

# Mother tongue – based multilingual education

[Education](#)



With all the students having a difficulty in coping with their lessons, Mother tongue-based multilingual education may be helpful or not in solving this problem.

## **INTRODUCTION**

One of the changes in the basic curriculum of education brought about by the new K + 12 program is the introduction of Mother Tongue - based Multilingual Education. It will be implemented specifically to kindergarten, grades 1, 2 and 3. Mother Tongue refers to “ first-language-first” education that is, schooling which begins in the mother tongue and transitions to additional languages particularly Filipino and English. It is meant to address the high functional illiteracy of Filipinos where language plays a significant factor. Since the child’s own language enables her/ him to express him/herself easily, then, there is no fear of making mistakes.

It 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 their mother tongue to construct and explain their world, articulate their thoughts and add new concepts to what they already know. With the demand of a high-quality education today, this research paper therefore aims to attain the following objectives:

1. To discuss the purpose of Mother-tongue based multilingual education (MTB-MLE)
2. To state the nature and effects of Mother tongue
3. To tackle as a form of comparing the advantage and disadvantages of MTB-MLE.

4. To prove why Mother Tongue is a helpful or not in solving the problem with students having a difficulty in coping with their lessons.

## **PURPOSE OF MOTHER TONGUE-BASED EDUCATION**

### **Reasons why the Mother Tongue should be used in primary schools**

There are many reasons why it is so important to support the continued learning of the home language or mother tongue. As Clarke (2009) puts it: A strong first language supports the development of a positive self-concept, helps to strengthen the existing relationships within the family and provides the opportunity to continue cognitive development while learning other languages as a second language.

In supporting the first language it is needed: respecting and supporting the home language, planning base on the development of knowledge of language, creating an environment to support natural language learning, observing children talking, finding out what they know in using language, establishing a supportive environment, understanding and appreciating the home literacy and helping parents to understand the value of a strong first or home language (Hassanzadeh et al. 40)

Local and international studies show that the use of the learner's mother tongue or the language used at home is the most effective medium of learning. " It is the easiest way for children to access the unfamiliar world of school learning. (Luistro)" If the use of mother tongue will be discarded in favor of a new unfamiliar language upon the children's entry into grade school, the learners lose interest in their studies because there is a disconnection in the language used at home and in school. It will also be a

loss of confidence in them as learners since their culture and experiences are excluded in classroom interactions.

Strong and well-planned MT-Based MLE programs help students to build a strong educational foundation when they enable and encourage students to develop oral fluency in their first language, introduce reading and writing in their first language, help students to become fluent and confident in first language literacy, and lastly, build their capacity to use their mother tongue for everyday communication and for learning in school.

MTB-MLE help learners build a 'good bridge' when the teachers introduce other languages in oral through a meaningful and non-threatening activities, introduce writing and reading other language by building on what they have learned about the oral teaching of language and their foundation in the first language literacy because reading is like a bicycle, we only need to learn once, and lastly, build fluency and confidence in using oral and written language for everyday communication and for academic learning.

MTB-MLE programs ensure that students achieve educational competencies or standards established by education officials for each grade when the teachers use the mother tongue only for teaching in the early year of grade school, as students are learning basic communication skills in English and the teachers use the mother tongue with English for teaching in later grades, as students gain fluency and confidence in using the school language for learning academic concepts. (Malone 3-4)

**Points and ideas about Mother Tongue-based Education**

Language is one of the valuable gifts which have been passed to children. The first language is significant and builds the basis for all later language progresses. Parents, family members and early childhood professionals have very important role on the development and maintenance of the first language. Studies shows that knowing one language can assist the child to comprehend how other languages work. First or home language is particularly important for the child' s development of a positive self-concept and well-being.

Children who have the chance to maintain their first language can extend their cognitive development, while learning English [this also can be correct with other languages including Turkish] as a second language. Their level of competence in the second language has relationship to the level of competence they have achieved in their first language. Children with a sound knowledge of their first language will be able to transfer skills from one language to another. Early childhood professionals can play a vital role in the maintenance of children' s first languages.

They can provide opportunities for children to use their mother tongue in early childhood settings and at school and encourage the parents to use the mother tongue at home in order to provide a good foundation for learning English. It is important to reassure parents that children will learn English as a second language from English speakers (Clarke). The mother tongue opens the door, including its own grammar, to all grammars, in which it awakens the potential for universal grammar that lies within all of us. It is the valuable asset people bring to the task of language learning. For this reason, the

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mother tongue is the master key to foreign languages, the tool which gives us the fastest, surest, most precise, and most complete means of accessing a foreign language.

Successful learners capitalize on the vast amount of linguistic skills and world knowledge they have accumulated via the mother tongue. For the beginner, becoming aware of meanings automatically involves connecting them with the mother tongue - until the FL has established an ever-more complex network for itself. The foreign language learner must build upon existing skills and knowledge acquired in and through the mother tongue. Monolingual lessons without the help of the mother tongue are extrinsically possible; however, monolingual learning is an intrinsic impossibility.

No one can simply turn off what they already know. It is postulated that the mother tongue is 'silently' present in beginners, even when lessons are kept monolingual. Just as we build upon our abilities to vocalize, to read and to write, all of which have been developed via our mother tongue, so too we are unable to switch off our knowledge of the world, again acquired through the mother tongue. With the emergence of research into the role of form-focused instruction, teacher-researchers have also begun to acknowledge the mother tongue as a legitimate tool with the potential to facilitate learning mainly in accuracy-based tasks (Ferrer). "You can banish the MT from the classroom, but you cannot banish it from the pupils' heads" (Butzkamm p. 31).

We need to associate the new with the old. To exclude MT links would deprive us of the richest source for building cross-linguistic networks. The well-directed and informative use of lexical and syntactic parallels between

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the mother tongue and foreign languages taught in schools promotes retention and deepens the understanding of the historical affinity of language and culture (Butzkamm, 2003). The relationship between languages should be clearly established and not ignored or suppressed. The non-use of the MT, however, seriously constrains what can be said and read. MT will save learners from a feeling of frustration which will eventually lead them to avoid all topics of personal interest. The measured and well-calculated contribution of the mother tongue can allow pupils to tackle more difficult texts sooner (Hassanzadeh et al. 40-42).

### **TARGET LEARNERS OF MOTHER TONGUE-BASED EDUCATION**

Basically, MTB-MLE targets students who are having a difficulty in understanding other languages rather than their own language which is their first language. Most of these students are primarily entering kindergarten and first three years of grade school. It's very common that children will lack interest in going to school once they didn't understand their lessons at school.

Since, their parents are from different places around the country or around the world, it's expected them to speak and understand what they learn from their parents. Not all students can understand English or other languages. At the start of classes, many will have a hard time in coping up with the lessons since they're having a difficulty in understanding what the teachers are saying.

MTB-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 (Nolasco 3).

## **EFFECTS OF MOTHER TONGUE-BASED EDUCATION TO STUDENTS**

### **Advantages**

In Mother Tongue-based Multilingual Education, students are taught over a period of time in their native language and English is treated as a second language, taught side by side and only when the student is believed to have attained proficiency in native language, so that he can master English easily. Technically and simply speaking, multilingual education is any educational system that favors education in more than one language. According to its proponents, the most important benefit of this system is that a student, who is from a non-English speaking background, can easily learn English, owing to his language development, in his native language as well as in English language.

And isn't it good to be proficient in various languages? What problem does it create if a student is well conversant in English and in his mother tongue? Besides that, a child who is exposed to multiple languages will be able to develop a better sense of appreciating various cultures and understanding societies. After all, now we're living in a global world and so being multilingual is always an asset in firms and business works.



Added to these advantages the child can easily use his native language in groups and he won't feel ashamed of it. In case, he is just aware of one language, he may face problems of hesitation in expressing himself. Its beautiful form of education as the minority speakers can learn English even while being able to strengthen their cultural bonds by being proficient in their mother tongue. (Pandey)

### **Disadvantages**

- Unsuccessful Attempt at Integration into Society

Multilingual education was deemed necessary since it was supposed to help integrate the children of immigrants and minorities into society. The system of multilingual education demanded separate teachers and classrooms and believed in gradual integration into society by allowing children to receive education in their native language for a period of three or more years.

Proponents of a single medium of instruction opposed bilingual education, since they believed that separate teachers and classrooms would widen the already existing gap between citizens and immigrants. They further proposed that encouraging children to interact within their own community for a period of three years, would delay the process of adjusting to the ways of life in a new country.

- School Dropout Rates

Over the years, the dropout rate in various schools across North America has reduced significantly. The medium of instruction in the above-mentioned schools is English. However, there has been no reduction in the dropout rates for schools offering multilingual education. Most people feel that a <https://assignbuster.com/mother-tongue-based-multilingual-education/>

dropout rate of 35% doesn't justify the costs involved in providing this form of education.

- Unavailability of Teachers

Multilingual education requires a number of trained teachers who are proficient in both English and their native language, assuming that English is one of the mediums of instruction. There is a wide gap between the demand and the supply for teachers, who are both confident and capable of handling the intense pressure associated with managing a class of students requiring special attention.

- Lack of Classrooms

There is a dearth of classrooms that can accommodate students, who require instructions in both English and their native language. Students are expected to sit together in one class regardless of their age and the variations in the required level of education. This poses a great problem for teachers, who, in addition to being well versed in two languages, have to exhibit a certain level of comfort in handling different levels of education, simultaneously.

- Lack of Funds

The mentioned issues bring us to the tip of the problem: lack of funds to promote multilingual education.

- Bilingual Education Is Costly

Education becomes unobtainable, when a language that is not dominant in nature is to be taught. The scenario becomes economically feasible, when multiple languages commonly used, are taught. An education system ought

to be aware that the noble sap of education and literacy lies in understanding the language in which knowledge is imparted. The content and context of the subject becomes oblivious, if the student is not well acquainted with the language employed (Iyer).

## **CONCLUSION**

This paper presents the benefits of a Mother Tongue-based Multilingual Education. MTB-MLE is a very helpful program to those students who use their first language in everyday life. It is used to also be a bridge or a mediator to learn other languages as well. Although it has some disadvantage in our money, it will ensure us that our children, future children and relatives will understand and learn very well the lesson being taught in school. Thus, Mother Tongue-based education is challenging in terms of planning, implementing and sustaining MTB-MLE programs in multiple language communities especially in multi-lingual countries lacking extensive financial resources.