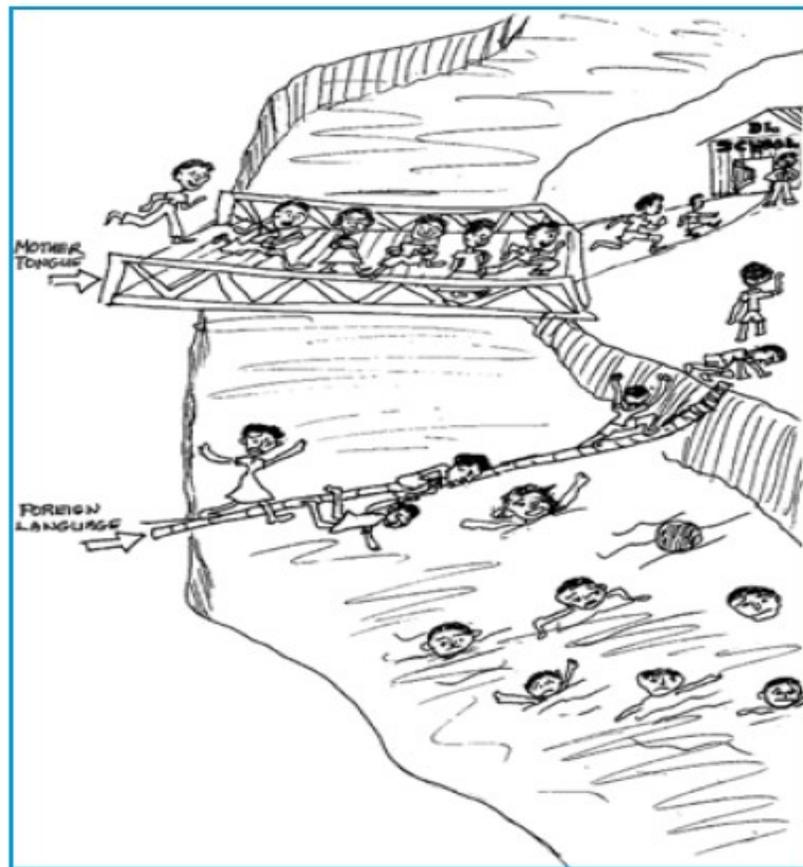


21 Reasons why Filipino children learn better while using their Mother Tongue

A PRIMER on Mother Tongue-based Multilingual Education (MLE) & Other Issues on Language and Learning in the Philippines

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Introduction

International and local research studies in the use of languages in education are conclusive—when the mother tongue is the medium in primary instruction, learners end up being better thinkers and better learners in both their first AND second language(s). Sadly, legislators at the House of Representatives continue to ignore the studies and are in fact set to approve a bill “strengthening” English as the medium of instruction (MOI) from the elementary grades to the tertiary level.

This primer aims to clarify the issues related to language-in-education in the Philippines by addressing 21 frequently-asked questions about mother-tongue based multilingual education (MLE). The primer explains why MLE is the way to go if Filipinos truly want long-term solutions to the ills plaguing the Philippine educational system, such as high functional illiteracy, low learning outcomes, and high drop-out rates.

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1. What is mother tongue-based multilingual education or MLE?

MLE is the use of more than two languages for literacy and instruction. It starts from where the learners are, and from what they already know. This means learning to read and write in their first language or L1, and also teaching subjects like mathematics, science, health and social studies in the L1.

The first language or L1 is defined by UNESCO as the language that a person (a) has learned first; (b) identifies with or is identified as a native speaker of by others; (c) knows best; or (d) uses most. Any language which is not an L1 is a second language (L2) or a third language (L3) in this primer.

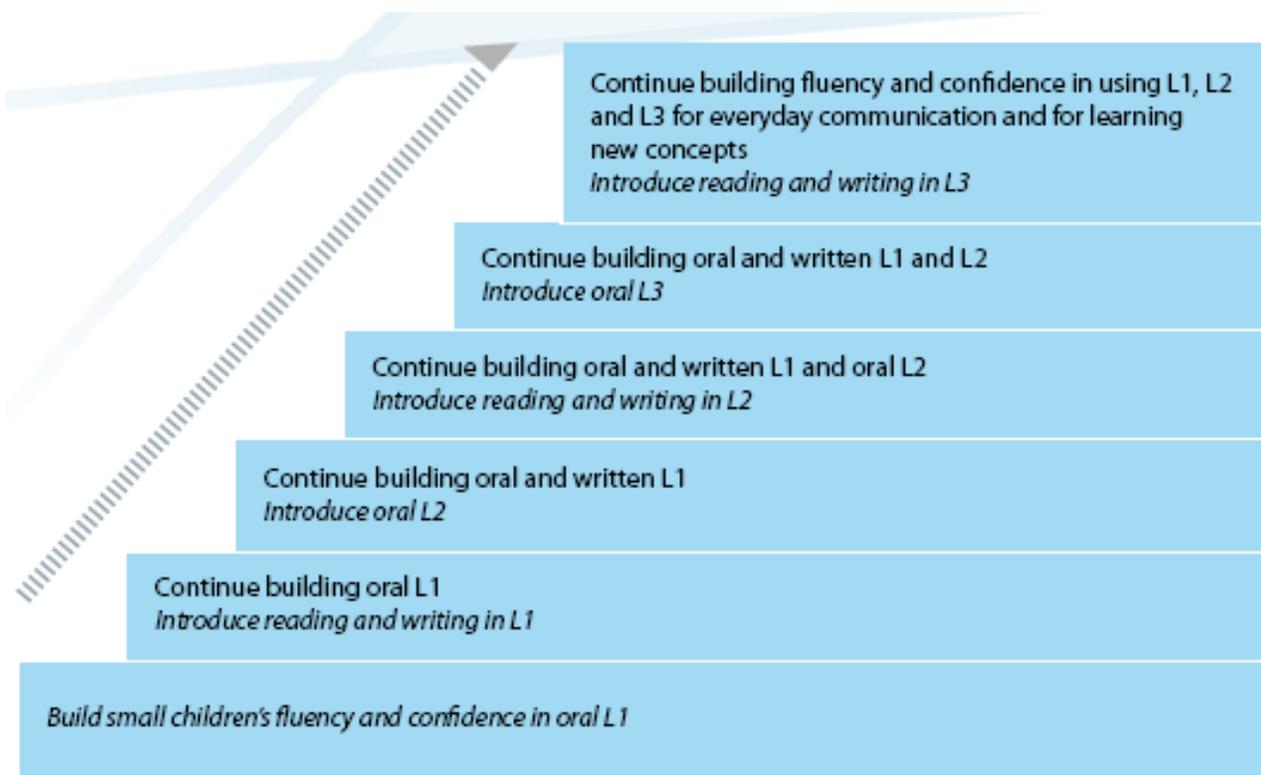
In the Philippines, the L1 can be Tagalog/Filipino, Cebuano, Ilokano, Hiligaynon, Bikol, Kapampangan, Pangasinan, Waray, Meranao, Tausug etc. It may even be English or Chinese, if that is what the children learned first or uses most.

2. When will children start learning Filipino and English?

As they develop a strong foundation in their L1, children are gradually introduced to the official languages, Filipino and English, as separate subjects, first orally, then in the written form.

When the Filipino child reaches the higher levels, s(he) would have gained enough proficiency in their second language (L2) and third language (L3) for these to be used as primary media of instruction. By this time too, the Filipino learner can now transfer his/her knowledge encoded in their L1 to the nationally prescribed languages (Filipino and English). The L1 can be taught as a separate subject or under the Filipino subject and used as an auxiliary medium.

Figure 1
Phases of a Three Language Education Program



Source: S. Malone

3. Does MLE only involve changing the language of instruction and translating the materials into the local languages?

MLE is an innovative approach to learning. Apart from programming the use of several languages, it also involves the following: (a) the development of good curricula (i.e. cognitively demanding); (b) the training of good teachers in the required languages, content and methodology; (c) the production of good teaching materials (i.e., error-free and culturally relevant); (d) the empowerment of the community (i.e. school-based management). MLE will not work when one simply changes the language by translating existing materials into the local languages.

4. What kind of learners does MLE intend to produce?

MLE aims to produce learners who are:

- Multi-literate—they can read and write competently in the local language, the national language, and one or more languages of wider communication, such as English;
- Multi-lingual—they can use these languages in various situations;
- Multi-cultural—they can live and work harmoniously with people of culture backgrounds that are different from their own.

5. What specific weaknesses in the Philippine educational system does MLE seek to address?

MLE seeks to specifically address the high functional illiteracy of Filipinos where language plays a significant factor. Based on the 2003 Functional Literacy, Education and Mass Media Survey (FLEMMS), out of 57.59 million Filipinos aged 10 to 64 years old, there were:

- 5.24 million Filipinos who could not read and write;
- 7.83 million Filipinos who could not read, write, and compute;
- 18.37 million Filipinos who could not read, write, compute and comprehend.

Inability to read and understand largely explains poor performance, low retention, and low learning outcomes in the high schools. For instance, from 2004 to 2006, the performance of 4th year high school students have remained stagnant at 44% with marginal gains in science and mathematics and a drop of two percentage points for English (Maligalig and Albert, p. 33)

As one educator, Professor Josefina Cortes, has observed, we have become “a nation of fifth graders.”

6. Why use the mother tongue or the first language (L1) in school?

One’s own language enables a child to express him/herself easily, as there is no fear of making mistakes. MLE encourages active participation by children in the learning process because they understand what is being discussed and what is being asked of them. They can immediately use the L1 to construct and explain their world, articulate their thoughts and add new concepts to what they already know.

MLE empowers the teachers as well, particularly when they are more fluent and adept in the local language than in the languages of wider communication. Because the students can express themselves, the teachers can more accurately assess what has been learned and identify areas where students need further assistance.

MLE creates the conditions for the integration of the people’s community knowledge—the knowledge that informs their lives and give them meaning—into the school system. MLE makes it possible for the community to produce its own culturally relevant reading materials and teaching aids, together with the local writers, illustrators, cultural groups and other stakeholders in the community.

MLE also empowers the parents who can take an active part in the education of their children because the school’s and the community’s language are also their language. MLE brings the community closer to the school and its programs.

7. But our children already know their language. Why still learn it in school?

What we and our children know is the conversational language or the everyday variety used for daily interaction. Success in school depends on the academic and intellectualized language needed to discuss more abstract concepts. According to studies, it takes one to three years to learn the conversational language, but four to seven years to master the academic language under well resourced conditions. It also takes time to develop higher order thinking skills and this depends largely on cognitively demanding curricula especially from Grade 4 onwards.

8. Why use the national language or Filipino in school?

The Philippines is a multilingual and multicultural nation with more than 150 languages. A national language is a powerful resource for inter-ethnic dialogue, political unity, and national identity. To communicate throughout the nation, Filipinos use the national lingua franca called Filipino, also known as Tagalog and Pilipino. They speak it as an L2, and not as an L1. Because languages in the Philippines have similar features, values, and concepts, non-native speakers of Tagalog learn Filipino faster, rather than English.

Many think that Filipino subjects involve rote memorization and are boring. This makes the subject least liked in the basic curriculum. However, the solution is not to remove Filipino as a subject and/or a medium but (a) to broaden its content by incorporating contributions from the regional and local cultures; (b) to make its curriculum more relevant to the thrust of promoting science and mathematics; and (c) to use more interactive, up-to-date teaching strategies.

9. Will the use of Filipino as medium of instruction and as a subject be advantageous to native Tagalog speakers?

It is partially true that native speakers of Tagalog enjoy a small advantage under the present bilingual education set-up in which some subjects are taught in their L1. But this is nothing compared to the overwhelming bias of the present system for English. The current bilingual education policy, as amended by Executive Order No. 210, mandates that at least 70% of curricular time be devoted to English and English-medium subjects. Only the native speakers of English or elite families who speak English at home are benefited by this system. The overwhelming majority of children, including Tagalogs, are greatly disadvantaged by the bilingual education policy because they are forced to sit silently and perform mechanical activities in the classrooms where the language used is one that the children hardly speak or understand.

10. Will the use of the local and regional languages be detrimental to building one nation?

No, it won't. On the contrary, it is the suppression of local languages that may lead to violent conflicts, disunity, and dissension. In the early 1970s, the Bangladeshis fought and won a war against Pakistan over the issue of language. The Lithuanians protested the mandatory use of Russian in schools and later seceded from the former Soviet Union in the early 1990s. The autonomous government of Catalonia enacted the 1983 Catalan Linguistic Normalization Law, which made Spanish and Catalan co-official languages in the

region. This was an act made by the Catalonians against what they perceived to be the Spanish government's attempt at practicing linguistic imperialism in their region.

11. Why use an international language like English in school?

Languages of wider communication like English should be part of the multilingual curriculum of a country. The graduates of this system should find relevance beyond their ethnic and national boundaries. They should be allowed to explore the opportunities that the national and international economies have to offer. Most world knowledge is accessible in English, and so, knowledge of English is certainly useful. It is not true, however, that students will not learn science and mathematics if they do not know English. The ideas of science are not bound by one language and one culture. The Russians, Germans, and French boast of excellent scientific discoveries without using English. The top five performers in the 2003 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), namely Singapore, Republic of Korea, Hong Kong, Chinese Taipei, and Japan, are countries where English is not the first language. In the 2003 TIMSS, the Philippines ranked among the fifth from the bottom in math and science excellence.

12. Will using the mother tongue as language of instruction hinder the learning of a second language like English?

No. Many studies indicate that students first taught to read in their L1, and then later in an L2, outperform those taught to read exclusively in an L2. Learning to read in one's own language provides learners with a solid foundation for learning to read in any L2.

In the Philippines, the Lubuagan Kalinga First Language Experiment was conducted with three experimental class schools implementing MLE and another three control class schools implementing the bilingual education scheme. Already in its tenth year, the project is being carried out by the Summer Institute of Linguistics-Philippines, the Department of Education and the local community of Lubuagan, Kalinga province.

The over-all results of the tests show the experimental class scored nearly 80 percent mastery of the curriculum, while the control class scored just over 50 percent mastery. The results provide crucial evidence that mother tongue instruction strengthens the learning of English and Filipino and does not hinder the learning of content, contrary to the fears and concerns of many parents and educators.

Table 1
Table 1

**Summary Results of Grades 1, 2 and 3 Tests
by Subjects in Lubuagan, SY 2007-2008**

	Grade 1		Grade 2		Grade 3	
	Control	Exper.	Control	Exper.	Control	Exper.
Reading	52.8	75.5	54.9	78.3	53.4	79.2
Math	48.9	82.1	61.9	80.3	49.5	76.2
Filipino	57.1	68.4	51.9	81.4	62.9	70.6
Makabayan	57.9	81.4	60.9	80.8	50.0	74.7
English	52.8	72.4	54.9	62.1	53.4	77.1
Overall	53.5	75.9	56.9	77.8	53.9	75.1

Source: Walter, Dekker and Duguiang (forthcoming)

In addition, there is impressive evidence in other developing countries showing the efficacy of L1. A 2005 World Bank Report revealed that in Mali, between 1994 and 2000, end-of-primary children who began their schooling in the mother tongue scored 32% higher in French tests than children who underwent French-only programs.

In Zambia, between 1999 and 2002, English-language reading and writing scores of children under the bilingual education program (L1 and L2) showed a surprising 360% improvement over the scores of children in non-bilingual programs (L2 only). The reading and writing scores in the Zambian languages also improved by 485%.

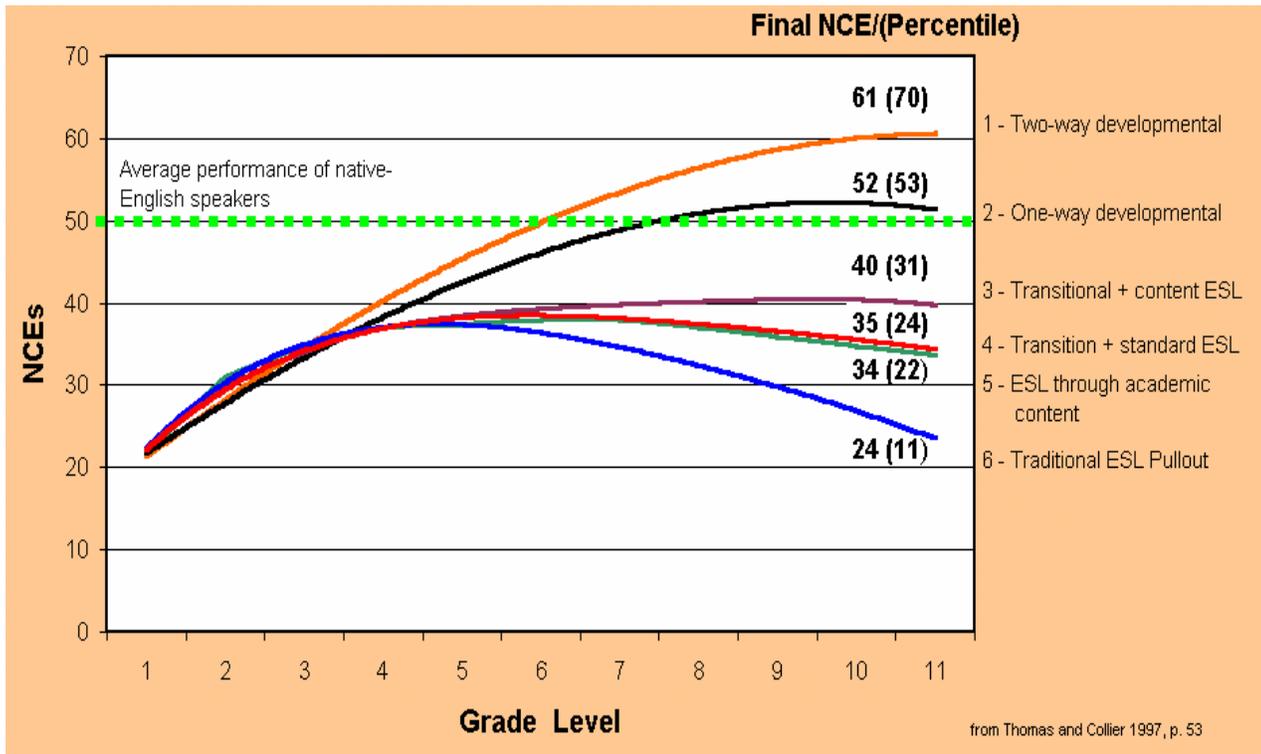
13. Will increasing the time for English or making it the exclusive medium of instruction improve our English?

No. This popular belief is increasingly being proven untrue. Large scale research during the last 30 years has provided compelling evidence that the critical variable in L2 development in children is **not the amount of exposure, but the timing and the manner of exposure.**

For 11 years, the Thomas and Collier study tracked 42,000 children in the US who entered school without knowledge of English. These children had been placed into one of several programs which varied extensively in exposure to English language instruction. To the surprise and consternation of many educators (and parents), children who received ALL of their education in English learned the least amount of English and scored the lowest on national academic achievement tests. This group (programs 5 and 6 in Figure 2 below) finished at the 11th and 22nd percentile rank nationally. They were also the most likely to drop out of school.

Those who were schooled for three years in the mother tongue (programs 3 and 4 in Figure 2 below) scored between the 24th and 31st percentile in the national tests. Children participating in the 6-year mother tongue based programs (programs 1 and 2 in Figure 2 below) scored between 53rd and 70th percentile rank, which were well above the national norm for their native English speaking peers.

Figure 2
Comparison of Achievement on Standardized Tests of English Language learners
(Based on Thomas and Collier, 1997)



(Note: The normal curve equivalent or NCE is the linear transformation of a standardized score in which the mean's scale is 50. It is a measurement of where a student falls on a normal curve, indicating a student's rank compared to other students on the same test.)

14. What is the best way to attain proficiency in English?

For non-native speakers of English, the best way is to teach it as an L2 and to teach it well. This depends on the proficiency of teachers, the availability of adequate models of the language in the learner's social environment, and sufficient reading materials. Simply increasing the time for English will not work. Our MLE model provides that English be taught as a separate subject in the elementary level before it becomes one medium of instruction in the secondary level, together with the national language, Filipino. Carole Benson cautions us: "There is no evidence that the L2 must be a medium of instruction to be learned well; countries like Sweden achieve high levels of L2 competence by teaching it as a subject and preserving the L1 for instruction."

15. Are local languages capable of being used as languages of instruction?

Definitely yes. As far back as 1925, during the American colonial period, the Monroe Commission already recommended the use of the local languages in education.

In 1948, Division Superintendent Dr. Jose Aguilar launched a three year study on the use of Hiligaynon as medium of instruction. After the first year, it became evident that pupils who were taught reading, arithmetic, and social studies in Hiligaynon were far more superior to their counterparts who studied in English. After three years, it was reported that the experimental group had caught up with the control group in knowledge of English after six months of exposure to the language as the medium of instruction.

The long term effects of beginning education in the local languages were also validated: “Students who received two years of L1 instruction were behind the control group at the end of fourth grade in reading, language and mathematics. However, by the end of Grade 6, the results were reversed, and the experimental group was superior in reading, mathematics and social studies.”

Beginning 1957, the local languages, or vernaculars, became the medium of instruction in Grades 1 and 2. This vernacular education policy was abruptly abolished in 1974, when the bilingual education policy was launched by the Marcos government.

Under the leadership of Education Secretary Andrew B. Gonzalez, the Regional Lingua Franca (RLF) Pilot Project was launched by the Department of Education. It began in 1999 in 16 regions, but covered only 32 schools, with 16 belonging to the experimental class and another 16 to the control class. The project utilized one of the three largest lingua francae —Tagalog, Cebuano and Ilocano—as media of instruction in grades 1 and 2. Test results of the project revealed the following for School Years 1999-2000 and 2000-2001.

Table 2
Mean Scores for Grade 1 under RLF project, SY 1999-2000

Subject Area Tested	Experimental Group			Control Group		
	Cebuano N= 183	Ilocano N= 115	Tagalog N=264	Cebuano N=186	Ilocano N=109	Tagalog N=253
Mathematics	16.26	15.26	19.32	14.62	12.96	14.74
Science	16.56	17.02	20.90	12.74	12.94	14.75
Wika at Pagbasa	25.57	25.21	31.53	26.07	26.00	27.83
Sibika	22.01	21.69	28.78	22.76	21.53	24.80

Source: Department of Education

Table 3
Mean Scores for Grades 1 and 2 under RLF project, SY 2000-2001

Subject Area Tested	Grade 1		Grade 2	
	Experimental	Control	Experimental	Control
Mathematics	16.25	12.32	18.31	15.28
Science	14.28	11.43	15.82	14.22
Wika at Pagbasa	21.16	20.84	24.82	23.20
Sibika			15.08	16.32

Source: Department of Education

For the first year of implementation of the RLF project, as shown in Table 2, the experimental group obtained numerically higher scores than the control groups in all learning areas and in all lingua francae, except in *Wika at Pagbasa* in Ilocano and Cebuano. For the second year of implementation, Table 3 shows the experimental classes in both grades performing better in all subject areas, except in English where the Grade 2 pupils in the control classes were exposed to English since Grade 1.

Languages grow and change in response to changes in the physical, social, political, spiritual and economic environments in which they are used. As a language is used for instruction, for example, it intrinsically evolves to adapt to the demands of its users. New objects and concepts become part of the meanings that a people use to communicate. Languages are able to do this through the process of borrowing lexical items or idiomatic expressions, or coining words and expressions. This is a characteristic of human language.

16. Why not use an early exit program where the L1 is used from pre-school up to Grade 3 and English is used as the exclusive medium of instruction thereafter?

Early-exit programs can help but may not be enough. The international experience on the use of L1 and L2 in education, especially in Africa, reveals that:

- Children need at least 12 years to learn their L1.
- Older children and adolescents, not younger children, are better learners of an L2.
- It takes six to eight years of strong L2 teaching before this can be successfully used as a medium of instruction.
- L1 literacy from Grades 1 to 3 helps but is not sufficient to sustain the learning momentum. (See performance of learners under programs 3 and 4 in the Thomas and Collier Study in Figure 2).
- The full benefits of long term L1 instruction (6 to 8 years) will only be evident after the tenth year.
- L1 education, when interrupted, adversely affects the cognitive and academic development of the child.
- The premature use of L2 can lead to low achievement in literacy, mathematics, and science.

The consolidated Gullas, Villafuerte and Del Mar Bill (or the “English-only” MOI Bill) pending in Congress appears to support the use of the local languages and also the national language in education, as it provides that “English, Filipino or the regional/native language may be used as the MOI in all subjects from preschool until Grade III.”

However, the Declaration of Policy section betrays the Bill’s real intention and this is to strengthen English **“as the medium of instruction in all levels of education, from the preschool to the tertiary level.”** The optional use of L1 and the national language as MOI really means that they may not be used at all. _

While many believe that the “English-only” MOI Bill is unconstitutional, most people are not aware that, when enacted into law, this bill will impair the learning process.

17. Don’t we need more English since the language will provide more jobs for our countrymen, such as in the call center industry?

Many believe that this is an extremely shortsighted view because not all Filipinos will become call center agents. The more important concern is how to solve the current mismatch between industry and the educational system. According to former Education Undersecretary Miguel Luz, the consensus among employers is that a high school diploma with its current coverage is inadequate for its purposes because Filipino high school graduates are weak in their ability to communicate, to think logically, and to solve problems. Luz adds: “It (the Gullas Bill) is a dangerous bill, however, because it places a misleading emphasis on English as the medium of learning. As such, **the young learners and their teachers will concentrate on the language, not on Science and Math and literacy (that is more fundamental to learning).**” The best way to learn basic science and math, problem solving skills, and reasoning skills is through the L1.

18. What is a better alternative to the English-only Bill?

A better alternative is House Bill No. 3719, filed by Congressman Magtanggol T. Gunigundo of Valenzuela. The Bill is also known as the Multilingual Education and Literacy Bill, or the Gunigundo Bill, which is far superior to the “English-only” Bill in many respects. Table 4 below presents a comparison between the two bills pending in Congress.

Table 4
Comparisons between the Gunigundo Bill
and the Consolidated “English-only” Bill

	House Bill 3719 (Gunigundo)	Consolidated “English-Only” Bill (Gullas, Villafuerte, Del Mar)
Purpose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To promote literacy and learning by making the native tongue as MOI during the formative years of basic education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To “strengthen” English as the medium of instruction in all levels of education, from the preschool to the tertiary level.
Strategy for learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop literacy and learning in L1 first. • Strong teaching of English and Filipino. • Transfer L1 skills to Filipino and English. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase time for English by making it as primary MOI. • Ban on L1 and Filipino as MOI.
Use of first language (L1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • L1 as primary MOI from pre-school to Grade 6. • Separate subject in elementary. • Separate subject and auxiliary MOI in secondary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optional use as MOI up to Grade 3. • Ban on L1 use thereafter.
Use of English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong teaching of English as a subject in elementary. • MOI and separate subject in secondary together with Filipino. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preferred MOI from pre-school to Grade 3. • Exclusive MOI thereafter.
Use of Filipino	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong teaching of Filipino in elementary. • MOI and separate subject in high school together with English. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optional use of Filipino as MOI up to grade 3. • Ban on Filipino as MOI thereafter except in Filipino as subject.
Transition to Filipino and English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From Grades 4-6, English and Filipino are used as MOI in some parts of the elementary curriculum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No transition. • Introduce English immediately as MOI.
Development of teaching materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, in L1, L2 and L3. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No in L1 and L2. • Yes, only in L3 (English).
Training of teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yes, in L1, L2 and L3. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No in L1 and L2. • Yes, only in L3

In sum, the Gunigundo Bill is based on sound pedagogical principles. It is the result of countless research on the efficacy of MLE throughout the world. And finally, it is pro-L1, pro-national language, and pro-English.

There is also an omnibus education bill pending before the Senate, which was filed by Senator Mar Roxas (Senate Bill No. 2294), with language provisions that are consistent with MLE. The Bill provides that the L1 shall be used as MOI up to Grade 3. It is different from the Gullas Bill, however, because it categorically blames the worsening competencies in English, Science, and Math to the Filipinos' "bias for English as a medium of learning."

The two bills, the Gunigundo Bill and the Roxas Bill, may be harmonized and improved with additional provisions on (1) L1 as the language of testing, (2) the implementation of MLE through school-based or community-based management, and (3) the application of MLE in alternative learning systems.

Another alternative to the Gullas Bill is not to have a law on MOI at all. Instead, schools and communities must be allowed to make their own decisions about the languages of learning.

19. Is it costly to practice MLE?

Contrary to popular belief, L1-based education may actually cost less than a system that is based on L2. If we consider the money wasted on drop-outs, repeaters, and failures, as well as other added costs, studies show that L2-based education systems are more costly than L1 systems. A Guatemalan study, for instance, showed that it is more expensive to produce a grade level passer (in Grades 1 to 6) in a Spanish medium school (\$6,013) than in a Mayan school (\$4,496). In Mali, a World Bank study found that French-only programs cost about 8% less per year than mother-tongue schooling, but the total cost of educating a student through the six-year primary cycle is about 27% more, largely because of the difference in repetition and dropout rates.

One problem often raised in discussions about MLE is that it is too expensive to produce instructional materials in so many languages. This may be true if materials are produced in full color, glossy pages. The successful MLE experiences in Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, Kenya, Ethiopia, Cameroon, and the Philippines indicate that teacher-made cardboard covered books, with simple black-and-white drawings on plain paper, are acceptable and just as effective in early primary education.

In Papua New Guinea, the national government moved the materials development process from expensive metropolitan contexts to the communities themselves. Because of this, the communities were able to produce instructional materials in approximately half of the 800 local languages in the country. The priority should therefore be on building the capacity of communities to build their own materials in their own languages.

20. What do Philippine stakeholders say about MLE?

- **The Department of Education, through Secretary Jesli Lapus:** “We find the bill (the Gunigundo bill) to be consistent with the Basic Education Sector Reform Agenda (BESRA) recommendations and the bridging model proposed by the Bureau of Elementary Education where pupils were found to comprehend better the lessons in class.”
- **The National Economic Development Authority, through NEDA Director General Ralph Recto:** “From the economic and financial vantage points, we believe that adopting this education policy (HB 3719), in the final analysis, is cost-effective. The known learning inefficiencies in basic education in the Philippines (high repetition rate, high drop-out rate, poor retention, and low achievement rate, etc.) are largely attributed to learning difficulties of children in the early grades which are given rise, among others, by the use of a language of learning and teaching that is alien to them.
- **The Philippine Business for Education (PBED), one of the largest associations of businessmen in the country:** “English and Filipino are languages ‘foreign’ to most children and legislating either as medium of instruction will do more harm to an already ailing system of education.”
- **The Department of Foreign Affairs and UNESCO Philippines, through Secretary Alberto Romulo:** “Multilingualism is the order of things in the UN and in the world. The unique richness of the world’s national identities draws on the many traditions that make up different countries and are expressed through local and indigenous languages. UNESCO supports mother tongue instruction as a means of improving educational quality by building upon the knowledge and experience of the learners and teachers.”
- **The Linguistic Society of the Philippines, in a statement released by the 2008 Board of Directors and Officers:** “The Philippines is a context for which multilingual education cannot be more correct. There is substantial information from past research, as well as more recent studies in the Philippines and around the world that prove that the use of the mother tongue (first language) is the best option for literacy and education in multilingual societies such as the Philippines. These studies, including those of the founders of LSP, Bro. Andrew Gonzalez, FSC and Dr. Bonifacio Sibayan, who are themselves pioneers in Philippine linguistic and languages-in-education research, cannot be ignored.”
- **Former Department of Education Secretary Edilberto de Jesus:** “Many countries around the world are indeed investing heavily to promote the learning of English; none of them considers it necessary to adopt English as the MOI. Instead, these countries ensure that their children learn their mother tongue well enough to be able to think in that language. It is then easier for the children to learn a second, third, and even a fourth language.”
- **Former University of the Philippines President and now member of the Presidential Task Force in Education Jose V. Abueva:** “We should use our regional languages as official languages and make use of them as the language of instruction at least in grade school. ‘Imperial Manila’ should be sensitive to our rich and proud linguistic and cultural diversity and identities. ”
- **Dr. Patricia Licuanan, President of Miriam College:** “English therefore, is not the solution to poverty in the country but may actually be part of the cause of poverty. The

use of mother tongue will not only improve the quality of education but may actually be the tool to learning and improving English.”

- **Dr. Michael Tan, Chair of the UP Diliman Department of Anthropology and columnist of the Philippine Daily Inquirer:** “We should allow Filipinos to nurture their own mother language and share this with other Filipinos or even the world. As we begin to appreciate the rhythms and cadences, the humor and the wisdom, in each of our many languages, we just might be able to overcome our parochialism and regionalism and build a nation strong in its multicultural foundations.”
- **Dr. Aurelio Agcaoili, Convener of NAKEM International:** “HB 3719 is a bold admission of a very simple but emancipatory principle of education: that each educand learns better and more productively if he learns what he is supposed to learn in his own language, and thus, in accord with the tools of his own culture.”
- **Dr. Ma. Cynthia Bautista, Dr. Alan B.I. Bernardo and Dr. Dina Ocampo from their UP Centennial Lecture “When reforms do not transform: reflections on Philippine education”:** (T)he DepEd, is the teacher of the nation. The hierarchical obeisance within DepEd has hindered it from performing this role to the fullest. Like all teachers, it must advocate for its students’ best interests. The political motives of those promoting the sole use of English as medium of instruction must be thwarted by the DepEd to protect the Filipino child’s right to quality and relevant education.”

21. Do we have to wait for legislation to implement MLE?

No. The Lubuagan experience, the DepEd Lingua Franca Project, and other existing programs using the local languages tell us that it is already possible to undertake an MLE program without waiting for legislation. Figure 3 below presents the essential features of a successful MLE program.

Figure 3
Essential features of a Strong and Sustained MLE Program
(from Susan Malone, SIL)



The important tasks in formulating a community-based MLE program include the following:

- 1) **Conduct preliminary research.** This involves collecting information that will be used to plan and implement the program, like language attitudes and uses in the community, the community's goals, needs and problems, and resources for the program.
- 2) **Mobilize resources and develop linkages.** This involves encouraging a sense of ownership for the program among the stakeholders (parents, DepEd officials, school heads, NGOs, universities, local government units, church, congressmen) and encouraging people to work together to support the program;
- 3) **Recruit and train staff.** This involves identifying the people that will be needed for the program, identifying the qualifications they will need, recruiting them and providing initial and on-going training for them;
- 4) **Develop a writing system.** This involves identifying the symbols that will form the writing system, or adapting an existing one, which is acceptable to the majority of stakeholders and which promotes ongoing reading and writing in the language.
- 5) **Develop curriculum and instructional materials.** This involves identifying the teaching methods that will be used, developing teacher's guides, and planning the content of the lessons in the local languages;

6) **Develop literature.** This involves writing, illustrating, editing, testing, producing and distributing a variety of graded materials in the local language that are interesting to the readers;

7) **Evaluate the program and document progress.** This involves assessing the program and the learners' progress regularly to find out if the program is serving the needs of the community and if you are achieving the program's objectives. It also involves keeping records of the planning and implementing process and of the learner's progress.

8) **Coordinate the program.** This involves making sure the program runs well. Program coordinating includes obtaining and allocating funds, keeping records, writing reports, and ensuring that staff care is supervised and supported.

**If you are interested in implementing an MLE program in your district,
province or region,
Or if you have other questions about MLE,
please contact us at mother.tongue@yahoo.com,
rnolasco_upmin@yahoo.com or mlephilippines@gmail.com.**

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