

The Discontinued Mother Tongue as Medium of Instruction in Elementary Level: Insights from the Primary Teachers

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Abstract

Language is an essential educational tool that shapes students' learning and interactions in the educational settings. In Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) language policy shifted from mother tongue to English and Filipino as mediums of instruction. This study used a phenomenological research design based on Moustakas' methodology to investigate how primary school teachers in Lambayong, Sultan Kudarat, have responded to the language policy shift in primary grades with the use of in-depth and in a semi-structured interview questionnaire. The data gathered was analyzed through thematic coding to examine the data. Findings revealed that while some teachers recognized the long-term benefits of early exposure to national and

global languages, they encountered challenges in adjusting their teaching strategies, which affected both their instructional efficiency and student performance. Concludingly, the transition in language policy resulted language barriers not only in the classroom but also within the broader educational community. Teachers also recognized the broader implications of discontinuing mother tongue instruction, particularly its effects on teaching practices. To address these issues, teachers suggested implementing a gradual bilingual transition program that integrates mother tongue support while progressively introducing Filipino and English as the primary languages of instruction.

Keywords: language policy, mother tongue, primary education, DepEd, Philippines, teacher experiences, language transition, bilingual education, phenomenological research

Introduction

Language is continually evolving, and so are the ways the learners acquire it. Mother tongue is often used in homes, daily conversations with family, friends, and colleagues, and the center of the community, while English is frequently kept for academic purposes and other formal settings. In multilingual classrooms, some educators question if this approach genuinely reduces learning gaps such as skills in reading, writing and speaking or if it unintentionally worsens these learning barriers. As language policies shift over time in

search of the best solution to these learning gaps, the question remains—what language best serves young learners in a world of ever-changing linguistic landscapes?

Globally, researchers have emphasized the importance that is brought about by use of mother tongue as a communication mode in learning in early year's education. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) indicated that language teaching must begin with using one's mother tongue at such a key time in one's education (UNESCO, 2016). In addition, the report by UNESCO highlights that children's confidence, comprehension and academic performance is enhanced when instructed by mother tongue.

Moreover, linguistic diversity has been identified as one of the factors contributing to low reading achievements (Mkandawire, 2022). This was emphasized by Nyimbili and Mwanza (2021) who claimed that the reason Zambia's literacy levels have remained low is because the country's language policy places a strong emphasis on one language of instruction while simultaneously presenting other languages in the region as a problem.

In Philippines, Department of Education D.O. 31, series 2012, the role of the students' Mother Tongue changed and was limited to using it as Medium of Instruction (MOI) for Grades 1–3. The D.O. also specified that English or Filipino will be used in Grades 4–10, and that these languages will be used as MOI for teaching English or Filipino in Grades 1–10 (DepEd, 2012). Years later of its implementation, the language policy shifted from MTB-MLE to Filipino and English as media of instruction in the primary grades (Kindergarten to Grades 1-3). Republic Act No. 12027, which discontinues the use of the mother tongue as the main medium of teaching and learning from Kindergarten through Grade 3, is a dramatic change in the nation's language policy.

The termination of mother tongue-based multilingual education (MTB-MLE) in primary grades is still not well understood, despite the fact that its significance has been discussed extensively. There is a need to represent the range of teacher perspectives, adaptation strategies, and pedagogical implications of this language policy change. This study bridged the gap by applying Moustakas' phenomenological research approach, which offers a profound, experience-based understanding of how primary grade teachers respond to the transition of the language policy particularly in multilingual settings like Lambayong, Sultan Kudarat.

This study called for the urgent need of development of alternative program that carefully incorporates the native languages of Hiligaynon, Ilocano, and Maguindanaon while progressively introducing English and Filipino as medium of instructions is critically needed. Bridging the gap between students' linguistic backgrounds and the language of instruction is essential given the increasing need for English proficiency in education and beyond. This study aimed to design an alternative program that improves learners' comprehension skills and learning abilities in subjects taught in both Filipino and English. Through the use of focused teaching techniques that expand on students' prior language proficiency, this approach ensures a smoother transition to English while encouraging greater comprehension and active participation in the educational setting.

Research Questions

The discontinuation of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction in the primary grades is a growing concern, particularly in multilingual contexts like Lambayong, Sultan Kudarat. This change raised important questions about its impact on teaching and learning. Specifically, it sought to address the following questions:

1. What is the lifeworld of the primary teachers in discontinuing the use of the Mother Tongue as a Medium of Instruction under the K-12 program?
2. What is the context of the lived experiences of the primary teachers in discontinuing the use of the Mother Tongue as a Medium of Instruction under the K-12 program?
3. How do teachers view the implications of Mother Tongue discontinuation as a medium of instruction in the primary years of participants?
4. What alternative program can be implemented to enhance the language proficiency of students?

Methodology

This study utilized Qualitative Transcendental Phenomenology research design. Transcendental phenomenology by Creswell (2007) is regarded as the best method for carrying out a detailed examination of participants' lived experiences. Phenomenology has approached the phenomenon at first instance, fresh as it could be, that also 'epoché', at length which "relegates the removal of presumptions" by the researcher himself (Creswell, 2006 & Moustakas, 1994). This would mean that the personal claim, belief, and assumptions about the phenomenon by the researcher were invalidated, disregarded, and unrecognized in constructing the underlying essences.

This study explored how teachers have responded to the shift away from teaching in the mother tongue, and how this policy shift has impacted their professional lives as well as the educational experience of their students through qualitative in-depth semi-structured interviews. This study embarked on a journey with the individual and professional to better understand the broader educational impacts of such a policy change in terms of how it would impact the development of the language and teaching practice of the individual within the multilingual classroom.

Locale of the Study

The research site was in the Lambayong District. It is a part of the municipality of Sultan Kudarat, in the Philippines. The district includes various primary schools. This study sought to understand the impact of discontinuing the use of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) on instruction at the primary grade levels within educational settings within the Lambayong District.

Research Participants

The participants in this study were the primary grade teachers from the public school within Lambayong District who have taught and serviced for at least five years in primary education with direct experience

firsthand of seeing a shift from Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education, teaching in Filipino, and in English. In these grades Kindergarten to Grades 1-3, there will be a transition from the dominance of the learner's first language to English and Filipino DepEd (2023). The primary grade teachers were from Madanding Elementary School and Kabulakan Elementary School, for the school year 2024-2025.

Inclusion criteria in the study were: (a) currently employed as a primary teacher in Lambayong District; (b) at least five years of teaching experience as a primary grade teacher; (c) previously implemented MTB-MLE program in their classrooms, and must have direct experience using mother tongue as a medium of instruction; (d) willing to contribute to the study; and (e) can speak in English, Filipino, or mother tongue.

It involved the relevance of participants to the research question, differences in background and experiences, accessibility and availability, the richness of the information availed, as well as ethical issues entailed such as seeking prior consent from participants and honoring their right to confidentiality by keeping whatever is said secret (Yin, 2018; Stake, 2005; Creswell, 2013; Merriam, 2009).

Data Analysis

The qualitative research was analyzed through a combination of Moustakas's phenomenological approach with the thematic framework of Braun and Clarke (2006) for the research to scientifically provide a solution. On this horizontal basis, in applying the Moustakas' method, equally weighted important statements should reveal an observation of participant experience regarding discontinuation from MTB-MLE.

Transcription of interviews ensured that the data is very accurate and complete. Proceeding with Braun and Clarke's systematic steps comprised familiarization with the data, coding, searching for themes, reviewing, defining, and naming them. In this way, the method integrated both approaches for comprehensive, structured data analysis leading to the emergence of themes in line with the participants' insights. The data were coded thematically to identify recurring patterns and themes among the responses of participants.

This involved repeated reading and rereading of the transcript to obtain a deeper sense of the lived experiences among primary teachers in Lambayong District. This further strengthened the validity of the findings through critical feedback and alternative perspectives from debriefers from different institutions. The process was documented in detail to provide transparency and facilitate the reproducibility of the analysis. Overall, this multi-faceted approach to data analysis provided a comprehensive understanding of the implications and insights related to the discontinuation of MTB-MLE in the educational context.

Results and Discussion

Fourteen (14) relevant themes emerged from the experiences of the primary teachers in the discontinuation of the use of Mother Tongue as a Medium of Instruction. These themes reveal the challenges and strategies involved in discontinuing the use of the Mother Tongue as a medium of instruction. The themes were organized according to the study's three Statements of the Problem and are as follows:

The Relevant Themes on the Lifeworld of the Primary Teachers in Discontinuing the Use of Mother Tongue as a Medium of Instruction under the K-12 program:

Relevant theme 1: Teaching and Pedagogical Experience

The Relevant theme "Teaching and Pedagogical Experience" showcases the flexibility, commitment, and fortitude of the primary school teachers who deal with changing language policies and career transitions. Most of the teacher-participants talked about their experiences switching from private to public schools, demonstrating their adaptability to various learning settings.

As suggested by Otwinowska (2017), English teachers who benefit from their previous experience as multilingual language learners and/or are trained in accordance to multilingual pedagogies will become more successful in their teaching practices. Teacher-participants' prior experiences helped them to face the sudden change in the language policy. Moreover, Vygotsky's theory emphasizes the need of guided learning and teamwork as seen by the way teachers adapt their teaching strategies to assist students in multilingual classrooms. This reinforces the idea that teachers are not just knowledge providers but also facilitators who scaffold learning to match students' needs.

Thus, the pedagogical experiences of teachers serve as dynamic responses to the evolving socio-cultural landscape of education, highlighting the need for continuous professional development and institutional support to sustain effective teaching practices.

Relevant theme 2: Teacher-language Proficiency Issues

This theme highlights the challenges that teacher-participants encounter when ask to use the learners' mother tongues. This is because they are not well prepared and trained in a multilingual education. Linguistic barriers make it difficult for many teachers to teach effectively, especially in multilingual classrooms where pupils speak a variety of native languages, including Hiligaynon, Maguindanaoan, and Ilokano.

Tsang (2017) argued that teachers' general proficiency plays a substantial role in the classroom but only to a certain extent: Once a certain proficiency threshold is met, other factors such as teachers' pedagogical skills and personality play a more vital role. This emphasizes the teachers' language proficiency especially in the English language unlocks other factors in the language learning of the learning. Others associate effective teaching in language proficiency to the "native-like" mastery of the English language.

However, many have argued that native-like mastery of the English language is not necessary for teaching it well (Canagarajah, 1999; Richards, 2017). Richards (2017) argued that most English teachers around the world are not native speakers and "do not have nor need native-like ability to teach well. They only need trainings and essential educational tools to make language teaching and learning effective for students.

This illustrates how the lack of proficiency in a required language forces teachers to seek external help, delaying instruction and impacting classroom efficiency. With this information, the study reveals that there is a need for further investigation to better the teacher training targeted, especially in the preparation of teaching students with minimal exposure to English. It can also be compared to learning a foreign language as it would be tough for learners to understand meaning without first having something to compare them to (Wach & Monroy, 2020).

Relevant theme 3: Challenges in Instruction

This relevant theme showcases the different challenges encountered by the teacher-participants. This is due to the following factors like the lack of training that is in line with the language policy, language barriers in the classroom, and difficulties incorporating contemporary teaching methods and resources. Additionally, sudden changes in language policy makes the teacher-participants confused and frustrated, making it harder for them to successfully and efficiently deliver lessons to the learners.

Bui & Nguyen (2015) suggested that when providing English education to minority students, it is better to apply a first-language-based education as a transition by which the students are able to gradually transit to second and other languages in their schooling progress. Translanguaging is an alternative pedagogical strategy that permits to use both L1 of the learners and English as target language to find out the resources to comprehend the content (Chaka, 2024; Motaung, 2024). The students can expand their linguistic repertoire and content knowledge through the L1 materials, resulting in a favorable effect on education.

These issues show how urgently needed for coordinated training, easily accessible learning resources, and the application of clear language policies for the benefit both instructors and students.

Relevant theme 4: Student Engagement with Language Use

The theme highlights the challenges that learners encounter in gaining English language competency because of their lack of exposure, insecurity, and fear of making mistakes. This is because many learners only hear English language in the classroom, they participate passively, reluctant to ask questions, and find it difficult to articulate their ideas in the Filipino and English language. Learners tend to be more comfortable expressing their thoughts and converse using their mother tongue. As a result, when forced to utilize English or Filipino in academic contexts, learners struggle with understanding, vocabulary retention, and fluency.

Furthermore, the shift in language policy has also highlighted learners' struggle with vocabulary and comprehension. Vygotsky (1978; 1986) puts forward the argument that learning of the child begins with interaction with other people. Then the child internalizes and processes the information and knowledge gained from the communication with others people.

Relevant theme 5: Adaptation to Policy Changes

Many teachers have challenges due to a lack of resources and training, which forces them to come up with their own ways to communicate with their learners. In order to cope with these challenges, teachers need to improve comprehension, teachers must modify their teaching strategies, ask parents and other learners for help in translating, and even learn the learners' mother tongue.

This showcases the challenges and adjustments that the primary grade teachers face following the shift in the language policy. Cummins (1979; 2000) claims that it takes at least two years to acquire basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) in an additional language, although perhaps less when there is more exposure to the target language, while it takes seven years to master cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). It may take years for learners' language proficiency in the Filipino and English to happen with proper guidance and exposure.

Notwithstanding, education planners and policymakers confront a myriad of practical challenges in this regard: language choice in multilingual contexts, the optimal length of mother tongue instruction, codifying unwritten or non-standardized language, developing (in some cases creating) mother tongue curricular materials, and teacher development (UNESCO IIEP, 2018).

The Relevant Themes on context of the lived experiences of the primary teachers in discontinuing the use of the Mother Tongue as a Medium of Instruction under the K-12 program

Relevant Theme 1: Limited Instructional Support for Transition

The theme emphasizes the vital challenges teachers face due to the absence of appropriate learning materials, inadequate training, and limited multimedia resources. Many teachers struggle with inadequate or out-of-date teaching resources, which forces them to invest more time in producing their own materials. This caused teachers to additional workload on the part of the teacher which hinders them to smoothly deliver lessons to the learners.

A well-designed curriculum and instructional materials tailored to learners' needs can enhance motivation and facilitate language acquisition (Solikhah, 2023). This highlights how teachers are left unprepared for policy shifts, as they lack both proper training and essential teaching aids.

Moreover, by utilizing technological tools, language learners can personalize learning experiences according to their strengths and limitations, leading to maximum results (Mishra et al., 2020). Since educators are encouraged to steer away from traditional teaching methods and prioritize approaches in line with the 21st-century learning paradigm (Nahar et al., 2021), it will be significant to figure out ESL teachers' perspectives on the use of digital tools in English language classrooms. Therefore, students' exposure to the new language policy is limited by the lack of digital and print learning resources, which slows down their language development and academic advancement in general.

Relevant Theme 2: Bridging School-Community Gaps

This theme highlights the difficulties faced by the community members, educators, and parents to adjust to the language policy. Unfamiliar languages make it difficult for many parents to help their kids with their schooling, which lowers parental involvement and makes it harder for the community and teachers to work together, collaboratively.

Vygotsky (1978) also argues that cognitive development is carried out via social interactions. He states that the learning process will continue more effectively as a result of interactions students engage in with peers that are more knowledgeable or adults (e.g., teacher, family). The individual learns more effectively as a result of an interaction with more knowledgeable peers or adults.

In addition, Mkandawire (2015) stressed the importance of teachers' communication tactics reflecting learners' cultural backgrounds. Teachers can adapt or combine teachings to reflect the cultural diversity of the learners in each class. In classroom, TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) instructors may need to consider how this power distance affects student-teacher interactions, student

participation, and promoting a supportive and inclusive learning environment (Alnwailem et al., 2021). Learners' surroundings can have a great impact on his/her language learning and acquisition.

Relevant Theme 3: Teacher Growth Amid Shift

Teachers' difficulties and chances for development as they adapt to the new language policy are highlighted in this theme. Although they acknowledge the need for ongoing professional development to improve their teaching abilities and language competency, many educators struggle because of inadequate training, a lack of learning resources, and growing workloads. Teachers have been forced by the shift to experiment with new approaches, and become more flexible while managing multilingual classrooms. But in the absence of sufficient institutional support, educators can experience burnout and find it challenging to carry out the policy.

Regarding teacher preparation, teacher training is largely theoretical and lacks practical focus on supporting the realities of the classroom, such as more multilingual and ethnically diverse groups, as access schooling becomes more universal (Opoku-Amankwa et al., 2015; Erling et al., 2016). The increased demand for and provision of English – whether as a subject or as the Medium of Instruction – is not usually accompanied by language enhancement or appropriate training (Erling et al., 2016). This is especially challenging for primary school teachers who are not necessarily language specialists but are expected to teach across a range of subjects (Erling et al., 2016).

Although subject-based English teaching materials may be increasingly communicative in their approach, teachers are often more comfortable relying on more familiar, traditional methods in exploiting them (Opoku-Amankwa et al., 2015; Erling et al., 2016). The study reveals that there is a need for further investigation to better the teacher training targeted, especially in the preparation of teaching students with minimal exposure to English.

Relevant Themes on teachers view the implications of Mother Tongue discontinuation as a medium of instruction in the primary years

Relevant Theme 1: Adapting to Educational Shifts

Language policy frequent changes disrupt the language proficiency, literacy development and overall academic performance of the learners. It is challenging for learners to become fluent in any one language because of the frequent changes, which force them to relearn vocabulary, grammar, and reading skills in other languages. Many teachers understand that language disorientation, challenges with the literacy transition, and lack of exposure to Filipino and English have a negative impact on students' learning, even though some perceive advantages in preparing pupils for multilingual communication.

Implicit in this idea is a recognition that the mother tongue may be mobilized in the teaching of additional languages, such as English, as opposed to being relegated to convert classroom teaching practice used when pupils do not understand (Erling et al., 2016). Using both languages of learning alongside each other particularly in the transition phase is seen as vital to making the necessary connections between them so as to facilitate transfer of knowledge and skills from one language to the other, as well as to maintain ongoing learning during the move from mother tongue to English as Medium of Instruction (Clegg & Simpson, 2016).

Relevant Theme 2: Shifting Policies, Changing Methods

The theme "Impact of Policy Shift on Teaching Practices" emphasizes the significant adjustments teacher-participants have had to make in response to changes in the language policy. Educators have been required to reteach fundamental skills like writing and reading, modify instructional resources, and address diverse linguistic backgrounds within their classrooms. While some teachers find that shifting to Filipino and English simplifies instruction, others experience increased workloads, translation difficulties, and the need to develop multilingual competence to support students' language learning effectively.

Haukas (2016) observed that "learning multiple languages is best enhanced when learners are encouraged to become aware of and use their pre-existing linguistic and language learning knowledge and therefore, in the school setting, the language teacher is the key facilitator of learner's multilingualism. Likewise, the theories involved are to help students understand the language rules and functions by comparing its use in both social interactions and academic language as well as the proficiency of the first language supporting the acquisition of the second language (Cummins, 1999). The interdependence hypothesis can be observed by working the languages under the common underlying proficiency of the two languages where it is possible to transfer cognitive/academic or literacy-related proficiency (Cummins, 1981 in Cummins, 2005).

Relevant Theme 3: Cultural Identity in Transition

This theme emphasizes how self-expression, social interactions and linguistic identities of the learners have been impacted by the language policy shift. The use of the mother tongue has decreased as a result of the shift in education toward Filipino and English. Although, this change promotes a more cohesive system of communication, it also causes a progressive decline in mother tongue retention in the classroom. However, because learners are no longer singled out for speaking their native language differently, there is a noticeable positive impact: a decrease in language-based bullying.

Since for language learning, student-student interaction and student teacher interaction is central, Vygotskian model of teaching and learning supports the interactive and cooperative learning and rejects teacher-centered teaching and learning. It suggests significant and fruitful collaborative strategies which engage both students and teachers with socio-cultural norms, values and interactions (Vygotsky, 1978; 1986; Blake & Pope, 2008).

Relevant Themes on Alternative Program can be Implemented to Enhance the Language Proficiency of Students

Relevant Theme 1: Gaps in Language Program Implementation

This theme highlights the challenges faced by teachers and learners due to unclear guidelines, insufficient learning resources, and inadequate training brought by the frequent language policy change. The transition in language policy has led to difficulties in effective teaching and quality language learning, particularly in English instruction where learners have less exposure with. The situation is made worse by unequal access to educational resources, which leads to learning gaps among students according to their social background. Language acquisition is nevertheless uneven and challenging to maintain without systematic implementation and ongoing instructor support.

Consequently, at the micro level, there are a number of challenges in using English as Medium of Instruction. For example, teachers and students not sharing a language, school communities being diverse, and students not sharing a language. This can occur particularly in urban contexts or when there is a mismatch between the state language which serves as the Medium of Instruction in government primary schools and the languages that many children use at home (Erling et al., 2016). Moreover, when students are required to learn in a language that differs from their home language, it is widely assumed to lead to difficulties in comprehension and engagement in the classroom (Erling et al., 2017; Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 2023).

Relevant Theme 2: Strategies for Improving Language Proficiency

The theme highlights the importance of structured and engaging language learning methods to enhance students' comprehension and communication skills. Teachers stress the importance of interactive teaching methods, smooth language transitions, more exposure to English and Filipino, and appropriate teaching resources. Without these essential elements, students encounter linguistic barriers that impede their academic development and struggle with learning English. According to the findings, a combination of interactive teaching methods, gradual exposure to new languages, and structured support through learning materials and teacher training are necessary for effective language learning.

Traditional teaching methods are deemed to be less successful in capturing students' interest, vis-a-vis causing a decrease in learning engagement (Patra et al., 2022). The lack of innovative and imaginative approaches poses a notable challenge in maintaining students' active involvement in class (Kamarulzaman et al., 2018). Clearly, integrating educational technology into both in- and out-of-class has allowed English language learning to become more relevant since a population well-versed in technology is important for a country's sustainable and successful development.

On the other hand, Vygotsky (1978; 1986) puts forward the argument that learning of the child begins with interaction with other people. Then the child internalizes and processes the information and knowledge gained from the communication with others people. The researcher further argues that the improvement brought about by the ZPD occurs in ways, that is, when the child gains a greater range of activity, using not only the tools available, but also finding and inventing some new tools that can be useful in solving the problems and planning future tasks (Vygotsky, 1978).

Lastly, The CALP is to help children learn the target language while being able to converse in daily conversations and are able to use the language in an academic setting (Cummins, 1976 in Cummins, 2000). There is a good evidence base to suggest that children acquire literacy most efficiently in the language they know best, and that using children's home language in early schooling is critical for cognitive development (Cummins, 2000; Kosonen, 2005).

Relevant Theme 3: Effective Interventions for Language Proficiency

This theme emphasizes the different strategies that support learners in developing language competency in both Filipino and English languages. These interventions include the utilization of multimedia materials in teaching and learning process, verbal performance tasks of the learners, after-school reading support, multilingual translation, and ongoing teacher training. Teachers suggest that in order to assist children become more proficient in the Filipino and English language and to cope with multilingual education, they must receive consistent exposure to the language and receive organized reinforcement.

Epps and Arkoh (2019) found that using translanguaging in language education can increase language learners' motivation and engagement, enhance their language skills, and contribute to preserving the language and culture. Likewise, Cummins (2000) posits that there is a good evidence base to suggest that children acquire literacy most efficiently in the language they know best, and that using children's home language in early schooling is critical for cognitive development.

In addition, according to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory (SCT), language is an instrument that facilitates social interaction, which is crucial to language development (Vygotsky, 1978). It presents the claim that social interaction is where a child's learning starts. The knowledge and information acquired from interacting with others are then internalized and processed by the children. The information and knowledge acquired are the result of this dialectical process of communal and individual learning.

In the end, the increased demand for and provision of English – whether as a subject or as the Medium of Instruction – is not usually accompanied by language enhancement or appropriate training (Erling et al., 2016). This is especially challenging for primary school teachers who are not necessarily language specialists but are expected to teach across a range of subjects (Erling et al., 2016). Although subject-based English teaching materials may be increasingly communicative in their approach, teachers are often more comfortable relying on more familiar, traditional methods in exploiting them (Opoku-Amankwa et al., 2015; Erling et al., 2016).

Conclusion

The results of the study concluded that primary school teachers had major difficulties with the discontinuation of the use of mother tongue as the medium of instruction and learning. Teachers require to deal with growing workloads, improve learner comprehension, and deliver lectures in an efficient manner. Despite of the obstacles they encountered, primary school teachers showed resiliency by implementing a range of teaching strategies to ease the shift and enhance student learning. However, the lack of sufficient

training, instructional materials, and institutional support significantly hindered their ability to implement the new language policy seamlessly.

Furthermore, the transition in language policy resulted language barriers not only in the classroom but also within the broader educational community. Many learners initially struggled to participate actively in lessons due to unfamiliarity with Filipino and English language, which affected their engagement and overall learning experience. Concerns concerning the long-term effects on learners' cultural and linguistic identities also arose from the decreased usage of the mother tongue in educational contexts. The communication gap between schools and communities further exacerbated these challenges, as parents found it difficult to support their children's learning in a language, they were not fully proficient in.

Teachers also recognized the broader implications of discontinuing mother tongue instruction, particularly its effects on teaching practices of the primary grade teachers and the learners' learning outcomes. Teachers find it challenging to successfully assist the students' learning since many teachers lacked proficiency in the recently shifted language policies. Consequently, many teachers had to develop their own strategies to bridge language gaps and ensure effective learning for the students, frequently relying on peer-assisted translation, multimedia resources, and modified teaching strategies and techniques.

Teachers suggested a number of strategies to improve language proficiencies and aid in students' learning in order to overcome the various obstacles that hinders effective learning of the learners. Structured reading programs, multimedia-based activities, peer-assisted translation, and gradual linguistic shifts were incorporated in the teachers' strategies to better facilitate the language policy transition. Additionally, schools implemented interactive language-learning methods such as translations to the mother tongue and provided bilingual materials to raise the learners interest and fluency in both English and Filipino languages. Nevertheless, despite their advantages, these interventions were not applied consistently because of differences in training opportunities and resource availability.

Overall, the study emphasizes how important it is to provide teachers and learners with thorough and ongoing instructional support as they face transition from mother tongue instruction to English and Filipino as the medium of instruction. Effective implementation of the language policy requires well-structured training programs, adequate learning materials, and clear guidelines to ensure consistency across educational institutions. Furthermore, fostering an inclusive learning environment where learners can be multilingually proficient while preserving their cultural identity requires encouraging cooperation between communities, parents, and schools. Policymakers and educators can strive to create a multilingual education system that is more sustainable and effective by addressing these important issues.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to further investigate and ensure a more effective implementation of the language policy transition, and to support both teachers and students in adapting to multilingual education:

1. Schools may provide curriculum-aligned, up-to-date teaching and learning materials that might comply with the new language policy. Digital resources, multimedia tools, and bilingual textbooks should be made available to support both teachers and learners in language acquisition.

2. Schools are encouraged to establish programs that involve parents and community members in supporting students' language learning. Conduct workshops and educational sessions to aid parents in helping their children make the switch to Filipino and English instruction.
3. Teachers may use instructional films, digital learning resources, interactive language apps. to improve language learning. The use of technology can help learners in their language acquisition.
4. Learners may be supported in their mother tongue while adjusting to Filipino and English language as the medium of instruction over time through a phased approach to language transition. This method will enhance comprehension and lessen cognitive stress for both teachers and learners.
5. Learners' cultural and linguistic legacy may be preserved while they switch to Filipino and English as the medium of instruction.
6. Future researchers are encouraged to further examine the effectiveness of using English or Filipino as the primary medium of instruction in early grade classrooms, particularly in multilingual settings.

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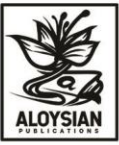
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