Teachers' Competence and Difficulties in Teaching Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE)

Crismarie P. Malacaman
Master Teacher II, Don Homero H. Tanpinco Elementary School, Philippines
https://orcid.org/0009-0006-2566-8674

Dr. Rey T. Eslabon
Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs, STI West Negros University, Bacolod City, Philippines
rey.eslabon@wnu.sti.edu
https://orcid.org/0009-0005-5206-3243

Abstract:

Exploring teachers' abilities and struggles in teaching Mother Tongue- Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) reveals a mix of language, teaching methods, and cultural factors at play. In light of the preceding discussion, determining the teachers' level of competence and difficulties in teaching MTB-MLE in the Division of Silay City is vital and of utmost importance. Data needed in this descriptive study was collected from 134 teachers using a self-made questionnaire that passed the rigorous tests of validity and reliability. The following analysis revealed that teachers registered a very high level of competence in teaching MTB-MLE in content knowledge and a high level of competence in pedagogical skills and motivation. Correspondingly, teachers had a moderate level of difficulty in teaching MTB-MLE when analyzed in terms of learning resources and training. Nonetheless, they needed a higher level of difficulty in learning assessment. The study results suggest a need for professional development programs to address language proficiency, cultural sensitivity, and effective pedagogical strategies to improve the complexity of MTB-MLE.

Keywords: MTB-MLE, Primary Grades, Key Stage 1, Negros Occidental, Philippines

Introduction:

Nature of the Problem

Teaching MTB-MLE offers several positive insights for teachers, such as improved learning outcomes, inclusive classroom environment, effective communication, empowerment of local communities, and enhanced cultural connections. Overall MTB-MLE provides teachers with a framework to create more culturally responsive and effective learning environments, benefiting both students and communities. Moreover, at present, teachers encounter several challenges in teaching this subject, such as limited resources, teacher training, standardization issues, language attitudes, social-economic factors, and policy implementation.

Correspondingly, the researcher, who has been in the service for almost 23 years, experienced the same dilemma in school. The issues and concerns include difficulty in translation, mandatory compliance with the Department of education order, and inadequacy of instructional materials. On the other hand, some achieve success, while others do not. In light of the preceding discussion, a better solution and recommendation could be offered for teaching using MTB-MLE.

Current State of Knowledge

DepEd Order No. 74 mandates using Mother Tongue (MT) as the primary medium of instruction (MoI) from kindergarten to third grade.
Similarly, DepEd Order No. 74, s. 2009 encourages school administrators and teachers to collaborate in developing a curriculum that will ensure effective MTB-MLE implementation.

Alberto et al. (2016) wrote an article entitled "Issues and Challenges in Teaching Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education in Grades II and III: The Philippine Experience." The article stated that the use of the mother tongue facilitates explaining the meaning of some English words. Yet, issues still arise as some teachers are unfamiliar with the words, and some need further training prospective teachers to teach the mother tongue. On the one hand, Caterial et al.'s (2019) study on the Teaching of Mother-Tongue Based Multilingual Education of Pre-Service Teachers: Basis for a Training Program revealed that teachers also encountered problems with the very limited materials of learners. Considering that they struggled to teach the subject, they also had the burden of creating video presentations in MTB-MLE, which will make their teaching effective.

According to Lartec et al. (2014), teachers' strategies include translating the target language to the mother tongue, multilingual teaching, remedial classes, and improvising instructional materials written in of ICT literacy skills diminishes teachers' ability to utilize learning resource management systems like LRMDS. However, in a study conducted by Cruz (2015), he revealed that most instructional objectives in the mother tongue subject are not being met, as evidenced by the areas where they are found to be lacking, especially in grammar awareness, vocabulary development, and reading comprehension.

As Wa-Mbaleka (2014) stated, the most common issue that elementary teachers face when teaching the subject of mother tongue is a need for instructional materials written in the mother tongue to meet the needs of their students who speak different mother tongues. Likewise, with regards to learning resources and training of teachers, there are concerns about the use of MTB-MLE like the provision of learner support materials, class size, shortages of suitably qualified teachers, preparation, and adequate training (Dio and Jamora, 2014; Singh, 2014), and the difficulty of translating mathematical terms to the mother tongue and insufficient mother tongue instructional materials (Dio and Jamora, 2014).

Theoretical Underpinnings

This study, anchored in UNESCO's O (2021) article, shows that teachers play a critical role in promoting multilingual, mother tongue education in Africa, and the UNESCO IICBA places a high value on this as part of its overall effort to improve education quality and relevance. Teachers are at the heart of learning and require support and training to promote MTB-MLE.

Pestalozzi Children's Foundation (2019) article showed that including teachers and teacher assistants in material development workshops is the best way to implement MTB-MLE.

Maimun et al. (2017), on the other hand, highlighted more specific factors like teacher skills, school infrastructure, budget allocation, teacher confidence, quality technical support, workload, access to technology, teacher practices, the structure of education systems, nature of the curriculum, and peer support system.

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to determine the teachers' competence level and difficulties in teaching mother tongue-based-multilingual education (MTB-MLE). Moreover, specifically, it aimed to determine 1) the level of competence of teachers in terms of content knowledge, pedagogical skills, and motivation and 2) the level of difficulties of teachers in terms of learning resources, training, and assessment of learning.

Research Methodology:

This section presents the research design, the study's locale, respondents, data gathering instrument, validity and reliability of the research instrument, data gathering procedure, analytical schemes, and statistical tools.

Research Design

This paper used descriptive research design to determine the teachers' competence levels and difficulties in teaching mother tongue-based-multilingual education (MTB-MLE).

Respondents

This paper involved 134 MTB-MLE teachers in the Division of Silay City, with a total population of 205. Since the number of respondents is quite significant, stratified sampling and random sampling techniques were used using the Cochran formula to find the sample size. The researcher randomly selected the respondents from each school using the lottery technique.

Procedures

Data Collection

The researcher complied with the legal process in asking permission to ensure the smooth conduct of the study. A letter requesting permission was sent to the Schools Division Superintendent (SDS) through the Public Schools District Supervisor (PSDS). After approval, letters were prepared to the School Principals or School Heads.

In gathering the necessary data, the researcher used a researcher-made survey questionnaire. The instrument was divided into two (2) parts: Part I was the respondents' profile, age, highest educational attainment, number of years in teaching, and average family monthly income. Part II is the survey questionnaire describing the teachers'

competence and difficulties in teaching mother tongue-based-multilingual education (MTB-MLE. The researcher complied with the legal process in asking permission to ensure the smooth conduct of the study. Administration of the instrument was administered face to face, observing safety health protocols provided with hard copies through their respective principals' offices. The data gathered was sent to the statistician for tabulation, application of the appropriate statistical tools in every problem, analysis, and presentation of the data in a tabular manner.

Data Analysis and Statistical Treatment

Various procedures were employed in data analysis depending on the study's objectives. Objectives 1- 5 used the descriptive analytical scheme and mean to determine the level of competence of teachers in teaching MTB-MLE in areas of Content Knowledge,, Pedagogical Skills, Motivations, and to determine the level of difficulties in areas of Learning Resources, Training and Assessment. Objectives 6-7 used a comparative analytical scheme and Mann-Whitney U Test to determine the significant difference in the level of competence and level of difficulties in teaching MTB-MLE when grouped and compared according to the variables above.

Ethical Considerations

This study took no personal information from the respondents that could compromise their identity. Respondents were informed that participation in this study is voluntary. They have the right to withdraw if they feel uncomfortable with the method of gathering information from them. The researcher assured them of confidentiality to protect their responses and other personal information. The researcher should have disclosed any information regarding the respondents' participation in the study to anybody not involved in the study.

Results and Discussion

This section presents, analyzes, and interprets the data gathered to carry out the objectives of this study.

Table 1
Level of Competence of Teachers in Teaching MTB-MLE in Content Knowledge

Items	Mean	Interpretation
As a teacher, I…		
1. teach the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) using the spiral/progression approach design in teaching the different learning competencies	4.85	Very High Level
2. design concrete objectives for different subjects using the mother tongue	4.81	Very High Level
3. use simplest words and terms in the mother tongue in explaining Science, Math, AP, and English concepts lessons that can be easily understood by learners	4.86	Very High Level
4. use strategies for improvising instructional materials written in their mother tongue to help learners attain maximum learning.	4.93	Very High Level
5. translate the content of the books written in English to Hiligaynon.	3.78	High Level
6. do research to learn more terminologies in mother tongue to be able to teach my learners effectively	4.96	Very High Level
7. use strategies for improvising instructional materials written in their mother tongue to help learners attain maximum learning.	4.86	Very High Level
Overall Mean	**4.72**	**Very High Level**

The result displays the overall mean score of 4.72, which is interpreted as a very high level. The findings conform with a local study by Alberto et al. (2016) entitled "Issues and Challenges in Teaching Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education in Grades II and III: The Philippine Experience," which stated that the use of mother tongue facilitates explaining the meaning of some English words yet, issues still arise as some teachers have unfamiliarity of the words and some needed further training to prospective teachers to teach mother tongue.

Table 2
Level of Competence of Teachers in Teaching MTB-MLE in Pedagogical Skills

Items	Mean	Interpretation
As a teacher, I…		
1. improvise instructional materials written in the mother tongue	4.51	Very High Level
2. use the Dictionary whenever I encounter mother tongue terms that are difficult to understand	3.66	High Level
3. use many appropriate gestures in teaching MTB-MLE lessons.	4.34	High Level
4. create and provide Big Books which will help in developing the learners' communication skills	4.44	High Level
5. demonstrate pedagogical content knowledge on effective MTB-MLE instruction through the creation of developmentally sequenced teaching and learning processes that meet curriculum requirements	4.31	High Level
6. access to DepEd-developed materials in MTB-MLE through DepEd's Learning Resource portal to have further references	3.43	Moderate Level
7. create teaching strategies that promote literacy skills through selecting, developing, and using varied teaching and learning resources, including ICT, in teaching the mother tongue,	4.09	High Level
Overall Mean	**4.11**	**High Level**

The result shows an overall mean score of 4.11, which is a high level. The findings are parallel with Susara's (2016) findings in her study "The Potentials and Problems of LRMDS" revealed the issues in using the DepEd LR portal, including the following: a lack of a clear format for learning resources, delays in accessing the portal, a lack of knowledge about how to use the portal since only one teacher are assigned as LR Coordinator in every school so some or not all teachers can access to the portal thus, limited resources can be taken from the portal, unmotivated teachers who produce learning resources, system glitches, and poor internet access.

Table 3
Level of Competence of Teachers in Teaching MTB-MLE in Motivation

Items	Mean	Interpretation
As a teacher, I…		
1. use teacher-made instructional materials and big books written in English language and translated into mother tongue to motivate learners	3.64	High Level
2. use songs and poems written in their mother tongue to increase learners' motivation and place	4.52	Very High Level
3. provide post-viewing activities online to enrich the learners' learning experience and inspire them to learn more about Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE)	4.41	High Level
4. create and provide Big Books which will help in developing the learners' communication skills	4.18	High Level
5. create video presentations in MTB-MLE lessons	3.46	Moderate Level
6. utilize icebreakers to build rapport with students in teaching MTB-MLE	4.66	Very High Level
7. create feedback on learners' performance and help them learn how to assess their work and progress in MTB-MLE	4.36	High Level
Overall Mean	**4.18**	**High Level**

The result shows an overall mean score of 4.18, interpreted as a high level. The findings conform with Caterial et al. (2019) study on The Teaching of Mother-Tongue Based Multilingual Education of Pre-Service Teachers: Basis for a Training Program, revealing that teachers also encountered problems with the limited learners' materials. Considering that they struggled to teach the subject, they also had the burden of creating video presentations in MTB-MLE, which will make their teaching effective.

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Level of Difficulties of Teachers in Teaching MTB-MLE according to Learning Resources, Training, and Assessment of Learning

Table 4
Level of Difficulties of Teachers in Teaching MTB-MLE in Learning Resources

Items	Mean	Interpretation
As a teacher, I am…		
1. contextualizing learning materials based on the adversity of times, availability of resources at home, and mastering the most essential competencies	2.51	Moderate Level
2. improvising instructional materials written in the mother tongue	2.33	Low Level
3. looking for an adequate number of books / published or printed instructional resources at home and school to be used in making lessons in MTB-MLE	2.53	Moderate Level
4. using the Internet in making MTB-MLE modules	3.66	High Level
5. accessing DepEd-developed materials in MTB-MLE through DepEd's Learning Resource portal to have further references	2.64	Moderate Level
6. creating pictures, graphs, charts, etc., based on the modules instead of learners mentally visualizing and imagining the lesson in MTB-MLE	2.63	Moderate Level
7. ensuring that learning materials focus equally on the meaning of the words given in the mother tongue	2.72	Moderate Level
Overall Mean	**2.72**	**Moderate Level**

The result shows an overall mean score of 2.72, interpreted as a moderate level. The findings concur with the study of Sarip (2015) on "Problems Encountered in Mother-Tongue-Based Teaching," which stated that teachers are not given enough mother-tongue-based teaching recommendations and resources. One of the most glaring issues teachers at MSU-ILS face is a need for internet connections.

Table 5
Level of difficulties of teachers in teaching MTB-MLE in Training

Items	Mean	Interpretation
As a teacher, I…		
1. having training to learn about the MTB MLE curriculum and the importance of helping students achieve the learning outcomes for each grade.	2.28	Low Level
2. attending workshops on the MTB-MLE curriculum	2.66	Moderate Level
3. designing MTB-MLE training materials for results-driven capacity development	2.71	Moderate Level
4. attending division training workshops on contextualization and localization of k to 12 learning materials in MTB-MLE	2.57	Moderate Level
5. providing own laptops, pocket Wi-Fi, and external wires during training in MTB-MLE	3.60	High Level
6. attending virtual seminars about the utilization of learning resources in MTB-MLE	2.51	Moderate Level

7. managing time between workloads and division training in MTB-MLE	3.55	High Level
Overall Mean	**2.84**	**Moderate Level**

The result shows an overall mean score of 2.84, interpreted as a moderate level. This result is aligned with the findings of Gaylo's (2020) study on Implementing mother tongue-based–multilingual education (MTB-MLE): Outcomes and challenges, which found that to address the unpreparedness of teachers in the implementation of the MTB-MLE Program, the majority of the teachers were sent to intensive training and seminars to equip them with the desired knowledge and skills needed to teach the mother tongue subject effectively. However, issues like a lack of laptops, pocket Wi-Fi, and external wires still occur while training.

Table 6
Level of Difficulties of Teachers in Teaching MTB-MLE in Assessment of Learning

Items	Mean	Interpretation
As a teacher, I am		
1. creating precise summative assessment tools: written works and performance tasks in MTB-MLE	2.09	Low Level
2. providing assessment activities that determine whether the objectives are met and learning takes place	2.22	Low Level
3. assuring that assessments are aligned or congruent with the module/lesson objective	2.31	Low Level
4. creating assessment strategies focus on outputs that can be done at home, i.e., creative project, learning journal, portfolio, and whatever is appropriate and doable	2.22	Low Level
5. checking and assessing weekly the answers of the learners in the exercises in MTB-MLE	3.31	Moderate Level
6. assessing and monitoring regularly learners' progress and achievement in MTB-MLE subject	2.30	Low Level
7. Provide ongoing feedback to the parents on their child/children's summative assessment by communicating with them via Facebook messenger or text messaging.	2.07	Low Level
Overall Mean	**2.36**	**Low Level**

The result shows an overall mean score of 2.36, interpreted as low.
The findings conform with Pe Dangle and Sumaoang's (2020) study, which showed that teachers encountered several challenges in
Modular Distance Learning. They need help checking modules in every subject, mainly as some learners submitted with incomplete answers while others still need to answer any activity.

Table 7
Difference in the Level of Competence of Teachers in Teaching MTB-MLE in Pedagogical Skills when Grouped according to Selected Variables

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Age	Younger	64	62.21	1901.500	0.121		Not Significant
	Older	70	72.30				
Highest Educational Attainment	Lower	91	67.33	1941.000	0.939	0.05	Not Significant
	Higher	43	67.86				

Number of Years in Teaching	Shorter	62	66.02	2140.000	0.673		Not Significant
	Longer	72	68.78				
Average Family Monthy Income	Lower	97	66.95	1741.000	0.784		Not Significant
	Higher	37	68.95				

Table 7 shows the difference in the level of competence of teachers in teaching MTB-MLE in Pedagogical Skills according to variables. The result indicates that no significant difference exists. The null hypothesis is, therefore, accepted.

Table 8
Difference in the Level of Competence of Teachers in Teaching MTB-MLE in Motivation when Grouped according to Selected Variables

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Age	Younger	64	62.63	1928.500	0.153		Not Significant
	Older	70	71.95				
Highest Educational Attainment	Lower	91	68.81	1837.000	0.558		Not Significant
	Higher	43	64.72			0.05	
Number of Years in Teaching	Shorter	62	65.09	2082.500	0.492		Not Significant
	Longer	72	69.58				
Average Family Monthy Income	Lower	97	67.71	1774.500	0.918		Not Significant
	Higher	37	66.96				

Table 8 indicates the difference in the level of competence of teachers in teaching MTB-MLE in Motivation according to variables. The result indicates that no significant difference exists. The null hypothesis is, therefore, accepted.

This means that teachers, either younger or older, with lower or higher educational attainment, in shorter or longer years of teaching, and with lower or higher income have the same level of competence in teaching MTB-MLE in motivation. Further, they have the same experience teaching MTB-MLE.

Comparative Analysis of the Level of Difficulties of Teachers in Teaching MTB-MLE in Learning Resources, Training, and Assessment of Learning when Grouped according to Age, Educational Attainment, Number of Years in Teaching, and Family Income

Table 9
Difference in the Level of Competence of Teachers in Teaching MTB-MLE in Learning Resources when Grouped according to Selected Variables

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Age	Younger	64	67.78	2222.000	0.935		Not Significant
	Older	70	67.24.			0.05	
Highest Educational	Lower	91	67.59	1948.500	0.969		Not Significant

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Attainment	Higher	43	67.31				
Number of Years in Teaching	Shorter	62	73.23	1876.500	0.105		Not Significant
	Longer	72	62.56				
Average Family Monthy Income	Lower	97	67.95	1750.500	0.823		Not Significant
	Higher	37	66.31				

Table 9 shows the difference in the level of difficulty of teachers in teaching MTB-MLE in Learning Resources according to variables. The result indicates that no significant difference exists. The null hypothesis is, therefore, accepted.

The findings indicate that age, highest educational attainment, number of years in teaching, and average family monthly income do not influence the teachers' level of difficulties in teaching MTB-MLE. Further, regardless of their groupings, they have the same level of difficulties in Learning Resources.

Table 10
Difference in the Level of Competence of Teachers in Teaching MTB-MLE in Training when Grouped according to Selected Variables

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Age	Younger	64	61.89	1881.000	0.102		Not Significant
	Older	70	72.63				
Highest Educational Attainment	Lower	91	69.58	1767.500	0.356		Not Significant
	Higher	43	63.10			0.05	
Number of Years in Teaching	Shorter	62	63.82	2004.000	0.298		Not Significant
	Longer	72	70.67				
Average Family Monthy Income	Lower	97	66.54	1701.500	0.636		Not Significant
	Higher	37	70.01				

Table 10 presents the difference in the level of difficulty teachers have in teaching MTB-MLE in training according to variables. The result indicates that no significant difference exists. The null hypothesis is, therefore, accepted. This means that teachers' difficulties in teaching MTB-MLE are not affected by age, highest educational attainment, number of years in teaching, or average monthly family income. Further, regardless of the groupings, they have the same training experiences.

Table 11
Difference in the Level of Competence of Teachers in Teaching MTB-MLE in Assessment of Learning when Grouped according to Selected Variables

Variable	Category	N	Mean Rank	Mann Whitney U	p-value	Sig. level	Interpretation
Age	Younger	64	66.66	2186.500	0.808		Not Significant
	Older	70	68.26			0.05	
Highest	Lower	91	68.95	1825.000	0.522		Not Significant

Educational Attainment	Higher	43	64.44			
Number of Years in Teaching	Shorter	62	76.03	1703.000	0.016	Significant
	Longer	72	60.15			
Average Family Monthy Income	Lower	97	65.78	1627.500	0.396	Not Significant
	Higher	37	72.01			

Table 11 indicates the difference in the level of difficulties teachers experience in teaching MTB-MLE in Assessment of Learning according to variables. The result indicates that no significant difference exists. The null hypothesis is, therefore, accepted. On the contrary, the Number of Years in Teaching obtained a p-value of 0.298, which is less than the 0.05 significance level, indicating a significant difference. In this regard, the null hypothesis is rejected.

This indicates that teachers' difficulties in teaching MTB-MLE are affected by their years of teaching. Moreover, teachers with shorter years of teaching have much more difficulty than those with longer. This result could be attributed to the fact that some of them are new in service and need to be more experienced with assessment compared to those tenured who are exposed to training and seminars.

Conclusions

Teachers registered a very high level of competence in teaching MTB-MLE in content knowledge, as well as a high level of competence in pedagogical skills and motivation. This suggests that while teachers excel in their understanding of the subject matter (content knowledge) and generally demonstrate strong pedagogical skills and motivations, there may still be areas within pedagogy where they can continue to develop and refine their techniques to further enhance the learning experience for their students. Teachers obtained a "moderate level" of difficulty in teaching MTB-MLE in the areas of Learning Resources and Training while a "low level" of difficulty in Assessment of Learning. This further suggests that while teachers may face moderate challenges related to accessing appropriate learning resources and training for MTB-MLE, they generally find it easier to assess student learning within this framework. Improving support in the areas of learning resources and training could further enhance teachers' ability to implement MTB-MLE effectively and support student learning outcomes.

Acknowledgment

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Bio-notes:

Crismarie P. Malacaman, Master Teacher II of the Division of Silay City, a Primary Grade Teacher, presently finishing a dissertation paper, " Teachers' Competence and Difficulties in Teaching Mother-Tongued, with a Degree of Doctor of Education major in Educational Management at STI-WNU Bacolod,