

Attitude of Local Stakeholders toward the Use of Mother Tongue in the Teaching and Learning Process

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Abstract— Amid recent shifts in the country's language policy, debates have arisen over the integration of L1 learning in language education. This systematic literature review examines local stakeholders' attitudes toward using mother tongue as a pedagogical method, a topic gaining significance due to ongoing changes. By analyzing fifteen relevant studies encompassing the perception, attitude, and cognition of MTB-MLE stakeholders, this research identifies key contributing factors to these language attitudes. A repertory grid was employed to visualize relevant study details, guiding the investigation's focus. Results revealed diverse stakeholder attitudes shaped by their experiences with MTB-MLE implementation. Learners generally exhibit positive attitude toward mother tongue usage in education, while many educators and other stakeholders hold negative views. Notably, some remain undecided about the approach's benefits versus drawbacks. These findings suggest the necessity for the DepEd to employ a bottom-up strategy in policy evaluation, involving grassroots perspectives in the MTB-MLE refinement process.

Keywords— *language perception and cognition, MTB-MLE, language in education*

I. INTRODUCTION

The movement that encourages and advocates for the use of students' first language (L1) in early education started from the call made by the United Nations in 1953 (Alieto, 2019), and the concept of learning in L1 is not new in language education. Other Southeast Asian countries have adopted the utilization of the mother tongue in their language programs at the community level (UNESCO, 2007). In the Philippines, there have been several policies on language in education since the Spanish period. It started with the use of Spanish, English, and Filipino with vernacular dialects as auxiliary. However, ten years ago, the country made a major change in the language policy by implementing the MTB-MLE in the primary years at a national level, replacing the Bilingual Education Program (BEP). Language in education is always subject to studies. As Alieto (2018) claims, the success of any educational process relies heavily on the language used because it is instrumental in transmitting knowledge. Moreover, these studies provide informed data as a basis for language policy planning and decision-making.

A couple of months ago, the Department of Education recently announced during the Senate Basic Education Committee hearing the department's plan to stop teaching the mother tongue as a subject to allocate more time to reading comprehension and math programs. This is the latest update on the ten-year language policy in the country. This planned modification in the implementation of the policy came after the department reviewed the curriculum, partly due to the persistent clamor of some people to stop the use of the mother tongue in the teaching and learning process. This proves that despite the established benefits of using L1 in learning through a considerable number of research studies, there still exists a fierce debate between those who believe that the use of the mother tongue as a pedagogical approach is sound and those who are against it because they believe that the use of the more powerful languages, English and Filipino, is best for Filipino learners. The implementation of the MTB-MLE has also been the target of multiple criticisms by scholars, academicians, educational managers, teachers, students, parents, and other stakeholders of Basic Education (De Guzman & De Vera, 2018). This keeps the issues about the MTB-MLE ongoing and trending even after a decade. It also hinders the department and other government agencies from providing full support to the current language policy.

Indeed, language attitude is an important factor and component not only in language shift but also in the success of a language-in-education policy (Baker, 1992). Ladegaard (2000) posited that language attitude is composed of three components: knowledge, emotion, and behavior. The topic is not new and has been the subject of study in language and sociolinguistics. However, in the Philippines, it has aroused the interest of educators and scholars anew due to the implementation of the MTB-MLE. Furthermore, the ongoing debate over which language to use in educating Filipino learners (Imperial, 2016) calls for more effort on the part of the government, with the help of its citizens, to continuously assess and reassess the implementation of the language policy and consider all aspects (Monje and Capones, 2019), such as the experiences of the end-implementers of the language policy and the end-users of the language(s). Along with the language used, the teaching strategies must be constantly evaluated to accommodate the changes of time. Borg (2003) stated that the

pedagogical practices of teachers are shaped by what they perceive and believe to be important in the classroom. Additionally, language attitude can serve as either an enabling or disabling factor not only in learning a language but also in teaching, as is the case with language educators (Alieto, 2018). This has led to a handful of studies conducted regarding the attitude of stakeholders towards the mother tongue in relation to the MTB-MLE.

After going through online journals, the researcher identified a number of studies that have explored the bottom-up perception of stakeholders regarding the top-down reform in the country's language policy (Burton, 2013; Anudin, 2018; Asuncion & Rañosa-Madrunio, 2017; Alieto, 2018; Cruz, 2015). These studies provide valuable insights and data relevant to modifying and refining the recently implemented MTB-MLE program. From the researcher's perspective, conducting a systematic literature review is crucial to synthesizing the conclusions drawn from these studies. By doing so, educational leaders, authorities, educators, and researchers can be informed about the perspectives and opinions of people at the grassroots level regarding the policy. Building on the recommendation of Gallego and Zubiri (2011), as cited by Esteron (2020), which emphasizes the importance of involving all stakeholders in the planning of the MTB-MLE program, this literature review aims to bridge the gap between research findings and the decision-making process, ensuring that the voices and insights of stakeholders are taken into account.

This systematic literature review analyzed the language attitudes of local stakeholders in the mother tongue as a pedagogical approach and discovered the contributing factors to such attitudes. It sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the language attitude of local stakeholders towards the use of mother tongue as a pedagogical approach in education?
2. What are the contributing factors that shape the language attitudes of local stakeholders towards the use of mother tongue as a pedagogical approach in education?

II. METHODS

This study employed a systematic literature review method. A systematic literature review (often referred to as a systematic review) identifies, evaluates, and interprets all available research relevant to a particular research question, topic area, or phenomenon of interest. Individual studies contributing to a systematic review are called *primary* studies; a systematic review is a form of *secondary* study (Kitchenham, 2007).

This systematic literature investigation focused on studies that discussed the attitudes of learners, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders towards the use of mother tongue in relation to the implementation of the Mother Tongue-Based Multi-Lingual Education. Fifteen (15) studies that dealt on the perception, attitude, and cognition of the MTB-MLE stakeholders were included.

To be able to meet the aims of this study, searching multiple databases to locate related studies on mother tongue used as a pedagogical approach was the first step. The search process was based on the eligibility criteria that were established before the process of retrieving research articles started. The eligibility criteria specified which studies were included and excluded from the systematic review. The criteria used for including and excluding studies form the *operational definition* of the problem (Abrami, Cohen & d'Apollonia, 1988), and they provide a clear guideline in the selection of research articles.

The features of the eligibility criteria are specified in the following table:

Parameters	Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Type of research	Primary research published in peer reviewed journals and scientific papers	Book reviews, opinion pieces, literary reviews, policy documents
Results of the study	Research articles or scientific papers that dealt on the attitudes and perception of learners, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders in basic education towards mother tongue	Research articles or scientific papers which did not wholly discuss the attitudes and perceptions of stakeholders toward mother tongue as a pedagogical approach
Language	Research articles or scientific papers that primarily made use of English	Research articles or scientific papers that did not make use of English
Data Base	Google scholar, EBSCO, ERIC, and that full text are accessible	Databases not accessible to the researcher; studies with full text not accessible to the researcher
Time frame	Research articles or scientific papers on the attitudes of stakeholders toward mother tongue as a pedagogical approach published from 2012 to 2022	Research articles or scientific papers before 2012
Population and Locale of the Study	Research conducted in the Philippines with Filipinos as respondents/ participants	Research conducted outside the country and or with respondents who are not Filipinos

After ensuring that the research articles meet the said criteria, the quality of the papers was further evaluated for the selection of the final papers to be included in the review. The papers should have at least the generally accepted structure of a scientific paper sectioned as: introduction, methods, results/findings, and discussions (Sharp, 2002).

Data Analysis

A repertory grid was utilized to plot the details relevant to the research question of this study. Using thematic approach (Braun & Clarke, 2013), the data on the grid were analyzed and coded to be able to identify the related themes.

Ethical Considerations

Since it is a systematic review, violations on plagiarism and academic integrity might be committed. For this, the researcher made proper citations and references for all sources used in this paper.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This systematic literature review explored the language attitudes of local stakeholders towards mother tongue as a pedagogical approach and described the factors that influence these attitudes. In the context of these findings, the terms perception, attitude, and cognition are used interchangeably or overlappingly to some extent. While there may be subtle differences in their precise definitions, they are often used to refer to individuals' thoughts, beliefs, and opinions towards a particular subject or concept. In the context of language and education, these terms are used to assess stakeholders' views and perspectives on using mother tongue as a medium of instruction.

Varied Language Attitudes toward the use of MT/ MTB-MLE and Experiences Shape these Differing Attitudes

Local Stakeholders have a positive attitude toward mother tongue.

According to Berowa, Devanadera, and David (2018, cited in Alieto, 2018), a positive language attitude is widely recognized as a crucial factor for determining success in language learning. The reviewed studies reveal that learners exhibit a positive attitude towards their mother tongue being used in the teaching and learning process, stemming from their classroom experiences and the awareness of the benefits associated with learning in the mother tongue. This finding aligns with the observation made by Richard et al. (1992), as cited by Esteron (2020) that individuals tend to develop a positive or negative attitude toward a language based on their perception of its difficulty or simplicity.

Among learners, parents, and local stakeholders, a positive attitude prevails towards the mother tongue as a medium of instruction. In the studies involving learners as respondents and participants, only one study reported a negative attitude towards the language used as the medium of instruction in school. It was noted that the language examined in the study, Sugbuanong Binisaya, was not the mother tongue of the community but was mandated by the Department of Education and used in the provided textbooks. The learners perceived Sugbuanong Binisaya as a foreign language and encountered difficulties in grasping concepts when taught in this language.

Parents have witnessed positive results in their children's learning, particularly an improvement in comprehension when the mother tongue is employed. As a result, they strongly support the language policy. Local

stakeholders also endorse the MTB-MLE approach as it aligns with the legal mandate and is perceived as a sound principle. Moreover, a substantial number of teachers exhibit a positive attitude toward the use of the mother tongue as a pedagogical approach. However, this suggests that teachers are not entirely convinced of the benefits of using the mother tongue in teaching and learning. Since teachers play a crucial role in implementing the policy, their hesitation stems from the challenges they have encountered, particularly during the initial stages of implementation.

Despite some teachers' reservations, there is a consensus among educators regarding the benefits of using the mother tongue, which is consistent with the experiences observed by learners, acknowledged by parents, and supported by other local stakeholders.

1. MT aids comprehension and improves self-expression. Mother tongue plays a key role in acquiring skills such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening (Halliday and Martin, 1993). It also serves as a vital tool for expressing ideas and giving clear instructions (Gallego and Zubiri, 2013). Academic competence can be achieved using the native tongue because it allows students to easily express their thoughts, feelings, and understanding of the lessons, thereby facilitating engagement in academic activities (Naom & Sarah, 2014).

The benefits of using the mother tongue approach, as observed and experienced, can be expressed as follows: it enhances communication between teachers and students, leading to better understanding during class discussions; it enables teachers to express themselves clearly and make lessons interesting for students, facilitating easy comprehension; and it directly connects to students' understanding, enabling them to actively participate in lectures and communicate effectively with their teachers and classmates. These findings support the claim that utilizing the mother tongue in teaching and learning helps improve students' academic skills, enhances literacy and English language proficiency (Cummins, 2000), and fosters critical thinking (Brock-Utne, 2006). Similarly, in other countries, it has been observed that African students whose language of instruction is not their mother tongue tend to struggle academically (Graham, 2010), and Nigerian students' scholastic achievement is low (Igboanusi, 2008).

2. MT adds self-confidence and contributes to building own identity. The observation that learners become more expressive of their ideas in class, whether when speaking to the teacher or their classmates in their own language, is a widely acknowledged phenomenon supported by various studies. Furthermore, our language is intertwined with our identity as individuals. The findings from these studies highlight the following aspects:

Firstly, learners actively participate in the classroom when their first language (L1) is used for learning. Benson (2000) emphasized that incorporating L1 in the learning process leads to stronger classroom engagement and participation. Secondly, using their own language enables learners to engage in activities and interactions that allow them to assert or hint at their cultural identity. Language serves as a medium through which not only our thoughts and ideas are expressed, but also our very sense of self. For example, using Bisaya encourages learners to develop a love for their hometown and fosters pride in their own heritage. This aligns with the belief held by other stakeholders who have a positive attitude towards Gaddang, their mother tongue, as they perceive it as reflecting their ethnic identity.

These findings align with the research conducted by Khalid (2016) in Pakistan, where Urdu is highly valued as it is considered essential for preserving their culture. Similarly, Kobari (2009) discovered that native speakers in Northern Mindanao displayed a positive attitude towards the Butuanon language, emphasizing the connection between language and cultural identity. By incorporating learners' mother tongue and valuing their cultural heritage, the educational environment becomes enriched, fostering a sense of belonging and promoting a positive attitude towards language and identity.

3. MT promotes a friendlier school environment.

The use of mother tongue in the classroom not only enhances the learning experience but also fosters a sense of enjoyment among learners, making them feel free to engage in conversations with their teacher and classmates without fear of reprimand or criticism. Additionally, using mother tongue is a powerful tool to combat linguistic discrimination. Encouraging children to speak in their mother tongue creates a foundation for active classroom participation. By allowing children to express themselves in their native language, they feel more confident and motivated to contribute to classroom discussions. Moreover, the adoption of mother tongue instruction has resulted in a significant reduction in pupil drop-outs. In the past, when lessons were delivered in a foreign language, students often felt alienated and disconnected from the classroom environment. However, by incorporating languages such as Ilocano, students now find their school experience more enjoyable and have greater opportunities to form friendships.

The positive shift in attitudes among local stakeholders, as discovered in Philippine-based research, contradicts the findings of studies conducted in Kenya (Khejari, 2014), Nigeria (Ejeh, 2004), and Botswana (Magogwe & Ketsitlile, 2015). These studies revealed that both teachers and students held negative attitudes towards the use of mother tongue in teaching and learning. This suggests progress in the development of attitudes towards indigenous languages, highlighting a shift towards more positive and inclusive educational practices.

Local Stakeholders have a negative attitude toward the MTB-MLE.

Among the local stakeholders, teachers constitute a larger proportion of those who hold a negative attitude towards the use of mother tongue as a pedagogical approach. Numerous studies have highlighted the stakeholders' disapproval or aversion to the idea of utilizing the mother tongue as a medium of instruction, often accompanied by the reasons behind their dissatisfaction. Several recurring findings have emerged, primarily stemming from the apprehensions voiced by local stakeholders regarding the potential impact of using the mother tongue in teaching children, the difficulties and challenges they encountered when implementing mother tongue instruction, and their preconceived notions of what language should be. These recurring concerns include:

1. MT will impede children's proficiency in English—a 'socio-economic power' language. People often cling to traditional beliefs and view English as an indispensable language. These perspectives can be summarized as follows: First, Bisaya is considered a language for home use, while English should be taught in schools as it is believed to enhance future job prospects for children. Second, the fear exists that prioritizing the mother tongue may compromise students' proficiency in English. Third, some students feel embarrassed when speaking Ilocano in class, perhaps due to the perception that using a vernacular language is less desirable than speaking English or Filipino. Fourth, pre-service teachers also harbor negative views regarding the use of the mother tongue, as they believe it may hinder children's English language performance in the future. Fifth and last, respondents generally hold a slightly negative perception of the mother tongue, aligning with the claims of various researchers who have documented beliefs devaluing local languages and emphasizing dedication and love for teaching English as a second language.

Many individuals mistakenly believe that the mother tongue does not offer economic opportunities, which explains their resistance to it and preference for more widely spoken languages. Furthermore, these findings highlight the perception that English is considered superior to local languages due to its global prevalence. In today's globalized world, it is not surprising that parents and teachers emphasize acquiring English skills. These findings corroborate the research conducted by Durano (2009), which investigated the attitudes of 284 seniors and found a positive attitude towards English linked to professional and social mobility. They also align with Sibayan's (1999) study, which revealed that speakers of indigenous languages experience low self-esteem and hold onto the hope of using English within the confines of the classroom.

However, it is worth noting that one study presented contrary findings from the rest of the research. Teachers exhibited a negative attitude toward the use of the mother tongue in the classroom, citing difficulties in reading

comprehension, instruction comprehension, potential degradation of English language literacy and proficiency, language and communication barriers between teachers and students, limited vocabulary, and other grammar-related issues. This study focused on high school and senior high school teachers who taught in Filipino and English. Cruz (2015) uncovered that a majority of instructional objectives related to the mother tongue as a subject were not being met, particularly in the areas of grammar awareness, vocabulary development, and reading comprehension.

2. The MTB-MLE is not properly implemented by DepEd. This common finding resonates across all the studies, indicating that the negative perception of the mother tongue among teachers and other stakeholders stems from implementation challenges of the language policy. These challenges include the unavailability or inadequacy of textbooks and learning materials essential for effective program delivery, as well as the lack of orientation and training provided to teachers, among other factors. It is notable that the government did not promptly provide the necessary materials following the issuance of the memorandum on the implementation of MTB-MLE. This situation aligns with the research conducted by Ong'uti et al. (2016), as cited by De Guzman & De Vera (2018), which revealed that both teachers and learners in Kenya held negative attitudes toward teaching and learning in their mother tongue. The poor attitude of teachers towards the mother tongue and their preference for foreign languages as a mode of communication can be attributed to the lack of proper training among teachers and the insufficient availability of resources for teaching and learning in the mother tongue.

3. Replacing the learners' mother tongue with a mandatory lingua franca made teaching and learning more challenging. The hesitance to accept MTB-MLE is often attributed to the use of the prescribed 20 languages (lingua franca) in multilingual communities. This practice is seen as a political move, favoring certain languages and undermining the original purpose of using mother tongue as an academic approach. The assignment of these languages contradicts Sections 4 and 5 of Republic Act No. 10533, which emphasizes the delivery of basic education in languages understood by the learners. Language plays a crucial role in shaping learners' formative years. Consequently, teachers oppose the program by modifying their lesson delivery to align with classroom practices, often resorting to Tagalog or English as a solution. These discrepancies contribute to the challenges faced in implementing the language policy (Lontoc-Demavivas, 2019). This finding conforms with the findings of Monje and Capones (2019), which pointed out that the "design of the MTB-MLE is that there is only one mother tongue to which the Filipino and English are added...there were many schools with many languages because students come from all over the Philippines, and they bring with them their languages."

4. Translating words from English or Filipino to mother tongue or lingua franca is difficult. In addition to the challenges faced in translating technical terms, Valerio's study (2015) highlights that even MTB course teachers lack confidence in the optimal benefits of using mother tongue as the medium of instruction. Factors such as the lack of instructional resources transcribed in the mother tongue contribute to this uncertainty. Teachers' comments reflect these difficulties, such as resorting to Bisaya instead of the prescribed Cebuano and struggling to teach compound words due to their absence in Bisaya. Moreover, technical terms and concepts, particularly in subjects like Mathematics and English, pose translation challenges (De Guzman & De Vera, 2018).

The negative attitude toward mother tongue reinforces the prevailing preference for English in the Philippines, as reported by Tupas (2015). It also aligns with Wa-Mbaleka's claim (2014) regarding teachers' belief in the negative impact of using mother tongue on English language teaching. Similarly, Lartec et al. (2014) found that lack of textbooks, vocabulary, and teacher training are major obstacles in implementing mother tongue-based instruction, echoing the concerns expressed in a bill proposed by Cong. Romulo. However, these results contrast Bachore's (2014) study in Ethiopia, where teachers displayed a positive attitude and perception toward mother tongue-based instruction.

Overall, these findings emphasize the challenges and varying perspectives surrounding the use of mother tongue in education, including issues related to instructional resources, language preferences, and the perceived impact on English language instruction.

Undecided Perception of Teachers and Stakeholders Regarding Mother Tongue.

The adjustments by teachers in the classroom are done to comply with the directives of the Department of Education (DepEd) and meet the needs of their students. However, these actions reflect the teachers' struggle in reconciling their personal beliefs with the prescribed curriculum. Their views can be summarized as follows: there is an equal divide among teachers regarding whether to use Bisaya or English as the medium of instruction; their attitude toward mother tongue as a medium of instruction reveals their conflict between embracing the new curriculum and adhering to traditional practices; and many participants have a limited understanding of the MTB-MLE. These findings align with Wa-Mbaleka's (2014) and Monje & Capones' (2019) studies, which discovered that teachers lacked a common understanding, had a wrong appreciation of the program, and lacked certainty about the impact of MTB-MLE on learning and its potential positive effects on English language teaching and global competitiveness.

Ultimately, the findings presented in this study might not be generalizable for the whole country since studies

included in the systematic review were only those that were accessed by the researcher through online search. Nevertheless, it gives a starting point in the evaluation of how stakeholders regard the current modification in the country's language policy.

IV. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This qualitative study analyzed the language attitudes of local stakeholders towards mother tongue as a pedagogical approach and identified the factors that contribute to these language attitudes. Deductions from the analyses of the attitudes of learners, teachers, parents, and other local stakeholders towards mother tongue as a pedagogical approach or the MTB-MLE in the materials redounded to the information that stakeholders welcomed the language policy. However, their apprehensions accompany their support on its impact on the English communication skills of the learners and the quality of their education as a whole. Their negative attitude towards the language policy is not due to the mother tongue but because of the challenges that they encountered in using the mother tongue in the teaching and learning process. The studies showed that the Department of Education adheres to the national guideline of the DepEd Order No. 74 Institutionalizing Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education, which clearly states that "the mother tongue of the students shall be a medium of instruction to be used in the classroom."

Given the apprehensions and concerns as found in the different studies, it is recommended that the Department of Education (DepEd) take certain actions:

1. Evaluation of the policy: DepEd should conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the MTB-MLE policy, considering the feedback and attitudes of stakeholders. This evaluation should be carried out using a bottom-up strategy involving teachers, parents, learners, and other local stakeholders. Their perspectives and experiences will provide valuable insights for refining the policy and addressing concerns.

2. Consideration of language attitude: Language attitude should be considered in the planning and development of language policies. Understanding the attitudes of stakeholders toward mother tongue-based instruction will help DepEd make informed decisions and craft effective policies.

3. Strengthened implementation: DepEd should focus on strengthening the implementation of the MTB-MLE approach. This includes providing necessary support, such as instructional resources, materials, and teacher training. Addressing the challenges encountered by teachers and ensuring they have the tools and knowledge to effectively deliver mother tongue-based instruction will contribute to its successful implementation.

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