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Exploring English Teachers' Experiences on Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE)

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Glenn Mark C. Escarda

Assistant Language Teacher, Hitaka Elementary School - Hitachi Board of Education, Hitachi City, Ibaraki, Japan
Graduate School Student, Graduate School of Education, University of the Visayas, Cebu City, Philippines
<https://orcid.org/0009-0001-1038-6475> | escardaglenmark@gmail.com

Suzine Edera-Petiluna

San Jose Central Elementary School – SPED Center, DepEd – Dinagat Islands, Philippines
Graduate School Student, Graduate School of Education, University of the Visayas, Cebu City, Philippines
<https://orcid.org/0009-0004-1150-6733> | suzine_ederapetiluna@uv.edu.ph

Sittie Aina P. Moh. Perdaus

Mindanao State University-University Training Center, Marawi City, Philippines
Graduate School Student, Graduate School of Education, University of the Visayas, Cebu City, Philippines
<https://orcid.org/0009-0004-9138-8617> | sittieaina_moh.perdaus@uv.edu.ph

Rosie A. Mendoza

College Instructor, University of the Visayas, Cebu City, Philippines
Graduate School Student, Graduate School of Education, University of the Visayas, Cebu City, Philippines
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1866-7685> | rmendoza@uv.edu.ph

Maria Chande D. Bula

College Instructor, Eastern Samar State University, Borongan City, Eastern Samar, Philippines
Graduate School Student, Graduate School of Education, University of the Visayas, Cebu City, Philippines
<https://orcid.org/0009-0004-0758-8596> | maria_bula@uv.edu.ph

Abstract:

This research explored the experiences of English teachers within the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) framework in the Philippines, addressing challenges and opportunities stemming from the recent exclusion of mother tongue as a standalone subject and with the aim of formulating theories that can enrich existing educational frameworks and promote teacher empowerment. Utilizing grounded theory, eight English teachers from public schools in Visayas were selected based on specific criteria. In-depth interviews were conducted for data collection, and Colaizzi's method facilitated analysis. The data gathered from the lived experiences of the teachers formed four emergent themes, serving as the basis for formulated theories. These theories aim to enhance educational policies concerning Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education. The study sheds light on the intricate balance required between mother tongue and English instruction, offering insights into policies and teacher empowerment in the evolving educational landscape of the Philippines.

Keywords: Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE), language integration, curriculum development, medium of instruction, multilingual education, language learning, language proficiency.

Introduction:

English holds a significant position in the Philippines across various sectors, including business, government, and education, facilitating professionalism and mutual understanding (Gonzales, 1998). Its pervasive use as the primary medium of instruction in schools has profoundly shaped Filipinos' proficiency in the language from an early age, with students exposed to English not only as a subject but also as a tool for learning other subjects like mathematics, science, and social studies. Over time, English has become deeply ingrained in Philippine society, symbolizing prestige and opportunity, particularly among the educated elite, and serving as a gateway to better opportunities amidst the country's growing economy and increasing globalization. The demand for English education remains high, reflecting its importance in the job market where fluency in English is prioritized by employers for seamless communication with international clients and partners.

In 2012, the Department of Education introduced Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) into the K to 12 Basic Education Program, aiming to enable students to integrate seamlessly into the mainstream educational system and become multilingual, multiliterate, and culturally adept citizens (DepEd, 2016). However, this move has spurred discussions among educators regarding the feasibility and effectiveness of employing local languages to teach various subjects, highlighting discrepancies and inadequacies in assessments aligned with mother tongue (Gempeso & Mendez,



2021). Studies also underscore financial challenges within Philippine schools implementing the MTB-MLE program. While proponents argue for cultural preservation and identity among indigenous communities, recent adjustments in the MATATAG K to 10 Curriculum, which phases out mother tongue as a standalone subject, introduce new complexities (DepEd, 2023).

This research investigated the complex relationship between English language instruction and the use of the mother tongue in the Philippine educational system. With the country's diverse linguistic background, transitioning from mother tongue instruction to effective English teaching presents a multifaceted challenge. By prioritizing the real-life experiences of English teachers, this study aimed to uncover practical theories and diverse approaches to effectively teach English within the MTB-MLE framework. Through a comprehensive exploration of these dynamics, the research hopes to provide valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities associated with integrating the mother tongue in education, with far-reaching implications for educational policy, teacher empowerment, and student language proficiency.

Literature Review:

Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) has emerged as a significant focal point in educational discourse, especially within multilingual societies like the Philippines. This literature review delves into the depth of MTB-MLE implementation, dissecting its theoretical foundations, pedagogical methodologies, and resultant outcomes to elucidate its impact on language proficiency, cultural identity preservation, and comprehensive learning outcomes.

MTB-MLE, rooted in the principle of utilizing learners' mother tongues as a medium of instruction, has garnered attention globally for its potential to address the diverse linguistic needs of students while preserving their cultural heritage. The framework recognizes the importance of leveraging the linguistic resources inherent in students' mother tongues to facilitate the acquisition of additional languages, particularly official languages like Filipino and English.

The theoretical underpinnings of MTB-MLE underscore its alignment with principles of sociocultural theory, which emphasize the role of language and culture in cognitive development. Vygotsky's concept of the zone of proximal development posits that learning occurs most effectively within the context of meaningful social interactions, and MTB-MLE capitalizes on this by situating language instruction within students' socio-cultural contexts. Pedagogically, MTB-MLE emphasizes a learner-centered approach that fosters active engagement and meaningful participation. Teachers are encouraged to employ diverse instructional strategies that accommodate the varied linguistic backgrounds and learning styles of students. This pedagogical flexibility allows for the seamless integration of students' mother tongues across various subjects, promoting deeper comprehension and retention of academic content.

Theoretical Framework

MTB-MLE is grounded in sociolinguistic theories emphasizing the importance of linguistic diversity, cultural relevance, and cognitive development in education (Dagalea et al., 2022; Garcia & Li Wei, 2014). Theories such as Cummins' linguistic interdependence hypothesis (Cummins, 2007) and Skutnabb-Kangas' advocacy for linguistic human rights (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000) provide conceptual frameworks for understanding the relationship between language, culture, and education within MTB-MLE contexts. These theories highlight the interconnectedness of language and identity, underscoring the need to leverage students' linguistic repertoires to enhance learning outcomes.

Pedagogical Approaches

In the Philippines, MTB-MLE implementation involves the integration of the mother tongue, Filipino, and English across various subjects (Perfecto, 2022). Teachers adopt integrative language pedagogy, combining flexible instructional methods and multilingual activities to cater to diverse learning styles and linguistic backgrounds (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2020; Hornberger & Link, 2012). Translanguaging practices (Garcia et al., 2017) and the utilization of students' funds of knowledge (Garcia & Kleifgen, 2020) are integral to MTB-MLE pedagogy, promoting linguistic inclusivity and cultural relevance in the classroom.

Impact on Language Proficiency and Cultural Identity

Research demonstrates the positive impact of MTB-MLE on language proficiency and cultural identity preservation. Studies indicate that instruction in the mother tongue enhances students' English proficiency (Ricablanca, 2014) and comprehension skills (Turnbull & Evans, 2017). Furthermore, MTB-MLE fosters a sense of belonging and cultural awareness among students, contributing to the preservation of linguistic and cultural heritage (Wierzbicka, 1997; Boski, 2017).

Comprehensive Learning Outcomes

MTB-MLE promotes comprehensive learning outcomes by fostering critical thinking skills, engagement, and application of concepts in real-world contexts. Teachers' resilience and creativity in overcoming challenges contribute to the enrichment of students' learning experiences (Apolonio, 2022; Cabactulan, 2023). Moreover, the integration of culturally



relevant content and community involvement enhances inclusivity and promotes academic excellence (Casinillo, 2022; Vacalares et al., 2023).

Research Method:

This research explored the lived experiences of English teachers in the Philippines who instruct using their students' mother tongue, employing a qualitative methodology, specifically grounded theory. Grounded theory, characterized by an iterative process of data collection and conceptual analysis, aligns seamlessly with the research goals, aiming to derive theories directly from empirical data. The study focuses on understanding how English teachers navigate the complexities of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) as both a subject and Medium of Teaching and Learning (MOTL).

Eight English teachers from public schools in the Visayas region, Philippines, participated in the study, chosen purposively based on specific criteria to ensure diversity of experiences relevant to the research objectives. Participants were selected for their minimum one-year experience in public schools and active involvement in teaching English during the implementation of Mother Tongue instruction. The data collection process involved online interviews conducted through platforms such as Skype, Zoom, and Google, allowing flexibility and convenience for both researchers and participants.

Ethical considerations were paramount, with approval obtained from the Research Ethics Committee at the University of the Visayas prior to initiating the study. Detailed letters were sent to potential participants outlining the study's nature and ensuring confidentiality. Data validity was prioritized throughout the process, with in-depth interviews continuing until data saturation was reached, indicating thorough exploration of experiences. Data analysis followed Colaizzi's method, a structured approach encompassing seven steps aimed at understanding individuals' experiences and deriving meaningful insights.

The study's methodological underpinning draws from established works in qualitative research, emphasizing the importance of ethical considerations, meticulous data analysis, and theory development deeply rooted in the authentic experiences of English teachers. Ultimately, the research seeks to provide valuable insights for enhancing teaching practices and potential implications for educational policies, contributing to the ongoing discourse on language instruction in the Philippines.

Findings and Discussion:

Participants were interviewed regarding their real-life encounters with Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) as both a subject and a Medium of Teaching and Learning (MOTL). Following the transcription of the comprehensive data shared by participants during the thorough interviews facilitated by the researchers, the collected information underwent repeated scrutiny and comprehension checks to ensure a complete understanding of all provided details. From the assortment of themes, four principal themes were identified and delineated.

Theme 1: Comprehensive Language Instruction

Mother Tongue-Based instruction transcends mere language teaching; it encompasses the integration of language into various subjects taught in schools. Teachers are actively embracing the challenges while harnessing the benefits it offers, enabling students to enhance their understanding skills not only in language learning but also in other subjects.

Benefits and Challenges of Mother Tongue – Based (MTB) Instruction

The implementation of Mother Tongue-Based Instruction presents both challenges and advantages, as evidenced by several studies. Dagalea, Peralta, and Aboejo (2022) critically evaluated the MTB-MLE program in the Philippines, highlighting its role in learners' development and its adherence to cultural and linguistic origins. They emphasized the need for reconfiguring MTB-MLE strategies to align with linguistic, economic, and cultural conditions. Apolonio (2022) stressed the importance of re-evaluating MTB-MLE in the Philippines, suggesting that the mother tongue should be used as an auxiliary language in teaching, rather than the exclusive medium of instruction. These findings resonate with the challenges identified in our study, particularly regarding students' reliance on the mother tongue and the need for balanced language instruction.

Furthermore, Leighton (2022) evaluated a primary school literacy intervention incorporating transitional bilingual education for students whose mother tongue differs from the language of instruction. The study found that the intervention significantly improved literacy scores in both the language of instruction and the mother tongue for minority language speakers. This underscores the potential of MTB instruction to support minority language literacy without compromising the acquisition of the language of instruction.

On the other hand, Perfecto (2020) explored bridging strategies used by English teachers in MTB-MLE settings, highlighting the importance of translanguaging strategies to facilitate students' transition to using English in the classroom. This underscores the benefits of integrating the mother tongue into language instruction, as it enhances students' comprehension and participation. Additionally, Vacalares et al. (2023) evaluated the effectiveness of MTB instruction in teaching Science to grade 3 students, demonstrating its positive impact on students' comprehension of



academic concepts. These studies reinforce the advantages of MTB instruction in improving students' academic performance and fostering their linguistic development.

Challenges and Strategies in Language Instruction

Challenges associated with the implementation of Mother Tongue-Based instruction have been underscored by participants in various studies. Studies identified the scarcity of instructional materials as a significant issue faced by teachers, hindering students' access to resources for enhancing their reading skills and understanding of unfamiliar mother tongue words. Similarly, Casinillo (2022) highlighted the challenges encountered by Grade I pupils in Math instruction under the MTB-MLE system, emphasizing the importance of effective language integration strategies in subject areas beyond language learning.

In response to these challenges, Cabactulan and Pañares (2023) emphasized the resilience of teachers in dealing with challenges and their commitment to providing quality education despite resource constraints. Additionally, Oktavia et al. (2022) identified strategies employed by English teachers to address challenges in teaching language skills to young learners, including the use of games, songs, and various teaching approaches. These findings underscore the importance of targeted strategies to overcome challenges associated with MTB-MLE implementation and enhance students' learning experiences. Moreover, Duru (2022) emphasized the significance of mother tongue as an effective tool for educational instruction, particularly in multilingual settings. The author highlighted the cognitive development benefits of teaching in the mother tongue and advocated for repositioning the language of instruction in early childhood education to promote better learning outcomes. This aligns with the need for comprehensive language instruction that integrates the mother tongue to support students' academic success and cognitive development.

Theme 2: Language and Cultural Identity

Cultivating an understanding and safeguarding cultural heritage stand as primary objectives within Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE). With the advent of globalization, students encounter a diverse range of international content, learning to engage in singing foreign songs, speaking other languages, indulging in various cuisines, watching foreign movies, and more. These practices raise concerns about our indigenous cultural identity, leading to a diminishing appreciation of local culture and a potential erosion of nationalism. Numerous studies from various countries and advancements in cognitive neuroscience indicate that children benefit from learning in their native language alongside other languages. This approach, known as mother tongue based multilingual education (MTB MLE), enhances language skills in both the native tongue and national languages. When children build upon their first language (L1) with a second language (L2), they develop intricate knowledge networks, a concept termed additive bilingualism (Abadzi, 2006).

Role of Mother Tongue in Cultural Identity and Language Proficiency

The utilization of the mother tongue undeniably enhances classroom dynamics. It facilitates a conducive teaching and learning environment, fostering a sense of belonging that acknowledges each student's cultural identity, thereby benefiting both students and teachers. When students become aware of the unfamiliarity of many mother tongue words, it serves as a wake-up call to the reality that the local language is at risk and requires preservation. Mother Tongue-Based instruction does not outright prohibit the learning of other languages; instead, it encourages the preservation of cultural identity while acquiring proficiency in other languages. This is exemplified by the translation strategy employed by teachers in their English classes, wherein both the local language and English are learned. Recognizing the substantial influence of cultural and identity factors on language acquisition, lessons can be customized by integrating locally relevant materials to enhance students' engagement and personal connection to the content.

Research emphasizes the significance of the mother tongue because as children develop it, they also enhance critical thinking and literacy skills alongside other important abilities (Nishanthi, 2020). Nishanthi's study (2020) suggests that the mother tongue shapes personal and cultural identity. Personal identity forms as individuals comprehend themselves, their environment, and their history. Since a person hears their native language even before birth, it subtly influences their perspectives and emotions. Consequently, it establishes an immediate connection with family, society, culture, and identity, laying a firm foundation for self-acceptance based on social roots and character in a simple and natural way. Furthermore, by valuing the diverse languages spoken in society, cultural identity naturally extends into various aspects of an individual's life.

Balancing Language Use and Potential Drawbacks

Mother Tongue-Based instruction accelerates learning, enhances comprehension, and boosts classroom engagement. However, excessive reliance on the local language can hinder English proficiency and foster negative attitudes toward it. Achieving a balance between the mother tongue and English is essential for effective multilingual education. While this approach enriches educational experiences, an overemphasis on the mother tongue may diminish students' confidence in expressing themselves in English. Nonetheless, students proficient in their mother tongue often excel in learning a second language. They leverage cognitive skills and language awareness to identify patterns and structures in the new language more effectively. Integrating the mother tongue in explanations clarifies concepts, aids comprehension, and bridges knowledge gaps. In situations where the mother tongue faces stigma or lacks appreciation, educators must foster inclusive environments. Recognizing the value of the mother tongue, educators promote linguistic and cultural



diversity. By respecting students' linguistic backgrounds and maintaining balance, educators create inclusive learning atmospheres that benefit all students.

Theme 3: Proficiency Enhancement

In the pursuit of enhanced language proficiency and effective teaching strategies, teachers deal with the challenges of language learning within the classroom. The integration of Mother Tongue-Based (MTB) and English language fosters a vibrant linguistic environment, encouraging meaningful interactions among students and with the teacher. Emphasizing the importance of adaptability, teachers employ diverse approaches, from collaborative learning to varied multilingual activities, tailored to cater to the diverse learning styles of students.

Language Proficiency and Teaching Strategies

Implementing English in classroom discussions can pose challenges for learners, potentially impeding their understanding. Nevertheless, there is a strong emphasis on translating content into their mother tongue, highlighting its role in fostering critical thinking, encouraging profound comprehension, and enhancing literacy skills. Despite its benefits, the use of mother tongue instruction may, on occasion, cultivate dependency among students. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers predominantly use English as the medium of instruction, fostering students' application of English in their learning journey, despite the acknowledged assistance that the mother tongue can provide. To aid understanding, essential visual aids, such as images and key words, are employed. In addition, various teaching strategies are applied to acquaint students with English in their daily activities, optimizing time and ensuring a comprehensive grasp of the material being instructed. The integration of role-playing is underscored, as it not only aids comprehension but also accelerates and deepens the understanding of concepts. Incorporating real-life simulations can also be employed to establish an interactive and hands-on language learning setting and also equip students with the linguistic proficiency needed for authentic scenarios. By incorporating a combination of these strategies, educators can create a dynamic and immersive language learning environment, fostering holistic language development among students.

Multilingual Approaches and Flexibility in Teaching

In the classroom, integrating Mother Tongue-Based (MTB) and English language strategies fosters interactive learning, supported by collaborative activities. Diverse learning styles are accommodated through verbal, visual, and kinesthetic experiences, ensuring inclusivity (Ball, 2010). Multilingual activities create a varied and flexible learning environment, catering to individual student needs (Thomas & Collier, 2002). MTB-MLE enhances comprehension and promotes social inclusivity, preserving linguistic diversity (Ball, 2010). Thomas and Collier's (2002) national study identifies effective school characteristics supporting language minority students, emphasizing multilingual approaches in English instruction. Educators, as advocated by Baker and Wright (2017), should nurture linguistic diversity, facilitating immersive language acquisition and maintenance. Mother tongue usage in society fosters cultural exchange, nurturing higher-order thinking skills and identity formation (Vygotsky, 1962). Embracing linguistic diversity ensures students' language becomes a tool for thought, shaping their cultural identity and societal engagement.

Theme 4: Learning Outcomes Impact

Mother Tongue instruction is a pivotal factor in molding students' English language proficiency and academic success, exerting a profound influence on both language skills and broader learning outcomes. The impact is conspicuous through heightened engagement, enhanced comprehension, and the practical application of acquired knowledge in real-world scenarios. These outcomes underscore the critical role played by Mother Tongue instruction in nurturing comprehensive and well-rounded learning. By delivering education in the native language, students experience increased involvement, a deeper understanding of concepts, and the ability to apply knowledge meaningfully. Consequently, Mother Tongue instruction stands as a cornerstone in shaping students' educational journeys, ensuring not only linguistic proficiency but also fostering a holistic and effective approach to learning.

Impact on Language Proficiency and Learning Outcome

Mother Tongue instruction is crucial in significantly boosting students' English language skills, addressing potential confusion and encouraging more interaction. This impact is especially helpful for students who may find English challenging, providing them with strong support for language development.

This is further supported in the study of Nolasco (2012) which emphasizes on the positive impact of utilizing mother tongue instruction in classes as it helped students acquire the ability to cultivate critical reasoning and problem-solving skills essential for continuous lifelong learning. Moreover, Zergani (2016) suggests that teaching both the mother tongue and the second language together facilitates the transfer of sounds and structures of the language more smoothly. This suggests that incorporating a person's native language, or mother tongue, in education serves to establish a more robust foundation. Students generally find it easier to understand concepts when they are presented in their own language rather than in a language that is unfamiliar to them. Similarly, Malone (2010) suggests the same in which the use of mother tongue facilitates the acquisition of second language rules. Moreover, Narayan (2019) highlights the use of mother tongue in Fijian English as a second language (ESL) classrooms because it increases interaction among students making the learning interesting and allowing more opportunities for language development during interaction.



The significant influence of Mother Tongue instruction on language proficiency outcomes leads to important changes in how English is taught. Research consistently shows that students taught in their mother tongue perform better than those taught in a second language. This is seen in higher engagement levels, improved understanding, and a remarkable ability to use learned concepts in real-life situations. The use of the mother tongue not only helps students understand better but also creates a more inclusive and diverse learning environment.

This prompts educators to rethink their teaching methods and consider the benefits of adding Mother Tongue instruction to English classes. This approach not only improves language skills but also enhances the overall learning experience, creating a stronger connection between students and the subjects they study. Recognizing Mother Tongue instruction as a positive force for better academic results highlights its importance in shaping a comprehensive and effective language education approach.

THEORY DEVELOPMENT

Theory 1: Integrative Language Pedagogy for Comprehensive Learning

Proposition: Teachers embracing an integrative language pedagogy adeptly address challenges, cultivate students' critical thinking skills, and contribute to a more comprehensive and well-rounded educational experience by capitalizing on its advantages.

In the Philippines, educators implementing Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) adopt an integrative language teaching approach, seamlessly combining various languages, including the mother tongue, Filipino, and English, across different subjects. This approach, as highlighted by Dagalea et al. (2022) and Perfecto (2022), underscores the significance of linguistic diversity in enriching the educational experience and promoting cultural appreciation among students. Despite challenges such as limited resources in local languages, MTB-MLE teachers, as noted by Apolonio (2022) and Cabactulan (2023), demonstrate resilience and creativity in overcoming these obstacles. They view challenges not as impediments but as opportunities to innovate, devising strategies to enhance language instruction and broaden students' linguistic competence.

Moreover, MTB-MLE educators actively cultivate critical thinking skills among students through integrative language pedagogy. By encouraging students to engage deeply with content across different languages, educators foster cognitive growth and analytical skills, as emphasized by Oktavia et al. (2022) and Leighton (2022). Through this pedagogical approach, students develop the ability to critically evaluate language use and comprehend subject matter within a broader context, contributing to their overall academic and intellectual development. Studies by Dongail et al. (2022) and Duru (2022) further support the notion that integrating language seamlessly across subjects promotes holistic learning experiences, enabling students to make connections between different areas of knowledge and fostering a deeper understanding of diverse topics.

By capitalizing on the advantages of MTB-MLE and integrative language teaching, educators in the Philippines contribute to a more comprehensive and well-rounded educational experience. This holistic approach, as suggested by Vacalares et al. (2023) and Casinillo (2022), transcends mere language instruction, enriching students' understanding of various subjects and creating inclusive learning environments. Integrating language across subjects through the lens of MTB-MLE, as highlighted by Dongail et al. (2022) and Duru (2022), not only enhances linguistic proficiency but also promotes cultural relevance and inclusivity in education. Thus, by embracing integrative language pedagogy, educators play a pivotal role in fostering academic excellence and nurturing the holistic development of students within the multilingual context of the Philippines.

Theory 2: Cultural Identity and Language Proficiency Connection

Proposition: The connection between cultural identity preservation and language proficiency is evident in MTB-MLE programs, where the use of the mother tongue nurtures a sense of belonging, heightens cultural awareness, and concurrently supports proficiency in multiple languages.

In the educational framework of the Philippines, Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) is integrated, utilizing the native language as both a subject and a Medium of Teaching and Learning (MOTL). Within this context, the theory suggests a robust connection between the preservation of cultural identity and the advancement of language proficiency.

As noted by Burton (2013), as cited in De Guzman et al., the adoption of MTB-MLE in the Philippines is seen as a model for the entire region. This implementation marked the start of a larger initiative supported by the DepEd and Congress, drawing from the insights of numerous previous studies highlighting the advantages of using the mother tongue as the language of instruction. Through MTB-MLE programs, the use of the mother tongue becomes a powerful tool for nurturing a sense of belonging among students. When they are taught in a language that reflects their cultural roots, it creates an environment where students feel connected to their heritage, fostering a deeper sense of identity.

Wierzbicka (1997), as referenced by Boski (2017), suggests that languages shape the cultural boundaries for their speakers. This means that learning a language involves adopting specific ways of thinking, behavior norms, and expressions of emotions. Therefore, acquiring a second language, like the first, entails embracing the associated culture



rather than just learning a linguistic system. Speaking any language implies becoming part of a particular cultural community (ethnic, national, or both) and engaging in various social interactions, which can enrich, redefine, or even shape one's identity. Simultaneously, the use of the mother tongue heightens cultural awareness. Students become more attuned to the richness of their own culture, traditions, and language. This awareness goes beyond language learning; it encompasses a broader understanding of their cultural heritage. Moreover, the theory suggests that as students engage with their mother tongue, they not only preserve their cultural identity but also develop proficiency in multiple languages. The proficiency gained extends to Filipino and English, creating multilingual individuals who can navigate various linguistic contexts effectively.

The language we use (L1, L2, Ln...) in daily interactions is closely tied to our personal, cultural, and ethnic identity. For instance, it reflects our national pride, how we communicate in different situations, and our attitudes and beliefs (Hamers & Blanc, 2000). From an acculturation perspective, being able to communicate effectively indicates successful adaptation and adjustment. Since language and culture are interconnected, learning a country's official language (L2) during migration can lead to various cultural changes for the individual, such as shifts in lifestyle, attitudes, customs, values, and self-perception (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

In essence, within the MTB-MLE framework in the Philippines, the theory emphasizes that the use of the mother tongue is not just a linguistic choice; it is a key element in preserving cultural identity, heightening cultural awareness, and concurrently fostering proficiency in multiple languages. This interconnectedness contributes to a more inclusive and culturally rich educational experience.

Theory 3: Multilingual Teaching Approach for Proficiency Enhancement

Proposition: The flexibility in instructional methods, combined with a range of multilingual activities, contributes to a dynamic and immersive language learning environment, addressing the diverse needs and learning styles of students.

In the Philippine education system, a multilingual teaching approach is fundamental for enhancing language proficiency and preparing students to thrive in a globalized world. This approach, characterized by flexible instructional methods and diverse activities in various languages, fosters dynamic and immersive learning environments. Teachers adapt flexible instructional methods to accommodate diverse linguistic backgrounds and learning styles. Utilizing the mother tongue to explain complex concepts, for instance, enhances accessibility and comprehension for students (Sonaiya, 2002). The incorporation of multilingual activities further enriches the learning experience, allowing students to engage with content across different linguistic contexts, such as participating in discussions, reading materials, or completing assignments in multiple languages.

Research by Garcia and Li Wei (2014) underscores the concept of translanguaging, advocating for a dynamic approach where students draw from their entire linguistic repertoire to communicate and make meaning. This fluid approach challenges the traditional separation of languages, promoting inclusivity and diversity in linguistic interactions.

Cummins (2007) emphasizes the need for inclusive instructional strategies, such as translanguaging and scaffolding, to support students with diverse linguistic backgrounds effectively. Baker (2011) highlights the value of bilingual education in fostering linguistic diversity and cultural understanding, reinforcing the importance of multilingual approaches in education. Garcia, Johnson, and Seltzer (2017) advocate for integrating translanguaging practices in the classroom to enhance learning outcomes. Practical strategies, such as interpreting or retelling stories in different languages, promote active engagement and motivation among students. Garcia and Kleifgen (2020) explore the concept of funds of knowledge (FoK) in multilingual classrooms, emphasizing the importance of incorporating students' cultural practices and knowledge into instructional practices. This culturally responsive pedagogy enhances connections between subject content and students' lived experiences, fostering inclusive learning environments. Skutnabb-Kangas (2000) highlights linguistic human rights and the significance of safeguarding language diversity. Acknowledging and valuing linguistic equality and justice promotes inclusive educational practices and preserves cultural identity.

Overall, a multilingual approach enhances language proficiency, critical thinking skills, confidence, and cultural identity preservation. By incorporating students' mother tongue, educators create inclusive and effective instructional practices that promote student engagement and achievement. Embracing linguistic diversity fosters a sense of cultural pride and prepares students to succeed in diverse linguistic landscapes.

Theory 4: Mother Tongue Instruction for Comprehensive Learning Outcomes

Proposition: Mother Tongue instruction significantly shapes students' English language proficiency, contributing to better learning outcomes, including increased engagement, improved comprehension, and the application of learned concepts in real-world situations.

In the Philippines, Mother Tongue instruction is pivotal for shaping students' English language proficiency within the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) framework. Recognized as both a subject and a Medium of Teaching and Learning (MOTL), Mother Tongue instruction transcends linguistic development, significantly enhancing English proficiency, improving learning outcomes, increasing engagement, enhancing comprehension, and facilitating practical application of learned concepts in real-world scenarios.



Research, including studies by Ricablanca (2014), Adeleye & Ogunremi (2017), and Al Shammari (2011), consistently supports the effectiveness of Mother Tongue instruction. Learners achieve significantly higher results with mother tongue-based instruction compared to English-only approaches. UNESCO (2008) and DepED reports (2016) also emphasize the critical role of mother tongue instruction for literacy and learning, particularly across various learning areas. Moreover, utilizing the mother tongue amplifies classroom participation and engagement, as students adapt better to instruction in their native language (Sonaiya, 2002). This approach not only enhances comprehension but also accelerates the cultivation of higher-level cognitive skills, leading to a deeper understanding and the rapid acquisition of critical thinking abilities.

Through the use of the mother tongue, students develop a robust foundation that significantly influences their English language skills. This comprehensive approach to language instruction extends beyond English language teaching, contributing to improved learning outcomes. Students become more engaged in the learning process, experience enhanced comprehension, and confidently apply learned concepts in practical situations. The multifaceted benefits of Mother Tongue instruction underscore its positive impact on various aspects of learning. By aligning proficiency in the mother tongue with enhanced English language skills, Theory 4 aligns with the principles of MTB-MLE in the Philippines, highlighting the importance of a comprehensive language education approach for more effective and applicable learning outcomes.

Conclusion:

The exploration of English teachers' experiences with Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) in the Philippines unveils its key role in reshaping the educational landscape. Through their narratives and reflections, key themes emerge, showcasing the significance of integrative language pedagogy within the MTB-MLE framework. Despite challenges such as limited resources, teachers exhibit resilience, blending various languages seamlessly to enrich students' learning experiences. Moreover, the research emphasizes the deep connection between cultural identity preservation and language proficiency within MTB-MLE. It serves as a forceful tool for fostering students' sense of belonging and cultural awareness while supporting proficiency in multiple languages, creating inclusive, culturally rich learning environments.

To successfully implement MTB-MLE, it is necessary to provide professional development programs for English teachers that concentrate on innovative language teaching techniques and cultural sensitivity training. These programs must be tailored to the specific needs of the teachers and the students they teach. Collaboration among stakeholders, including the allocation of sufficient resources, is crucial to ensure fair distribution of instructional materials and support networks. Additionally, incorporating culturally relevant content into curricula and involving parents and communities in the educational process can significantly contribute to promoting linguistic diversity and fostering inclusive learning environments. Continued research and evaluation efforts are essential to inform evidence-based policy decisions and enhance language proficiency development among students in the Philippines.

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