ENGLISH TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE MOTHER TONGUE-BASED EDUCATION POLICY IN THE PHILIPPINES

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ABSTRACT

The instruction of English in the Philippines causes quite some challenges to scholars due to its rich linguistic diversity. With more than 180 languages currently recorded in the country, linguistic power struggle is unavoidable, although it may be silent. To make the situation even more complex, the Philippine Government recently launched a new educational policy that promotes learning in mother tongues in earlier years of primary education. While this policy is based on sound research, it poses quite some challenges to linguists due to the various linguistic backgrounds found in almost every classroom around the nation. This survey research investigated 467 English teachers' perceptions about the importance of this policy. Findings were inconclusive on teachers' perception about the policy's importance on general learning and the nation's preparedness. Findings were positive, however, about teachers' perceptions about the role this policy plays on first language learning, students' culture, and the Philippines as a nation.

Keywords: Mother tongue-based education, multilnigual education, MTB-MLE, language policy, Philippines, survey research, English teachers, multilingualism.

INTRODUCTION

The Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) policy is complex from different perspectives. The policy poses challenges of instructional materials development, teacher training, and language instruction; just to name a few. Instructional materials are available in few languages. Each classroom has the representation of several linguistic backgrounds. Classroom teachers are split on whether or not MTB-MLE is right for them and their students. While exciting promises have been made about the great value of MTB-MLE, many questions remain unanswered.

In a recent SWOT Analysis study of the current state of affairs of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) in the Philippines, results showed that the MTB-MLE policy is also creating quite a number of challenges for English teachers (Wa-Mbaleka, 2014). While excellence in English has been reported about the Philippines, both academically and from business perspective, the MTB-MLE policy seems to cause some concern to English language experts. This survey research study investigated the perceptions of English teachers on MTB-MLE policy. This investigation provides important insight on the implementation of the MTB-MLE policy from the Englsih teacher's pespective. Their perspective is important for the policy because this policy has a direct impact on how English will be taught from now on.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

About a decade ago, the world was believed to have between 6,000 and 7,000 languages (UNESCO, 2005a). Of those thousands of languages, only 300 were widely spoken by 90%

of the people worldwide. Back then, about 50% were classified as endangered languages. This statistics may be even worse today, a decade later. Six in ten of the endangered languages were found in the Asia-Pacific region. This discovery led to the important focus on major concepts such as "first language first", "mother tongue first bilingual education", and "mother-tongue based bilingual education" (UNESCO, 2005a, p. v). A decade later, the impact is felt in publications, academic conferences, and more importantly in national language policies. Today, theorists, researchers, scholars, educators, and politicians are all involved in the discussion of mother tongue-based education (MTBE).

Foundations of Mother Tongue-Based Education

In different publications, UNESCO has been consistent in their claim on the commitment to the support of MTBE and multilingual education and the diversity that is reflected in different languages and cultures (Ball, 2010; UNESCO, 2005a, 2005b, 2007, 2010). UNESCO is even more interested with disadvantaged groups of people. It is no surprise that one of the Millenium Development Goals is on offering universal primary education, while promoting MTBE.

Citing from wa Thiong'o (1992), Alexander (1994), and Achebe (1992)—three of some of the most influential linguistics on the African continent—Phillipson (1996) reiterated that only a couple of decades ago, 90% of Africans spoke only African languages, 70% of South Africans understood Zulu, while the arbitrary classification of different types of English in Africa was incorrect. More than half a century after UNESCO declared the importance of MTBE for minority children, "and despite a plethora of books, articles, numerous conventions, declarations and recommendations addressing this issue… most African countries continue to use" the European languages inherited from the colonizers (UNESCO, 2010, p. 4). While some may see it as an opportunity offered to Africans to contribute to the global discourse, others see this as neocolonialism. For them, African languages face stigmatization because of English imperialism (Phillipson, 1992, 1996). Yet, all languaguages are expected to have equal right to be "protected, respected and developed" (McIlwraith, 2013, p. 7). This situation has led parents in some Asian countries, for instance, to the hard choice between fighting English imperialism or accepting English because of the socio-economic opportunities that it provides (Li, 2002).

In the case of Africa, "there are objective, historical, political, psycho-social and strategic reasons to explain this state of affairs… including their colonial past and the modern-day challenge of globalization" (UNESCO, 2010, p. 5). This is despite the understanding that proficiency in one's mother tongue (L1) is known to be somehow beneficial to second language (L2) learning and the protection of indigenous languages (Kirkpatrick, 2008, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c, 2011a, 2011b; Nunan, 2009).

UNESCO (2007) gives some strong reasons why MTBE and multilingual education should be promoted around the world, in the countries that offer a multilingual setting. With UNESCO's "Education for All" policy, everyone has the right to quality education, preferably in their own mother tongue. According to UNESCO, this is even more important for minority groups who are often disadvantaged with national educational programs. While students from minority or indigenous groups try to learn to read and write, they must do so in a language new to them. This double challenge does not help them learn effectively and efficiently. According to UNESCO, such a disadvantageous educational system can only lead students from minority groups to higher levels of illiteracy, dropouts, poverty and undesirable

life (UNESCO, 2003, 2005a, 2007). Such system affects female students even more in many minority group settings (UNESCO, 2005b).

Citing a speech by Luis Enrique López, Dutcher (2001) outlines five major reasons why MTBE should be promoted (p. 9). First, with MTBE, young learners develop strong L1 competencies. Those learners perform well in all subjects. They develop a higher level of self-estem. They develop a solid foundation on which all additional languages can be built if the students want to learn an additional language. Last, MTBE promotes more participation of the parents and community in the school activities. In the case of the Philippines, however, this may not necessary be as attractive as it sounds because one classroom can easily have the representation of more than five linguistic backgrounds. MTBE seems to be more challenging in such multilingual settings (Ghimire, 2012), unlike settings where both students and teachers share the same local language (Kang, 2012). In fact, while long-term effects of MTBE may have been proven in Western countries, it has not been clearly conclusive in countries of the South (D. Malone, 2008).

In the case of MTB-MLE in the Philippines, Mahboob and Cruz (2013) believe that due to the last century that was mainly focused on English instruction, this new policy is a major paradigm shift. According to them, the success of MTB-MLE will highly depend on the change in attitude towards languages. This is a conclusion they reached after their study revealed some positive attitude towards the MTB-MLE policy.

Challenges of Mother Tongue-Based Education

Despite the many benefits outlined for MTBE, it also presents some drawbacks (S. Malone & Paraide, 2011; Oyzon & Fullmer, 2014; Wa-Mbaleka, 2014) that can not be ignored in this discussion. First, instructional materials are not readily available in the majority of local languages. Second, teachers are not trained in the local languages used for instruction where they teach. Third, primary school teachers may not have solid training on L1 or L2 learning research and theories. Fourth, some local languages may not be perceived as important for formal education. Last, parents may see MTBE as a disadvantage for future employability where English is highly valued. All these are major issues that any government promoting an MTBE policy must take into consideration. Ignoring any of them can certainly lead to certain failure.

Although a strong proponent of MTB-MLE and although optimistic about the success of this policy in the Philippines, Nolasco (2008) concluded that "the road to multi-literacy and multi-lingual education in the Philippines will be a difficult and tortuous one" (p. 13). Challenges listed above are easily seen in many places around the nation today. The turmoil is already happening. The future of MTB-MLE, however, will be determined by how the Philippine government is able to handle the turmoil.

English in the Philippines

The historical foundations of English instruction in the Philippines are usually traced back to the American occupation era, although some scholars may debate that (Bernardo, 2004). At least, Americans are known to have made the first attempt to formally teach English to the Filipino people. This instruction was meant to "civilize" the Filipino people. Just like it is still the case today (Wa-Mbaleka, 2014), English instructional materials for students whose L1 is not English were almost nonexistent (Bernardo, 2004). English was also introduced in order

to create a level ground for all the different Philippine linguistic groups. This practice was common during and after the colonization era in many parts of the world (Kachru, 1990; Kachru, Kachru, & Nelson, 2009).

In the contribution to the discussion of the English-only policy that was looming in the government, a famous linguist called Jose V. Aguillar conducted some experiments in the early 1950s, teaching students in the Hiligaynon language in Iloilo City (Bernardo, 2004). The positive findings of these experiments would influence the language policy in the Philippines in the years and decades to come. Interestingly enough, as MTB-MLE discussion became heated, another study led to positive findings in favor of the policy where the students' L1 was used to teach Math (Espada, 2012). Walter and Dekker (2011) also found students who were involved in MTB-MLE performed significantly better than those who were not, although they believe that some of the success may have been due to the quality of the teachers. Besa (2013) also referred to another recent study that led to positive outcome in learning in a high school, but with the use of code switching between L1 and L2.

Although the discussion continues to go in all directions on whether or not MTB-MLE, some challenges remain today as they were when MTBE and English only were first introduced in the Philippines, as in other similar multilingual settings in Africa, Asia, and even Europe (Brigham & Castillo, 1999; Gacheche, 2010; Ghimire, 2012; KIrkgoz, 2009; Liddicoat, 2007; Nunan, 2003; Wa-Mbaleka, 2014). First, English is taught as a set of structures rather than being taught from a functional or pragmatic perspective. Students are led to know about the language more than they know how to utilize it. Second, since training in TESOL is highly limited in the country, English is not taught in the best way possible to learners whose L1 is not English. On the other hand, because most educators have not been taught how to teach L1 (or teach in L1), they either do not know how or they do not know the L1 technical language. This is a concern on many lips of educators who are asked to teach in a Philippine language different from the major three or four ones.

Next, because the Philippines has more than 180 languages, there is a *linguistic power struggle* between the languages. For instance, people in regions and provinces far away from Manila have some level of resistance towards Filipino, the national language. This attitude is due to the fact that probably more than 90% of Filipino words come from Tagalog, the language spoken primarily in Manila, the country's capital city. Only a third of Filipino people can speak Tagalog (Smolicz & Nical, 1997). Using Filipino, therefore, is seen as yielding too much power to the Tagalog linguistic group, which the rest of the country is not ready to do. On the issue of power, Martin (2012) indicates that legal work in the Philippines is done primarily in English, and sometimes with some code switching between English and Tagalog. More and more work is now being done in Filipino, but not in any other Philipine language. Last, with the Critical Period Theory (Gass & Selinker, 2001; Krashen, 1981; Nunan, 2009; Scovel, 1998), it seems appropriate to promote L2 learning at an early age. This early learning gives young learners a better chance to develop well their linguistic skills in more than one language.

English and Globalization

For those who view the spread of English in a positive way, English offers great opportunities, despite its stigmatizing effect (Carnajah, 1999; Jay, 2001; Kubota & McKay, 2009; Nunan, 2003). English is playing an important role in world economies, travel, and many institutions and organizations that deal with international and multinational issues. In

some Asian countries, an institution with students who have high English language proficiency is highly regarded (Cho, 2012; Wa-Mbaleka, 2014). According to Cho, promoting high English proficiency is sometimes a marketing tool for an institution to attract international students. This can explain the explosion of so-called international universities in Asia where English-only policy is enforced (Dearden, 2014; Kang, 2012).

The focus on English-only policy sometimes go to the extreme. In South Korea, the overemphasis on English-only policy in Korean universities has created so much stress on Korean students that Kang (2012) believes it may be cause of a number of student suicides. Any extreme, no matter the direction that is taken, usually leads to undesirable results.

English has sometimes been associated with national and international competitiveness, better quality of education, and better employment opportunities (Dawe, 2014; Gallego & Zubiri, 2011; Piller & Cho, 2012). When applying for a job in a multilingual country where English is an official language, candidates with a high command of English are certainly likely to take the job of those with a low command. With an astonishing and still-rising number of multinational business companies today, bilingual employees who know English seem to be favored.

Despite the prestigious position that English has assumed over a number of decades now (Finegan, 2011; Phillipson, 1992, 1996; Yule, 2014), it seems to be facing some new challenges as more and more emphasis is placed on mother-tongue based and multilingual education, at least in the primary education (UNESCO, 2005a, 2005b, 2007, 2010). Some newer scholars have surprisingly started pushing MTBE to go all the way to junior high school grades (McIlwraith, 2013). The discussion on when to stop MTBE and introduce English (or L2) seems to be never-ending.

UNESCO is probably the organization that has taken the major lead in the promotion of indigenous languages to enhance the development of literacy skills at the early age of the learners. Despite the seemingly conflicting findings of mother tongue-based education (MTBE) on learning in general (Burton, 2013), language learning, second language learning, and learning at different educational levels, UNESCO has kept a consistent position on its promotion.

Theoretical Framework

This study is based on a few theories that make it interesting to the field of TESOL. First, both the Input Hypothesis and the Critical Period Theory (Krashen, 1981, 1985, 1989; Nunan, 2009) propose something that seems to be fairly in contradiction with the MTB-MLE policy, as far as English teaching in the Philippines is concerned. According to the MTB-MLE policy, children learn better when they study in their own mother tongue. This policy is based on solid research that has been done in different countries around the world (Abadzi & Prouty, 2012).

On the other hand, Krashen's Input Hypothesis claims that for someone to learn a second language, or any language for that matter, they must have large exposure to the target language. Input should come from reading and listening, in this case. This view has already been supported by other scholars in the field (Paradis, 2004; Spada & Lightbown, 2002), although some believe that it is of course more than just input (Doughty & Long, 2003). So, with the limited number of hours of English teaching and the limited exposure to English

materials and English instruction in the MTB-MLE era, it is possible that English language learning will slow down in the Philippines. In fact, with this new policy, the number of hours for English instruction in the elementary school is believed to be considerably reduced (Wa-Mbaleka, 2014).

Krashen's Critical Period Theory claims that humans can easily learn a language up to a critical period, a period situated between puberty and end of adolescence (DeKeyser, 2000; Johnson & Newport, 1989; Krashen, 1981; Nunan, 2009; Scovel, 1998). Beyond that period, it becomes harder and harder to learn another language, although not impossible. From this perspective, it would be important to introduce English at an early age.

The Philipines has come to be known as the best provider of English teachers and English instruction in the whole Asia. Starting English language learning at later academic grades may negatively affect the learning of English in the country. This may have a negative impact in the preparation of students for tertiary education, given that higher education in the Philippines depends on English as the official medium of instruction. In fact, this can lead to a "clash of policies" (Besa, 2013) between MTB-MLE and English-only policies at the tertiary level.

Filipinos can easily be found working in several countries around the world. English has played a very important role in the international labor market that depends so highly on the Philippine human resources. Additionally, the Philippines is increasingly attracting foreigners. English is certainly playing a role in attracting the market to the Philippines from the socio-economic, socio-political, touristic and educational perpsectives. Maintaining an edge on English proficiency in the Philippines is therefore something that both the Philippine government and Philippine educators cannot overlook. This study provides important insights from English teachers, who are at the frontline of this challenge that the MTB-MLE policy poses to the English language teaching and learning in the Philippines.

The purpose of the current study was to investigate the perceptions of English teachers on the new language policy that went into effect a few years ago. MTB-MLE is a major educational change that involves all linguists, including applied linguists, under whom TESOL is found. It has some impact on the way English will have to be taught and learned in the Philippines. To train English teachers in the MTB-MLE era will require deep understanding of the intricacies of this new language policy. Understanding the views of English teachers about this policy provides some important insight for the training of Englih teachers and contribute new knowledge to the ongoing discussion of this new language policy. The following are the major research questions of the study.

1. How do English teachers view the impact of MTB-MLE policy on learning in general?
2. How do English teachers view the impact of MTB-MLE policy on language learning?
3. How do English teachers view the impact of MTB-MLE policy on the nation and its competitiveness on the global level?
4. How prepared is the Philippines for the implementation of MTB-MLE?

METHODOLOGY

To investigate the perceptions of language teachers about the MTB-MLE policy in the Philippines, three aspects were considered in this survey research. First, the study

investigated the English teachers' perceptions on the possible effect of policy on learning in general. Second, English teachers' perceptions on the effect of the policy on language learning was examined. Third, the study evaluated perceptions on the potential effect of the policy on the nation (inside and outside). Last, the focus of the study was on English teachers' perceptions on preparedness of the Philippines for the implementation of MTB-MLE.

Research Design

Considering the main purpose of the study, a survey design was used. A survey design is used when "investigators administer a survey to a sample or to the entire population of people to describe the attitudes, opinions, behaviors, or characteristics of the population" (Creswell, 2012, p. 376). A survey was the tool used to collect the data from English teachers. This design was preferred because the study is focused on English teachers' opinions – their perceptions.

Sampling

The population of this study was made of English teachers at the elementary, secondary, and tertiary levels. Random sampling was used to regions and schools accessible to the researcher and the research assistants. Data was collected from Manila, Cavite, Mindoro Occidental, Bacolod, and Davao. Research participants had to be English educators at any of the three educational levels. Recruitment of the participants was done through an email or phone call to school principals, English department heads, and TESOL Philippines national and regional association's directors. Participation was voluntary and a statement of the informed consent was included on the questionnaire. In the end, 467 teachers participated in the study.

Instrument

The survey used in this study was self-made. After it was made, it was given to three TESOL experts for improvement and validation. The final version of the survey, which comprised 22 questions, was a 4-point Likert Scale that varied from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". Before the 22 questions, a section was presented for demographics where participants needed to provide important information such as their gender, whether or not their college degree major was English, and the number of years they had been teaching. The Crownbach's alpha revealed quite a high coefficient of .96.

Data Collection

English teachers voluntarily participated in the survey. The survey took about 10 minutes for each participant. At some schools, the researcher or the research assistants gathered small groups of teachers who were interested in participating. In one setting, one research assistant collected separately the surveys from individuals due to their conflicting schedules. At two conferences, the researcher simply distributed the survey copies to the conference participants who were willing to participate in the study. They were enthusiastic about participating because most of them were English teachers.

In all the cases, permission was sought from the school administrators, department chairs, or the conference presidents. It was 100% return because participants filled their surveys before leaving the room where they gathered. Despite this high return, there were some missing

values in a few of the demographic data. These missing values explain the reason why some of the data presented below do not reflect the maximum sample size, which was 467.

Data Analysis

For the purpose of this study, SPSS was used to encode the data and run statistical analysis. To be able to address the research questions, the study relied on descriptive statistics, *t*-tests, and analysis of variances (ANOVA). Detailed results are presented below.

RESULTS

The study presented several interesting findings, which can be seen below. First, this paper presents demographic data needed to have a good understanding on the research participants. Second, this section presents the descriptive statistics. Additionally, the study presents some ANOVAs that were deemed important for the purpose of the study.

Demographics

The study included 467 participants. From this number, 392 were female teachers, 48 were male, and 27 did not report their gender. The majority of the participants came from the Luzon region of the Philippines (Northern side), with the representation of 324. Only 76 were from the Visayas (central Philippines) and 22 from Mindanao (south of the Philippines). Due to this large disparity of representation, no statistical analyses were based on the region of the participants.

Of the total sample, 259 teachers were non-English majors, 174 were English majors, and 34 did not report their majors. All the three levels of education were represented: 298 were elementary school teachers, 84 at the secondary, and 26 at the tertiary levels. Table 1 synthesizes some other important descriptive statistics related to gender, the teacher's L1, and teacher's major.

Table 1: *Descriptive Statistics of Gender, Teacher's L1 and Major*

	N	Mean	SD
Gender			
Male	48	2.45	.59
Female	391	2.76	.52
Teacher's Dialect			
Different	268	2.39	.51
Same	117	2.32	.56
College Major			
English	174	2.4	.63
Non-English	258	2.31	.42

From Table 1, it is evident that participants' replies did not differ significantly on all the three levels: gender, teacher's L1 and teacher's major. Whether teachers were male or female, it did not make any statistical difference in the findings. It did not matter whether or not the teacher's L1 was the same as the language required for instruction in his or her school. Last, the results were not statistically different whether or not teachers' college major had been English.

There was an interest in finding how teachers in the elementary, secondary, and tertiary levels addressed the issue. This analysis was especially important to examine whether there is some difference in the way educators of English at different levels of education differ. Table 2 presents the analysis of variance on the three categories.

Table 2: *ANOVA on the Rating by Educational Level*

ANOVA

mean

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	15.462	2	7.731	33.636	.000
Within Groups	92.856	404	.230		
Total	108.318	406			

From Table 2, the analysis of variance shows that there was some difference between the groups at a *p* value of .05. Although the table shows that there is some difference between the groups, it cannot show which group was significantly different from the other two. To find out about that statistically different group, Tukey HSD test was used. Table 3 shows the result of the test.

Table 3: *Tukey HSD Test of Multiple Comparisons*

Dependent Variable: mean
Tukey HSD

(I) level	(J) level	Mean Difference (I–J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Elementary	Secondary	−.47352*	.05950	.000	−.6135	−.3335
	Tertiary	−.29610*	.09804	.008	−.5267	−.0655
Secondary	Elementary	.47352*	.05950	.000	.3335	.6135
	Tertiary	.17742	.10775	.227	−.0760	.4309
Tertiary	Elementary	.29610*	.09804	.008	.0655	.5267
	Secondary	−.17742	.10775	.227	−.4309	.0760

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 3 demonstrates that, indeed, one of the three groups was statistically different from the other two. This test revealed that there was no statistical difference in the responses of secondary and tertiary level teachers of English. On the other hand, however, the responses of elementary school teachers differed significantly from those of the other two groups. This finding does not seem to be too surprising because elementary school teachers today, at the early stage of MTB-MLE policy implementation, are the ones primarily directly involved. It may take a few more years before those teaching at the secondary and tertiary levels feel a strong impact.

It was important to have a general idea about different types of perceptions about MTB-MLE and the importance attached to its implementation. The focus was on participants' agreement or disagreement on received training, the potential impact of MTB-MLE on language learning, on the nation, on learning in general, and the nation's readiness for this paradigm shift.

The option "agree" seems to be culturally a safe option for Filipinos. It is used usually to avoid confrontation in communication (Wa-Mbaleka, Blath, Lloren, & Duan, 2014). It is therefore the "strongly agree" option that seems to show agreement with certainty. The data presented below is solely considering "strongly agree" as the agreement that can be accepted with about 100 per cent certainty.

Results revealed that 122 had certainly received MTB-MLE training while 133 did not strongly agree, 45 strongly agreed that they are knowledgeable about MTB-MLE while 396 did not, and only 35 strongly agreed that the MTB-MLE training they received is enough while 406 perceived that it is not. Additionally, only 14 stated that they strongly feel confident enough to be able to train someone else in MTB-MLE implementation while 415 did not; and only 27 strongly agreed that they had enough second language acquisition theoretical knowledge for the implementation of MTB-MLE while 413 did not. These results show that, although participants in this study may feel quite comfortable about their beliefs on MTB-MLE, they have not yet received enough training. Someone would count as proficient in new knowledge if he or she is able to effectively train someone else.

The participants needed to provide their perceptions about the potential impact of MTB-MLE on language learning. Only 37 strongly believed that it may have positive impact on English language learning while 413 did not; only 49 strongly believed that it can facilitate the teaching of English in the Philippines while 391 did not; only 59 strongly agreed that it promotes linguistic knowledge while 377 did not; and 78 strongly agreed that it can help students learn three languages well while 365 did not. At least from these results, the majority of teachers do not seem to believe strongly in the positive impact of MTB-MLE on language learning.

Participants were asked to share their perceptions on the impact of MTB-MLE on the nation. Results revealed that only 44 strongly agreed that MTB-MLE help meet the needs of the country while 402 did not; 49 strongly believed that it promotes world competitiveness while 391 did not; and 58 strongly agreed that it should be maintained in the Philippine educational system while 388 did not.

Participants also shared their perceptions of on the impact of MTB-MLE on learning in general. On this issue, 63 strongly agreed that it has a positive impact on learning in general while 379 did not; 51 strongly believed that it helps them become better teachers in general while 391 did not; and only 41 strongly indicated that it is important in elementary education while 396 did not.

The trend seemed to be about the same when participants gave their perceptions about the nation's readiness for the successful implementation of MTB-MLE. Only 24 strongly agreed that schools have enough materials for the proper implementation of MTB-MLE while 412 did not; only 18 strongly perceived that the materials to teach English are fit within MTB-MLE while 417 did not; and up to 74 strongly indicated that MTB-MLE has been integrated in their school curriculum while 366 did not. Additionally, 39 strongly believed that they are capable of integrating MTB-MLE within their English teaching while 398 did not, and 49 had a strong impression that the majority of their colleagues are capable of using MTB-MLE effectively while 381 did not.

Ignoring the cultural implications of the data, the analysis turned to the descriptive statistics that took into consideration each score. Table 4 presents the complete descriptive data of all the items that were included on the survey. The statistically significant ones are discussed.

Table 4: *Descriptive Statistics of the Survey*

		a2	a3	a4	a5	a6	a7	a8	a9	a10	a11
N	Valid	441	437	441	440	436	435	429	446	444	440
	Missing	26	30	26	27	31	32	38	21	23	27
Mean		2.39	2.62	2.63	2.56	2.66	2.63	2.75	2.33	2.39	2.31
Mode		2	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	2	2
Std. Deviation		.785	.820	.790	.779	.749	.705	.708	.735	.704	.740

a12	a13	a14	a15	a16	a17	a18	a19	a20	a21	a22	a1
445	436	446	433	430	443	440	442	440	445	437	445
22	31	21	34	37	24	27	25	27	22	30	22
2.03	2.14	2.24	2.56	2.44	2.13	2.17	2.20	2.57	2.26	2.29	2.21
2	2	2	3	3	2	2	2	3	2	2	2
.672	.673	.729	.791	.772	.711	.736	.711	.698	.714	.673	.985

From the results presented in Table 4, it is evident that some items were statistically significant for this study, although the predominant mode of this study was 2, which represented "agree". Disagreement began at the score of 3.

Of the 22 items that were part of the survey, only eight presented significantly statistical findings of this study. Results show that teachers believe that MTB-MLE has the potential to enhance cultural heritage (M=2.03; SD=.67), increase general linguistic knowledge (M=2.14; SD=.67), and help students master at three language throughout their education (M=2.13; SD=.71). Additionally, it was agreed that schools have revised curriculum based on MTB-MLE (M=2.17; SD=.74); MTB-MLE has positive impact on students (M=2.20; SD=. 71); and it is needed in teaching courses in elementary school (M=2.29; SD=.67). Last, teachers perceived that they will become better at teaching as a result of MTB-MLE (M=2.26; SD=. 71) and they believed that it should be maintained in the Philippine educational system (M=2.24; SD=.73). It is important to emphasis here that all the significant means presented here are all within the "Agree" category; none is in a "strongly agree" category.

DISCUSSION

From this study, four interesting findings are worth some special attention. First, it looks like a considerable number of schools in the Philippines have already revised their curriculum to integrate MTB-MLE. Second, participants believe that the MTB-MLE policy will have a positive impact on students. Third, they agreed that this policy is needed for better learning experience in the elementary school. Last, they therefore believe that it should be maintained. It is great news for MTB-MLE proponents to learn that schools have already revised their curriculum to fit in this new policy. It is a different story, however, to know the effectiveness of this integration. It is not uncommon to find new policy being "dumped" down on teachers, without proper resources, preparation, and training. In fact, preparedness did not yield a significant statistical result in this study. It leads one to wonder about the MTB-MLE integration into the curriculum that is taking place.

Participants believed that MTB-MLE will have a positive impact on students. Looking at it from a general perspective, it makes sense. If people learn in their own language, chances are that they will learn well. The question, however, is whether students from more that five

linguistic backgrounds can each learn in their own mother tongue in one classroom setting. Additionally, resources are only in a handful of Philippine languages today.

Findings revealed also that MTB-MLE is needed at the elementary school level. This is based on the belief that it will improve student-learning experience. These finding corroborate what UNESCO has been pushing for over than half a century now (UNESCO, 2003, 2005a, 2005b, 2007, 2010). It is important, however, to remember that these are just perceptions. This study did not investigate what is actually happening with the students who are currently learning using MTB-MLE.

Last, research participants agreed that MTB-MLE should be maintained. This finding is important in that it shows that the national campaign on the implementation of MTB-MLE has been successful. On the other side, given that the majority of the respondents were from the Luzon region (where Filipino is predominantly spoken), another interpretation can be made. In Luzon, they use Filipino, the language that probably has most instructional materials designed than any other Philippine language. It looks like it would be easy to implement MTB-MLE in that part of the country. Second, given that the progress in developing instructional materials in other languages will likely be slow, Filipino might be the language by default to use in place of other local languages in some places. Such a decision would increase the power and prestige of Filipino.

CONCLUSION

The current study aimed at investigating the current state of perceptions of English teachers about MTB-MLE policy and its implementation. From the four research questions that were at the heart of this study, the following findings emerged. First, teachers' perceptions on the impact of MTB-MLE on learning in general were inconclusive. At this moment, teachers' perception could not reveal with certainty whether or not they believe an impact of MTB-MLE exists on learning in general. Second, results were not conclusive to state with certainty whether or not the Philippines is well prepared for the implementation of MTB-MLE. While the curriculum has been "dumped" on schools and teachers, enough training does not seem to have occurred to allow successful implementation.

Additionally, the study revealed some promising findings. Participants believed with certainty that MTB-MLE will have a positive impact on the leaning of mother tongues. They did not, however, believe that MTB-MLE will have a positive impact on ELT. Last, the study showed that MTB-MLE is believed to have the potential to enhance the local Philippine cultures. It did not, however, favor the positive impact on global competitiveness.

The implications of this study are threefold. It is clear that the Philippines has been successful in having everyone adopt the policy, especially in the public schools. Next, more preparation and training need to be done. In fact, this should have been done before the beginning of the implementation of this policy. Last, while MTB-MLE may have some advantages on the local and national level, it is not seen favorably for global competitiveness of the county.

Further research needs to be done in experimental studies to compare the actual impact of MTB-MLE on learning in general, L1 learning, learning of Filipino (the national language) and English. Other important research is needed about the interaction taking place as teachers deal with students from different linguistic backgrounds. Studies would also be important on training and on the development of instructional materials.

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