

# A Correlational Study on Mother Tongue-Based Education and School Engagement of Pupils

**CHARLIE A. DAYON**

charliedayon2@gmail.com

<http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6553-2743>

Agusan del Sur State College of Agriculture and Technology  
Agusan del Sur, Philippines

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## **ABSTRACT**

The study aimed at determining the relationship between mother tongue-based education and school engagement of grade 3 pupils at the West Bunawan Central Elementary School. In this study, descriptive correlational research design was utilized. Using universal sampling, 83 pupil respondents were involved. The results disclosed that the level of mother tongue-based education of the respondents was very high. Meaning, the more the respondents understood the lesson when their subject teacher would have explained it in their first language. Moreover, the level of their school engagement was also high. This suggested that they actively participated in school activities. Finally, it was revealed that there was a significant relationship between the two main variables indicating that the utilization of mother tongue in the instruction of school children would motivate them to actively participate or engage in school activities.

**Keywords:** Language education, mother tongue-based education, school engagement, descriptive correlation

## **INTRODUCTION**

Language is an integral feature of educational practice in the classroom. Teachers communicate content and instructions through language. Hence, the use of language is important in a child's education (Walter, 2010).

The pressing issue in the Philippine education today is the declining performance of school children in subject areas of the curriculum. According to Ocampo and associates (2006), this phenomenon has come about because of the inaccessibility of quality and relevant education. So, to address this phenomenal concern, the Department of Education (DEPED) in 2009 issued an order institutionalizing Mother Tongue-based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE). This order requires the use of the learners' first language as the medium of instruction across all subject areas in pre-kindergarten through grade three with Filipino and English being taught as separate subjects. Subsequently, DEPED issued in 2012 another order offering more specific guidelines for MTB-MLE and embedding reform in the newly adopted K to 12 Basic Education Program (DEPED, n.d.). The shift from bilingual education policy to MLE is promising and has a big potential in solving many problems in the education system of the country. One of the problems which have been encountered by school teachers is the learners' lack of school engagement. According to Dotterer and Lowe (2004), school engagement is a major factor which has both direct and indirect influences upon learners' learning achievement in the classroom context. Since no studies have been conducted yet to establish the bearing of MTB-MLE on learners' engagement in school activities, the researcher was prompted to pursue this study through the assistance of his Education students who had undergone internship training at West Bunawan Central Elementary School in the Municipality of Bunawan, Agusan del Sur, Caraga, Philippines during the school year 2017-2018. The results of this study could be used as baseline information by future researchers to expand its coverage for a wider and clearer picture of the phenomenon.

## **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

The primary purpose of the study was to determine the relationship between the Mother Tongue-based Multi-lingual Education (MTB-MLE) and the school engagement as perceived by Grade 3 pupils of West Bunawan Central Elementary School, Bunawan, Agusan del Sur, Caraga, Philippines.

## METHODOLOGY

A descriptive correlational research design was used in determining the relationship between the Mother Tongue-based Multi-lingual Education (MTB-MLE) and the school engagement which the respondents perceived. In this study, the researcher adopted the questionnaire of Chapman (2013) and Fredricks, et al. (2005) with translations of the texts in the Visayan language – the dominant dialect of the locals in the said municipality. During the administration of the instruments, he was around to help out any respondent with difficulties in understanding the texts. Using universal sampling, he involved 83 grade 3 pupils. In treating the data, weighted average mean was used to determine the level of strategies used by teachers in MTB-MLE and school engagement. Pearson Product Moment of Correlation was also used to determine the significant relationship between the two main variables.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### ***Level of Mother Tongue-based Multi-lingual Education of Grade III Pupils***

The level of MTB-MLE of grade 3 pupils at West Bunawan Central Elementary School is presented in Table 1. The table shows that the level of MTB-MLE of the respondents is very high as indicated by the over-all mean of 4.31 with standard deviation of .428.

Table 1. Level of Mother Tongue-based Multi-lingual Education among Grade 3 Pupils

<b>Mother Tongue-based Multi-lingual Education</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Verbal Description</b>
Translation of target language to mother tongue	.666	4.19	High
Utilization of Multi-lingual Instruction	.660	4.23	Very High
Improvisation of Instructional Materials	.638	4.37	Very High
Remediation of Instruction	.512	4.41	Very High
Utilization of Literary Piece	.503	4.36	Very High
<b>Over-all Mean</b>	<b>.428</b>	<b>4.31</b>	<b>Very High</b>

The implication of the data is that MTB-MLE has always been used in the classroom. However, among the indicators, the highest is the remediation of instruction with obtained mean of 4.41. It suggests that the teacher has been using the mother tongue, giving opportunity for students to ask when they

encounter difficulty in understanding the lesson, utilizing students' first language for them to learn, and accommodating them all despite their knowledge of the mother tongue.

The translation of target language to mother tongue with obtained mean of 4.19 is high. This indicates that the MTB-MLE has also been observed. It further explains that the teachers address the problem of their pupils in language by translating to them the core ideas of the lessons in their mother tongue.

The findings are supported by South African Press Association (2010). In the findings, it is revealed that learners cannot understand another language unless they are competent in their first language. Hence, they naturally experience difficulties in cognition when their teachers use other languages aside from their own.

Table 2. Level of School Engagement of Grade 3 Pupils

School Engagement	Standard Deviation	Mean	Verbal Description
Behavioral Engagement	.560	3.68	High
Emotional Engagement	.503	3.99	High
Cognitive Engagement	.508	4.41	High
<b>Over-all Mean</b>	<b>.340</b>	<b>4.05</b>	<b>High</b>

The data in this table reveal that the level of the respondents' school engagement is high as indicated by the over-all mean of 4.05 with standard deviation of .340. Among the indicators of school engagement, the highest is the cognitive engagement with obtained mean of 4.41. It implies that during the engagement, the respondents find themselves inquisitive. Hence, when they are at home, they study, check their school work, and read extra books. This finding is supported by Astin (1999). According to him, the greater the students' involvement in school, the greater will be the amount of their learning and personal development.

The lowest among the three indicators with high level of engagement is the behavioral engagement as indicated by the obtained mean of 3.68 with standard deviation of .560. But, still this suggests that during the engagement, the respondents pay attention to their class, work in class, follow rules in school; but, often, they get in trouble. According to Finn (1989) and Jeankins (1995), students tend to have good relations with other students whom they feel they belong. However, some school children do not share this sense of belongingness. They do not believe that academic success has a strong bearing on their future. Hence, their feelings and attitudes result in their becoming disaffected from school. They may gradually withdraw from school activities, and some cases

participate in disruptive behavior and display negative attitudes towards teachers and other students.

Table 3. A Test on Significant Relationship Between Mother Tongue-based Multi-lingual Education and School Engagement of Grade 3 Pupils

Mother Tongue-based Multi-lingual Education (x)	School Engagement (y)	r-value	p-value	Remarks
Translation of target language to mother tongue	• Behavioral Engagement	.119	.282	Not Significant
	• Emotional Engagement			Not Significant
	• Cognitive Engagement	.163	.142	Not Significant
Utilization of Multi-lingual Instruction	• Behavioral Engagement	.211	.055	Significant
	• Emotional Engagement			Not Significant
	• Cognitive Engagement	.300	.006	Not Significant
	• Behavioral Engagement	.200	.070	
	• Emotional Engagement			Significant
	• Cognitive Engagement	.206	.061	Significant
Improvisation of Instructional Materials	• Behavioral Engagement			Not Significant
	• Emotional Engagement			Significant
	• Cognitive Engagement	.294	.007	Not Significant
Remediation of Instruction	• Behavioral Engagement	.272	.013	Significant
	• Emotional Engagement			Not Significant
	• Cognitive Engagement	.165	.137	Not Significant
	• Behavioral Engagement	.235	.033	Significant
	• Emotional Engagement			Significant
	• Cognitive Engagement	.197	.074	Not Significant
Utilization of Literary Piece		.199	.071	Significant
		.454	.000	Significant
		.326	.003	Significant
		.178	.107	
Over-all Mean		.381	.000	
		.316	.004	
		.263	.016	
	<b>Over-all Mean</b>	<b>.491</b>	<b>.0000</b>	Significant

Since the data used are interval, therefore the most appropriate test statistics used is Pearson Product-Moment of Correlation. With this statistical tool, the result reveals the over-all p-value of .000 with obtained r-value of .491. This indicates that there is a significant relationship between the variables. It further implies that MTB-MLE has a bearing on the school engagement of the respondents. However, among the indicators, there are those with no significant relationship. These are Translation of Target Language to Mother Tongue with Behavioral, Emotional, and Cognitive Engagements as indicated by the p-values of .282, .142, and .055 respectively. This suggests that translating to mother tongue the lessons being discussed by the teachers has no bearing on the engagement of the pupils in school activities.

Utilization of MTB MLE and Emotional and Cognitive Engagements have no significant relationship too as indicated by p-values of .070 and .061 respectively. This implies that even though the teacher explores and uses all possible languages for her pupils to understand, uses varied dialects, becomes versatile in providing their needs, and becomes flexible in using dialects, still these strategies are insignificant to them.

Improvisation of Instructional Materials and Cognitive Engagement are not related either as indicated by p-value of .137. This implies that even the teacher uses instructional materials, it is insignificant to their pupils' cognitive engagement.

Furthermore, Remediation of Instruction and Emotional and Cognitive Engagements are not related either. The p-values of .074 and .071 respectively indicate that despite the teacher's conduct of remediation, still her pupils feel happy or bored, excited or interested in their work at school. Despite this mechanism, they also continue doing their routines, such as studying at home, reading books, and watching TV shows.

Finally, Utilization of Literary Pieces has no bearing on Cognitive Engagement as indicated by p-value of .107. This means that the teacher's use of these materials, such as songs, poems, and the like do not affect pupils' cognitive engagement.

In sum, to the level of Mother Tongue-based Multi-lingual Education in terms of translation of target language to mother tongue, utilization of multi-lingual instruction, improvisation of instructional materials, remediation of instruction, and utilization of literary piece, the grade 3 respondents perceive it as very high. Next, as regards the level of their school engagement characterized as behavioral, emotional and cognitive, they perceive it as high too. Finally, as regards the relationship between MTB-MLE and school engagement of the respondents, the over-all mean positively shows that the two variables are

significantly related. Hence, through the strategies of MTB-MLE, the respondents perceive that they attain the maximum learning. Through these, they also perceive that their values and communication skills are developed.

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