

# Mother Tongue Instruction in Philippine Schools

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Experiments/studies on the use of Mother Tongues/  
vernacular languages as medium of instruction (MOI)

- Major studies/policies that touched on MTs as MOI

Swanson Survey (1960)

PCSPE (1970)

The Revised Elementary Education Program (1970)

The Bilingual Education Policy of 1987

The EDCOM recommendation (1991)

The PCER recommendations (2000)

- Analysis

Why the premium on English?

MT an initial language of literacy

“Education for All” and notions of language aptitude & intelligence  
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New perspectives for the education of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century learner

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## Background

Philippine experiments/studies on the use of the Mother Tongue/  
Vernacular as MOI

- The Iloilo Experiment (1948-1954)

After the first year, as an MOI, local vernacular (Hiligaynon) produced better teaching results than did English.

At the end of three years, the experimental group (Hiligaynon as MOI group) caught up with the Control group (the English as MOI group) in knowledge of English.

General Conclusion: Teach initially in the MT for optimum results.

The Experimental group, which received two years of instruction in the MT, was behind the Control group after 4 years, in Reading, Language and Math, but showed better achievement results by the end of Grade 6; they were more interested, extroverted, dominant and more emotionally stable and mature than the Control group.

- **The Rizal experiment, Part II (1960-1966)**

Pupils subjected to MT instruction (Tagalog) did not learn significantly better than those taught entirely in English.

- **Other Studies**

**De Guzman(1998):** The advantage of instruction in the indigenous language was shown, but also the disadvantage of sustaining it because Science and Mathematics were meant to be taught in English.

Espiritu (1994): Her survey showed that teachers:

- commonly used their respective vernacular as auxiliary medium of instruction as per BEP
- were not in favor of EDCOM's recommendation to use the vernaculars as MOI in the first 3 grades as it was thought to promote regionalization and hinder the growth of Filipino

**Bautista (1986):** There was more student talk in Filipino-instructed classes than in English-instructed classes.

**Santos (1984):** Teachers in Region III (Central Luzon area) use the vernacular to present new content with frequent repetitions of questions and sentences in order to elicit responses from pupils, but Filipino and English were found to be reinforcing media.

**Casquejo (1981):** Vernacular instruction enhanced Manobo pupils' ability to read and speak Pilipino. V/(MT) instruction:

- contributed positively to overall academic success.
  - helped develop positive attitudes toward their own language and culture.
- lent support to using the vernacular as a bridge to bilingualism.

**Mogol (1977):** Filipino was the more effective medium of instruction and encouraged a higher level of teacher-pupil interaction. The Filipino-instructed group, like their English-instructed counterpart, demonstrated high levels of thinking, rate, fluency, and clarity of classroom interaction.

In 1956-1957, all public schools followed the Iloilo experiment.

With MT instruction, children progressed rapidly in reading and writing. Parents, initially opposed to vernacular instruction, were eventually won over when they saw the positive results.

In 1954, public school teachers in the Division of Laguna, said that the vernacular/(MT):

- simplifies the language problem

- promotes spontaneous expression among pupils

- is an effective instrument to reduce illiteracy

- reduces serious teaching difficulties

- is an effective bridge between home and school

## Major studies that touched on the use of MTs as MOI

### Swanson Survey (1960)

Recommended the use of the vernacular as MOI in the early grades and as an auxiliary medium when needed but never as a substitute for instruction in English and Filipino.

### Presidential Commission to Survey Philippine Education (PCSPE 1970)

Suggested the use of the vernacular in the first two grades; recommended pre-service and in-service teacher education programs to train teachers in the use of vernaculars as MOI

## **Revised Elementary Education Program (REEP) of 1970**

Prescribed the use of the vernacular as MOI in Grades 1 and 2 with English and Pilipino taught as subjects

## **The Bilingual Education Policy of 1987 (DECS Order No. 52, s. 1987)**

Allowed the use of the eight major languages as auxiliary language rather than all the vernaculars, specifically as the initial languages of literacy

## **The EDCOM Recommendation**

To pave the way for Filipino becoming the medium of instruction,

“In Grades 1, 2 and 3, the vernacular shall be the medium of instruction for all subjects, with Filipino as a separate subject and auxiliary medium of instruction.”

## The PCER Recommendations re the Medium of Instruction

“Where applicable and where there exists a strong support system, use the regional lingua franca or vernacular as MOI for Grade 1, English and Filipino shall be taught as separate subjects.

A strong support system for the use of a regional lingua franca or vernacular implies the existence of the following conditions:

- Prepared teachers
- Tested teaching materials
- Logistical support ...“

Languages, including Regional Linguae Francae that already have initial instructional/reading materials may be used as MOI to develop basic literacy.

## Analysis

- Why the premium on English?
- The bearing of an MT on literacy development
- “Education for All” perspective and the concepts of language aptitude & intelligence and multiple intelligences
- New perspectives for education of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century learner

## Conclusions

In the Philippines, material and manpower resources for teaching and learning through the MT exist that just need to be tapped.

The MT is acknowledged to be an effective bridge language to cognitive learning, even to second language learning.

With MT as the “known” factor, learning will proceed to the “unknown” in a relatively smooth fashion.

## Recommendations

Carry out experiments re length of time spent on MT as MOI (i.e., in Grades 1 to 3 (EDCOM's recom), or only in Grade 1 (PCER's recom) to see which has greater efficacy.

Activate the search for, and development of, material and manpower resources for MT/vernacular instruction.

Conduct teacher training programs for MT/vernacular teaching with a built in monitoring and evaluation (M & E) component.

Tap groups/organizations, e.g., INNOTECH, SIL, the ICC (Indigenous Cultural Community) and similar groups in every LGU to lend expertise re materials development and teacher training.

Get parents and the community involved in their children's MT learning activities.

Adopt an expanded framework for MT not only as an MOI but as a bridge language of instruction (cf. SEAMEO's framework).