From English-only Policy (EoP) to Mother Tongue-based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE): A Proposed Model for Contextualized Three-Way Immersion Program in the Philippines

Junnie Armel T. Salud
Education Research Division, Department of Education &
The Graduate School, University of Santo Tomas
PHILIPPINES

5th International Conference on Language and Education: Sustainable Development Through Multilingual Education
19-21 October, 2016
Bangkok, Thailand
EoP in Philippine Schools

Case (Dawe, 2014):

July 30, 2013 – Three high school students from Laoag City, Philippines were expelled for violating the school's English-only policy (EoP). The school cited in its handbook that “Speaking the vernacular [Iloko] in the campus” is a punishable offense. Though not listed as an infraction worthy of expulsion, the school deemed the repeated use “inappropriate conduct” which is considered expellable (Patria, 2013). The expulsion quickly became a hotly debated topic. Principal Pedro defended the school’s English policy and Reverend Shah wrote, “the policies we craft and implement in the school are well-intentioned and have the best interests of our students in mind” (Multilingual Philippines, 2013).
The Scenario

- Two official languages (English and Filipino)
- Over 180 native languages
- At least 19 recognized regional languages (as of 2015)
The Scenario

- English
- Filipino
- Mother Tongue
“Linguistic power struggle is unavoidable, although it may be silent.”

– Wa-Mbaleka (2014)
Language Chaos Theory
(Wa-Mbaleka, 2014)
National Language Policies in Basic Education

- 1908 – English only
- 1974 / 1987 – English and Filipino
- 2009 / 2013 – Mother Tongue (per region) from kinder to grade three; English/Filipino afterwards
  First-language-first policy
Assumptions behind MTB-MLE in the Philippines (Wa-Mbaleka, 2014)

1. UNESCO: a) for democratization and b) accessibility
   - 19 languages (by region) out of 180+?

2. Nationalistic View vs Internationalization View
   - How to balance?
Nationalistic Model vs Internationalization Model – Wa-Mbaleka (2014)

Nationalistic Model:
- Filipino is the only language to be used as the MOI until the elementary
- Grade 4 to 6 transition stage from Filipino to English
- English as MOI for the rest of educational levels

Internationalization Model:
- English as the MOI
The Challenges

Language policy can:
● discriminate learners
● favor one language over the other
● cause confusion in the classroom

Language policy should:
● be flexible
● not be prescriptive but dynamic
● not alienate a learner
Lubuagan Study (Dumatog & Dekker, 2003)

- Lubuagan as the lingua franca
- Trilingual teaching approach
- Mother tongue in all subjects including Science and Math for 4.5 hours a day
- Filipino and English as specific subjects for one hour each day

-improved student performance and parent participation
-strengthened the community's connection to their local roots and culture
Proposed Contextualized Three-Way Immersion Program in the Philippines

Proposed Three-Way Immersion Program for Primary Grades
Things to consider:

- Creation and implementation of language groups (school-based)
- Include child's mother tongue in the LIS (Learner Information System) from the Central Office
- More comprehensive language mapping in the Philippines
- Express strong support in code-switching
- Reduce mismatch (teachers also cross linguistic boundaries) through intensive training
- A language policy should be additive and not subtractive
- **K-G3**: MOI – child's mother tongue (CMT)
  Subject 1 – Region's mother tongue (RMT)
  2 – Filipino

- **G3-G6**: MOI – CMT / RMT (code switching)
  Subject 1 – Filipino
  Subject 2 – English

- **G7-G10**: MOI – depends on the subject area
  Tool subjects (English): English, Math, Science
  Others: RMT or CM/RMT (code switching)
Filipino learners who have a strong sense of self-identity, who are nationalistic but functional members of the international community
Points for discussion

- In your own context, how does your current basic education language policy respond to the same challenges?
- In what ways does your current basic education language policy a.) additive and b.) subtractive?
- What is your stand on code switching? Is it practical and realistic?