

Strategies and Problems Encountered by Teachers in Implementing Mother Tongue - Based Instruction in a Multilingual Classroom

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Abstract

The use of mother tongue in teaching in a multilingual setting affects the way pupils learn. A melting pot and the educational center of the North, Baguio City, Philippines demands teaching strategies that not only adapt to the interplay of the different cultures and languages but give importance to them, too. Specifically, this paper analyzed the strategies of teachers in implementing Mother Tongue - Based Instruction in a Multilingual Classroom and identified some problems that teachers encounter in implementing them. The study used qualitative analysis with interview as the main data gathering tool. The respondents were teachers purposively selected from the suggested pilot schools of Mother Tongue - Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) in Baguio City. From the phenomenological analysis of the data, the findings showed that the teachers used strategies such as translation of target language to mother tongue, utilization of multilingual teaching, utilization of lingua-franca, improvization of instructional materials written in mother tongue, remediation of instruction, and utilization of literary piece written in mother tongue as motivation. Some problems encountered by the teachers in implementing mother tongue - based instruction include absence of books written in mother tongue, lack of vocabulary, and lack of teacher-training. Nevertheless, the study indicated that major attention and effort are still necessary to be given to the approach.

Keywords: practices, mother tongue - based instruction, multilingualism, and multiculturalism

1. Introduction

The role of language as a medium of instruction in promoting an effective teaching and learning is an issue that has occupied many scholars all over the world for many years (Orr 1987a, 1997 as cited by Deyi, et al., 2007). This role of language as a medium of instruction has been a concern mostly in countries where immigrant children are in the minority such as United States and Canada (Krashen, 1981 as cited by Deyi, et al., 2007). It is in these countries where research has been widely conducted and a number of legislations have been passed and amended throughout the years. Despite such developments, debates on the use of language persist.

One of the latest developments in the Philippine educational system is the Mother Tongue – Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE). MTB-MLE refers to the use of students' mother tongue and two or more additional languages as Languages of Instruction (LoI) in school. In other contexts, the term is used to describe bilingual education across multiple language communities—each community using its own mother tongue aside from the official school language of instruction. In South Asia, multilingual education usually follows the first definition, learning and using multiple languages in school. In some countries, MTB-MLE includes four languages—the students' mother tongue or first language, a regional language, the national language and an international language (Malone, 2007).

According to the official language policy of the 1987 Educational Act (revised in 2004), children in Grades 1 – 3 were to be instructed in their first language, while those in Grade 4 onwards are set to be instructed using a second language (L2), which is English. This language policy can be identified as a possible model for bilingual education (Borch & Tombari, 1997 as cited by Ndamba, 2008).

Many studies have already revealed that teaching using the mother tongue in the early grades enhances children's ability to learn better compared to the use of a second or foreign language (UNESCO, 2003; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2003 as cited by Rai, et al., 2011). It has also been reported that if children are taught in languages which are different from their home language or mother tongue, they drop out from school, have low academic performance, and repeat classes due to a high failure rate. This state of affairs is still persistent in Nepal (Yadava, 2007; Awasthi, 2004 as cited by Rai, et al., 2011). Research on L2 acquisition shows that when a child masters the first language then learning another language becomes less problematic in the habits of speech, listening, reading, and writing (Maclaughlin, 1987; Krashen, 1995; Ndamba 2008 citing Cummins, 1981; Hawes, 1979; Obanya, 1985; & Dawes, 1988). Research that has been conducted on language education has also shown that children are quicker to learn, to read, and to acquire other academic skills when instructed in the language that they speak at home rather than taught in an unfamiliar language (Langer, et al., 1990; Unicef, 1999).

Recently, in the educational reforms in the country, the mother tongue in the regions plays an important role especially in the educational system. To strengthen this, the Department of Education (DepEd) has implemented the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction (DepEd order No. 74, series of 2009).

No research has been conducted on the effective strategies of teachers in implementing the MTB-MLE in a multilingual education. The city of Baguio (Philippines) is considered to be a home to many immigrants from other parts of the country and other countries. A significant population of foreigners and local people contributed to the diversity of the city's culture. The languages that are commonly spoken are Kankanaey, Ibaloi, Ilocano, Kapampangan, Pangasinense, Tagalog, English, Chinese, and recently Korean. Having different languages in the city has been a concern. The problems include what strategies can be employed by the teachers in successfully implementing MTB-MLE.

This study explored the strategies employed by the teachers in implementing MTB – MLE and the problems that they have encountered. It specifically dwelt on answering the following research questions: What are the strategies employed by the teachers in using MTB-MLE in the multilingual classrooms? And, what the problems encountered by the teachers in employing the MTB-MLE?

2. Methods

2.1. Participants

Twelve teachers from Kindergarten to Grade 1 from the three pilot schools in the city of Baguio were chosen by the researchers as respondents based on the inclusion criteria set for the study (teachers who are teaching in the pilot schools and teaching Kinder to Grade 1). These teachers had their rich experiences in employing and implementing the MTB-MLE in the pilot schools and they have tried different strategies in teaching in the early grades in a multilingual classroom. These pilot schools were chosen because they implemented the MTB-MLE for the city considering the nature of the learners in these schools. Baguio City is known to be a melting pot of different language and culture in the Northern Philippines, so the pupils have diverse background in terms of language and culture.

Having 12 interview subjects for the study was arrived at based on phenomenological inquiry and data saturation criterions. According to Creswell (1998), phenomenology requires in-depth interviews from 3 to 13 subjects.

2.2. Data Collection Tools

A semi-structured in-depth interview (Patton, 1990) was used as data gathering tool. An aide memoire which probed the dynamics of the teachers' experiences in employing MTB-MLE in teaching the Kinder and Grade 1 in the pilot schools was developed by the researchers based on a priori code. Their sharing revolved around the questions, "What were your experiences with teaching the Kinder/ Grade 1 using MTB-MLE? What are the strategies that you used in using MTB-MLE? What do you think were the best strategies that you have employed helped facilitate the learning of the pupils? What were the problems that you have encountered in using MTB-MLE? Why do you consider these as your problems?"

If the interviewer is skilful, Best and Kahn (1993) believe that the interview can be regarded as data gathering device which is often superior to others as people are more willing to talk than to write, and confidential information may be obtained from respondents who might be reluctant to put it in writing. The interview was considered suitable in this study in order to determine respondents' opinions, attitudes or trends

of beliefs (Sharma, 1994 as cited by Ndamba, 2008). Also, classroom observations were conducted to further witness the actual setting, especially how the teachers applied the strategies and how effective their practices were with their pupils. Video and tape recordings were used during the interview and observation.

2.3. Data Collection Procedure

To capture the essence of the phenomenon under investigation, a letter of request was addressed the principals of the pilot schools and to the respondents informing them of the nature of the research, the topic to be discussed and extent of their participation. After seeking their permission and willingness to participate, an appointment was scheduled for a one-on-one interview based on their availability. To elicit natural responses for questions, all the respondents were interviewed in locations of their own choice and lasted for at least 45 minutes to one hour per respondent.

The in-depth and semi-structured interview was conducted in English language since the respondents are proficient in English but they were given the freedom to answer the questions in other languages like Filipino, the national language or in their native language that they are comfortable with to ensure the richness of data. The interview sessions for teachers have closed and open-ended questions to allow the researchers to follow up points which needed elaboration and to clarify questions that were misunderstood by the respondents (Mouly, 1978 as cited by Ndamba, 2008). The interview focused /centered on the best strategies employed by the teachers and the problems they encountered in using MTB-MLE. Best and Kahn (1993) stated that interviews are particularly appropriate in getting responses from respondents.

For the classroom observation, one teacher for every level and pilot school was chosen. The respondents were oriented about the observation done in their classes. Dates for trial and final observations and video recordings were scheduled. The recorded classroom proceedings were transcribed to produce the field text which was utilized for the analysis. Two observations and video recordings for each subject-teacher were undertaken. These excluded the trial observation and recording for each teacher before the final collection of data. The trial observations and recordings were conducted for the teachers and their students to get used to the process, thus reducing any “halo effect” during the final data collection. The data gathered during the trial observations and recordings were not included in the analysis of the data.

2.4 Data Analysis

The video and tape recorded interviews and classroom observations were transcribed into field texts (Clandinin & Connely, 2000) where both anchors and phenomenal themes were extracted. The text was subjected to phenomenological reduction by means of repertory grid. The grid presented the significant statements made by the respondents which were classified using themes and were interpreted carefully. Simultaneous re-reading of the significant statements of each respondent facilitated the surfacing of the important ideas and experiences of the respondents. For the warm analysis, highlighted words or phrases were proof-read and analyzed to formulate categories and themes. The validity, truthfulness and trustworthiness of the emerging patterns and themes were done through correspondence with the participants where the consistency of the transcription and interpretation made by the researchers on the respondents' statements were verified individually with the study participants. Member-checking procedure (Graneheim & Lundan, 2004 cited in Valdez, De

Guzman & Escolar-Chua, 2012) and a critical friend technique involving expert were also employed.

3. Results and Discussions

Findings in this paper described the strategies and problems of teachers in employing MTB-MLE in their classrooms as pilot schools. The thickness and richness of the field text gathered afforded the identification and emerging of the six interesting themes relative to the strategies employed by the teachers and three interesting themes relative to the problems they encountered.

3.1. *Strategies Employed by Teachers in Implementing Mother Tongue - Based Instruction in a Multilingual Setting*

Based on the answers given by the respondents and the observation conducted on the strategies employed by teachers in the implementation of mother tongue - based instruction in a multilingual setting, several themes emerged. These themes are (a) translation from target language to mother tongue, (b) utilization of multilingual teaching, (c) utilization of lingua-franca, (d) improvization of instructional materials written in mother tongue, (e) remediation of instruction, and (f) utilization of literary piece written in mother tongue as motivation.

3.1.1. *Translation of target language to mother tongue.*

Translation is very beneficial to learning when it comes to learning through the use of the students' mother tongue because it serves as a bridge to connect students to the lesson. Translation is sometimes referred to as the fifth language skill alongside the other four basic skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. "Translation holds a special importance at an intermediate and advanced level: in the advanced or final stage of language teaching, translation from first language (L1) to second language (L2) and from L2 to L1 is recognized as the fifth skill and the most important social skill, since it promotes communication and understanding between strangers" (Ross, 2000 as cited by Kavaliauskiene, 2009). It is commonly believed that translators are better at translating into their native language than into a second language.

For the respondents, translation is important for the reason that it helps them address the needs of the pupils who have different languages. Moreover, teachers need to translate the lesson using all the pupils' mother tongue for better understanding. This is evident from the following statements of the respondents: *"So for some pupils I use Ilocano as a medium of instruction but for those pupils who can't understand Ilocano, I go to the extent of using Kankanaey for a better understanding of the lesson."* And, *"So I will translate it all in Ilocano to Tagalog to English."*

The statements indicate that the respondents are using translation in their lesson. The first statement shows that the teacher is using Ilocano as a medium of instruction but if there are pupils who do not understand Ilocano, she translates the discussion into another language that the said pupils understand. The second statement signifies that the teacher translates in one native language to another native language used by the pupils. It implies that pupils learn more if the lesson is translated to their mother tongue. The respondents mentioned: *"Teacher-made IM's and big books written in English language but I translated in mother tongue."*; *"As a teacher, you will do the*

translation, that is what we use as instructional materials. All the alphabets should be translated into mother tongue.”

As seen from the responses above, translation can be applied in every aspect of learning. The respondents use books written in English and translate the content to the pupils' mother tongue. The teachers have no option but to use English books because there are no available books written in the mother tongue. Through translation, it helped the students understand more the materials that they are using. Furthermore, the second statement points out that alphabets should also be based on the pupils' mother tongue. This means that translation plays a vital role in teaching and in learning.

The above statements support the claim of Dickins (2005) as cited by Jabak (2013) that translator training normally focuses on translation into the mother tongue, because higher quality is achieved in that direction than in translating into a foreign language.

Moreover, teachers translate for the learners to have a better understanding of the lesson. The effectiveness of this strategy is confirmed by the following statements of the respondents: *“It's effective because my pupils respond positively. They also interact during discussions, games, and the like.”*; *“It's effective because half of the class are participating during class discussion. So they will understand; actually if English is used, only 2 or 3 pupils recite unlike in Ilocano.”*

“Through add evaluation, tests, and checklist.”; *“Formative and summative test are given to my pupils.”*

Thus, this means that majority of the learners understand the lesson better when being translated in mother tongue and its effectiveness is being tested through the use of the assessment tools. As mentioned above, the teachers use assessment tools such as formative and summative tests, add evaluation, and checklists to evaluate the students work or performance.

Also, the pupils respond actively to the discussion and many of them participate when their mother tongue is used as a medium of instruction, unlike when the teacher use English where only two or three take part in the discussion as revealed from the observation conducted.

3.1.2. Utilization of multilingual teaching

Multilingual teaching is when teachers use varied languages in the whole duration of teaching for the reason of accommodating students who do not speak a particular language and including them in the discussion. This is defined as speaking two or more languages in a growing worldwide phenomenon (Milambiling, 2011).

Since the people who live in Baguio City are speakers of different languages, the teachers need to explore and use all possible languages in order to cater to the needs of the learners having different mother tongues. A teacher uses each mother tongue for the pupils to understand the lesson. *“I use Ilocano aah...Kankanaey and for those...who cannot speak or still understand Kankanaey and Ilocano I use the Ibaloi language.”*

The above statement denotes that the teacher uses varied language such as Kankanaey, Ilocano, and Ibaloi in delivering her lesson. It is clearly stated that she has the capability to use different mother tongues which makes a good point of what a mother tongue teachers should be since they are multilingual themselves. Through this, the teacher can say that this strategy is effective because the pupils are seen motivated. This was also observed in the video of the classes where the pupils tend to be very active in recitation and other activities when the teachers use varied languages in giving instruction and explaining the lessons. One respondent stated: *“So for some pupils I use Ilocano as a medium of instruction but for those pupils who can’t still understand Ilocano I go to the extent of using Kankanaey for better understanding of the lesson.”*

This means that the teacher is versatile in making ways to cater to the needs of the students. Therefore, being a multilingual teacher is an advantage in teaching pupils with different languages. The teacher’s flexibility in using other languages means that there are fewer problems in translation. In line with translation of the different mother tongues, being a multilingual teacher is needed to match the skill of translating. If the teacher knows every language of his/her pupils then the demands of every learner to use his/her own language will be met. The teacher can cater to the individual needs of the learners by translating the lessons he/she is teaching in the different mother tongues of the learners in the classroom.

The above response of the respondent provide support to the concept of Garcia (2008) as cited by Milambiling (2011), that multilingual language awareness is a necessity for teachers of multilingual students. Besides knowing about languages, subject matter, and teaching methodology, teachers should have an understanding of the political struggles and social circumstances of pupils. This strategy also allows the students to explore and learn the language of others.

Milambiling (2011) further states that those who speak more than one language are also generally more aware of sociolinguistic variables and functions than those who speak one language, and they are adept at switching between different regional varieties, registers, and formal and informal language styles. This same author stated that the advantage of being a multilingual is that it creates different kinds of connections in the brain, which gives multilingual individuals an advantage in some respects compared with monolingual individuals.

3.1.3. Utilization of lingua-franca

Lingua-franca is a language that is widely used as a means of intercommunication among speakers of different languages. Seeing that the dominant language that is being used in Baguio City is Ilocano, the respondents prefer it as their medium of instruction since it is the language that is widely used by the learners in the school and at the same time at home. The respondents shared, *“In English subject, I use Ilocano then bridge to English.”*; *“Here in Baguio, Ilocano is really the language they use.”*; *“So for some pupils I use Ilocano as a medium of instruction but for those pupils who can’t still understand Ilocano I go to the extent of using Kankanaey for better understanding of the lesson.”*

The respondents use Ilocano as a medium of instruction because majority of the class understand Ilocano. If the teacher uses Ilocano in delivering the lesson then majority

would understand and take part, and with those who do not understand Ilocano, it is where translation is used. The statements revealed that the first choice of the teachers when it comes to using mother tongue is Ilocano due to the fact that Ilocano is the most dominant language in class.

This is also confirmed from the observation conducted by the researchers, that is, it was evident that all the learners were very participative in the discussion because majority of them are using Ilocano when communicating in school and at home.

According to Swadesh (1951), lingua-franca is a folk language; it can be used with all the advantages of any other mother tongue as an effective instrument of instruction in the areas where it is the folk language. The fact that the language may be pidginized will not detract from this value on the lower level of instruction; a pidginized mother tongue is nonetheless a mother tongue. For more complex purposes than elementary instruction, there may be problems of adapting the medium to the subject matter. Finally, using common language in a multilingual setting allows the learners to become active participants during class discussion and activities since they understand each other.

3.1.4. Improvization of instructional materials written in mother tongue

Instructional materials are the basic channel of communication in the classroom for the purpose of bringing about effective teaching and learning.

Instructional resources in teaching and learning make students learn more and retain better what they have been taught and that these instructional resources also promote and sustain students' interest. These resources also allow the learners to discover themselves and their abilities. The respondents mentioned, "...I use improvized materials like stories, songs, poems, and charts written in Kankana-ey and Ilocano."; "To motivate the pupils, I use songs and poems written in Kankanaey and Ilocano."; and "Teacher-made IMs and big books written in English language but I translated in mother tongue." From the given responses of the respondents, the materials are written in the learners' native languages to motivate students and for the learners to participate.

These instructional materials are entertaining at the same time educational and can cater to the different senses. This is one way of motivating the class to participate during the discussion. Instructional materials are vital to teaching-learning process (Sunday & Joshua, 2010). Teaching can only be effective when adequate and relevant instructional materials are used (Afolabi, Adeyanju, Adedapo & Falade, 2006 as cited by Sunday & Joshua, 2010).

With the use of mother tongue as a medium of instruction, instructional materials should also be written in mother tongue to achieve consistency. These instructional materials are prepared based on the interests and needs of learners. The poems, songs, and stories were translated by the teacher because there are no books written in the mother tongue. Thus, the use of instructional materials written in mother tongue enhances students' awareness of their own language which can lead to their proficiencies of the said language. This is also a way of appreciating their own language, using it in the class and making materials with it.

The effectiveness of this strategy can be seen in the following statements: *“It’s effective because my pupils respond positively. They also interact during discussions, games, and the like.”* And *“It’s effective because half of the class are participating during class discussion. So they will understand; actually if English is used, only 2 or 3 pupils recite unlike in Ilocano.”*

The respondents also explained that their learners interact well if the materials that they are using are written in their mother tongue. The result also revealed that the pupils are actively participating when their mother tongue is used as a medium of instruction to further the discussion of the lesson. This means that pupils prefer materials which are written in their mother tongue because they can comprehend. Another respondent added, *“Our signages are also in written in mother tongue”*.

It was seen during the observation that there are signages everywhere written in the learners’ mother tongue. There are also headings and letterings written in mother tongue and English equivalent beside them. This means that learners can better understand and follow the signs posted in the classrooms and school surroundings if they are written in mother tongue. Instructional resources in teaching and learning make students learn more and retain better what they have been taught and that they also promote and sustain students’ interest (Abimbade, 1997 as cited by Sunday & Joshua, 2010). These instructional resources also allow the learners to discover themselves and their abilities.

3.1.5. Remediation of instruction

This requires pupils to stay after class hours for an extra learning especially for those pupils who have difficulty with the lessons and for those who are behind in their lesson. This means that the teacher will tutor to accommodate all the learners despite of their levels of intelligence. In conducting remedial classes, the teacher uses mother tongue as the medium of instruction. This is a strategy that was suggested by one of the respondents saying, *“We use remedial class. I see to it that in the afternoon I have one or two pupils to have remedial classes. So I have 40 minutes remedial, but not all students.”*

The school thought of this as best for they know that it will help their pupils who are failing to excel or follow in the class. Having their proof that most of the class are always participating by the help of the mentioned strategy and that the discussion is more interactive, the teachers concluded that this strategy is an effective one for both the teachers and students.

Also, a remedial class is a learner’s opportunity to ask the teacher about his/her difficulties in understanding the lesson especially when the problem has something to do with the mother tongue the teacher is using during the class discussion. In this case, it will also help the pupils learn most, from utilizing their mother tongue.

3.1.6. Utilization of literary piece written in mother tongue as motivation

Literary pieces are used by teachers as a springboard to teach other concepts or ideas that are beneficial to the pupils. Teachers integrate literature within the discussion and these literary pieces are already translated in preferred mother tongue.

There are four main reasons that lead a language teacher to use literature in the classroom namely: valuable authentic material, cultural enrichment, language enrichment, and personal involvement (Hişmanoğlu, 2005 citing Collie & Slater, 1990). One respondent cited, *“To motivate the pupils, I use songs and poems written in Kankanaey and Ilocano”*.

The respondent shared that in order to get the interest of the learners, she used songs and poems that were written in mother tongue because if she uses native songs, the learners will develop love and appreciation of their own language and culture. In addition, using songs written in mother tongue allow the students to understand the meaning of the song or poem because they are mother tongue users inside and outside the school.

Literature of any kind can be important for children of other cultures and is a powerful tool to weaken and dissolve racism. Multicultural literature can also play a very important role for teachers. This serves as an instrument for the teachers to see first in themselves the importance of being a multicultural person in order to appreciate the different cultures found or emanating from the literature that they are reading or they are teaching. Through this, they can impart to their students the importance of having a multicultural literature so that in turn the students will also understand and appreciate different cultures. The teachers must be very keen in selecting the different literatures that can show the diversities of cultures of the pupils especially those that are found in the classroom. Multicultural literature can be used as a tool to open pupil's minds. It helps to stimulate an understanding of diversity in the classroom and helps to build an understanding of and respect for people from other cultures (Boles, 2006). Also, multicultural literature can be used to eliminate racism (Colby & Lyon, 2004 as cited by Boles, 2006).

Finally, in the case of Baguio City having different languages, the mentioned strategies are beneficial for the pupils to have a meaningful learning since the learners are exposed to different languages and cultures.

3.2. Problems Encountered by Teachers in Implementing Mother Tongue - Based Instruction in a Multilingual Setting

Aside from the best strategies mentioned by the respondents, there are also themes that were developed regarding the problems they encountered in the implementation of mother tongue - based instruction in a multilingual setting. These are (a) absence of books written in mother tongue, (b) lack of vocabulary, and (c) lack of teacher-training.

3.2.1. Absence of books written in mother tongue

This is the condition of having no textbooks or dictionaries in the mother tongue that are needed to accommodate the needs of the learners having different mother tongues. Although one of the strategies in implementing MTB-MLE is the improvisation of instructional materials written in mother tongue, still teachers need books that are accurate and reliable.

The respondents' emphasized that they really need books written in mother tongue so that they will be able to implement MTB-MLE successfully. The absence of books

written in mother tongue affects the teaching specifically when translating since their pupils are speakers of different languages. The respondents said, *“There are no big or small books in Ilocano that you can buy, so as a teacher will just translate it”* and *“The problem is that, there are no books written in mother tongue.”* The responses paralleled the statement of Hall, (2010) as cited by Dekker, et al., (2008), that is, no teacher can teach effectively without appropriate materials that are based on two components: established government curriculum goals and pupil’s prior knowledge, culture, and value systems. With few books available for most of the 170 languages of the Philippines, materials development appears a daunting task (Dekker, et al., 2008). Books are one of the most needed materials in the learning process of the pupils. Teaching and learning cannot be effective without adequate and relevant use of instructional materials (Grant, 1978 as cited by Sunday & Joshua, 2010). One of the respondents emphasized that in order to effectively implement MTB-MLE, curriculum should be updated and textbooks and teaching materials should be made available in advance.

In implementing MTB-MLE, goals are not being attained if there is deficiency of materials needed; hence, there is a need for the provision of the books and instructional materials that are helpful to the learning of pupils which will increase their understanding. Malone (2007) stated that literacy can only be maintained if there is an adequate supply of reading materials.

This problem can be a hindrance in the success of the implementation of mother tongue - based instruction since the teachers are not that literate in all the different languages of their learners; thus, the production of mother tongue textbooks and dictionaries is a must in the city of Baguio.

3.2.2. Lack of vocabulary

This is considered to be the dearth of words to use when delivering a message or information. There is no wide range of the words or phrases used in discussing the lesson using mother tongue; therefore, it is considered as one of the problems being encountered by the teachers. Two of the respondents said, *“The vocabulary of the teacher is not enough because we are not really used to Baguio Ilocano. And not all pupils really understand Ilocano, although there are some who can but have low level of understanding of the language.”* and *“We lack vocabulary to be used in translating an English and Filipino word.”*

The above statements explain that though teachers are residents of Baguio City, their knowledge on the different languages of the city is not enough to deliver the lesson. They cannot say that they have enough vocabulary especially that their pupils are not fluent in the lingua franca and not all words from the target language have equivalent terms in the first language.

In addition, the respondents are experiencing difficulties in teaching their pupils because they cannot think of the right word that is exactly the equivalent of the source language, putting them in a situation that will bring confusion to the pupils.

Moreover, since Baguio City is considered as the melting pot of cultures and languages, all of the respondents revealed that they are pressured to use mother tongue as their medium of instruction because they are teaching pupils with different

languages. This problem was very evident from the given statements of the respondents, *“The pupils are a mixture of Ilocanos, Kankanaey, Kalanguya, and even Ibaloi aah. So that they will be able to understand our lesson, I use Ilocano aah Kankanaey. I use Ilocano as a medium of instruction but for those pupils who can’t still understand Ilocano, I go to the extent of using Kakana-ey for better understanding of the lesson.”* ; *“ First, they should all be speakers of their mother tongue, should they? So it cannot be that half of them speak Tagalog. Well, here in Baguio City we cannot avoid that some are mixed speakers of different languages.”* And, *“ Of course many of them understand Ilocano; they just cannot speak straight Ilocano.”*

Although the teachers are trying their best to explain the lesson using mother tongue; still, the learners cannot interact well during the discussion because the pupils are not that fluent in using the same mother tongues. This adds to the teachers’ problem on how to address their needs.

This scenario implies that the teachers need to be a linguist and/ or polyglot in order to address the needs of the pupils. This makes their learning interactive and meaningful. This means that the task of educating children becomes much more difficult when teachers have to face a heterogeneous group with multilingual and multicultural background (Pai, 2005).

3.2.3. Lack of teacher-training

Lack of teacher-training includes unpreparedness of the teachers to teach their learners with the use of mother tongue as their medium of instruction considering that their pupils have different mother tongues.

The respondents felt that training and seminars for teachers should be provided regularly and academic support from the specialist on various issues of mother tongue teaching is also required. One of the respondents stated that *“ All of a sudden you will teach using mother tongue. I never expected to teach using it. All of a sudden they called me to teach. What? Mother tongue?! I told them I don’t really know Ilocano. Even the pupils are having a hard time.”* From the statement, it is very evident that the teacher is not prepared because she has not undergone any training regarding MTB-MLE. Having limited background in using mother tongue as a medium of instruction can hinder in becoming an effective teacher.

Training and seminars are important for teachers who are teaching multilingual learners because they need to be oriented and guided on how to handle learners with different languages. Also, through training and seminars, the teacher’s knowledge is enriched because they are being involved in the different workshops during seminars. Seminars and training also served as an opportunity for the teachers to learn from and interact with the different participants.

The sharing of the respondents lends support to Dutcher (2004) who stated the teachers need training in using first language in the classroom and that the materials have to be appropriate, available, and interesting to the pupils, as well used. If they are not being used (the case in Guatemala from the recent study of the Grade 6 graduates) learning is not progressive. Most teachers need training in methodology so that they can exploit the advantages of teaching in the language that children can understand

(Dutcher, 2004). This means less emphasis on rote learning, repetition and copying, and more on peer-to-peer interaction and on encouraging students to think for themselves, read, and come to their own conclusions (Dutcher, 2004).

Also, the respondents were just prompted to use mother tongue in teaching regardless of their background knowledge about the languages of their learners. One of the respondents mentioned, *“The vocabulary of the teacher is not enough because we are not really used to Baguio Ilocano. And not all pupils really understand Ilocano, although there are some who can but have low level of understanding of the language.”*

Finally, this suggests training programs for teachers to enhance their skills and to enrich their knowledge regarding the implementation of mother tongue - based instruction and to improve their vocabulary with the use of mother tongue they are using.

With pupils who are not all speakers of the same mother tongue, teachers have difficulty when they are not expert of the different mother tongues. In this situation, the teacher would rather use the language that is understandable to the pupils. This weakens the implementation of mother tongue.

4. Conclusions

The study successfully surfaced the teachers' experiences from the three pilot schools in implementing the MTB-MLE in a multilingual setting reflected in the use of the strategies like translating of target language to mother tongue, utilizing multilingual teaching, utilizing lingua-franca, improvising instructional materials written in mother tongue, remediating instruction and utilizing literary piece written in mother tongue; and the problems they encountered like absence of books written in the mother tongue, lack of vocabulary, and lack of teacher training. Through these strategies employed by the teachers, they are able to effectively implement the use of MTB-MLE in helping their pupils acquire the necessary information and learning in the classroom. These innovative strategies help the students attain the maximum learning and helps build firm foundations, valuing and developing the oral and written skills that young children bring to school without rushing literacy. The problems indicated the major attention and effort necessary to be considered so that it will not hinder the meaningful learning and will not affect the way the teachers deliver their lessons.

The study advances the current literature by illuminating areas on the strategies and problems of MTB-MLE instruction previously not cited as well as concurring with the previous investigations. Clearly, findings generated in this study affirm the vital role of teachers in supporting pupil's learning relative to the implementation of the MTB-MLE through their innovative strategies and overcoming the barriers. Hence, the Department of Education are challenged to initiate a mechanism by which the teachers' innovative strategies and problems are assessed, monitored and evaluated at the same time design an effective program or model of MTB-MLE that is geared towards supporting these teachers' role in its effective implementation. This study however, has a certain limitation. Given the study site, the findings may not reflect the experiences of all teachers locally and internationally. Nonetheless, this study surfaced trends worthy of further investigation. We end this study with a view to

increasing administrators and teachers' awareness and improving MTB-MLE policy in a multicultural and multilingual setting.

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