.00	Very High	This indicates that the pupil's productive skills are excellent.
3.41 - 4.20	High	This indicates that the pupils' productive language skills are outstanding.
2.61 - 3.40	Moderate	This indicates that the pupils' productive language skills are moderate.
1.81- 2.60	Low	This indicates that the pupils' productive language skills are poor.
1.81- 2.60	Low	This indicates that the pupils' productive language skills are poor.

The survey questionnaires will undergo a validation process to ensure the content validity. The first draft of the research instrument will be submitted to the research adviser for comments, suggestions, and recommendations to improve its presentation with the corrections to be included and integrated. The final copies will be submitted to a panel of experts for refinement. The final revision will be made by

incorporating the corrections, comments, and suggestions given by the expert validators before gathering data. The ratings of the validators will be computed and consolidated to know the status of the questionnaires. Further, the reliability index shall be observed through pilot testing on students of the same grade level. The data to be gathered shall undergo the Cronbach Alpha test to identify the items to be removed and revised so that the questionnaires will address the students' comprehension according to their level before the final conduct.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Exposure to Mother Tongue among Grade 5 Pupils of San Francisco Elementary School

Presented in Table 2 is the exposure to mother tongue among grade 5 learners of San Francisco Elementary School with a total of 97 respondents. Conversing with friends using Cebuano and at home when conversing with siblings and parents came first in a tie with the mean of 4.97, which has a descriptive value of very high and indicates that their exposure to their mother tongue is very extensive. The lowest is reading articles in newspapers and magazines in Cebuano, with a mean of 2.91, which has a descriptive value of moderate and indicates that their exposure to their mother tongue is relatively extensive.

Table 2. Exposure to Mother Tongue

Mother Tongue	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
Listening to the radio news and drama in Cebuano (Maninaw ko sa radyo og drama ug balita sa Cebuano.)	2.96	Moderate
Reading articles from the newspapers and magazines in Cebuano (Nagabasa kog ma balasahon sama sa dyaryo ug magasin sa Cebuano.)	2.91	Moderate
Conversing with friends using Cebuano (Mag-estoyahanay mi sa akong amigo gamit ang Cebuano.)	4.97	Very High
Watching TV series in Cebuano (Nagatan-aw ko teleserye sa Cebuano.)	3.06	Moderate
Overall	3.77	High

Another item is watching T.V. series in Cebuano, which came third with a mean of 3.06, which indicates that their exposure to their mother tongue is moderate or relatively extensive. The overall mean of the exposure to the mother tongue of Grade 5 pupils is 3.77, which has a descriptive value of high and indicates that the exposure to the mother tongue is extensive. This supports the study by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization or UNESCO (2011) entitled Mother Tongue-Based Bilingual or Multilingual Education in the Early Years, which stated that parents and other primary caregivers strongly influence children's first language acquisition in the early years. These first teachers' attitudes, goals, and behaviors related to their child's initial language development influence children's developing language skills, language socialization, and perceptions of the value of the Mother Tongue.

In addition, such use of language, whether one or another language, will contribute to personal success, security, or status. By contrast, an integrative language attitude focuses on social considerations, such as the desire to be accepted into the cultural group that uses a language or to elaborate an identity associated with the language.

Productive Language Skills in English in terms of speaking among Grade 5 Pupils of San Francisco Elementary School

Table 3 presents one of the productive language skills in English in terms of speaking among Grade 5 pupils of San Francisco Elementary School. Comprehension came first with a mean of 2.32, which has a descriptive value of low and indicates that their productive skills in English in terms of speaking are poor. The lowest mean is their grammar, which got a mean of 1.65, which has a descriptive value of very low and indicates that pupils' productive language skills in Speaking are inferior. Vocabulary got a mean of 1.86, which has a descriptive low and indicates that the productive language of pupils is inferior.

The overall mean of productive language skills in terms of speaking is 1.93, which has a descriptive value of low and indicates that the productive language skills of pupils are poor. Also, Lyle (1993) claimed that from the language development perspective, oral language provides a foundation for developing other language skills. Through speech, children learn to organize their thinking and focus on their ideas. Neglecting oral language in the classroom will destroy that foundation and severely hinder the development of another aspect of language skills.

Table 3. Productive Language Skills in English in terms of Speaking among Grade 5 pupils of San Francisco Elementary School

Speaking	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
5 Pronunciation	1.81	Low
4 Grammar	1.65	Very Low
3 Vocabulary	1.86	Low
2 Fluency	2.01	Low
1 Comprehension	2.32	Low
Over-all Mean	1.93	Low

Productive Language Skills in English in terms of writing among Grade 5 Pupils of San Francisco Elementary School

Shown in Table 4 is one of the productive language skills in English, which is writing, of Grade 5 pupils of San Francisco Elementary School. The data shows that mechanics got the highest mean of 3.96, which has a high descriptive value and indicates that learners' productive language skills are outstanding. Then the lowest are content and form, which has the same mean, got 2.16, which has a descriptive value of low and indicates that the productive language skills in English in terms of content and form are poor. Grammar got a total mean of 2.73, which has a moderate descriptive value and indicates that the productive language of pupils is average. The overall mean of productive language skills in terms of writing is 2.83, which has a descriptive value of moderate and indicates that the productive language skills of pupils in terms of speaking are average.

Moreover, Vilina (2014) mentioned that, like any sport or skill, learning and mastering it requires practice and effort. Just like writing, it requires concentration and time to improve the skills. Once acquired, he still needs to practice sustaining proficiency and mastery.

Table 4. Productive Language Skills in English in terms of Writing Skills among Grade 5 pupils of San Francisco Elementary School

Writing	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent
CONTENT Appropriateness of information	2.16	Low
FORM Structure/ Transition	2.16	Low
STYLE Sentence, Length Expression, and Diction	3.14	Moderate
GRAMMAR Rules Language	2.73	Moderate
MECHANICS Spelling, Punctuation, and Capitalization	3.96	High
Overall	2.83	Moderate

Significant Difference in the Exposure to Mother Tongue of Grade 5 Pupils in San Francisco Elementary School when Grouped by Gender

Table 5 shows the significant difference in exposure to mother tongue when grade 5 pupils are grouped by gender. The males got 3.79, and females got a mean of 3.75, a t-value of 0.357, and a p-value of 0.722, which means that the null hypothesis is not rejected on Ho at 0.05 level, which is interpreted as there is no significant difference in exposure to the mother tongue of the grade 5 pupils when grouped by gender. Estyn (2008) indicated that gender alone cannot explain underachievement, and broader socioeconomic factors should be considered in concluding pupils' achievements.

Table 5. Significant Difference in the Exposure to Mother Tongue of Grade 5 Pupils in San Francisco Elementary School when Grouped by Gender

Gender	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent	T-value	p-value	Decision on Ho a 0.05 level
Male	3.79	Moderate	0.357	0.722	Ho is accepted
Female	3.75	Moderate			

Significant Difference in Productive Language Skills in English of Grade 5 Pupils in San Francisco Elementary School when Grouped by Gender in terms of Speaking and Writing

Presented in Table 6 is the Significant Difference in Productive Language Skills in English in speaking and writing. In speaking skills, Females have a 1.98 mean. While 1.89 for Males is low with a t-value of -1.484 and a p-value of 0.141, Ho is accepted, which is interpreted as there is no significant relationship in productive language skills in speaking when grouped by gender. On the other note, in writing, Males got the mean of 2.84 and 2.82 for Females, a t-value of -0.506, and a p-value of 0.614, and Ho is accepted, which means there is no significant difference in productive language skills in writing when grouped by gender. The overall result of the t-value is -0.804 and p-value of 0.423, the Ho is accepted, interpreted as there is no significant difference in productive language skills when grouped by gender.

As Estyn (2008) mentioned, it opposes the evidence suggesting that boys perform less than girls in writing.

There was evidence that are being identified concerning their underperformance. Additionally, factors related to the quality of teaching, such as teaching grammar separately from contextualized writing, inappropriate use of interventions, misuse of writing frames, and a lack of connection between oral and writing work. School-level factors, such as not offering children an active and free-play environment, which has been associated with more progress in reading and writing. Classroom-level factors include inefficient use of I.C.T., setting, and streaming behavioral and social-level factors. These are related to the way lessons are conducted, such as too much emphasis on story writing, not giving boys ownership of their writing, a discrepancy between boys' reading preferences and writing topics, using 'counting down' time strategies, and a dislike by boys of drafting and figurative language.

Table 6. Significant Difference in Productive Language Skills in English of Grade 5 Pupils in San Francisco Elementary School when Grouped by Gender

Variables	Gender	Mean	Descriptive Equivalent	T-value	P-value	Decision on Ho at 0.05 level
Speaking	Male	1.89	Low	1.484	0.141	Ho ¹ is Accepted
	Female	1.98	Low			
Writing	Male	2.84	Moderate	0.506	0.614	HO ² is accepted
	Female	2.82	Moderate			
Overall result				0.804	0.423	Ho is accepted

Significant Relationship between the Exposure to Mother Tongue to Productive Language Skills in English for Grade 5 Pupils in San Francisco Elementary School

Table 7 presents the significant relationship between exposure to mother tongue and productive language skills. The exposure to the mother tongue to speaking skills got the r-value of 0.865 and p-value of 0.000, which is Ho is rejected as well, as the exposure to mother tongue to writing skills got the same interpretation that there is a significant relationship in the exposure to mother tongue to speaking skills. The same goes for writing with an R-value of 0.711 and a p-value of 0.000. The overall result shows a significant relationship between exposure to the mother tongue and productive English language skills.

As Ferran (2015) mentioned, one must learn the stylistic devices related to or equivalent to the first language to progress in speaking and writing skills. According to William (2001), language plays a significant role in education and can affect the learners and their academic performance. English is the most common and widely used medium of instruction and communication at school, in many countries, either in primary or secondary schools. Constant exposure to the language could give a degree of mastery.

Table 7. Significant Relationship Between Exposure to Mother Tongue to Productive Language Skills in English

Variables	R-value	P-value	Decision on Ho at 0.05
Exposure of Mother Tongue to Speaking Skills in English	0.865	0.000	Ho is rejected
Exposure of Mother Tongue to Writing Skills in English	0.711	0.000	Ho is rejected

Overall result: Exposure to Mother Tongue and Productive Language Skills	0.051	0.618	Ho is rejected
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Summary of Findings

The following are the findings of the study based on the computed data result: The extent of exposure to the mother tongue of Grade 5 pupils of San Francisco Elementary School is high based on the overall mean of 3.77. The level of productive language skills, which is speaking, of Grade 5 pupils in San Francisco Elementary School is poor, with an overall mean of 1.93. It shows that the level of productive language skills in writing of Grade 5 pupils in San Francisco Elementary School is moderate, with an overall mean of 2.83. There is no significant difference in the exposure of the mother tongue of Grade 5 learners when grouped by gender since the p-value is more significant than the 0.05 level. There is no significant difference in the level of productive language skills of Grade 5 learners when grouped by gender since the p-value is more significant than 0.05. There is a significant relationship between exposure to the mother tongue and productive language skills among Grade 5 pupils since the p-value is lower than the 0.05 level.

CONCLUSION

Based on the data gathered, here are the conclusions: The exposure to the mother tongue of Grade 5 pupils of San Francisco Elementary School is high. The level of productive language skills in speaking of Grade 5 pupils in San Francisco Elementary School is poor, while their level of productive language skills in writing is moderate. It also shows that their level of productive language skills in writing is moderate. There is no significant difference in the exposure of the mother tongue of Grade 5 learners when grouped by gender. There is no significant difference in the level of productive language skills in English of Grade 5 learners when grouped by gender. A significant relationship exists between exposure to the mother tongue and productive language skills among Grade 5 learners of San Francisco Elementary School.

RECOMMENDATION

From the data gathered and after they had been analyzed thoroughly and with many considerations, the researcher, therefore, recommends the following: The teachers and parents should collaborate to encourage pupils to use English in their conversations with their family at home, with friends, and at school and encourage them to listen, watch and read English when time permits them to do so, according to their abilities. Teachers should encourage pupils to use English as a medium of communication inside the classroom, allowing them to practice and have an opportunity to enhance their speaking skills. Teachers and parents should encourage learners to have a diary or journal to allow them to write and practice their writing skills. Teachers should help learners know the basic grammar rules to write a well-written sentence structure by giving writing exercises and giving one vocabulary word every day and how the word is appropriately used in a context. Teachers should provide spelling exercises to improve their spelling and vocabulary while enriching their vocabulary. Learners should be encouraged to immerse themselves in English early, which would help them prepare to be globally competitive. Learners should be encouraged to use their mother tongue at school and home to have a strong foundation for acquiring the second language through reading English books, listening to English songs, and watching English movies. Learners should also be tasked with enhancing the mastery of their mother tongue through writing, composition, and speaking through role-play and simulations.

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