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THE EFFICACY OF MTB-MLE ON ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACQUISITION OF EARLY ENGLISH LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

This study determined the efficacy of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) on the English language acquisition of early English learners and the challenges in its policy from the perspective of Grade 1 teachers in Pampanga. This study used the mixed method approach, specifically the Sequential Explanatory Design by Creswell et al. (2003), where a survey tool was used to collect the quantitative data from Grade 1 teachers, while a structured interview guide was used to collect qualitative data. The study was able to get the quantitative data needed like the demographic profile of the participants, and the pedagogy of MTB-MLE in terms of language learning, classroom instruction, and implementation, which includes the readiness for the implementation of the program. It also included the importance of MTB-MLE in the comprehension skills of Grade 1 pupils, the teacher's instruction, and the pupil's required language to be learned. On the other hand, through the structured interview, teachers shared their insights about the MTB-MLE policy in terms of their knowledge about it, the language used in the classroom, their beliefs about MTB-MLE, and the challenges they encountered. Findings reveal that the participants have different perceptions of the MTB-MLE implementation's effect on learners. Moreover, the participants agreed that it is essential for Grade 1 children to learn *Kapampangan* in their tenure as pupils inside the classroom. Skills like reading, writing, speaking, and listening in *Kapampangan* are considered important. Furthermore, challenges were also noted in terms of implementing the policy in a school. Some of the noted challenges were the following: (1) lack of training; (2) absence of books written in the students' mother tongue; and (3) students who are raised as *Tagalog*-speaking individuals. As of now, materials and resources are being handed to the teachers. These include learners' materials and teaching guides. Training and seminars were also done before the implementation of the policy. Implications include suggesting additional training, seminars, and materials should be conducted on the teachers applying the MTB-MLE policy. Also, it is highly suggested that a program review regarding the extent of implementation of the MTB-MLE policy should be done to look at the quality of the materials used in instruction.

KEYWORDS - mother tongue-base, multilingual education , English language acquisition, policy and program

INTRODUCTION

The Philippines is well-known for its linguistic diversity. One of its commonly spoken languages is Kapampangan, which is spoken throughout Central Luzon, especially in Pampanga. Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) has established a niche for itself as a helpful and viable educational landscape strategy. It gives a solid basis for preparing future generations to be more flexible and even prosperous members of a global and diverse society. The arrival of the new millennium has ushered in a wave of enthusiasm and competition surrounding this educational alternative. (Cabansag, 2016). Despite the continued prevalence of using a single language in students' teaching and learning process, UNESCO has remained firm in promoting mother-tongue-based instruction in the primary years of education. This led to the implementation of the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education Policy (Rumenapp, 2014). It has been recommended that the use of the mother tongue helps youngsters enroll in and succeed in school, achieve a higher level of comprehension, and acquire basic reading skills and concepts more quickly (Espada, 2012). Nonetheless, the difficulties in implementing the MTB-MLE strategy are pervasive in various educational contexts. According to Burton (2013), the number of educational resources and competence of teachers, the translation of academic language, a multilingual setting, the incentives for teachers, the lexical capacity to express authenticities of science and technology, the vocabulary and writing system, new terminology for modern discourse, and the number of native language speakers affect effectiveness of crafting of policies for students. Ball (2012), on the other hand, stressed that the most significant element that could erode the MTB-MLE strategy is parental pressure to teach their children international languages for economic gain. The 2009 DepEd Order No. 74 s. requires that the mother language be used as the medium of instruction for the first four years of primary education. Every school has encountered difficulties in adjusting to and adapting to the MTB-MLE policy since the implementation of said order. Tupas (2014) explained that even if the learners have continuously used their mother tongue in their early years of learning, it does not guarantee that it will positively affect them. Instead, teacher education should be reconceived to emphasize teacher ideology in addition to teaching methods. According to Mahboob and Cruz (2014), one of the significant problems in MTB-MLE implementation is the overlapping of the Filipino and the Mother Tongue subjects in Metro Manila and nearby provinces. Teachers do not know how the Mother Tongue must be treated since both the Filipino and Mother Tongue contain lessons in language and reading. Therefore, there is no legislation specifying whether Filipino should emphasize language or reading.

Moreover, Mahboob and Cruz discussed that the case of the transferees could be another problem in the MTB-MLE policy. For instance, a student from the North learned a different language and transferred to the South, wherein they needed to learn a different Mother Tongue. These are just some of the challenges in implementing the MTB-MLE policy. This research determined the efficacy of MTB-MLE on the English language acquisition of early English learners and the challenges in its policy from the perspective of Grade 1 teachers. In addition, this study would considerably aid educators in fulfilling their goal and vocation of providing quality education and understanding the function of the mother tongue language in the teaching and learning process for students. This may also help students recognize the benefits of incorporating mother-tongue-based, multilingual education into their daily school routine.

METHODOLOGY

This study used the mixed method approach to obtain a more complete understanding of the implications of MTB-MLE in Pampanga among Grade 1 teachers by using more than one method within a research study. Specifically, the Sequential Explanatory Design by Creswell et al. (2003) was used. According to Creswell et al. (2003), this design is “characterized by the collection and analysis of quantitative data followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data” (p. 223). Findings from both phases are integrated during the data-interpretation stage. The general aim of this approach is to further explain the phenomenon under study qualitatively or to explore the findings of the quantitative study in more depth ([Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2010](#)). Priority is typically given to quantitative data in this design, and the two methodologies are subsequently combined during the study's interpretation phase. The objective of the sequential explanatory design is “typically to use qualitative results to assist in explaining and interpreting the findings of a primarily quantitative study” (Creswell et al., 2003, p. 227). This approach can be very helpful when a quantitative investigation yields unexpected results. The qualitative data are useful in examining unexpected results in greater detail. The simplicity of this design is one of its main strengths (Creswell et al.). The main strength of the sequential design includes the ability to enable one to gain a deeper understanding of findings revealed by quantitative studies and collect and analyze the different methods separately. Additionally, the two-phase approach makes sequential designs easy to implement, describe, and report (Warfa, 2016). For the quantitative phase in this research, a survey tool was used to collect the data from Grade 1 teachers. The design was preferred since the study focuses on a particular group of people, specifically the teachers, to determine their opinions and perceptions. The survey questionnaire contained four parts which describe the pedagogy of MTB -MLE. These are the demographic profile of the respondents, language learning, classroom instruction, and implementation, which include the readiness for the implementation of the program. For the qualitative phase, an interview was also done to support the information

gathered from the survey tool. Interview is the most direct way to obtain rich, in-depth information regarding a particular phenomenon. A structured interview guide was used to collect data that were tailored to the research questions. It included the insights of the teachers about the MTB-MLE policy in terms of their knowledge about it, language used in classroom, their beliefs about MTB-MLE and the challenges they encountered.

Table 1.

Demographic Profile of the Grade 1 Teachers

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Female	6	100

Position	Frequency	Percent
Teacher I	3	50
Teacher II	1	16.7
Teacher III	2	33.3

Total	6	100
No. of Years in Teaching	Frequency	Percent
1	2	33.3
9	1	16.7
10	1	16.7
15	1	16.7
34	1	16.7
Total	6	100

Table 2

Grade 1 Teachers' Assessment of the Pupils' Performance in terms of Language Learning

Statement	Mean	Interpretation
1. Children who can read and write Kapampangan will be able to learn English easier than children who cannot read and write in Kapampangan	2.67	Agree
2. Children will do better in school if they learn to read and write in Kapampangan first	2.17	Disagree
3. Learning Math and Science in Kapampangan helps children do better in those subjects	2.00	Disagree
4. When children learn to read and write in Kapampangan, it is easier to learn to read and write in English later	2.33	Disagree
5. In the early grades, it is better for students to learn in English than Kapampangan	2.50	Agree
6. Using Kapampangan to teach children has negative Effects when they learn English	2.17	Disagree
7. Children will learn English best if English is the only language spoken in their classroom	2.50	Agree
8. Learning in Kapampangan might be confusing for children	2.33	Disagree
Weighted Mean	2.33	Disagree

Table 3.*Grade 1 teachers' subjective assessment of the MTB-MLE implementation*

Question	Mean	Interpretation
1. How prepared do you feel to implement MTB-MLE in your classroom?	3.00	Prepared
2. How similar is MTB-MLE to the way you taught last year?	2.17	Somewhat Different
3. How much extra work will it take for you to use MTB-MLE in your classroom?	2.67	Some Extra Work
4. How difficult will it be to implement MTB-MLE in your classroom?	2.17	Somewhat Difficult
5. What is the likelihood that Grade 1 teachers in your school will use MTB-MLE teaching next year?	2.67	Somewhat Likely
6. What is the likelihood that primary grade teachers in your school will use MTB-MLE teaching in five years?	2.67	Somewhat Likely
7. What is the likelihood that primary grade teachers in your school will use MTB-MLE teaching in ten years?	2.50	Somewhat Likely

Table 4.

Numerical figure of training days acquired by the teachers with regard to MTB-MLE

Number of Days	Frequency	Percent
0 days	1	16.7
5-6 days	3	50
7 or more days	2	33.3
Total	6	100

Table 5.

Grade I Teacher's Assessment on the Importance of MTB-MLE for Grade I Comprehension Skills

Statement	Mean	Interpretation
<i>How important do you think it is for Grade I children to...</i>		
1. Learn to read in Kapampangan	3.00	Important
2. Learn to write in Kapampangan	3.00	Important
3. Speak in Kapampangan	3.00	Important
4. Listen to the teacher speak Kapampangan	3.17	Important
Weighted Mean	3.04	Important

Table 6.

Grade I Teacher's Assessment on the importance of MTB-MLE for their Instruction

Statement	Mean	Interpretation
<i>How important do you think it is for Grade 1 teachers to...</i>		
1. Teach in Kapampangan	2.67	Important
2. Create lessons related to life in Pampanga	3.00	Important
3. Involve parents in writing Kapampangan stories	3.00	Important
Weighted Mean	2.89	Important

Table 7.

Grade I Teachers' Responses pertaining to the necessity of the language to be imparted in Grades 1 to 3

Language(s)	Frequency	Percent
English and Filipino	3	50
Kapampangan with English and Filipino as a subject	3	50
Total	6	100

Table 8.

Grade I Teachers' Responses pertaining to the Insinuated Language to be imparted in Grades 1 to 3

Language(s)	Frequency	Percent
English and Filipino	3	50
Kapampangan with English and Filipino as a subject	3	50
Total	6	100

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research design utilized by the study is qualitative-descriptive. Using a survey and a structured interview, the study was commenced at San Vicente Elementary School. The respondents were the school's Grade 1 teachers who applied the policy of MTB-MLE. Finally, the results were obtained and tabulated. With the help of an expert, statistical methods were applied. Consequently, descriptive statistics were used to analyze the qualitative responses for the quantitative data and thematic analysis. All of the six Grade 1 teachers that participated in the study were all female. Additionally, their ranks are then defined by the levels of Teacher I (having 3 teachers included), Teacher II (with one teacher), and Teacher III (two teachers).

Results would have been much more effective if there had been an equal distribution among the ranks of each respondent. It could be seen that the participants have different perceptions of the MTB-MLE implementation's effect on learners. Specifically, the participants agree on the following conceptions: (1) Children who can read and write Kapampangan will be able to learn English easier than children who cannot read and write in Kapampangan; (2) In the early grades, students should learn in English than Kapampangan, and (3) Children will learn English best if English is the only language spoken in their classroom. These items gleaned means of 2.67, 2.50, and 2.50, respectively. However, the participants disagreed on the following statements: (1) Children will do better in school if they learn to read and write in Kapampangan first; (2) Learning Math and Science in Kapampangan helps children do better in those subjects; (3) When children learn to read and write in Kapampangan, it is easier to learn to read and write in English later; (4) Using Kapampangan to teach children has adverse effects for when they learn English, and (5) Learning in Kapampangan might be confusing for children.

Unanimously, the participants agree that it is vital for Grade 1 children to learn Kapampangan in their tenure as pupils inside the classroom. Reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills in Kapampangan are considered important. On the same page, all the teachers agreed that creating lessons and teaching in the Kapampangan language is important. Also, teachers agreed to involve parents in writing Kapampangan stories. All teachers suggest using combined English, Tagalog, and Kapampangan as a language for their classes. Lastly, most Grade 1 teachers are aware of the MTB-MLE policy. Teachers believed that learning the mother tongue first could help learners and teachers address the high functional illiteracy of Filipinos. They also claim that language plays a vital role in learning. Results show that most teachers had 5-6 days of training, while two (2) teachers studied it for seven or more days. Lastly, only one teacher is not trained in the MTB-MLE program. In terms of the implementation of the policy, questions were asked to assess it "Prepared." It means that the teachers have been prepared for this policy regarding their lesson content, discussions in the room, assessment materials, and the like. Secondly, based on the similarity of the teachers' teaching last year, it is "somewhat different" in the current year of concern since the mean gleaned to 2.17. Third, as evidenced by the mean of 2.67, teachers claim that the policy application puts "some extra work" on their part. Fourth, in terms of difficulty, teachers find it "somewhat difficult" to apply the MTB-MLE policy in the school, which the researcher argues as a contrasting claim in the first question they are prepared for. Lastly, in terms of the likelihood of the paradigm to be applied in the next years of the school operations, the means show a "Somewhat Likely" interpretation, as evidenced by the ratings of 2.67, 2.67, and 2.50. Collectively, all the participants report that their most-used languages are Kapampangan and Filipino (Tagalog). According to the participants, most of their

pupils speak the said languages and can easily follow instructions. Meanwhile, the participants were also asked about the possible outcomes, benefits, and disadvantages of using Kapampangan and English during the early stages of schooling. Several themes were obtained from the responses of the teachers. Overall, the teachers agree on some perceived advantages of using the mother tongue as a medium of instruction for Grades 1 to 3: (1) increased understanding and (2) better performance. However, they have different perceptions of its disadvantages. The noted disadvantages were the following: (1) limited English vocabulary and (2) difficulty in pronouncing words in Tagalog and English. Insights were also gathered about how the policy affects the learners. Varied responses were recorded. Two effectiveness. The first question was positively answered, gleaning a 3.00 mean, which translates to teachers noted that implementing MTB-MLE was effective because pupils easily understood the lessons that were taught to them. Furthermore, challenges were also noted in terms of implementing the policy in a school. Some of the noted challenges were the following: (1) lack of training; (2) absence of books written in the students' mother tongue, and (3) students who are raised as Tagalog-speaking individuals. As of now, materials and resources are being handed to the teachers. These include learners' materials and teaching guides. Training sessions and seminars were also done before the implementation of the policy.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

In light of the findings of the study, the following conclusions were drawn: 1. The implementation of the MTB-MLE policy has had a positive response amongst the students, thus proving that the MTB-MLE is an effective policy in the academe. 2. Based on the teachers' accounts, the MTB-MLE policy has helped the learners understand lessons. 3. The application of the MTB-MLE may or may not affect the competency of Grade 1 to 3 pupils in learning English and Tagalog as they transition to Grade 4. Some subjects (e.g., Mathematics and Science) are not suitable for localization. 4. The teachers find using the mother tongue in teaching advantageous to increase understanding and improve pupil performance. 5. Lack of materials, training, and seminars for implementing the policy may deter its effectiveness.

Based on the aforementioned findings and conclusions, the following suggestions are humbly and respectfully offered; 1. The researcher recommends creating a program review for teachers regarding the extent of implementing the MTB-MLE policy to look at the quality of the materials used in instruction. 2. It is also recommended to conduct additional training, seminars, and materials on the teachers applying the MTB-MLE policy. 3. The researcher also recommends that researchers explore further studies to assess the pupils' performance in class while following the MTB-MLE policy.

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