Multilingual Education in the Philippines: Possible Strategies for Implementation

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When our children go to school, they go to an alien place. They leave their parents, they leave their gardens, they leave everything that is their way of life. They sit in a classroom and they learn things that have nothing to do with their own place. Later, because they have learned only other things, they reject their own [things].”

What is Multilingual Education?

Multilingual Education is based on and begins from a child’s first language (sometimes called the mother tongue) from which Filipino and English are learned. Children begin their education in a language they understand, their mother tongue, and develop a strong foundation of cognitive development in their mother language.
Multilingual Education

Aims at developing cognitive thinking skills in the language the child knows best and using those skills to help the child master the curriculum and learn Filipino and English.

Deep levels in all three languages (avoiding semilingualism) are the goal for life long learners, allowing participation at all levels of society.
MLE

- maintains local language and culture while providing national language acquisition and instruction
- Cultural based learning enables love and pride in personal and group identity. It allows examination of culture: what is helpful and not helpful, caring and not caring, life sustaining or destroying. It then allows people to create a new culture and grow together as a people. - Toquero
- promotes learners’ integration into the national society without forcing them to “subtract” their linguistic and cultural heritage.
MLE on the International Scene

- Makes Education For All (EFA) attainable in the Philippines.
- “UNESCO supports mother tongue instruction as a means of improving educational quality by building upon the knowledge and experience of the learners and teachers.”
- “UNESCO supports bilingual and/or multilingual education at all levels of education as a means of promoting both social and gender equality and as a key element of linguistically diverse societies.”
What MLE is NOT

- MLE is not changing the language that comes out of the mouth of teachers.
- MLE is not translating either into the L1 what the teacher says in the LOI or vice versa.
- MLE is not reprinting textbooks in the mother tongue.
- MLE is not fast and easy.
- MLE is not a quick fix.
Sound MLE programs

- Take *time* to implement
- Are worth doing *well*
- Value *people* more than time
- Value *process* for development
Mother-tongue based Multilingual Education is based on sound research in cognitive development of bilingualism, multilingualism, and multilingual education:
First Language

Top Floor—balanced bilinguals
Age-appropriate consequences in both languages with positive cognitive consequences.

Second Threshold
Middle floor—less balanced bilinguals
Age-appropriate consequences in one but not two languages—neither positive nor negative consequences.

First Threshold
Lower floor—limited bilinguals
Children have low levels of competence in both languages with likely negative cognitive consequences.

Second Language
Developmental Interdependence Hypothesis (Cummins)

- A child’s second language competence is partly dependent on the level of competence already achieved in the first language. The more developed the first language, the easier it will be to develop the second language.
- From this developed the distinction between surface fluency – BICS, and more complex language needed for the classroom - CALP
BICS and CALP

- Research indicates that BICS – Basic Interpersonal Conversational Skill - everyday conversational ability can be developed in two years, minimally (if society supports the learning)
- CALP – Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency - Complex language ability needed to cope with classroom curriculum takes five to seven years or longer to develop
- Strong BICS ability can hide an inadequate CALP ability thus accounting for low performance in school
Cognitively Demanding

- Greeting someone
- Talking about the weather today
- Making their own books based on their own spoken or written stories
Cognitively Undemanding

- Greeting someone
- Talking about the weather today
- Making their own books based on their own spoken or written stories

Cognitively Demanding

- Reciting nursery rhymes
- Listening to a story or poem on cassette
- Describing something seen or heard on TV
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- Describing something seen or heard on TV

Context Embedded

- Giving instructions about making a painting
- Use simple measuring skills
- Role play
- Dramatic stories
- Solution seeking
- Explaining & justifying

Context Reduced
Cognitively Demanding

- Greeting someone
- Talking about the weather today
- Making their own books based on their own spoken or written stories
- Giving instructions about making a painting
- Use simple measuring skills
- Role play
- Dramatic stories
- Solution seeking
- Explaining & justifying

Cognitively Undemanding

- Reciting nursery rhymes
- Listening to a story or poem on cassette
- Describing something seen or heard on TV
- Listening to the news
- Reading a book and discussing the contents
- Relate new information in a book to existing knowledge
- Discuss ways that language is written, styles and conventions
- Reflecting on feelings
Additive vs Subtractive Education

- Additive education maintains the learners first language while adding other languages. Mother tongue based MLE is additive education.

- Subtractive education bypasses the learners first language and attempts to replace it with another, more prestigious language. Bilingual Education that does not include the mother tongue except as an auxiliary language is subtractive education.
Educational goals for all Filipinos

- Strong linguistic abilities in three languages – the first language, Filipino and English
- Strong cognitive skills in the first language that are transferred to Filipino and English when those languages are well developed
- Creative thinking that can be expressed equally well in any of the learners three (or more) languages
Thomas and Collier graph – school effectiveness for language minority students.

Bilingual Programs - Comparison of Achievement on Standardized Tests

Final NCE

1 - Two-way developmental
2 - One-way developmental
3 - Transitional + content ESL
4 - Transition + standard ESL
5 - ESL through academic content
6 - Traditional ESL Pullout

Average performance of native-English speakers

from Thomas and Collier 1997, p. 53
Weak education
Strong and effective education
So how did we do it in Lubuagan?

Summary of Lubuagan Grade One results,
SY 2007-2008
Summary results of Grade One testing in Lubuagan, SY 2007-2008

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Summary results of the Grade 3 testing in Lubuagan, SY 2007-2008

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So how did we do it in Lubuagan?

- Background study
- Literacy survey
- Linguistic analysis – grammar, phonology, morphophonemetics
- Orthography development and testing
- Culture learning
How can your community do this?

- Partnerships among all stakeholders
- Establish local language committee
- Orthography / linguistic analysis
- Materials production
- Do NOT anticipate that implementing MLE is quick or easy.
What did we do next

- Writer’s workshop
- Steering Committee
- Garner permission/partnership from Dep Ed
- Provide information
- Series of training and production workshops
- Availed of local University – NVSU, Dr. Gloria Baguingan
What stakeholders can do...

- Advocate
- Build partnerships
- Build capacity
  - Invite technical and professional help
  - Writer’s workshops
- Prepare systems for training
  - Understanding methodology
  - Curriculum adaptation
  - Materials production

KEY - PARTNERSHIP
Advocacy

- Inform communities
- Organize communities
- Encourage and support local level Dep Ed
Invite Participation

- Parents
- Communities
- LGUs
- NGOs
- Regional leadership
- Government leaders
- others
Build Capacity

- Equip local communities
- Train
  - Understanding
  - Curriculum adaptation
  - Materials production
- KEY - PARTNERSHIP
Prepare systems

- Sound understanding of MLE theories, principles of second language acquisition
- Curriculum adaptation – resequencing, beginning with the MT, theme based
- Materials production – community committees work with the teachers, local universities, LGU’s
- Teacher training, initial and on-going inservices
- Supervisor training
What we learned about materials and sequencing

- NO translation
- L₁ materials
- L₂ materials
- L₃ materials
- Debatable whether textbooks are needed in the early grades!
- Filipino and English oral language lessons; gradual introduction of reading and writing L₂
Methodology

- Firm foundation in L1 for cognitive development and reading and writing
- Filipino and English as subjects – lots of oral first, then reading
- Subjects taught only in L1 for mastery
Methodology...

- Textbook based L2 acquisition is not helpful
- TPR – Total Physical Response
- TPR storytelling
- Cummins is right, BICS before CALP
- Krashen is right, comprehensible input
What we have learned

- Community perception
- Control class
- Methodology is the differential, not oral language