Embracing Linguistic Diversity in Mother Tongue Education: The Case of the Philippines

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The Challenge of Implementing Mother Tongue Education in Linguistically Diverse Contexts: The Case of the Philippines

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Linguistic Diversity as a Challenge to MTE

• Mismatch between the MOI and students’ home languages (Trudell, 2016)
• Additional challenges to MTE implementation (Ball, 2011)
• Using LFs as MOI (Klaus, 2003)
• Using English as MOI (Heugh, 2009)
Country Profile: Why the Philippines?

- 187 spoken languages
- 19 official languages used as medium of instruction
- 46,000 schools nationwide
Choice of LF as MOI

• “…evidence overwhelmingly points to the effectiveness of using an L1 (or, if necessary in a multilingual area, another language in which children are proficient) as the LOI throughout primary school (at least)” (RTI International, 2015, p. 21).
### Choice of LF as MOI

- a short-term design
- undermines linguistic diversity and excludes the minority (Mokibelo, 2014).

### Using LLs

- ensures equity in education, particularly for children who are not LF-proficient (Trudell, 2016).
- need to be protected and multilingualism preserved (Lo Bianco, 2016)
- raises challenges including inadequate academic vocabulary (Klaus, 2003), low pedagogical suitability (Trudell, 2016), weak community support, and preference for dominant languages (Young, 2011)
Localizing a National Policy

Model 1
- children’s MT should be used for Kindergarten to Grade 1 (K-1) classes.
- does not advise whether one language or several should be used – a question that arises in the case of LDC schools

Model 2
- is the use of an LF for LDC schools, with provisions for MT oral fluency classes for children whose MT is not the chosen LF, subject to teacher availability.
- does not provide other alternatives for children not speaking the school’s declared MT if a teacher is unavailable – a circumstance with a higher likelihood of arising in LDCs
Overview of the Study
Questions

(1) What are the challenges faced by LDC schools in implementing MTE?

(2) What strategies are being adopted by LDC schools in response to these challenges?
Locale

- 50 LDC schools nationwide
- represented the three main island groups (Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao)
- predominantly small and rural, but 17 (34%) were large and city-based
- schools implemented - eight LLs and four LFs. Ten of these languages were in the DepEd list, while two were LLs not included in the list.

Sample

- School administrator
- Half of the total number of K-3 MT teachers in each school
Verification visit was made to all 50 schools to confirm linguistic diversity

Survey administration

Two survey instruments – one for school administrators and one for teachers

- 19 Likert-style items (Cronbach’s alpha was .944), analyzed through ANOVA
- Six open-ended questions analyzed through NVivo 10
Findings
Figure 1. Categories of Program Challenges

- Design: 7
- Connection with local community and culture: 3
- Staff training: 3
- Staff selection: 4

Total 17
Figure 2. Categories of Program Strategies

- Design: 5
- Connection with local community and culture: 3
- Staff training: 4
- Advocacy: 2
- Monitoring and evaluation: 4

Total 19
Figure 3. Teachers’ Attitude towards Classroom Language Practices

- I am proficient in the MT: 0.82
- I use the assigned MT during instruction: 0.91
- I avoid indiscriminate code-switching: 0.75
- I am confident in teaching in the MT: 0.64
- I use strategies shared in training: 0.86
Figure 4. Teachers’ Perception on the MT as MOI

The MT has a formality level that is appropriate for classroom use.

The MT provides useful science terms.

The MT provides useful math terms.
A Deeper Look at Findings

• Teachers’ knowledge of the MTs
• Relatively lower mean rating for confidence in MT
• Code-switching as one of the most reported strategies for addressing challenges
• Teachers’ perception of MTs as limited in math and science lexicon and academic formality.
• Teachers’ negative rating for the usefulness of the MT academic lexicon
Table 1: Program Designs in LDCs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Single Language Program</th>
<th>Multiple Languages Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Model 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Combined Model</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MT is a local language only</td>
<td>At least 1 MT is a local language + at least 1 MT is a Lingua Franca in the locality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Model 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MT is a Lingua Franca in the locality</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Modified Model 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>All MTs are different local languages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 19 (40%)     | 12 (25%) | 2 (4%) | 15 (31%) |
Four Modifications

1) the use of a single LL instead of the recommended LFs
2) the combining of models,
3) the use of multiple languages,
4) formation of in-class groups of students who speak the same language.
**Model 1**
(one LL, DepEd Model)

- Preserving the language and culture of their area
- “Should be protected from MTs which are historically associated with other areas” - Teacher 17

**Modified Model 1**
(use of multiple LLs as MTs)

- a process of trial and error.
- *tried grouping the Iloko pupils in one class and Tagalog pupils in another and found it effective*’ (Teacher 17).
- in-class groups of pupils with the same MTs, retaining a form of Modified Model 1 within the class
“It was the actual dominant language in the community, the only language that all pupils will understand.”
- School Head 03:
Findings

- **Program design** is a crucial issue in the implementation of MTE in LDCs.

- **Policy flexibility** provides potential for schools to make decisions that meet local circumstances but allows pragmatic decisions with potential to undermine policy goals.

- **Gaps in the guidelines** triggered the innovativeness of school heads and teachers.

- **Use of LLs** can be achieved in MTE.

- **Language management** in MTE requires further investigation to understand how code-switching in MTE classrooms relates to policy goals.

- The **localization of policy** guidelines spurred the modification of class models.
Implications

- The case of Philippine LDCs enriches a growing typology of MTE language programs or class models
- Models are on a continuum, with each model involving a mix of costs and gains
- MT use for all children –likely to be realized in varying models –one size does not fit all
- The modified models highlight how the interplay of needs and goals influences policy implementation
Implications

- **Linguistic diversity** indeed raises challenges for MTE.

- The decision to use LFs must be made with a clear understanding of the costs and benefits it brings.

- Policies may not comprehensively account for all the circumstances in schools, but these can be viewed as avenues for innovative localization.

- Adapting policy imperatives to local circumstances can be effective but can result in unevenness in the extent to which localization is faithful to MTE goals and principles. This requires close monitoring of and support for schools as they engage in localization.
Implications

While flexibility of policy is viewed positively in MTE literature, if it is to allow effective implementation, it needs to be designed in a way that guarantees and protects policy principles.
“…whatever the choices made, MTE in LDC raises issues regarding the accommodation of children who do not speak the implemented MT and the use of multiple languages in the classroom.

These challenges emerge from the balancing act between program principles and practicalities. Flexible decision-making and program localization require support to ensure faithfulness to policy principles.”
Next Steps

Look into:

• The role of code-switching
• Language management
• Program design
• Localization efforts
Understanding Best Practices in MTB-MLE in the Philippines

Mother Tongue Based-Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) policy in The Philippines involves implementation of local mother tongues as the language of instruction in Kindergarten to year three (K-3), with the official languages (Filipino and English) being introduced as the language of instruction after grade three. Previously, the early years of schooling used Filipino and English as the language of instruction, with local languages being used to assist teachers and students in the classroom. MTB-MLE is being implemented across the country from the 2012-2013 school year. While a very small number of schools previously implemented MTB-MLE, many schools and teachers are now learning how to use a local mother tongue as the language of instruction, and in the coming years this will be taken up by more schools, teaching a wider variety of languages.

This project is designed to study the widespread implementation of the mother tongue as the language of instruction within the MTB-MLE policy in four phases. Phase 1 surveyed a small number of schools across different types of language contexts to identify the factors relevant to implementation of the policy. Phase 2 surveyed a much larger number of schools across the country to identify the degree and range of influence of these factors. Phase 3 investigated four case studies of schools (one in each type of language context), to describe in detail best practices used in schools successfully implementing MTB-MLE. In Phase 4, data from Phases 1 to 3 are being matched to actual learning outcome data from selected schools; program factors are being associated with the results of student testing.

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