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Comparative Analysis of Iloko and English Reading Proficiency Among Grade 4 Pupils of one Philippine Elementary School

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Abstract

Proficiency in one's mother tongue is crucial for acquiring a second language. The implementation of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) in the Philippines has sparked debate regarding its effectiveness for Kindergarten to Grade 3. This study compared the reading proficiency levels in Iloko and English among Grade 4 pupils at Tapel Elementary School, Gonzaga East District, Cagayan and identified strategies to sustain and improve reading skills in both languages. Using a descriptive research design, data were gathered from 33 pupils using the Individual Graded Passage Screening Test (IGPST) from the revised Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI). The study assessed oral reading and comprehension scores and employed a t-test to compare the languages. Results showed most pupils were at Instructional and Independent levels in Iloko, but at the Frustration level in English. This indicates a strong foundation in Iloko, with a need for improved English proficiency. The study recommends strict implementation of Phil-IRI and targeted interventions to enhance English reading skills. These findings support the importance of fluency in the mother tongue for learning a second language and emphasize the need for continuous enhancement of MTB-MLE programs to boost overall reading proficiency and academic achievement.

Keywords: Iloko, Mother Tongue, Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education, Reading Proficiency Level, Second Language.

INTRODUCTION

The mother tongue of learners is a crucial element of their cultural identity. The concept of Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE), which uses the mother tongue such as "Iloko" in K to 3, aims to promote and build a deep sense of cultural identity and improve the quality of basic education in the Philippines. It is widely believed that fluency in one's mother

tongue facilitates the learning of a second language. However, the impact of reading proficiency in the mother tongue on the proficiency in a second or foreign language remains a subject of debate.

The continuous implementation of MTB-MLE has sparked criticism and investigation regarding its efficacy as a teaching approach in primary education (Santiago and Dagdag, 2021). The Department of Education issued DepEd Order No. 16, s. 2012, which mandated MTB-MLE in all public schools for Kindergarten to Grade 3 as part of the K to 12 Basic Education program. This initiative supports the goal of "Every Child-A-Reader and A-Writer by Grade 1." Eight major languages or lingua francas, including Iloko, were designated as both learning areas and languages of instruction (Department of Education, 2012). Furthermore, Republic Act No. 10533, the Enhanced Basic Education Act, requires DepEd to incorporate MTB-MLE principles into its curriculum development, ensuring that Kindergarten through Grade 3 learners receive instruction, teaching materials, and assessments in their regional or native language (Department of Education, 2020). Iloko is the native language in Gonzaga, Cagayan, originating from the Ilocos Region, where it is predominantly spoken by Ilocanos.

MTB-MLE involves education, formal or non-formal, where learners begin with their mother tongue and gradually add additional languages. Research indicates that children with a solid foundation in their mother tongue develop stronger literacy skills in school languages, as knowledge and skills transfer across languages. This transfer enables learners to use multiple languages successfully in school and beyond. Cognitively, school activities in the mother tongue engage learners in higher-order thinking skills, which can be transferred to other languages once proficiency is achieved in Filipino or English (Department of Education, 2016).

The ultimate goal is to make Filipino children lifelong learners in their mother tongue (L1), Filipino (L2), and English (L3), preparing them to excel in various learning areas and contribute productively to society as multilingual, multiliterate, and multicultural citizens (Department of Education, 2016). The full implementation of MTB-MLE began in SY 2012-2013, specifically for Kindergarten and Grades 1 to 3. This approach starts with education in a language children understand—their mother tongue—aiming to develop appropriate cognitive and reasoning skills that facilitate the transition to Filipino and English.

Research shows that mother tongue education enhances inclusion, quality learning, and academic performance, particularly in primary school. It helps avoid knowledge gaps and accelerates learning and comprehension. Multilingual education based on the mother tongue empowers learners to participate fully in society, fostering mutual understanding, respect, and the preservation of cultural heritage (UNESCO, 2022).

However, research findings on the effectiveness of mother tongue instruction are mixed. Some studies, such as Behrmann (2018), confirm the positive impact of native language instruction on academic achievement, while others, like Mohamed and Lobo (2020), suggest that bilingual methods can be more effective for language learners. Local studies, including those by Santiago and Dagdag (2021), also present varied conclusions, highlighting the need for further investigation into the benefits and limitations of MTB-MLE.

This descriptive study aims to compare the Iloko and English reading proficiency levels of Grade 4 pupils at Tapel Elementary School in Gonzaga, Cagayan. It seeks to determine the differences in proficiency levels and identify projects, programs, activities, and

interventions to sustain the MTB-MLE program for Kindergarten to Grade 3 and improve English proficiency for Grades 4 to 6.

1. What is the Reading Proficiency level of the pupils in Iloko Mother tongue and English?
 - a. Oral Reading Score
 - b. Reading Comprehension Score
2. What is the difference between the reading proficiency level of pupils in Iloko and English?
 - a. Oral Reading Score
 - b. Reading Comprehension Score
3. What are the propose programs, projects activities and intervention to improve the Iloko Mother tongue and English as a Second Language?

METHODOLOGY

This research employed descriptive research design to describe the reading comprehension level of the Grade 4 pupils for both in Iloko Mother Tongue and English. Descriptive research design aims to systematically obtain information to describe a phenomenon, situation or population. More specifically, it helps answer what, when, where, and how questions regarding research problem rather than why. This acts as the cornerstone of other research methodologies and distinctive because it can use quantitative and qualitative at the same time (Dovetail.com, 2023).

In this study, it involved single-group of 33 out of 36 Grade 4 pupils, 14 boys and 19 girls, who were identified to have been exposed in Iloko Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education from Kindergarten to Grade 3. English in Grade 4 as a subject and medium of instruction in English, Science and Mathematics subjects, that is why, the researcher chose English for this will be their Second language (L2). Total enumeration was used since all of the pupils received Iloko instruction from Kindergarten to Grade 3. The three (3) were not included for they were absent due to health-related reasons.

The reading text used in testing their Iloko reading proficiency was adopted from the "Iloko Bag of Knowledge" which is entitled "Ti Napangas a Baka". This reading text has been quality assured by the Schools Division Office of Cagayan and was published in Sirib ta Bannag, the official website of learning resources of SDO Cagayan. The English text was adopted and lifted from the revised Phil-IRI Manual (2018). The Oral Reading test where types of miscues were its main content adopted from the revised Phi-IRI was used by the researcher.

Before the gathering of the data, the researcher informed and requested permission through request letters to the Public School District Supervisor (PSDS) of Gonzaga East District and to the School Principal. After the approval of the request letters, the researcher approached the class adviser of the Grade 4 pupils and distributed the Parent's/Guardian's Consent printed in Iloko text and informed also the pupils about the gathering of data for the study. It is stated in the consent the voluntary involvement of their children in the study and all data will be gathered will solely be used for the purpose of the study. It is also stated that the data gathered from the pupils will be treated with utmost confidentiality in accordance with the Data Privacy of 2012. All of the parent and guardians signed in the consent.

The pupils read individually the text while the researcher listens and look on the text while recording the number of miscues committed by the pupil. After reading, a copy of the

comprehension test is given to the pupil with a written code on the test paper. Gathering data for the Iloko were done for two separate days while the English were on the same date due to ample time of the researcher during Friday. When the pupil finished answering the comprehension test, they immediately submitted it to the researcher.

After all the data were gathered, the researcher tallied the number of miscues committed by each of the pupil and computed using the formula from the Phil-IRI. The comprehension test was also check by the researcher and tallied the number of correct answer and treated using the formula adopted from Phil-IRI. In treating the data gathered, the researcher used Microsoft Excel Office 2019 version.

The following formula were used:

For Oral Reading Score;

$$\text{Oral Reading} = \frac{\text{number of words} - \text{number of miscues}}{\text{number of words}} \times 100$$

For Comprehension score;

$$\text{Comprehension} = \frac{\text{number of correct answer}}{\text{number of questions}} \times 100$$

Parent's/Guardian's Consent printed in Iloko text were distributed and signed by the parents or guardians of the pupils. The researcher informed the pupils about research purpose, procedure, benefits and risks; and that participating in the study is voluntary. Confidentiality and anonymity were observed by not disclosing the names of the participants in the manuscript. It was stated in the consent the voluntary involvement of their children in the study and all data which will be gathered will solely be used for the purpose of the study. It is also stated that the data gathered from the pupils will be treated with utmost confidentiality in accordance with the Data Privacy of 2012. All of the parents and guardians signed in the consent. Code using number were used to identify each pupil's performance and tests.

Authors of books, journals, publications, unpublished materials as well as websites and from the internet which will be used as references in the conduct of the study shall be properly acknowledged and cited.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This descriptive research aimed to describe the current reading proficiency level of Grade 4 pupils in both Iloko, their mother tongue, and English as the second language (L2). The study also identified significant differences between Iloko and English proficiency levels and explored potential projects, programs, and activities (PAPs) for intervention and enhancement in both languages.

Table 1. Iloko and English reading proficiency level of Grade 4 pupils

Level	Iloko		English	
	Oral Reading	Comprehension	Oral Reading	Comprehension
	Frequency n=33	Frequency n=33	Frequency n=33	Frequency n=33
Independent	4	20	0	3
Instructional	17	8	7	7
Frustration	12	5	26	23

Table 1 displays the reading proficiency levels of Grade 4 pupils in both Iloko and English. In Iloko, 17 pupils are at the Instructional level in oral reading and 20 at the Independent level in comprehension. In English, 26 pupils are at the Frustration level in oral reading, and 23 are at the Frustration level in comprehension.

In Iloko, most mispronounced words were lengthy and contained diphthongs, often comprising complex consonant-vowel structures like "kadakkelna," "nakabasbassit," "pinangipangpangas," "kaimudinganna," and "panangngiyapli-aplitna." Common comprehension errors included difficulties with analyzing practical applications of values in the reading text. Repetitions occurred frequently due to mispronunciations, and substitutions were noted, such as "ti" into "ni," "p" in "napigpigsas" into "b" as "nabigbigas," and "g" in "gatel" into "patel." Additionally, "siak" was reversed into "sika" and "nga" into "ang."

One pupil struggled significantly, unable to produce any correct words and merely uttering sounds. Another pupil, although primarily an English speaker, read Iloko fluently but with an English accent and Ybanag intonation, likely influenced by his grandfather, who provided care.

In English, mispronunciation was a major issue, leading to repetition of words. Common errors included pronouncing "while" with a long "I" sound like "wheel" and "said" as "sa-ed."

These findings suggest that Grade 4 pupils exhibit high comprehension and instructional oral reading proficiency in Iloko but face significant challenges in English, showing frustration levels in both oral reading and comprehension. This discrepancy highlights the pupils' fluency in their mother tongue, influenced by early education (K to 3) in Iloko, whereas English, newly introduced in Grade 4, presents greater difficulty.

The results imply that a strong foundation in the mother tongue facilitates learning a second language. This supports the premise that mother tongue proficiency aids in second language acquisition, a primary question of this study.

The findings align with Santiago and Dagdag (2021), who support the MTB-MLE approach for enhancing learning processes. Behrmann (2018) and Mohamed and Lobo (2020) also found positive effects of mother tongue fluency on second language acquisition. UNESCO (2022) supports this, emphasizing mother

tongue education as crucial for inclusion, quality learning, and improved academic performance.

Conversely, the study disagrees with Mwanza (2020), who argued that literacy levels may not improve merely with prolonged mother tongue instruction without addressing other factors. The study found that pupils categorized as Independent and Instructional in Iloko also performed better in English, suggesting that MTB-MLE effectively facilitates proficiency across languages.

This study underscores the importance of mother tongue instruction in early education. While pupils show proficiency in Iloko, there is a significant need for interventions to address frustration levels in English. Enhancing instructional strategies in English, while maintaining strong Iloko programs, will likely support balanced bilingual proficiency, aiding in overall academic success and multilingual competence.

Table 2. Difference between Iloko and English reading proficiency level of Grade 4 pupils

Variable	Reading Text	Mean	t-stat	Stat. Sig.
Oral Reading Score	Iloko	87.55	0.00	Highly Significant
	English	80.19		
Comprehension Score	Iloko	40.98	1.43	Not Significant
	English	80.19		

Table 2 shows a significant difference in Oral Reading Scores ($t=0.00$) between Iloko and English, while no significant difference was found in Comprehension Scores ($t=1.43$). This means there is a notable difference between the oral reading proficiency of Grade 4 pupils in Iloko and English, with pupils being mostly independent in Iloko and frustrated in English. This disparity can be attributed to the use of Iloko as a medium of instruction and subject area from Kindergarten to Grade 3, while English was newly introduced as a subject and medium of instruction in Grade 4.

The data imply that English is effectively their third language (L3), following Filipino as their second language (L2). This highlights the need for continued use of English as a medium of instruction and subject to build a strong foundation in L3. Additionally, it suggests that class advisers should develop interventions to enhance and improve the reading proficiency of pupils in English, with support from parents or guardians.

The findings on comprehension differences align with Santiago and Dagdag (2021), who found no significant differences between pre-assessment and post-assessment scores of the Monolingual Second Language (MSL) group and the MTB-MLE group. This is also supported by Behrmann (2018), where differences were not significant for most groups, leading to the rejection of the hypothesis (H1) stating that there would be significant differences in the learning of science and math concepts between students instructed in their native language and those instructed in the mandated language. However, the data differ from Mohamed and Lobo (2020), who identified significant differences between bilingual and monolingual teaching methods.

This study underscores the importance of mother tongue instruction in early education. While pupils show proficiency in Iloko, there is a significant need for interventions to address

frustration levels in English. Enhancing instructional strategies in English, while maintaining strong Iloko programs, will likely support balanced bilingual proficiency, aiding in overall academic success and multilingual competence.

Table 3. The programs, projects and activities for the improvement and sustainability of reading proficiency both Mother Tongue and English

S.L	Programs, Activities	Projects,	Description
1	Continuous implementation of the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI).		Regular assessment of reading proficiency to identify and address reading challenges.
2	Propose school-initiated reading program like "Friday Reading habit".		Encourage regular reading practice with a dedicated time for reading activities every Friday.
3	Develop interventions and enhancement of Reading proficiency levels in mother tongue and English.		Create tailored interventions to improve reading skills based on assessment results.
4	Partner with parents/guardians in helping the pupils to learn reading.		Engage parents and guardians in supporting their children's reading development at home.

Table 3 outlines the proposed programs, projects, and activities (PAPs) aimed at improving and sustaining the reading proficiency levels of pupils in both their mother tongue, Iloko, and English. These initiatives have been suggested by the teachers and master teacher of the school.

The school is already implementing the Philippine Informal Reading Inventory (Phil-IRI) in its pre-assessment phase and conducting Group Screening Tests across all grade levels. Despite these efforts, there is currently no school-initiated reading program, a gap that the teachers hope to address by proposing initiatives such as the "Friday Reading Habit."

The data suggest a pressing need for concrete school-based PAPs to improve and sustain reading proficiency among pupils. The lack of such programs may contribute to poor or frustration-level reading proficiency. To address this, it is essential to develop comprehensive and structured reading programs tailored to the needs of the pupils.

Additionally, the involvement of parents and guardians is crucial. As key stakeholders, their active participation in their children's reading development can significantly enhance reading proficiency. This collaborative effort among all school stakeholders, especially the class adviser and reading coordinator, is vital for the success of these initiatives.

The study highlights the importance of a multifaceted approach to improving reading proficiency in both the mother tongue and English. Implementing regular assessments through Phil-IRI, proposing school-initiated reading programs, developing targeted interventions, and fostering strong partnerships with parents and guardians are essential steps in this process. By addressing these areas, the school can create a supportive and effective environment for enhancing pupils' reading skills, ensuring their academic success and overall language development.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Fluency in one's mother tongue (L1) is foundational for bridging the learning of a second language (L2) and even a third language (L3). A strong knowledge base in Iloko, for example, supports the development of essential cognitive and reasoning skills, enabling pupils to navigate multiple languages effectively. This transition, beginning with the mother tongue and moving to Filipino and English, is critical for inclusion, quality learning, and improved academic performance.

This study underscores the importance of sustaining and strengthening the implementation of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) in primary education. MTB-MLE has demonstrated its capacity to enhance pupils' reading proficiency, facilitating smoother learning of second and third languages, which in turn leads to higher academic achievement.

To achieve this, stakeholders, especially classroom teachers, should consider several strategies:

1. **Redefine the Mother Tongue and Revisit the MTB-MLE Curriculum:** Ensure the curriculum reflects the contemporary language needs of learners.

2. **Intellectualize the Mother Tongue:** Continuously apply the mother tongue in various academic engagements to enhance its utility and status.
3. **Capacitate Teachers:** Provide ongoing training and resources to equip teachers with the skills needed for effective MTB-MLE implementation.
4. **Monitor MTB-MLE Implementation:** Regularly assess and adjust the program to ensure it meets educational goals and addresses any challenges.
5. **Disseminate Research-Based Information:** Share findings and best practices with all stakeholders to build a collective understanding and support for MTB-MLE.
6. **Class advisers and reading coordinators** should also consider developing strategic projects, programs, and activities to improve, enhance, and sustain reading proficiency in both the mother tongue for Kindergarten to Grade 3 and in English for Grades 4 to 6.

By adopting these measures, schools can create a robust foundation for multilingual education, ultimately leading to well-rounded, linguistically capable, and academically successful students.

Appendix A

Iloko Reading Text

TI NAPANGAS A BAKA

Idi un-unana a panawen, adda naidumduma ti kadakkelna a Baka ken adda nakabasbassit a Lamok. Napalalo ti panangipangpangas ni baka iti kinapigsana.

Iti maysa nga aldaw, nangnggeg ni lamok a kinuna ni Baka, "Awan ngatan ti napigpigsas pay ngem siak!" Nagdisso ni Lamok iti bukot ni Baka ket kinunana, "Dika man agpangpangas gayyem a Baka, adda la ketdi napigpigsas ngem sika!" Nagkatawa iti nakapigpigsas ni Baka," Oy sika nga awan

kaimudinganna nga ayup! Pumanawka iti bukotko! Asinoka koma tapno patienka?" Saan a nagtagtagari ni Lamok, ket rinugianna a kinagat-kagat ni Baka.

Nakarikna ni Baka iti nagpaiduma a gatel ken sakit ti panangngiyapli-aplitna ti ipusna agingga nagpadispensar ken Lamok iti panangtagibassitna kenkuana.

Adalen a balikas:

nagpadispensar- dimmawat ti pammakawan

panangtagibassit- panangibaba/pananguyaw

From: Iloko Bag of Knowledge compiled by: Mrs. Levita B. Baclig

Appendix B

English Reading Text

Waiting for the Peddler

Mama was feeling sick. "Lisa, I cannot make you a snack," she said. "Can you watch out for the peddler while I rest?" "Yes Mama," Lisa answered. Soon, a man shouted, "Taho! Taho!" Lisa ran. "Two cups please," she said. Lisa paid the man. She got one cup of taho and gave the other to Mama. "Thank you, Lisa. I feel much better now," said Mama. "You're welcome, Mama!"

September 11, 2023

WAIVER/PAMMALUBOS

Siak ni _____, sitatallugudak a mangted iti pannarabay ken suporta kenni

nga anakko kabayatan iti pannakaisyangkat ti **“Comparison between Iloco and English Reading Proficiency among Grade 4 Pupils of Tapel Elementary School”** ni Rey S. Palattao para iti tawen 2023-2024 tapno mapasayaat ti panagbasana.

Addaannak iti naananay nga pannakaawat iti pateгна daytoy a ganwat nga ipaayna iti anakko iti inna pannakisalip laeng nu masigurado iti panangtaripato, proteksyon ken kinakonpidensyal iti amin a sungbatna.

Pirma ti Nagannak/Guardian

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