



## THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MOTHER TONGUE-BASED MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION IN GRADE I IN THE PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN PANGASINAN I

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### Abstract

Three years into its implementation, the utilization of the mother tongue both as a medium of instruction and as a learning subject is still found wanting. In the Division of Pangasinan I, Grade I teachers in particular have to contend with modules that are either found inadequate or inappropriate. Add to this the performance of the Grade I pupils who, sadly, are still processing their manner of learning with the use of the mother tongue, a language which has become secondary to Filipino. The aforementioned data led the researcher to look into the status of the implementation of the mother tongue-based multilingual education in Grade I in the public elementary schools in the Division of Pangasinan I. Utilizing a survey questionnaire as well as documentary analysis, the study assessed how the Grade I pupils were faring in the Mother Tongue as a learning subject. It also looked into the Grade I teachers' proficiency in the mother tongue (Pangasinan) as well as the problems they encountered with the implementation of MTBMLE. Results show that majority of the instructional objectives in the mother tongue as a subject are not being met as indicated by the areas where they are found weak, particularly here grammar awareness, vocabulary development, and reading comprehension are concerned. Moreover, the Grade I teachers use another language as accessory to the mother tongue. They, too, encountered serious problems with the implementation of MTBMLE such as attendance to relevant trainings and the provision of evaluation instruments.

**Keywords:** K to 12; learning areas; mother tongue; MTBMLE; strategies

### INTRODUCTION

The shift in language policy is part of a growing trend around the world to support mother tongue instruction in the early years of a child's education. In Southeast Asia, this is apparent in a rising number of educational programs that utilize a mother tongue approach. While the use of non-dominant languages in education is allowed in countries such as Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam and Thailand, the Philippines is the single

country to institute a national policy requiring their inclusion in the early grades. As a result, the implementation of MTB-MLE in the Philippines is being looked at as an example for the rest of the region.

As envisioned by the Education for All (EFA) programme and the Millennium Development Goal (MDG), countries around the world, especially the developing ones like Philippines, are provided with both financial and technical assistance from international development agencies. The countries



have also attempted various policy changes to ensure access, equity quality and relevance of primary education. One of the policy level innovations we can see is the introduction of learners' mother tongues in schools both as a subject and the medium of instruction. Various studies (e.g. Benson, 2002; Dutcher, 2003) have identified that children's overall educational attainment can be enhanced if they are taught in their mother tongue in early grades. In contrary to this, teaching in a dominant language, which is different from children's mother tongue, in early grades invites serious challenges in education e.g. high drop-out rates, low educational attainment and lack of classroom interaction (UNESCO, 2003). Due to these problems, as reported by Dutcher (2004), a large number of indigenous children, who come from different linguistic groups, are still out of school, and even if they have joined the school they are marred with the low performance on the ground of their low competence in dominant language (s) which is used as the medium of instruction in schools.

With MTB-MLE comes the growing apprehension from the teachers that teaching in a mother tongue-based program requires a vastly different set of skills, many of which they apparently do not have at the moment. The teachers are particularly concerned with practical issues such as producing home-grown and contextually sensitive teaching and reading materials, and how to actually develop greater fluency in their own languages.

The broad categories of materials needed to implement an MTB-MLE curriculum include early literacy materials in the mother tongue, a variety of on-grade narrative reading materials using the mother tongue, possibly subject-area materials in the mother tongue, materials to transition from the

mother tongue into the second language, and then, of course, materials as appropriate for the educational system in the second language. In most cases, appropriate mother tongue materials will be lacking and will need to be prepared. Other educational materials in the mother tongue will likewise have to be constructed by those proficient in writing the language and with appropriate educational backgrounds or experience in constructing learning materials. Likely the most technically demanding skills will be needed to structure the primary literacy materials, since effective materials will require knowledge of how to present the symbol-to-sound rules and the sound-to-meaning conventions for writing the language in a way that aligns with the students' capabilities. In view of these observations and data pertinent to the implementation of MTBMLE and consequently the teachers and administrators' knowledge, needs, preparedness and attitude towards it that this present study is created. It looks into how the Grade I pupils and teachers in the public elementary schools in Pangasinan I take to the implementation of the mother tongue as a learning subject and as the medium of instruction.

## METHODOLOGY

This study utilized the descriptive method of research. It describes the status of the implementation of the mother tongue as a learning subject and medium of instruction in Grade I in the public elementary schools in Pangasinan I.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the study as well as the data gathered and arrived at from the documents studied and analyzed by the researcher on the mother tongue as a subject and



medium of instruction in Grade I in the public elementary schools in Pangasinan I.

Table 1

**Performance Level of the Grade I Pupils in the Mother Tongue-Based**

**A. Vocabulary Development**

Scores	Level of Achievement	Frequency	Average
10 – 14	High	25	24
5 – 9	Average	79	76
0 – 4	Low	0	0
<b>Total</b>		104	100

The data in the table disclose how the Grade I pupils in the public elementary schools in Pangasinan I fared in the diagnostic test in the pupils' mother tongue, particularly in the area of vocabulary development. The results show how majority of them have achieved "average" in the said area, with 76 percent of the total number of students scoring in the range 5-9 out of the fourteen questions under vocabulary development. This result is encouraging as it shows a positive progress of the mother tongue as a subject in its second year of implementation. It is a clear manifestation of the significant learnings they have of the mother tongue in their grade one. Still, the data imply a further doubling up of efforts to improve the pupils' score in vocabulary development, and in the process, manifest a mastery of the skills/competencies required in the development of their vocabulary.

**B. Grammar Awareness**

Scores	Level of Achievement	Frequency	Average
10 – 14	High	6	6
5 – 9	Average	87	84
0 – 4	Low	11	10
<b>Total</b>		104	100

The transition in the medium of instruction and learning content into the mother tongue as a subject is without its corresponding phases of confusion and difficulty. This is made apparent in the data in Table 2 where it shows how the pupils are obviously found wanting in the area pertinent to grammar awareness. The difficulty that the pupils usually have in grammar is made more complex and clear with the transition to the mother tongue. Grammar still remains to be an area where the pupils face difficulty. The results reveal how only six percent of the total number of pupils achieved "high" in grammar awareness and ten percent achieved "low". Still, the results is encouraging as majority of the pupils achieved "average" in as far as their grammar awareness is concerned. The results call for an improvement in their scores as well as a further focus and attention in the said area so as to improve the pupils' achievement and turn it to "high". Obviously, the teachers and the school heads need to come up with measures to address this area as it is usually in grammar, along with reading comprehension, that the pupils find the most difficulty



### C. Reading Comprehension

Scores	Level of Achievement	Frequency	Average
10 – 14	High	11	10.6
5 – 9	Average	73	70.2
0 – 4	Low	20	19.2
<b>Total</b>		104	100

One of the objectives of MTBME is cognitive development which focuses on the higher order thinking skills. The skills expected and required of the learners in the 21<sup>st</sup> century call for the development of critical thinking skills. The data pertinent to the pupils' comprehension compel them to make use of skills reflective of their critical thinking ability. It is apparent that along the area of comprehension, both listening and reading, majority of the pupils need further assistance. The data also imply a review of the strategies that teachers employ in the mother tongue as a subject as well as the instructional materials they utilize in carrying out instruction. The data in the table show that 19.2 percent of the total number of pupils achieved "low" in the comprehension while only 10.6 percent achieved "high". Just like the other two tables, the achievement of the majority of the pupils is "average" as marked by a percentage of 70.2. The average achievement of the pupils is indicative of the pupils' difficulty in their level of comprehension. What is more alarming here is that the results point to where the pupils are currently at in terms of their reading comprehension. It is a reflection of the level of their comprehension which needs further improvement. All in all, the results in the specified areas of vocabulary development, grammar awareness, and reading comprehension call for beefing up of

resources used in aid of the mother tongue as a subject as well as a review of the strategies employed by the teachers in carrying out instruction

Table 2  
**Other Languages/Dialects Used as Accessories to the Mother Tongue**

Languages	%
Pangasinan	9.58
Ilocano	20.54
Filipino	54.79
English	15.06
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>

This table shows how the teachers make use of other languages or dialects in aid of the mother tongue as instructional base. It shows that most of the respondents (54.79%) use Filipino as accessory to the mother tongue. The dialect that is next to this is Ilocano totaling to 20.54% of the respondents. Only 15.06% say that they make use of English while a few (7%) indicate that they make use of Pangasinan. It can be inferred here that there are terms that are not familiar to the students and so the respondents resort to the use of other language or dialect that will better translate or explain such unfamiliar terms to the students. It is encouraging to note that they make use of other languages or dialects as accessories to the mother tongue.

Table 3

**Problems Encountered by the Grade I Teachers**

	Mean	Description	Rank
1. relevant trainings attended	2.78	Serious	1
2. provision of instructional materials	2.53	Moderately Serious	3
3. provision of evaluation instruments	2.60	Serious	2
4. variety of teaching strategies	2.46	Moderately Serious	4
5. proficiency in the mother tongue	2.21	Moderately Serious	5
<b>Overall</b>	<b>2.52</b>	<b>Moderately Serious</b>	

This table shows what the respondents perceived as problems in the implementation of the mother tongue as instructional base and a learning subject. This table affirms the restraints that the Grade I teachers have to reckon with in the implementation of the mother tongue in the said level. Topping their list as serious are the (1) relevant trainings attended, 2.78, and the (2) provision of evaluation instruments, 2.60. These two point to the pressing concerns that they face in carrying out instruction and assessment where attendance to relevant trainings and provision of evaluation instruments are concerned. This implies a need to organize, if not send the Grade I teachers to periodic trainings and evaluation which will better

equip them in the use of mother tongue as instructional base and learning subject. This will consequently address the problems that teachers face in the proficiency in the mother tongue. Moreover, sending the teachers to relevant trainings will empower them to make their own instructional materials and will no longer have to rely on what will be provided them. A problem, though perceived as moderately serious is still a problem and still needs to be addressed. Thus, it is imperative, too, that areas which the teachers perceived as moderately serious- provision of instructional materials (2.53), variety of teaching strategies (2.46), and proficiency in the mother tongue(2.21) should be addressed. The overall mean may indicate the results to be moderately serious but still, these are areas of concerns that need to be looked into and attended to by the people concerned.

## CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this study reveal how the Grade I pupils in the public elementary schools in Pangasinan I have been “average” in their level of performance in the mother tongue as a subject, particularly in areas that target the vocabulary and concept development, grammar analysis, and reading comprehension. Moreover, the Grade I teachers make use of other languages or dialects such as Filipino or Ilocano in aid of the mother tongue as instructional base. Consequently, attendance to relevant trainings as well as the provision of evaluation instruments are perceived as serious problems encountered by the Grade I teachers with the implementation of the mother tongue as instructional base and learning subject.



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