

Helpdesk Report: Language of Instruction

Date: 14 June 2011

Query: What evidence is there of the impact of language of instruction, i.e. mother tongue or second language, on literacy and learning outcomes? Is there a difference in learning outcomes between children that become literate in their mother tongue as opposed to second or third language?

How should teaching practice be adapted for learning in a second language? Is there evidence of programmes that have successfully improved the learning outcomes of second language learners?

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1. Overview

1. Evidence of impact of language of instruction on learning outcomes

A National Study of School Effectiveness for Language Minority Students; Long-Term Academic Achievement.

Thomas, W. and Collier, V. (2002). Centre for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence.

http://www.crede.berkeley.edu/research/laa/1.1_final.html

Thomas and Collier have looked at thousands of second-language-English speakers in the USA, and measured the outcomes of various kinds of bilingual education programmes for those students. Considerable evidence amassed over the last 2-3 decades across the US (Ramirez et al, 1990/1; Thomas and Collier, 2002; 2004; etc.);

Optimizing Learning and Education in Africa – the Language Factor, A Stock-taking Research on Mother Tongue and Bilingual Education in Sub-Saharan Africa

Alidou H, ADEA, 2006

http://www.adeanet.org/adeaPortal/adea/downloadcenter/Ouga/B3_1_MTBLE_en.pdf

This is an extensive publication on education and language of instruction in the African context.

Chapter 4 presents classroom observation studies conducted in several countries in Africa (Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, South Africa, Togo, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Ghana, and Botswana). They reveal that the use of unfamiliar languages forces teachers to use traditional and teacher-centred teaching methods which undermine teachers' effort to teach and students' effort to learn. Such situation contributes to the school ineffectiveness and low academic achievement experienced by students in Africa.

In Chapter 7, the author looks at issues related to publishing in African languages in the context of the current education policies and by analysing the role of key actors, their strengths and weaknesses and making some recommendations on how to improve the situation. Strengthening the African publishing sector is a key aspect in building the African language industry which will provide the education sector with relevant teaching and learning material and whether it will be a key player in creating a meaningful literate environment.

Heugh explores some of the issues around the costs of implementing both successful and unsuccessful language education programmes and outlines some of the initiatives and strategies which can be taken, with minimal cost implications in Chapter 8.

Language of Instruction Briefing Paper, Language of instruction as the key to educational quality: Implementing mother tongue-based multilingual education

Benson C, Stockholm: Swedish International Development Authority, 2010
(Available on the DFID Business Case Teamsite)

How can any educational intervention make an impact if the medium of literacy or instruction is a language that learners do not speak or understand? Effective learning requires communication between teachers and students. As most countries of the world are multilingual, those committed to quality education must therefore consider the key role played by learners' home languages in teaching and learning. The purpose of this policy brief is to discuss how mother tongue-based multilingual education (MLE) works, and how educational policymakers can be engaged in productive discussions about language issues.

2. International assessments of learning

Data shows that generally, children's learning and literacy is poorer when they are not able to learn in their mother tongue. In Africa, teaching children in a language they do not use in daily life has been demonstrated to have a poor success rate in terms of children's literacy and fluency in that language, their competency in other areas of learning, and their competency in their first language (Williams, 1998; Alidou *et al*, 2006).

The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), a test of mathematics and science ability conducted in 36 countries at Grade 4 and 48 countries at Grade 8, categorises children as speaking the language of the test at home 'always or almost always', 'sometimes,' or 'never'. The assessment found that children whose home language differed from the test language ('sometimes' or 'never') performed worse in maths and science (Martin *et al*, 2008; Mullis *et al*, 2008:132).

The Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), conducted in 35 countries, finds a similar trend for literacy: "In all countries, the students who reported never speaking the language of the PIRLS test at home had lower average reading achievement than those speaking it more frequently" (Mullis *et al*, 2007).

3. Cost effectiveness of mother tongue instruction

Logistics to teach multiple languages may be complex, but ultimately mother tongue instruction in the early Grades may prove cheaper. The cost-effectiveness of bilingual education needs to be calculated, taking into account the costs of Grade repetition and social costs of illiteracy (Helen Abadzi).

Producing educational materials in local languages: costs from Guatemala and Senegal.

Vawda Y. A., Patrinos A.H. (1999), *International Journal of Educational Development* 19 (4): 287-299.

This paper examines production costs of local language materials, budgetary implications of such programmes and cost-saving strategies that have and can be usefully employed in Guatemala and Senegal. Information from Guatemala indicates that investments in bilingual education programmes are time-intensive but not prohibitive. The Senegal case study estimates the impact on the unit cost of local language materials if production is expanded to include all potential students in two neighbouring countries, Senegal and The Gambia, that share a common local language. Results indicate that inter-country cooperation is beneficial, especially when factoring in demand constraints in any single country.

4. Evaluation of mother tongue programmes – lack of longitudinal studies

Unfortunately, there have not been a lot of large-scale mother tongue programmes that have been evaluated in developing countries. What is needed is identification of specific methodologies and approaches for teaching specific languages in particular contexts, and how to best transition children to learning a second or foreign language.

Most evaluations assess programmes after students have been in them for one or two years and they fail to track students to see what happens by the fourth, fifth and sixth year of school; and beyond.

4. What are the best strategies for instruction in second language?

Thomas and Collier (2002, 2004, etc) show that most new programmes work well for the first few years of a student's school life – i.e. for the first 2-3 years of primary school. Progress tapers off and flattens in year 4 and goes into a decline by year 5 onwards – unless the mother tongue is retained as a medium of instruction for at least 50% of school/academic study – and this needs to continue at least until the student has reached the end of year 6 (in middle class, well-resourced contexts; and at least year 8 in less well-resourced/poor contexts).

The best way to ensure successful learning of a second language is to support the first language as a medium of instruction for as long as possible (minimum 6 years) while simultaneously offering quality second language instruction (by teachers who themselves are good models of the second language). The second language can be introduced from early on – first Grade of school (no need to delay) – but only as a subject for part of the day, not as a medium.

Why and How Africa Should Invest in African Languages and Multilingual Education. An Evidence and Practice Based Policy Brief

Ouane A & Glanz C, UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, 2010

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001886/188642e.pdf>

This brief is the product of an in-depth research and consultation process, which was initiated in 2005 and carried out in consultation with experts – the majority from Africa – in language, education and publishing and African Ministries of Education. It addresses seven common concerns about mother-tongue-based multilingual education in sub-Saharan. It also draws on

a broad array of experiences and sources from around the world. The focus on African experiences redresses the mistake made so often in the past: namely, the practice of applying to this continent research results from regions with very different linguistic contexts and learning environments. Drawing on research results from Africa, the brief makes concrete suggestions as to how education systems can be shaped to foster individual and social development in African contexts.

2. Key Readings

Efficient Learning for the Poor, Insights from the Frontier of Cognitive Neuroscience

Abadzi H, World Bank, 2006

Not Available Online

Chapter 6

In many countries, including most in Africa and the South Pacific, the lingua franca is foreign to everyone. In some countries students may study in their mother tongues in lower primary Grades and then switch to lingua franca for all Grades. The latter is preferred in much of Africa.

Introductory points:

- There are definite advantages to learning a second language at an early age. Non-native students in primary and secondary years become fluent in about a year and eventually competently master a language. With help, they may be able to catch up with students studying in their native language, although the latter double their vocabulary every two years between Grades 1 and 5, and by Grade 5 know 40,000 words. However, the literacy rate among speakers of minority languages worldwide is low, reported at 20-30 percent.
- Proficiency in a first language predicts success in studying a second. Better-off children can benefit from bilingualism because a second language added to a rich knowledge of a first language results in complex knowledge networks (*additive bilingualism*). But poor children often have a limited vocabulary in their first language, so a second language may replace elements of the first (*subtractive bilingualism*).
- Beginning learners and readers must quickly reach a threshold of language knowledge where they start to learn subject matter from context. Research on students with English as a second language shows that in English, with just 1,000 words, one covers 72 percent of the text. But to successfully guess the meaning of unknown words, at least 95 percent coverage is needed.
- When students know only limited grammar and vocabulary, it is not even possible to create a basis on which to peg complex concepts, and the classes may get stuck in a simple level of discourse. Sometimes problems are not obvious as children's ability to repeat sequences verbatim can fool adults, making them believe that children actually know what they say.
- Instructional languages with orthographic complexities spell trouble. Official languages have often been written for centuries, resulting in irregular spelling. Most of the school time in sub-Saharan Africa is taken up with language and spelling instruction, such as putting the right accents on French. Neglected African languages tend to be phonetically written and very suitable for reading instruction.
- Phonological awareness and decoding skills transfer from one language and script to another. However, visual features such as letter shapes do not transfer.

The benefits of bilingual education:

- U.S. students receiving instruction in a native language and English at different times of the day were found to make the most dramatic gains in reading performance

compared to their English-only peers. This research is pertinent to multilingual low-income countries.

- Students who arrived in the US between ages 8 and 11, and who had received at least 2–5 years of schooling in their native language and home country, were the best achievers and took only 5-7 years to catch up in English. Those who arrived before age 8 required 7-10 years or more to catch up. Younger children had received little or no formal schooling in their primary language which appeared to be a significant predictor in these studies.
- Deficiencies in the second language may not be apparent in lower Grades, but they increase after Grade 4-5, when the concepts become more challenging. Merely immersing students in a second language or giving them separate intensive language instruction results in low reading scores many years later.
- Research suggests that a very effective model of language introduction is 10 percent of foreign language in Grade 1, gradually increasing to 20 percent, 30 percent, 40 percent, and 50 percent by Grade 5. Students who start school performing at Grade level and receive such gradual bilingual education will catch up with English-language students by Grade 5.

The *pédagogie convergente* of Mali gradually introduces French and reduces the local languages, but also introduces more 'student-centered' strategies. Despite a lack of political support, textbooks, and training, students have a much lower repetition rate (3.7 percent versus 18.1 percent of French-speaking classes) and dropout (1.6 percent versus 5.7 percent of French-speaking classes). At the end of the first year, about 69 percent were promoted compared to about 52 percent of French-language schools. Classroom observations showed high rates of student engagement and writing skills in French, in contrast to French-only schools. Although the *pédagogie convergente* students are mainly rural and periurban, they scored slightly above French-only students in Grade 6 standardised achievement tests conducted in French. *Pédagogie convergente* nominally costs 80 percent more to teach because of materials and teacher training, but it costs 27 percent less when repetition rates are considered. However, political support for this programme has been limited.

The positive results of literacy in mother tongues are evident in a programme piloted in 800 schools in Zambia. The children learned to read just in local languages in Grade 1 while learning English orally at the same time. Efforts were made to use instructional time well and employ interactive, 'student-centered' methods. English writing was introduced in Grade 2. The results were astounding. In 1999, students read on average two Grade levels below their Grade level in English and three Grades below their Grade level in Zambian languages; but in 2002, student's reading and writing scores were 575 percent above baseline for Grade 2, 417 percent for Grade 3, 300 percent for Grade 4, and 165 percent for Grade 5. Scores in Zambian languages ranged from 780 percent above baseline for Grade 1 to 218 percent in Grade 5. Subsequently, the programme was introduced to all schools of the country.

Governments seem unable to reconcile political issues with instructional outcomes, particularly since the children of the officials themselves usually have little difficulty with the foreign language in school. Parental preferences pose an unexpected obstacle in bilingual education. In the words of one Senegalese father during an IEG evaluation mission, "*The child already knows Wolof; what is the use of studying in Wolof?*" Parents with limited or no education may expect a higher status or better family income if their children are educated in the official language. Frequently, the strong objections to local-language instruction are due to concerns that the language may acquire political importance in areas which try to set tribal differences aside. Reactions against national languages in Africa have been widespread and have resulted in reversal of programmes in Guinea and Madagascar. However, the success of programmes in Zambia, Mali, and Burkina Faso are encouraging.

Policy implications:

- Immersion languages with spelling complexities should be avoided for the poor at all costs.
- Logistics to teach multiple languages may be complex, but ultimately mother tongue instruction in the early Grades may prove cheaper. The cost-effectiveness of bilingual education needs to be calculated, taking into account the costs of Grade repetition and social costs of illiteracy.
- Teaching children the basics in a mother tongue includes the use of dialects. Children also need to be taught the change patterns between the dialect and mainstream language and learn to use them consciously.
- A communication strategy involving mass media is needed to explain to parents the rationale for mother tongue instruction and underline its utility if children are to learn the official language sufficiently well to progress in their studies.

Early Reading: Igniting Education for All, A report by the Early Grade Learning Community of Practice

Gove A & Cvelich P, Research Triangle Institute, 2011
<http://www.rti.org/pubs/early-reading-report-revised.pdf>

Results are not specifically looking at language differences but results from different languages in the same country are reported, see Chapter 3 p12-15.

3. Arguments and evidence around school language

ASER (2011) The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) Pakistan 2010, Lahore: South Asian Forum for Education Development

Ball, H. (2010) Enhancing learning of children from diverse language backgrounds: Mother tongue-based bilingual or multilingual education in the early years. Analytical review commissioned by UNESCO Basic Education Division, Paris: UNESCO

Benson, C. (2004) The Importance of Mother-Tongue Based Schooling for Educational Quality, Background paper for EFA Global Monitoring Report 2005, Paris: UNESCO
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Cummins, J. (2000) BICS and CALP: <http://www.iteachilearn.com/cummins.bicscalp.html>

McLaughlin, B. (1992) *Myths and Misconceptions about Second-Language Learning: What every teacher needs to unlearn*, Educational Practice Report 5. Santa Cruz: University of California. <http://people.ucsc.edu/~ktellez/epr5.htm>

Martin, M.O., Mullis, I.V.S., & Foy, P. (with Olson, J.F., Erberber, E., Preuschoff, C., & Galia, J.) (2008) Chapter 4: Students' Backgrounds and Attitudes Towards Science. Chestnut Hill, MA: TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center, Boston College.

Ouane, A. and Glanz, C. (2010). Why and how Africa should invest in African languages and multilingual education: An evidence- and practice-based policy advocacy brief. UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning & Association for the Development of Education in Africa, http://www.unesco.org/ui/en/UJLPDF/unesco/publication/AfricanLanguages_MultilingualEducation_pab.pdf

Patrinos, H.; Velez, E.; (1996). Costs and benefits of bilingual education in Guatemala: a partial analysis. World Bank: Human Capital Development Working Paper No. 74.

Pinnock, H. (2009) Language and Education: The Missing Link, CfBT and Save the Children http://www.cfbt.com/evidenceforeducation/our_research/evidence_for_government/integrating_services/language_and_education.aspx

Webley, K. (2006) *Mother tongue first: Children's right to learn in their own languages*. id21 Development Research Reporting Service, UK

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Smits, J., Huisman, J, and Kruijff, K. (2008). *Home language and education in the developing world*. Background paper for the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2009, Overcoming Inequality: Why Governance Matters. UNESCO.

4. Literacy and language

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Ochoa, C. and Shrestha, D. N. (2010) Language and Early Grades Literacy Acquisition in Nepal. Paper given at International Conference on Language, Education and the Millennium Development Goals. Bangkok: SEAMEO
http://www.seameo.org/LanguageMDGConference2010/doc/track/Track1/Language_and_Early_Grades_Literacy_Acquisition_in_Nepal.pdf

UNESCO. (2006). Promoting literacy in multilingual settings. Bangkok: UNESCO

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5. Second language teaching and learning

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<http://www.edqual.org/publications/presentations/textbooks.pdf>

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6. Mother tongue based multilingual education programmes

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http://www.sil.org/asia/ldc/parallel_papers/dumatog_and_dekker.pdf

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http://www.hsrc.ac.za/HSRC_Review_Article-14.shtml

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Walter, S. (2000). *Explaining multilingual education: information on some tough questions*. In *Work Papers of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, University of North Dakota Session 2000*. Vol 44. Online. URL: <http://www.und.edu/dept/linguistics/wp/2000Walter.PDF>

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Walter, S.L., and K.M. Roth. (2008) *Results of the first year of the Kom experimental education project*. Dallas: SIL

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7. Practical strategies to help multilingual education succeed

Durrnian, T, (2007), Mother Language First: Towards achieving EFA for Adivasi children in Bangladesh, Dhaka: Khagrachari Hill District Council, Zabarang Kalyan Samity and Save the Children, available at:

[http://www.crin.org/docs/Mother%20Language%20First%20\(English\).pdf](http://www.crin.org/docs/Mother%20Language%20First%20(English).pdf)

Kwintessential (2009): Philippines Scrap Bilingual Education

<http://www.kwintessential.co.uk/applied-languages/2009/07/philippines-scrap-bilingual-education/>

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http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/en/54_7939.htm

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http://www.seameo.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=404&Itemid=1

UNESCO (2007), Advocacy Kit for Promoting Multilingual Education: Including the Excluded, Bangkok: UNESCO Bangkok

Jim Cummins, Modern Language Centre, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto

<http://home.oise.utoronto.ca/~jcummins/cummins.htm>

A Cummins paper: Educational Implications of Mother Tongue Maintenance in Minority Language Groups, Canadian Modern Language Review 34 (3).

Abstract:

http://eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/search/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=EJ183530&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=EJ183530

A study based on two hypotheses: (1) The cognitive and academic effects of bilingualism are mediated by the levels of competence attained in the first and second languages, and (2) the development of skills in a second language is a function of skills already developed in the first language.

James Crawford's Language Policy Website and Forum

<http://www.languagepolicy.net>

'Lily Wong Fillmore Breaks New Ground in Work with Native Children in Alaska'

News from the Graduate School of Education, University of California

http://gse.berkeley.edu/admin/publications/termpaper/spring00/fillmore_alaska.html

Stephen Krashen's Theory of Second Language Acquisition
<http://www.sk.com.br/sk-krash.html>

An introduction to the work of Stephen Krashen
<http://esl.fis.edu/teachers/support/krashen.htm>

8. Other Useful Resources

Cognitive Effects of Bilingualism: How Linguistic Experience Leads to Cognitive Change

Bialystock E. *The International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism* 10(3), 2007
<http://people.westminstercollege.edu/students/sm0528/Cog%20Effects%20of%20Bilingual%20Ed.pdf>

Bilingual Children's Mother Tongue: Why is it important for education?

Cummins J, *SPROGFORUM* NR. 9, 2001
<http://www.fiplv.org/Issues/CumminsENG.pdf>

Bilingual Education in West Africa: Does It Work?

Hovens M, 2001
<http://bit.ly/kiqRRw>

What Teachers Need to Know about Language

Fillmore LW, ERIC, 2000
<http://bit.ly/mpzLWp>

Hispanic Kindergarten Students: The Relationship Between Educational, Social, and Cultural Factors and Reading Readiness in English

Gouleta E, *NABE Journal of Research and Practice* 2(1), 2004
<http://njrp.tamu.edu/2004/PDFs/Gouleta.pdf>

NABE NEWS, February/March 2010

<http://bit.ly/lDglNX>
Indigenous Bilingual Education in Vietnam, Eirini Gouleta

Bilingual Education in China: The Tibetan Experience

Gouleta, E, 2008, Presentation of DFID project

Language of Learning, Language of Instruction: Implications for Achieving Education for All

Human Development Network, The World Bank, 2006

Optimizing Learning and Education in Africa – the Language Factor, A Stock-taking Research on Mother Tongue and Bilingual Education in Sub-Saharan Africa

Alidou H, ADEA, 2006
http://www.adeanet.org/adeaPortal/adea/downloadcenter/Ouga/B3_1_MTBLE_en.pdf

In Chapter 2, Wolff aims to (i) establish the normality of multilingualism for the majority of children in Africa, (ii) draw attention to various factors that tend to impede the formulation and implementation of adequate and socio-culturally integrated language and language-in-education policies, and (iii) highlight the necessity of making language a central issue in all developmental discourse.

Chapter 3 looks at language education models in Africa and the use of African languages through these models. She analyses the different models in light of their design feature, potential outcomes, and their synchrony with national education goal.

Chapter 4 presents classroom observation studies conducted in several countries in Africa (Benin, Burkina Faso, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, South Africa, Togo, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Ghana, and Botswana). They reveal that the use of unfamiliar languages forces teachers to use traditional and teacher-centred teaching methods which undermine teachers' effort to teach and students' effort to learn. Teachers do most of the talking while children remain silent or passive participants during most of the classroom interactions. Because children do not speak the languages of instruction (LOI), teachers are also forced to use traditional teaching techniques such as chorus teaching, repetition, memorisation, recall, code-switching and safe talk. In this context, authentic teaching and learning cannot take place. Such situation accounts largely for the school ineffectiveness and low academic achievement experienced by students in Africa.

In Chapter 5, the authors analyse the relationship between the LOI and teaching and learning. The findings of both authors confirm what international research on learning and many African teachers also suggests: When asked to draw a profile of an effective primary teacher, Ghanaian tutors placed "mastery of local language", "knowledge and respect of child's culture, "loving and caring" at the same level as "mastery of subjects and methodologies"

Chapter 6's main focus is the alternative delivery mode encompassing the language factor provided by non formal education (NFE) systems that cater to children who have either dropped out of school or never had the chance to go to schools. In this chapter, Boly examines a variety of models used in the NFE system in Africa in regard to the LOI and looks at what the NFE system can bring to the formal system. Based on the review of the existing literature, Boly states that there are many different models of NFE in Africa going from those mirroring very closely the formal school system and those evolving entirely outside of any formal education.

In Chapter 7, the author looks at issues related to publishing in African Languages in the context of the current education policies and by analysing the role of key actors, their strengths and weaknesses and making some recommendations on how to improve the situation. Strengthening the African publishing sector is a key aspect in building the African language industry which will provide the education sector with relevant teaching and learning material and whether it will be a key player in creating a meaningful literate environment.

Heugh explores some of the issues around the costs of implementing both successful and unsuccessful language education programmes and outlines some of the initiatives and strategies which can be taken, with minimal cost implications in Chapter 8.

A Better Way to Teach Children to Read? Evidence from a Randomized Controlled Trial

He F, Linden LL & MacLeod M, Columbia University, 2009

<http://www.columbia.edu/~ll2240/Teach%20Children%20to%20Read.pdf>

Advocacy Kit for Promoting Multilingual Education, Including the Excluded

UNESCO 2007

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001521/152198e.pdf>

Enhancing learning of children from diverse language backgrounds: Mother tongue-based bilingual or multilingual education in the early years

Ball J, UNESCO, 2010

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001869/186961e.pdf>

Final Report Study on Medium of Instruction in Primary School in Ethiopia

Heugh K et al. Commissioned by the Ministry of Education, 2006

http://www.hsrb.ac.za/research/output/outputDocuments/4379_Heugh_Studyonmediumofinstruction.pdf

First language education in Lubuagan, Northern Philippines

Dumatog RC & Dekker DE, 2003

http://www.sil.org/asia/lbc/parallel_papers/dumatog_and_dekker.pdf

Home Language and Education in the Developing World

Smits J, Huisman J & Kruijff K, UNESCO Background paper prepared for the Education for All Global Monitoring Report, 2009

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0017/001787/178702e.pdf>

Improving the Literacy of Mother Tongue-based Literacy and Learning. Case Studies from Asia, Africa and Latin America

UNESCO, 2008

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0017/001777/177738e.pdf>

Language and education: the missing link, How the language used in schools threatens the achievement of Education For All

Pinnock H with Vijayakumar G, Save the Children, 2009

http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/en/docs/Language_Education_the_Missing_Link.pdf

The Impact of Language of Instruction, Teacher Training and Textbooks on Quality of Learning in Africa

Language of Instruction and Quality of Learning in Tanzania And Ghana, EdQual Policy Brief No. 2, 2010

<http://www.edqual.org/publications/policy-briefs/pb2.pdf>

In Their Own Language...Education for All

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Action Research on Mother Tongue-based Education: Achieving Quality, Equitable Education

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Language of Instruction Briefing Paper, Language of instruction as the key to educational quality: Implementing mother tongue-based multilingual education

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(Available on the DFID Business Case Teamsite)

How can any educational intervention make an impact if the medium of literacy or instruction is a language that learners do not speak or understand? Effective learning requires communication between teachers and students. As most countries of the world are multilingual, those committed to quality education must therefore consider the key role played by learners' home languages in teaching and learning. The purpose of this policy brief is to discuss how mother tongue-based multilingual education (MLE) works, and how educational policymakers can be engaged in productive discussions about language issues.

The Role of Language of instruction in promoting quality and equity in primary education

Chapter 9 in Heymann, Jody and Cassola, Adèle (eds) (forthcoming, 2011) *Lessons in Educational Equality. Successful Approaches to Intractable Problems Around the World.*

Oxford UK: Oxford University Press

(Attached, NOT FOR CIRCULATION)

Includes:

- Introduction to language issues in education
- Why a foreign medium of instruction does not work
- How and why L1-based schooling works
- Multilingualism and multiculturalism in education for development
- Implementing multilingual schooling: The challenges

- Policymaking in educational development: Some underlying issues
- Conclusion and ways forward.

A National Study of School Effectiveness for Language Minority Students' Long-Term Academic Achievement

<http://escholarship.ucop.edu/uc/item/65j213pt;jsessionid=95F86F3EFC791287EB1FBDA8E483AE11>)

Quick Summary of Findings from the PM Grade 1 MTB-MLE Experiment Patani Malay MTB MLE program in southern Thailand Mahidol University, Bangkok

	Comparison	Treatment	Percent Gain	P value	R-Sq.
Reading	41.91	72.14	72.0	0.000	16.92
Math	39.96	52.94	32.5	0.000	10.44
Science	64.67	75.10	16.1	0.000	13.24
Social Science	52.12	68.37	31.2	0.000	19.58
Thai	37.62	56.80	51.0	0.000	10.68
Overall	49.20	69.81	41.9	0.000	19.44

Comparison: schools using the normal model (Thai-medium instruction)

Treatment: schools using PM as a medium of instruction

Percent Gain: extent to which the treatment scores surpass the comparison scores

P value: likelihood of this result being the product of a random variation in sampling or measurement

R-Sq.: amount of variance in the data accounted for by the experimental variable (language of instruction). Other sources of variance include school, instruction, ability of a given child, measurement, SES, absenteeism, etc.

The Bridge to Filipino and English Third Year Results of the First Language MLE Program in the Philippines

Summary results of the Grade 1 testing in Lubuagan, SY 2007-2008:

	Controls			Experimentals			Statistics	
	N	Mean	Percent	N	Mean	Percent	T-test	P
Reading	73	8.97	52.76	69	12.83	75.47	6.86	0.000
Math	73	8.32	48.94	70	13.76	82.12	9.19	0.000
Filipino	73	6.85	57.08	70	8.21	68.42	3.42	0.001
Makabayan	73	6.95	57.92	70	9.77	81.42	8.12	0.000
English	73	8.97	52.76	70	12.31	72.41	5.88	0.000

The Kom Experimental Mother Tongue Education Project

Walter SL & Trammell K, 2010

Performance on standardised tests administered to both Standard and Experimental (KEPP) schools in 2010:

Test Component	Class 1			Class 2			Class 3		
	Standard	KEPP	Gain (%)	Standard	KEPP	Gain (%)	Standard	KEPP	Gain (%)
Language Arts	8.5	61.8	627	27.5	62.0	125	19.9	40.6	104
Math	11.1	44.9	305	26.0	66.5	156	21.8	49.5	127
Oral English	40.8	55.5	36.1	53.1	56.1	5.6	*	*	*
Overall Test	20.6	54.8	166	37.5	60.9	62	20.6	43.8	113

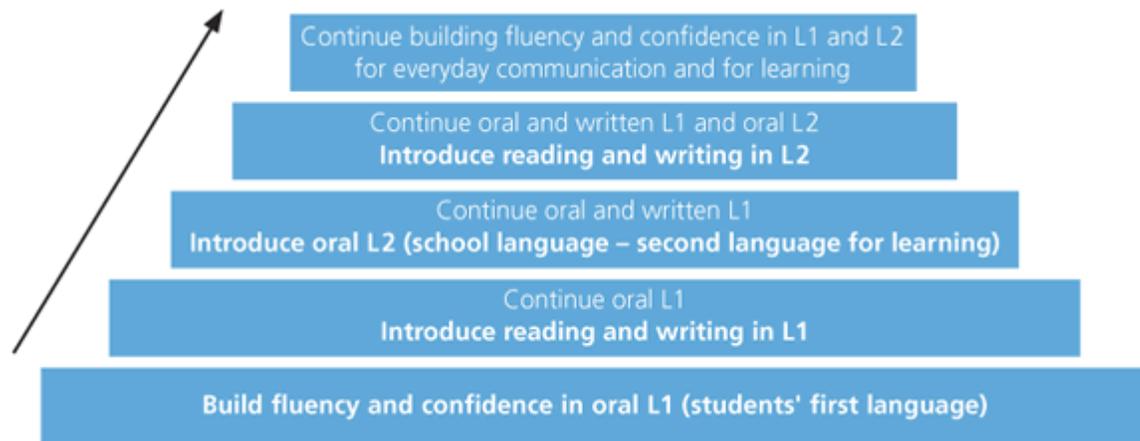
Bridging languages in education

Susan Malone, 2006, in id21 insights 'Mother tongue first: Children's right to learn in their own languages'
<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20090321144217/http://www.id21.org/insights/insights-ed05/art06.html>

In this article, Susan presents a framework for turning a monolingual system into a bilingual or trilingual one: mother tongue-based multilingual education (MLE). MLE programmes acknowledge the right of all learners to education in a language they speak and understand. Learners begin school in their home language and then add the official language of instruction, building fluency and competency in both languages for communication and learning.

In MLE programmes, learners begin school in the language they know best and use that language for initial literacy. Then the new language is added – first listening and speaking, then reading and writing. As learners gain confidence in using the official language for everyday communication, they also learn the vocabulary and grammatical constructions for more abstract academic concepts.

Five phases are identified in bridging between languages in MLE:



In schools with L1 teachers who are not fluent in the official school language, the language education component of primary level MLE might look like the table below:

Kindergarten	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
Develop oral L1	Continue oral L1	Continue oral and written L1	Continue oral and written L1, oral L2	Continue oral and written L1 and L2	Continue oral and written L1, L2, L3	Continue oral and written L1, L2, L3
	Introduce written L1	Introduce oral L2	Introduce written L2	Introduce oral L3	Introduce written L3	
L1 as LOI	L1 as LOI	L1 as LOI	L1 and some L2 as LOI	L1 and L2 as LOI	L2 with L1 as LOI	L2 with L1 as LOI

Manual for Developing Literacy and Adult Education Programmes in Minority Language Communities

Malone, S, 2004, UNESCO: Bangkok

<http://www2.unescobkk.org/elib/publications/minoritylanguage/index.htm>

9. Additional information

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