

***Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education Implementation:  
A Basis for Policy on Culture Preservation***

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**Abstract**

The study aimed at determining the elementary school teachers' socio-demographic attributes in terms of their sex, age, civil status, and language spoken at home. It likewise determined the perception of the respondents on the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education. The subjects of the study came from the different elementary schools who are teaching under the mother tongue-based multilingual education curriculums. It highlighted the teachers struggles and experiences on the implementation of the mother tongued based multi-lingual education and more importantly as to their perceptions whether such curriculum of instructions should further be implemented adding on their recommendations to its continuance to help in the preservation of culture and traditions emanating from language used. The respondents believed on the following: that the use of mother tongue will make a better communication between pupils and teachers; mother tongue-based education will develop the writing system of the children; mother tongue-based education will be a big help in developing curriculum and instructional materials; the teacher utilizes role play in the generalization of lesson using mother tongue; and children who use their mother tongue will have easier way for them to learn a second, third and fourth language. Thus, the respondents strongly believed that MTBMLE should continue its implementation for it will guarantee the preservation of our culture.

Keywords: Mother Tongue-Based Education, Culture, Language, Preservation

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## INTRODUCTION

Mother tongue education refers to any form of schooling that makes use of the language or languages that children are most familiar with. This is usually the language that children speak at home with their family. The ‘mother tongue’ does not have to be the language spoken by the mother. Children can and often speak more than one or even two languages at home. For example, they may speak one language with their mother, another with their father and a third with their grandparents.

When children are offered opportunities to learn in their mother tongue, they are more likely to enroll and succeed in school, and their parents are more likely to communicate with teachers and participate in their children’s learning (UNESCO, 2007).<sup>[1]</sup>

Mother Tongue-Based project is launched in the Philippines in S.Y. 1999-2000 as mandated by DECS Memo no. 144s. 1999. The DepEd said, the use of Mother Tongue from pre-school to grade three is called bridge program because the Mother Tongue or first language of the learner is being used as a bridge to learn a second or third language, like Filipino or English.<sup>[2]</sup>

Order no. 74 is based explicitly on assumptions about the “superiority” of the use of mother tongues in education based on successful projects and empirical research which include the Lingua Franca Project of DepEd that begun in 1999, an immediate precursor of MLE; the longitudinal study of the Lubuungan Experiment (Walter, et.al, 2008)<sup>[3]</sup> which showed that the educational performance of Primary Grades 1-3 pupils who were taught Mathematics in the local language outperformed those taught in English; and the DepEd study which affirmed international studies showing pupils who were taught Mathematics in their mother tongues performed relatively well in International test.

Many developing countries are characterized by individual as well as societal multilingualism, allow a single foreign language to dominate the education sector. Instruction through a language that learners do not speak has been called “submersion” because it is analogous to holding learners under water without teaching them how to swim. Compounded by chronic difficulties such as low levels teacher education, poorly designed, inappropriate curricula and lack of adequate school facilities, submersion makes both learning and teaching extremely difficult, particularly when the language of instruction is also foreign to the teacher. Mother tongue-based bilingual programs use the learner’s first language, known as the L1, to teach beginning reading and writing skills along with academic content (Carole Benson, 2004).<sup>[4]</sup>

The choice of the language is a recurrent challenge in the development of quality education speakers of mother tongue, which are not the same as the national language, are often at a considerable disadvantage in the educational system (UNESCO, 2007).<sup>[5]</sup> By the time children begin schooling, they gain confidence in their ability to communicate meaningfully in their mother tongue. They have built a foundation of knowledge and experience through observing and interacting with peers and adults in their community. The language, knowledge and experience that children bring to school form an important foundation for their learning in the classroom.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

Secretary Andrew B. Gonzalez.<sup>[6]</sup> of Department of Education, the Regional Lingua Franca (RLF) Pilot Project was launched in 1999-2001. It began with 16 regions, but covered only 32 schools, with 16 belonging to the experimental class and another 16 to the control class. The project utilized one of the largest Lingua Franca – Tagalog, Cebuano and Ilocano – as media of instruction in grades 1 and 2. The result of the project of the first implementation for S.Y. 1999-2000 the experimental group obtained numerically higher scores than the control groups in all learning areas – Mathematics, Science, Wika at Pagbasa and Sibika. For the second year of implementation, it shows that for the experimental classes in both grades performing better in all subject areas, except English where the Grade 2 pupils in the control classes were exposed to English since Grade 1. Based on the results, Gonzales<sup>[7]</sup> pointed out that languages grow and change in response to changes in the physical, social, political, spiritual and economic environments in which they are used. As a language is used for instruction, for example, it intrinsically evolves to adapt to the demands of its users. New objects and concepts become part of the meanings that people used to communicate. Languages are able to do this through the process of borrowing lexical items or idiomatic expressions or coining words of expressions. This is the characteristic of human language.

Cummins (2000),<sup>[8]</sup> an educational researcher and writer suggests: 1) Children with a solid foundation in their mother tongue develop stronger literacy abilities in the school language; 2) The level of development of children's mother tongue is a strong predictor of their second language development; 3) Children's knowledge and skills transfer across languages from the mother tongue to the school language. A good bridge allows learning of a new language before learning in a new language. Reading and writing skills only have to be learned once and these skills, as well as understanding concepts, can be transferred from one language to another (second language acquisition). Second language learning is more successful with a good L1 foundation. Learning a language should come before learning through a language.

The group study of Dekker, et. al (2012),<sup>[9]</sup> explained that MTB-MLE is a structured program of language learning and cognitive development providing a strong educational foundation in the first language, with successful bridging to one or more additional language, and enabling the use of both/all languages for life-long learning. The purpose of a multilingual educational program is to develop appropriate cognitive and reasoning skills enabling children to operate equally in their community language, the national language and English.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The descriptive-survey method of research was used in this study. According to Creswell, (2002),<sup>[10]</sup> a Descriptive-survey Research is a quantitative research with a process of collecting, analyzing, interpreting, and writing the results of a study, while qualitative research is the approach to data collection, analysis, and report writing differing from the traditional, quantitative approaches.

### **Subjects and Sampling Procedure**

The subjects of this study focused on the groups of teachers belonging to District I of Labrador, Pangasinan, Philippines. There are eleven (11) schools in the said District I comprising of one hundred and twenty- one (121) teachers. The respondents of the study should meet the following criteria or characteristics: a) They came from the schools

belonging to District I of Labrador, Pangasinan; b) they are teaching in the elementary for the S.Y. 2019-2020; c) They are willing to be a part of the study.

There is a large number of elementary school teachers in the province but only the respondents who have met the criteria will be involved in this case study. Thus, the purposive sampling techniques were utilized. According to Calderon (1993),<sup>[11]</sup> as cited in the study of Mendoza (2015),<sup>[12]</sup> purposive sampling is determining the target population, those to be involved in the study.

The respondents of this study were the One hundred and twenty-one (121) Elementary School Teachers of Labrador District of Pangasinan, A.Y. 2019-2020.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

In order to undertake successfully this study, the researcher had sought prospective respondents through personal visits. Before the start of the actual interview, rapport is established with the subjects through scheduled visits hence, they were assured of the confidentiality of their responses by not mentioning their real names in the case study report.

Administration of the questionnaire is done in their residence and likewise all other data gathering procedures is conducted anytime they are available. Like, during weekends when they are free from their jobs or during their most convenient time. Follow-up interview and observation of the respondent's activities is taken into account to establish other data in order to clarify vague points and other statements which may not be clearly captured in the questionnaire. Taped interview is likewise used during the data gathering procedure.

### **Instrumentation and Validation**

To obtain the primary sources of information, the interview schedule is used. In gathering the data, the researcher used the questionnaire-checklist as the main instrument. The said questionnaire is constructed by the researcher. The questionnaire consists of two parts: Part I includes profile of the respondents in terms of sex, and language spoken at home. Part II, includes 20 items that determined the perception on Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education. Observation is also done to supplement the data gathered which was later subjected to content validation with the help of some experts, prior to its finalization. The draft of the questionnaire was presented to the researcher's adviser, critique reader, and panel members for their comments, and suggestions. After the necessary revisions were made, the draft of questionnaire was tested to ten (10) citizens who are not actual respondents of the study in order to determine the areas that are confusing to the respondents. The questionnaire was presented to a pool of experts for content-validation purposes. Their wise recommendations were considered in finalizing the questionnaire.

In gathering the data, the researcher made use of the questionnaire checklist as the main instrument in gathering the needed data relative to her study. Informal interviews to some respondents to gather additional data was likewise conducted during the actual administration of the questionnaire.

## **Data-Gathering Procedure**

Permission from the different offices was sought for by the researcher to conduct this study. Before the needed data were gathered a communication was prepared by the researcher, addressed to proper authority for their approval of administering the questionnaire.

The researcher personally administered the survey questionnaire to the respondents to identify their perception on Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education.

To enable the respondents to freely express their ideas on the items of the questionnaire, an assurance was made by the researcher that their responses will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

## **Sources of Data**

To answer the problems stated in the research, the following were used as sources of data.

To answer problem number 1, a questionnaire-checklist on the respondent's socio-demographic profile in terms of their age, sex, civil status, highest educational qualification and language spoken at home were used to describe the socio demographic profiles of the respondents on the above stated information.

To answer number 2, a twenty (20) item each questionnaire checklist about the perceptions by the elementary school teachers were administered to the respondents.

To answer problem no. 3, as to whether the respondents believe that MTBMLE continue its implementation, a frequency count is used.

Moreover, the researcher kept in touched with the respondents through follow-up visits in order to clarify vague answers and uncertain information to guarantee the reliability of the study.

## **Statistical Treatment of Data**

To answer problem no. 1, frequency counts and percentage were used. Below is a formula of percentage rate.

$$P = \frac{f}{N} \times 100$$

Where:

P=percentage rate

F=number of frequency

N=total member of respondents

100= constant factor

To answer problem no. 2 extent of Perception of Elementary School Teachers. Average weighted point will be used. The formula is stated below:

$$AWP = \frac{\sum(fiXWi)}{N}$$

Where:

AWP= average weighted point

f3 = Frequency of those who will answer Strongly Agree

f2 = Frequency of those who will answer Agree

f1 = Frequency of those who will answer Disagree

N = Number of case

AWP	Interpretation	(W)
2.50-3.0	Strongly Agree	3
1.50-2.49	Agree	2
1.0-1.49	Disagree	1

To answer problem no. 3, as to whether the respondents believe that MTBMLE continue its implementation, a frequency count is used. If there are more than half of the respondents who answered Yes, it means that they still favor the continuation of the implementation of MTBMLE

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents across the variable categories considered in this study.

**Table 1. Profile of Elementary School Teachers  
N=121**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>AGE BRACKET</b>		
18 – 28 Years Old	5	4.13
29 – 39 Years Old	98	81.00
40 – 50 Years Old	15	12.40
51 – 61 Years Old	3	2.47
62 and above	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	15	12.40
Female	106	87.60
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>CIVIL STATUS</b>		
Single	9	7.44
Married	111	91.73
Widow	1	0.83
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>HIGHEST EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT</b>		
Elementary undergraduate	—	—
Elementary graduate	—	—
High School level	—	—
High School graduate	—	—
College level	—	—
College Graduate	5	4.13
Masteral level	99	81.82
Masteral Graduate	10	8.26
Doctoral level	5	4.13
Doctoral Graduate	2	1.66
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Language Spoken at Home</b>		
Pangasinan & Filipino	58	47.93
Pangasinan	22	18.18
Filipino	18	14.87
Ilocano	15	12.40
Ilocano and Filipino	4	3.31
Ilocano, Pangasinan & Filipino	4	3.31
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>100</b>

**Age.** Majority of the respondents belong to age bracket of 29-39 years with 98 members or 81.00%. Thus 15 respondents or 12.40% belong to the age bracket 40-50 years, 5 respondents or 4.13% belong to the age bracket 18-21, and only 3 respondents or 2.47% belongs to age bracket 51-61 years. It shows further that none of them belong to age bracket 62 and above. It simply indicates that majority of the teaching force belongs to the young generation.

Santrock (2002),<sup>[13]</sup> categorizes 30-60 years old as middle adulthood stage. The respondents in this study are mid adults (30-60 years). Middle adulthood as discussed by Papalia, et al. (2003),<sup>[14]</sup> has many markers, and they are not the same for everyone. The middle years are the central years of the adult life span, but their content varies greatly. Cognitively speaking, middle-aged people are in their prime. They have the ability to apply mental powers to novel problems that require little or no previous knowledge.

**Sex.** It can be seen on Table 1 that 106 or 87.60 percent of the Elementary School Teachers are females, while 15 or 12.40 percent are males. The result shows that females outnumbered the males. This may be attributed partly to the conservative notion that teaching is more for women while the men should be aggressively involved in the community leadership or other manly endeavors.

**Civil Status.** With respect to the civil status of the respondents, it shows that 9 or 3.37 % of them are single, 111 or 91.73 % are married, and 1 or 0.83% are widow. It shows further that most of them are married.

**Highest Educational Attainment.** The highest educational attainments of 99 or 81.82% of the respondents are Masteral level. 5 or 4.13% are College Graduate, 10 or 8.26% of them is with Masteral Units, 5 of them or 4.13 % are have Doctoral Units, and 2 or 1.66% of them are Doctoral Units. This simply connotes that majority are pursuing to finish Education and to be able to obtain the highest possible educational qualifications.

The data shows that all of the respondents were able to finish college and were able to pursue higher level learning. This is indicative that finishing education guarantees a better opportunity for a person to find a greener pasture. As stated in NSCB (2008), "Education is the great equalizer that will give all Filipinos, rich or poor, the chance to uplift their lives and face a secure future. Nobody can deny the fact of education are the most important thing or factor for some people to bring change in their lives. It has been recognized as the most prevailing gearing-up the socio-economic development of our government or our nation." This supports the results conducted that 47% of those surveyed says not having a diploma makes it hard to find a good job. Others say they would rather go back to school than to have a not stable job:

([http://www.careerconnectionsct.com/index.asp?Type=B\\_BASIC&SEC=%7BED52E35D-26DB-4822-B7C7-74AB857D3BB5%7D](http://www.careerconnectionsct.com/index.asp?Type=B_BASIC&SEC=%7BED52E35D-26DB-4822-B7C7-74AB857D3BB5%7D)).<sup>[15]</sup>

**Language Spoken at Home.** It can be seen that 58 or 47.93% of the Elementary School Teachers speak Pangasinan and Filipino at home, 22 or 18.18% speak Pangasinan, 18 or 14.87% speak Filipino, 15 or 12.40% speak Ilocano, 4 or 3.31% speak Ilokano and Filipino and 4 or 3.31% speak Ilocano, Pangasinan and Filipino. The findings show that most of the respondents speak Pangasinan and Filipino at home because these are the language spoken by their parents since they were born. Pangasinan (*Pangasinense*) is an Austronesian language, and one of the eight major languages of the Philippines. It is the primary and predominant language of the entire province of Pangasinan and northern Tarlac, on the northern part of Luzon's central plains geographic region, most of whom belong to the Pangasinan ethnic group. Pangasinan is also spoken in southwestern La Union, as well as in the municipalities of Benguet, Nueva Vizcaya, Nueva Ecija, and Zambales that border Pangasinan. A few Aeta groups in Central Luzon's northern part also understand and even speak Pangasinan as well.<sup>[16]</sup>

**Table 2: Perception of Elementary School Teachers on Mother Tongue-Based Education**

PERCEPTION		3 (SA)	2 (A)	1 (D)	AWM	Interpretation
1	Mother tongue-based education from grades 1-3 helps but it's not sufficient to sustain the learning momentum	89	25	7	2.47	Agree
2	The use of mother tongue will make the teacher easily explain to the pupils about the topics	87	29	5	2.58	Strongly Agree
3	Mother tongue education makes it possible for the community to produce its own culturally relevant reading materials and teaching aids	100	17	4	2.59	Strongly Agree
4	Through the use of Mother Tongue Education, the teacher can more accurately assess what has been learned and identify and identify areas where students need further assistance	75	38	8	2.55	Strongly Agree
5	Children who use their mother tongue will be easier for them to learn a second, third and fourth language	90	24	7	2.69	Strongly Agree
6	Teaching all subjects except Filipino and English should be done using the mother tongue	5	35	81	1.37	Disagree
7	The use of mother tongue will make the pupils immediately construct and explain their world, articulate their thoughts and add new concepts to what they already know.	85	30	6	2.65	Strongly Agree
8	English and Filipino are languages foreign to most children and legislating it as medium of instruction will do more harm to an already ailing system of education.	15	45	61	1.61	Disagree
9	Shared reading using mother tongue will increase the levels of performance of pupils.	63	47	11	2.42	Agree
10	The use of mother tongue will increase the levels of performance of pupils	59	57	5	2.45	Agree
11	The use of mother tongue will make a better communication between pupils and student teachers.	99	18	4	2.75	Strongly Agree
12	The use of mother tongue is an innovative approach in learning	77	41	3	2.61	Strongly Agree

13	We should use our regional languages as official languages and make use of them as the language of instruction at least in grade school.	70	49	2	2.51	Strongly Agree
14	The use of mother tongue will make the teacher easily explain to the pupils about the topics.	80	34	7	2.60	Strongly Agree
15	Mother tongue Education will develop the writing system of the children	97	17	7	2.74	Strongly Agree
16	Mother Tongue Education will be a big help in developing curriculum and instructional materials.	96	17	8	2.72	Strongly Agree
17	The teacher utilizes role play in the generalization of lesson using mother tongue	96	17	8	2.72	Strongly Agree
18	Use simple activities and work cards to engage in reading using mother tongue to understand more by the pupils	89	21	11	2.64	Strongly Agree
19	Reading and writing should be first taught using mother tongue	79	21	21	2.47	Agree
20	Teachers who use mother tongue incorporate oral literature, local history, local arts, craft and music in the curriculum as well as the learners	70	31	20	2.42	Agree
<b>AWP</b>					<b>2.47</b>	<b>Agree</b>

It can be gleaned in Table 2 the indicators under perception of Elementary School Teachers on Mother Tongue-Based Education were Agree as evidence by the Average weighted Point of 2.47. The five (5) indicators which got the highest point are the following: 1) The use of mother tongue will make a better communication between pupils and student teachers with 2.75; 2) Mother tongue Education will develop the writing system of the children with 2.74; 3) Mother Tongue Education will be a big help in developing curriculum and instructional materials with 2.72; 4) The teacher utilizes role play in the generalization of lesson using mother tongue with 2.72; and 5) Children who use their mother tongue will be easier for them to learn a second, third and fourth language with 2.69.

Children with solid foundation in their mother tongue develop stronger literacy abilities in school language. This was stated by Cummins (2000),<sup>[17]</sup> who is an educational researcher and writer. The level of development of children's mother tongue is a strong predictor of their second language development. Children's knowledge and skills transfer across languages from the mother tongue to the school language. A good bridge allows learning of a new language before learning in a new language. Reading and writing skills only have to be learned once and these skills, as well as understanding concepts, can be transferred from one language to another.

The findings of the recent student coincide with the study conducted by Walter (2016),<sup>[18]</sup> where he states that language is an integral feature of educational practice in the classroom.

Teachers communicate content and instructions via language. Learners listen and interact via language in the process of learning.

**Table 3: Respondents who believe that MTBMLE continues its implementation**  
N+121

<b>Respondents who believe that MTBMLE continue its implementation</b>	<b>f</b>	
	<b>%</b>	
Yes	103	85.12
No	18	14.88
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>100</b>

It can be gleaned in Table 3 that 103 or 85.12% of the Elementary School Teachers believed that MTBMLE should continue its implementation, while 18 or 14.88% does not believe that it should be continued. Based on interview, those who say no for its continuation says that he MTB MLE policy, therefore, can create a polarity of functions—that is, accelerate or delay learning based on the context by which it is understood and implemented. When used as a means to understand concepts, it can speed up comprehension. When it is taught as a subject in isolation, it can take the shape of a second language effecting a sense of linearity because learning is taught within the limits of time, human and material resources and activities. The current milieu finds the newly-integrated archaic words irrelevant not just because they are not used at home but because children find them too complex to use and phonetic structure too complex to pronounce and use for conversations. They hope that this study also captured realities confronting the students, teachers and parents who are directly affected by the policy one of which is a weak prospect of promoting MTBMLE successfully in all contexts. The results will serve as a solid empirical basis for the formulation of reform policies, innovations and programs that will create a path for all learners to experience a smooth flow of thinking and processing of information in any language, be it mother tongue or foreign language or both.

Metila, et. al. (2017),<sup>[19]</sup> in their study states that Mother Tongue Based-Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) policy in the Philippines involves implementation of local mother tongues as the language of instruction in Kindergarten to year three (K -3), with the official languages (Filipino and English) being introduced as the language of instruction after grade three.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. The respondents belong to the age bracket of 29-39 years, are predominantly female and mostly are married and have Masteral Units.
2. The respondents all “agree” that the use of mother tongue will make a better communication between pupils and student teachers, will develop the writing system of the children and it will be a big help in developing curriculum and instructional materials.

3. That majority of the respondents believed that MTBMLE should continue its implementation.

### **Recommendations**

The findings and conclusions made the researchers suggest that:

1. The use of Mother Tongue in teaching learning process should be strongly implemented;
2. The parents and other stakeholders shall support the Mother Tongue-Based Curriculum;
3. Find more avenues or activities that will encourage children to speak their Mother-Tongue;
4. There must be formulation of reform policies, innovations and programs that will create a path for all learners to experience a smooth flow of the implementation of the MTBMLE;
5. More studies related to the Mother Tongue-Based Curriculum should be conducted to possibly improve its implementation.

Having a strong mother tongue foundation which is anchored on the implementation of the mother tongue based multilingual education, children will be able to learn the best skills needed, thus the language learned will allow them understand that the structure of language they know will be and can be used to learn more other languages.

The conduct of multi lingual education is becoming more advantageous for the child will be exposed to the mandates of globalization but not forgetting his roots and to be the agent to promote such language identity innately distinct and multi-faceted. It shall play a major role in the child's personal, social and cultural identity for they shall be the first who shall acquire grassroots knowledge of who they are, based on the mother tongue they speak, that they can use to make a stand in its promotion, propagation and preservation. That being the case, they will have a deeper understanding of the role they have to play and what is their role in the society they belong to.

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