



PROCEEDINGS 2026-30

Local Regional Studies Network

Best Practices in the Teaching of Eastern Visayas Mother Tongues

Pagpakusog han Aton Pinulungan: The Promotion of Eastern Visayas Mother Tongues in Academic and Public Discourse
Session 1

19 September 2025

Leyte Samar Heritage Center, UP Tacloban College (UPTC)



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Cover Image Credit

"Roundtable discussants for panel 1 "What Now, MTB-MLE?" - Dr. Rosemarie Guino, Dr. Gretel Cadiong, and Dr. Voltaire Oyzon" (top)

"Roundtable discussants for panel 2 "MTB-MLE on the Ground" - Dr. Mat Banagbanag, Ms. Milen Esteria, Prof. Georgina Orbeta, and Dr. Alma Sonia Sanchez-Danday" (bottom)

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29 November 2025 | 9:00 AM
Golden Prince Hotel and Suites, Acacia St. Cebu City
Brynch Bonachita



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Proceedings of *Kulokabildo*:
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How Capitalism Affirms its Hegemony: The Imperial Mode of Living Public Lecture Proceedings

02 September 2025 | 1:00 - 5:00 PM
Performing Arts Hall, University of the Philippines Cebu
(Hybrid - Face-to-Face and Zoom)
Mari Elise Gwyneth Lim



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PROCEEDINGS

How Capitalism Affirms its
Hegemony: The Imperial
Mode of Living

About the Roundtable Discussion

The roundtable discussion (RTD) on “Best Practices in the Teaching of Eastern Visayas Mother Tongues” was held on September 19, 2025 at the Leyte Samar Heritage Center, UP Tacloban College (UPTC). It was the first of the three-part series of RTDs of “Pagpakusog han Aton Pinulungan: The Promotion of Eastern Visayas Mother Tongues in Academic and Public Discourse.” The event was formally opened with a warm welcome from Dr. Patricia B. Arinto, Dean of UPTC.

The RTD consisted of two panels of discussants. The first panel, “What Now for Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE)?” featured Dr. Voltaire Q. Oyzon of Leyte Normal University (LNU), Dr. Gretel Laura M. Cadiiong of the Schools Division Office of Tacloban City (SDO-Tacloban), and Dr. Rosemarie M. Guino of the Department of Education Region VIII (DepEd Region VIII). They shared their perspectives on the progress made, challenges encountered, and ongoing concerns surrounding the implementation of MTB-MLE in Eastern Visayas. Meanwhile, the second panel, “MTB-MLE on the Ground,” was composed of Dr. Alma Sonia Q. Sanchez-Danday (LNU), Prof. Georgina M. Orbeta of Eastern Visayas State University-Ormoc City Campus (EVSU-Ormoc), Ms. Milen C. Esteria of Capul-Agro Industrial School, and Dr. Mat C. Banagbanag of Capul Central II Elementary School. They presented their studies on the implementation of MTB-MLE in their respective communities and shared their approaches in putting the program into practice.

Each panel discussion was followed by an open forum where participants engaged in conversations about the use of Eastern Visayas local languages. The participants included faculty members and students from UPTC, LNU, and EVSU. Also in attendance were local writers, along with representatives from the Regional Development Council Region VIII and various civil society organizations.

By bringing together educators, language scholars, and other stakeholders, “Pagpakusog han Aton Pinulungan” aims to develop policy interventions that will promote, strengthen, and popularize the use of Eastern Visayas languages in academic and public discourse.

PRESENTATIONS

Panel 1: What Now for MTB-MLE?

The first panel, “What Now for MTB-MLE” featured Dr. Voltaire Q. Oyzon, Dr. Gretel Laura M. Cadiong, and Dr. Rosemarie M. Guino who deliberated on the general state of MTB-MLE implementation in Eastern Visayas. They shared their experiences and insights on the gains and challenges that came with the implementation of the program.

MTB-MLE Innovations in Region 8

Dr. Voltaire Q. Oyzon

Professor, Leyte Normal University

Dr. Oyzon opened his discussion by introducing the concepts of language learning: Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). He related these to the level of language proficiency among Waraynons, emphasizing that most speakers use Waray primarily for everyday, casual communication, falling under BICS. They have yet to develop the ability to use their mother tongue for formal writing, academic purposes, and complex discourse, which are associated with CALP. This, according to Dr. Oyzon, is why the MTB-MLE program holds great potential to strengthen the use and understanding of local languages. However, he emphasized that its progress is hindered by Republic Act No. 12027 (R.A. No. 12027), which discontinued the use of the mother tongue as the primary medium of instruction.

Even before the MTB-MLE program’s institutionalization, Dr. Oyzon shared that LNU had already anticipated the challenges it would entail. Hence, they proactively developed relevant resources and tools to address them. The first challenge they identified was the common confusion over vowel usage in Waray—particularly when to use “o” instead of “u” and “e” instead of “i,” and vice versa. To address this, they developed a standardized orthography called “*An Bag-o nga Ortograpiya han Winaray*,” which was institutionalized by DepEd Region VIII in 2012 and has since guided teachers in ensuring the accuracy of their lessons. Another challenge they foresaw was the lack of teaching materials for Waray vocabulary and grammar. To take early action, Dr. Oyzon and his colleagues created an online Waray-English dictionary and



Figure 1. Presentation by discussant Dr. Voltaire Q. Oyzon

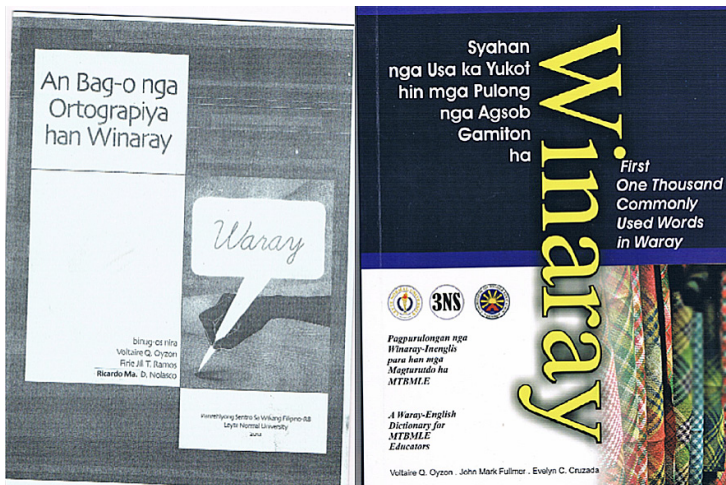


Figure 2. An Bag-o nga Ortograpiya han Winaray and Syahan nga Usa ka Yukot hin mga Pulong nga Agsob Gamiton ha Winaray

compiled “*Syahan nga Usa ka Yukot hin mga Pulong nga Agsob Gamiton ha Winaray*” (First One Thousand Commonly Used Words in Waray). This featured sample sentences and model spellings for teachers’ reference.

Moreover, they also recognized that teachers might struggle to evaluate the complexity and suitability of texts for their learners. To respond to this, they created an online readability tool to help teachers assess whether reading materials align with the learners’ grade levels.

In addition, Dr. Oyzon pointed out another challenge, which is the presence of learners with different mother tongues in the same classroom. This situation, he explained, might complicate teaching in a single language. To deal with this, they developed the “Learner’s Classified Dictionary for Learning: English, Waray, Kana, Inabaknon, and Tagalog Vocabularies,” to provide a practical reference for teachers in multilingual classrooms.

However, despite the progress made through corpus-based innovations, Dr. Oyzon highlighted that these efforts are still not enough because new challenges have emerged with the actual implementation of the MTB-MLE program. For instance, there remains a shortage of learning materials, particularly children’s stories written in the learners’ mother tongue. He explained that each grade level from kindergarten to grade three ideally requires around 150 stories to adequately support instruction, and the region remains far from meeting this target. Beyond this lack of resources, another challenge arises from the linguistic variations across the region—the Waray spoken in Leyte differs from that in Eastern Samar, Northern Samar, and other parts of Samar. Because of these differences, a single set of learning materials cannot be uniformly applied across all areas. Dr. Oyzon added that addressing these issues has become even more difficult now due to the constraints posed by R.A. No. 12027.

Even so, Dr. Oyzon remains optimistic, especially since there is a growing presence of Waray language courses in state universities such as UPTC, LNU, and Northwest Samar State University (NwSSU). For him, this development signifies that the language is finally being formally recognized and makes Waray feel more “legitimate.” Dr. Oyzon concluded his discussion by urging everyone to persevere in their efforts to promote and use local languages, even when state policies fail to acknowledge their value in education.

The screenshot shows the '3NS Corpora Project' website. At the top is a dark blue navigation bar with links: Home, About, Words, Texts, Contact, and Help. Below this is a section titled 'Readability Instrument' with a light blue background. It contains two dropdown menus: 'Choose the language of the text: Language' (set to 'Language') and 'Choose the genre (poem readability treats line breaks as sentences) Genre' (set to 'Genre'). Below these is a large text area with the prompt 'Paste your text below'. At the bottom of the form is a blue button labeled 'Calculate Grade Level'.

Figure 3. Readability tool

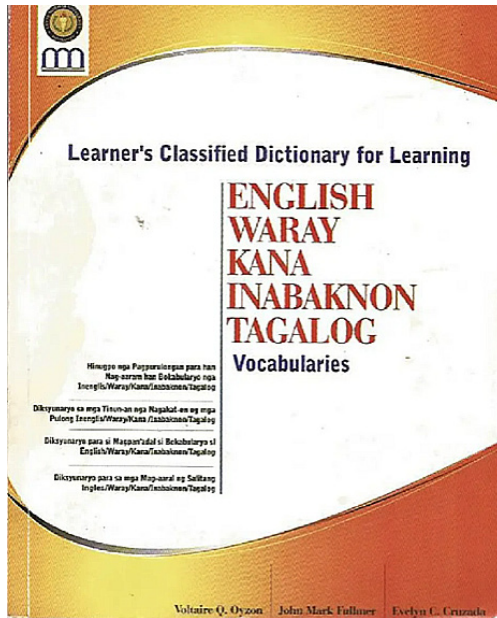


Figure 4. Learner's Classified Dictionary for Learning English, Waray, Kana, Inabaknon, Tagalog Vocabularies

DepEd Tacloban's Milestones on the Implementation of Mother Tongue

Dr. Gretel Laura M. Cadiong

Learners Resources Manager/Education Program Supervisor, Schools Division Office of Tacloban City

Dr. Cadiong began her presentation by highlighting how the orthography that LNU developed played a key role in having Waray recognized as one of the nineteen languages included in the MTB-MLE implementation across the Philippines. This milestone laid the groundwork for subsequent efforts, motivating the SDO-Tacloban to strengthen its commitment to addressing the program's needs.

According to Dr. Cadiong, their teachers created big books for each letter of the Waray alphabet—referred to by the SDO-Tacloban as “*Anigoban*,” instead of “*Abakadahan*” because its 20 letters are arranged as A-N-I-G-O-T-H-P-U-K-Y-S-R-G-D-B-L-M-E-W. These books were carefully designed to help learners



Figure 5. Presentation by discussant Dr. Gretel Laura M. Cadiong

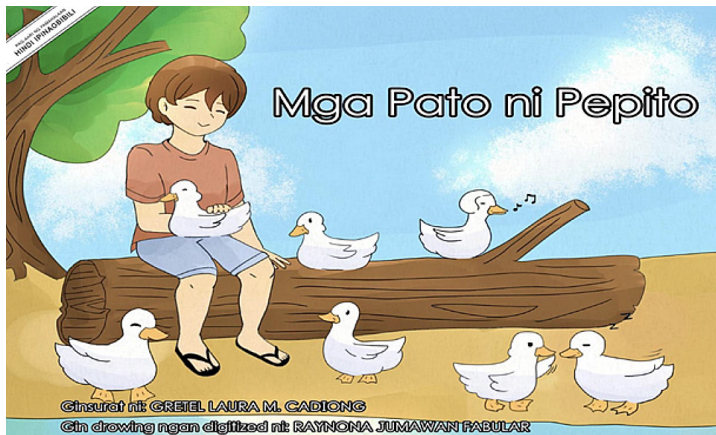


Figure 6. Mga Pato ni Pepito

associate every letter with a story of a person or an object to make it easier for them to understand and remember the lessons. Some examples include *An Okra ni Ogi* and *Mga Pato ni Pepito*. Along with these, teachers also created big books designed to teach literacy, numeracy, and values. Dr. Cadiong herself contributed several stories to the collection, ensuring that they reflected the children's everyday experiences and surroundings. Among these are *Awto-awto ni Oskar* for teaching shapes, *An Balangaw* for colors, and *Maki Makarag* for water conservation. She highlighted that, as a result, learners, especially those from the northern barangays of Tacloban City, developed a genuine enjoyment for reading because they could easily relate to and understand the materials written in their own language.

To further enrich the learning materials for young learners, the SDO-Tacloban also developed animated versions of the big books. In addition, they developed routine songs in Waray. Some were original compositions, while others were translations of popular children's songs like "Ako ay May Lobo" and "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star." Dr. Cadiong also noted that the SDO-Tacloban quickly adapted when the pandemic struck by producing e-book versions of the stories and providing tablets to learners without access to gadgets. Teachers also created Waray video lessons for kindergarten to grade three, which were broadcast on PR-TV 12 through Tac TV, the official TV-based learning platform of Tacloban City that supported modular instruction.

Although the SDO-Tacloban has exerted great effort in implementing the MTB-MLE program, with teachers even going beyond their regular workload to deliver quality lessons in Waray, Dr. Cadiong emphasized that these efforts still fall short. The additional challenge, she explained, stems from parents' misconceptions about the program. No matter how beneficial the MTB-MLE may seem to educators, its success remains limited if parents fail to fully understand and appreciate its goals. Dr. Cadiong expressed that this problem is further compounded by the implementation of R.A. No. 12027. She shared that even some higher officials support this discontinuation because they tend to downplay the program, believing that Waray is no longer commonly used in classrooms, particularly among the younger generation.

However, Dr. Cadiong's language use survey disproves this assumption. The results show that Waray remains the dominant language, spoken by 89 percent of the population, compared to six percent for English, four percent for Filipino, and one percent for other languages. These findings, as Dr. Cadiong explained, highlight that Waray remains highly relevant and essential in classroom instruction despite the restrictions of R.A. No. 12027. According to her, Waray is still currently used as the medium of instruction in kindergarten and grade one, and as an auxiliary language for grades two and three in Eastern Visayas.

Dr. Cadiong closed her discussion by underscoring that despite the restrictions imposed by R.A. No. 12027, people should continue to take pride in using their mother tongue. She showcased SDO-Tacloban's efforts, including literary contests for teachers conducted in Waray, the use of Waray in certificates, and its inclusion in Buwan ng Wika celebrations. These may seem like small steps, but she believes that they create a lasting impact on the promotion of local languages. Ultimately, Dr. Cadiong reminded everyone that advocating for

the Waray language must go hand in hand with preserving and promoting the culture and traditions of Eastern Visayas.



Figure 7. PR-TV 12 lessons in Waray for Kindergarten to Grade 3 learners, supporting Modular Instruction

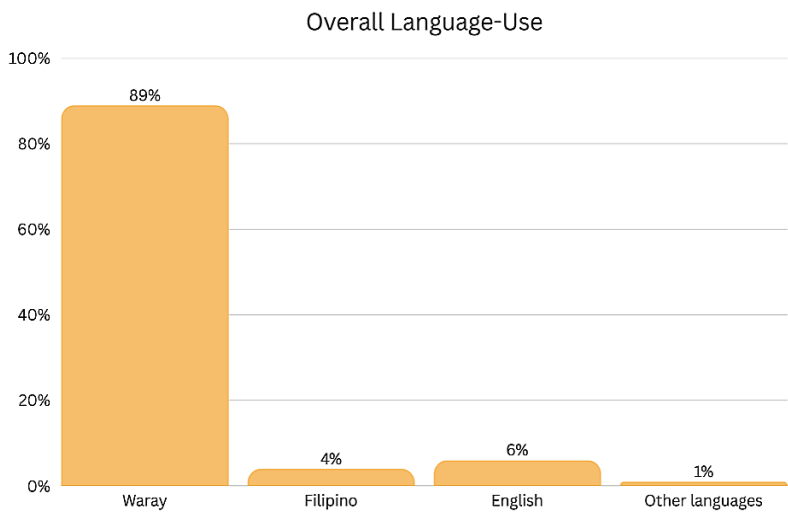


Figure 8. Language Use Survey Results

Practices in the Teaching of Mother Tongue in Eastern Visayas

Dr. Rosemarie M. Guino

Chief Education Supervisor, Department of Education Region VIII

Dr. Guino began with a brief overview of how MTB-MLE was implemented and how it eventually led to the enactment of R.A. No. 12027, which runs counter to the program's objectives. She noted, however, that the passage of R.A. No. 12027 does not entirely prevent the practice of MTB-MLE. While the law shifts the medium of instruction back to Filipino and English, it still allows for optional implementation of MTB-MLE, particularly in monolingual classrooms. Nevertheless, Dr. Guino recognized the negative impact of favoring other languages as the medium of instruction instead of a region's widely spoken mother tongues. She stressed that effective learning should start with what the children already know—their mother tongue.

Practically speaking, Dr. Guino acknowledged that while MTB-MLE offers significant benefits, it also comes with its own set of challenges. Focusing on the positive outcomes first, she noted that DepEd Region VIII considers MTB-MLE highly effective in early education because of its culturally responsive approach. Drawing from her monitoring activities in Carigara, Leyte, Dr. Guino shared that learners are able to read and comprehend more quickly when instruction is delivered in their mother tongue, rather than being introduced to Filipino or English immediately. She cited an example of a grade one pupil who was able to spontaneously narrate her own story in her native language. The children were also highly participative and could elaborate on their answers more confidently, without fear of making grammatical mistakes or feeling judged. According to Dr. Guino, this demonstrates that teaching in the mother tongue not only enhances comprehension and retention but also builds students' confidence and encourages active engagement in the classroom. She added that this approach also makes it easier for students to transition from their first language (L1) to a second (L2) and even a third language (L3).

In support of the program, Dr. Guino shared that their office has procured and distributed textbooks and worksheets for schools to utilize. These materials were designed to help teachers feel supported and equipped as they implement MTB-MLE in their classrooms. Along with this, they have conducted capacity-



Figure 9. Presentation by discussant Dr. Rosemarie M. Guino

building sessions and mentoring programs for school heads and teachers to strengthen their confidence and skills in delivering lessons using the mother tongue. However, Dr. Guino admitted that despite these efforts, challenges remain because of insufficient funding. This limits the production of more instructional materials, the frequency of training sessions, and the overall sustainability of the program's implementation.

Another pressing challenge that Dr. Guino highlighted was the implementation of MTB-MLE in indigenous peoples (IP) communities. Since these communities have their own distinct languages, teachers who are not members of the community often struggle to communicate effectively and deliver lessons. Dr. Guino acknowledged that this issue poses a significant challenge, underscoring the need for the program to be more inclusive and responsive to the linguistic diversity of learners. She emphasized that addressing this ultimately boils down to ensuring adequate funding to equip teachers with proper training and to develop learning materials tailored to the learners' specific needs.

Dr. Guino reaffirmed that children learn best when taught in their mother tongue because it provides them with the space to naturally express themselves. She urged everyone to continue using and promoting Eastern Visayas mother tongues, reminding the audience that no one can champion its importance and survival better than its own native speakers. Finally, she concluded by reinforcing her point with the quote, "Ang wika ay may buhay; limutin mong gamitin, ito'y kusang mamamatay" ("Language is alive; forget to use it, it dies").

Open Forum

Prof. Efmer E. Agustin, Faculty-in-Charge of the UPTC *Sentro ng Wikang Filipino*, facilitated the open forum for the first panel of discussants under the theme “What Now for MTB-MLE?” The first question was raised by Ms. Tiffany Kem Millamena, a first-year BA Political Science student from UPTC. Her question centered on the common belief among parents that English and Filipino are superior to the mother tongue. This, she explained, is rooted in the prevailing notion that proficiency in so-called “superior” languages can open doors to better opportunities. Specifically, she asked how this mindset can be countered without dismissing the parents’ aspiration for their children.

Dr. Cadiong responded by noting that this has been one of the most common concerns raised by the parents since the beginning of the MTB-MLE implementation. She recounted a personal experience from her early years of teaching, when she overheard a mother during a jeepney ride to her assigned barrio school questioning DepEd’s decision to adopt the program. The parent expressed fear that using the mother tongue in school would make her child academically weaker. Drawing from this, Dr. Cadiong emphasized that language is not and will never be a measure of intelligence and that the program is grounded in extensive research. She noted that studies have consistently shown how using a child’s mother tongue in schools helped them develop foundational skills such as reading, comprehension, analysis, and critical thinking, which is a strong foundation for learning additional languages later on.

Dr. Cadiong added that it is essential for parents and teachers to fully understand and internalize the principles of the MTB-MLE program because they are at the forefront of its implementation. She shared that whenever she gets the opportunity to speak with them, she makes it a point to explain the importance of the program. Through such efforts, she has begun to observe positive outcomes in teachers. She noted that some teachers have personally reached out to her after the enactment of R.A. No. 12027 to ask whether they could still continue using the mother tongue, explaining that they have already grown accustomed to it and feel that they teach more effectively in the language. With this example, Dr. Cadiong emphasized that it only takes patience and continuous dialogue to also help parents understand that the use of the mother tongue does not limit their children’s potential nor dim their future.

Dr. Guino, agreeing with Dr. Cadiong's insights, highlighted the need to consistently orient parents and strengthen the advocacy for the MTB-MLE program. She stressed that sustained advocacy is necessary to help parents understand and appreciate the program's goals and the long-term benefits it envisions for their children. Meanwhile, Dr. Oyzon clarified the distinction between MTB-MLE and English, emphasizing that advocates of MTB-MLE are not opposed to the use or learning of the English language. Rather, the program promotes a more effective approach to learning English—by first mastering the child's L1 and developing their CALP. Building on this, Dr. Guino added that, in the context of Eastern Visayas, proper timing and appropriate exposure are key for learners to effectively acquire English or Filipino. She stressed that while children are still young, it is crucial to strengthen their foundation in their mother tongue before transitioning to their L2 and L3.

The second question came from Prof. Rowena Ariano, a faculty member of LNU, and was specifically directed to Dr. Cadiong and Dr. Guino. Since both discussants mentioned producing big books and developing textbooks and worktexts, Prof. Ariano asked how such initiatives could be sustained through Waray literature to further strengthen the use and preservation of local languages.

Dr. Cadiong replied by sharing that she once organized a Waray story-writing workshop in 2018 with teachers as participants. She had planned to publish the outputs and even submitted a proposal to their mayor through the school education fund, but it was eventually disapproved. She emphasized that while there are many things they can do to promote Waray literature, funding remains a significant challenge, as their initiatives depend on the limited resources available. Still, Dr. Cadiong reassured that in her own ways, she continues to do her part by encouraging and advocating for teachers to write in Waray. Dr. Guino agreed and emphasized the importance of continuously capacitating teachers, particularly in producing instructional materials. She also suggested that organizing literary and musical contests in schools using the Waray language could help sustain the ongoing efforts to advocate for the use of local languages.

Following this, Mr. Judah S. Aliposa opened his question with a brief statement on the ongoing discussion about the name of the Waray language—whether it should be referred to as Waray or Binisaya. He expressed his support for Macabenta's view that Binisaya is more fitting because Waray translates to “nothing” or “zero.” Furthermore, he shared an example from his high school

days when people would say “*para*” or “*dinhi na la*” whenever they signal a jeepney driver to stop. However, he observed that most Taclobanons today say “*lugar la*,” which he associates with Cebuano influence. He also pointed out the increasing use of “*na*” instead of “*nga*” among younger generations, relating it to his question on the possible initiatives that stakeholders such as DepEd, LNU, and the Leyte Samar Heritage Center of UPTC could further pursue to strengthen the proper and consistent use of local languages in the region. Mr. Aliposa cited Dr. Cadiong’s presentation, which showed that 89 percent of people still use Waray, and connected this to the need for efforts beyond the classroom to broaden the use of local languages. He also drew from Dr. Oyzon’s discussion on how communities can move beyond the BICS and develop CALP.

Dr. Cadiong addressed the question by first discussing the ongoing debate on whether the language should be called Waray or Binisaya. She shared that she has been asked this question several times—even her own brother argues that it should be called Binisaya. In response, she would often explain to him that when the MTB-MLE program began, it was the *Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino* (KWF) that officially designated the language as Waray, and therefore, it cannot simply be changed to Binisaya. She added that if advocates truly wish to push for the name Binisaya, the proper course of action would be to file a formal petition to the KWF because such a change is possible but not within their authority to decide. Moving forward to the main question regarding how to promote the language beyond the classroom, Dr. Cadiong shared that when she was still the MTB-MLE Coordinator, she had planned to conduct seminars for media practitioners after noticing the frequent linguistic errors made on air. Unfortunately, she was reassigned before this initiative could materialize. She emphasized, however, that the preservation and proper use of the local language require a collective effort. The media, she explained, should take the lead in this advocacy since they have significant influence over the public, followed by local government units (LGUs), which also occasionally make mistakes in their publicity materials. Dr. Cadiong underscored that the effort should begin with improving materials that people regularly encounter. She expressed that the SDO-Tacloban would be very willing to help, even proposing the idea of organizing a Waray convention to raise awareness about common language errors and promote proper usage.

Additionally, Dr. Guino suggested that beyond organizing conventions, it would also be strategic to gather mother tongue advocates and bring the agenda to the Regional Development Council (RDC). She believes that the advocacy can be more effectively advanced through formal dialogue and

proposals presented at the RDC level, as this would allow the initiative to reach national attention. Dr. Guino further emphasized that this institutional effort should go hand in hand with continued public advocacy, encouraging influencers and vloggers, for instance, to use Waray in their content since they have strong appeal and reach among the people nowadays.

Dr. Oyzon also contributed to the discussion on whether the term Waray carries a derogatory meaning, clarifying that it should not be regarded as an issue in the first place. He explained that many languages have origins that could be considered derogatory, citing English as an example. When traced etymologically, even the English language has derogatory origins. However, its speakers never regarded this as a hindrance; in fact, according to Dr. Oyzon, they eventually went on to influence and dominate half of the world. Dr. Guino agreed with this point, reiterating that no language is superior or inferior. She emphasized that people in the region should take pride in their own language and be at the forefront of advocating for its continued use and preservation.

The fourth question was read by Prof. Agustin from the set of questions submitted by online registrants. It focused on how to evaluate not only students' literacy gains under MTB-MLE but also its lasting influence on their cultural awareness, personal development, and critical thinking skills.

Dr. Oyzon straightforwardly responded that determining such outcomes would require a scientific study. He explained, however, that there are certain indicators that can already suggest progress—such as an increase in Waray speakers or the production of more Waray films. He noted that when a language becomes more visible and utilized across different industries, it signifies its integration into both cultural expression and economic activity. However, he pointed out that the current reality is quite the opposite because it still favors fluency in English as a key to entering the workforce and pursuing career opportunities.

Another question read by Prof. Agustin was centered on how the MTB-MLE implementation in Eastern Visayas could transcend its role as a transitional tool for learning Filipino and English. The question sought to explore how the program could instead serve as a long-term means for safeguarding local languages and cultural heritage.

Dr. Oyzon addressed the question by first explaining that research shows it takes around 12 years for individuals to fully develop CALP. Therefore,

according to him, for the MTB-MLE program to create a lasting impact, it should ideally be implemented up to the high school level. This will allow the program to become part of students' lifelong learning and shape how they perceive and understand the world. Dr. Guino agreed, emphasizing that the ultimate goal of MTB-MLE is to develop learners who are multiliterate, multilingual, and multicultural. To achieve this, she highlighted that the use of the mother tongue should extend beyond the classroom and become part of the speakers' daily lives. According to her, this practice should begin at home, where language learning naturally takes root.

Mr. Judah S. Aliposa raised another question, referring to Dr. Guino's earlier point about submitting a proposal to the RDC. He shared that he serves as a private sector representative in the council and expressed willingness to help draft a resolution that would advocate for the use of Waray in official communications, particularly in agencies such as the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG). He cited the example of Hagonoy, Bulacan, where the local government enacted a policy mandating that all ordinances and resolutions be written in Filipino. Believing that such an initiative is also feasible in the region, Mr. Aliposa sought the panel's support, asking if they could extend their assistance in pursuing this proposal. Dr. Guino responded affirmatively, saying that such an initiative is indeed possible. She expressed her willingness to assist, especially noting that once a proposal reaches the RDC, it already holds significant weight. However, she underscored the importance of first forming a dedicated team to work on it.

The final question came from Mr. Jay Chris Gadil, a Bachelor of Elementary Education student from LNU. He inquired whether there are existing activities in elementary and secondary schools that aim to strengthen students' appreciation and understanding of the Waray language.

In response, Dr. Guino explained that schools across the region have been supporting the promotion of local languages through various initiatives, such as holding *siday* writing competitions and other literary contests that encourage the use of Waray. She noted that similar efforts are also being carried out in schools that use *Sinugbuanong Binisaya*. Dr. Guino concluded by suggesting that the DepEd Regional Office could strengthen this initiative by partnering with Tingog Partylist, which has expressed willingness to fund literary contests for local languages.

PRESENTATIONS

Panel 2: MTB-MLE on the Ground

The second panel, “MTB-MLE on the Ground,” consisted of Dr. Alma Sonia Q. Sanchez-Danday, Prof. Georgina M. Orbeta, Ms. Milen C. Esteria, and Dr. Mat C. Banagbanag who discussed their research and teaching experiences on the implementation of the MTB-MLE program in their respective communities.

Literacy Instruction in the Mother Tongue: The Case of Pupils Using Mixed Vocabularies

Dr. Alma Sonia Q. Sanchez-Danday

Assistant Professor, Leyte Normal University

Dr. Sanchez-Danday opened her presentation by recounting her experience of being assigned to a Grade 1 classroom at the Leyte Normal University - Integrated Laboratory School (LNU-ILS) during the implementation of MTB-MLE. This experience prompted her to conduct several case studies as part of LNU’s pilot implementation of the program.

One of her notable works, “Literacy Instruction in the Mother Tongue: The Case of Pupils with Mixed Vocabularies,” was published in the *Journal of International Education Research*. In a preliminary survey, her team found that 37 grade one pupils spoke Waray at home, yet often shifted unconsciously to English when communicating—thus classifying them as learners with mixed vocabularies. Motivated by this observation, Dr. Sanchez-Danday sought to evaluate whether the pedagogy introduced during their MTB-MLE training in 2009 and 2010 would be effective for such learners. To do this, they employed the accuracy track method, conducting pre- and post-tests using the 100 most common Waray words, derived from the list of 1,000 most common words identified in the study of Dr. Oyzon and his team. In addition, they conducted a frequency count of sounds using three contemporary Waray short stories. They patterned their lessons based on the frequency order of the sounds, and eventually produced a Waray primer. Dr. Sanchez-Danday noted that this approach proved effective in several ways. It helped students learn letters more easily, demonstrated that using their L1 made lessons clearer, and encouraged them to participate more confidently in class.



Figure 10. Presentation by discussant Dr. Alma Sonia Q. Sanchez-Danday

However, challenges and issues arose throughout the process. Even in developing the primer, they initially struggled to select keywords based on the order of sound combinations, only to later switch to teaching by syllabic patterns when students could not recognize the prepared keywords. Dr. Sanchez-Danday noted that this difficulty stemmed from students' greater familiarity with English vocabulary than Waray. The ten readers who used syllabic reading could hardly associate some words with the key pictures in Waray. Moreover, in words with consonant-vowel-consonant (CVC) syllables in the middle or at the end, such as "*tikadto*" (on the way to) and "*dasag*" (square), 48.15 percent (13 pupils) omitted the final consonant and read the words as "*tikato*" and "*dasa*." There were also 12 pupils who were consistently zero in their pre- and post-test scores and were found to have a combination of all the listed difficulties. These, she explained, demonstrates that the students were not accustomed to syllabic reading.

Based on the results of their study, Dr. Sanchez-Danday shared several implications and recommendations: (1) identify challenges by recognizing difficulties in implementing the accuracy track method with Waray speakers; (2) defer pictures by delaying the use of illustrations in early instruction to emphasize language fundamentals; (3) introduce keywords later in the teaching process to ensure better comprehension; (4) modify the method by adapting the accuracy track method to better suit Waray learners; (5) ladder progression by establishing a structured sequence for teaching Waray sounds; and (6) study effects by assessing how the modified method impacts literacy outcomes.

Furthermore, Dr. Sanchez-Danday shared about her study titled “A Modification of Mother Tongue Literacy Instruction for Pupils with Mixed Vocabularies.” Based on this, she explained that the most effective approach for learners was to introduce one symbol and one sound at a time while teaching through sound combinations. To reinforce this method and make learning more engaging, they incorporated games and riddles, which in turn boosted students’ confidence in participating in classroom activities. From this, she also shared findings from a 2018 study she conducted that explored the perspectives of practice teachers, which highlighted the advantages of MTB-MLE in real classroom settings. However, she noted that challenges remain, such as the shortage of teaching materials and limited mother tongue proficiency among some practice teachers.

Additionally, Dr. Sanchez-Danday presented another case study she conducted in 2021, which explored parents’ perspectives on the use of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction for pupils with mixed vocabularies. Her team found that MTB-MLE supported pupils’ language development, cultural awareness, and social growth. From the parents’ perspective, it enabled them to assist their children more effectively because they can understand the language used in instruction and monitor their children’s progress. Furthermore, Dr. Sanchez-Danday shared that parents felt more at ease using the mother tongue for behavior management since, as they mentioned in interviews, it allows them to easily correct or discipline their children when they become unruly. However, she emphasized that several challenges were also identified. For the pupils, these included instructional difficulties, the lack of instructional materials (IMs), a limited number of trained preservice teachers, and confusion between languages. Meanwhile, some parents also faced challenges such as the lack of IMs and difficulty in assisting with instruction.

In relation to IMs, Dr. Sanchez-Danday shared that between 2009 and 2012, LNU undertook several initiatives such as developing big books and short stories as well as organizing workshops on material development and various fora, conferences, and seminars. Among their outputs was “*Gudti nga mga Pitad ha Pagbasa han mga Barasahon para han Una nga Grado*” and a Waray reading workbook, which remains in use for their extension activities today. Dr. Sanchez-Danday also shared that she recently developed a Waray reading primer together with one of her classes. Since her previous primer was lost during the onslaught of Super Typhoon Yolanda in 2013, she guided her students in creating a new one. They were able to produce three modules by following the accuracy track method—Module 1 focused on vowels, Module 2 on consonant sounds, and Module 3 on borrowed consonants.



Figure 11. Big books from workshops

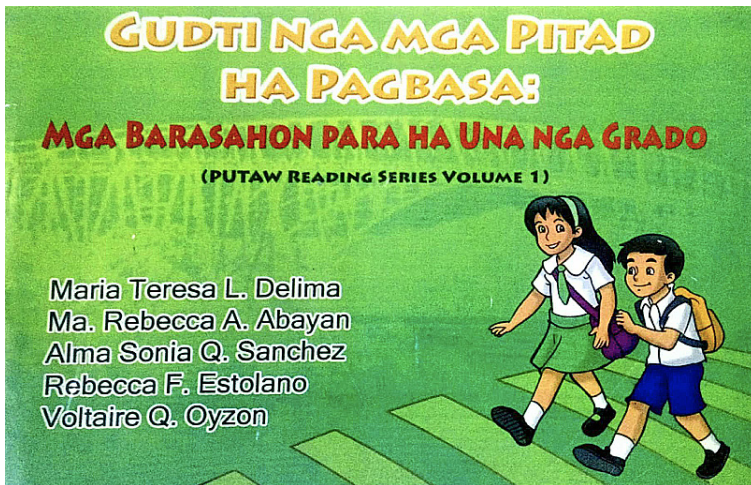


Figure 12. *Gudti nga mga Pitad ha Pagbasa: Mga Barasahon para ha Una nga Grado*

Dr. Sanchez-Danday concluded by outlining their plans, which include proposing a service-learning program, furthering their intensive reading program, and developing research proposals to further promote local languages. She first discussed their plan to implement a literacy program for young learners at the LNU-ILS as part of a service-learning component for College of Education students. Based on their observation of the kindergarten and grade one curriculum, which allots 30 minutes for homeroom, they intend to integrate a 30-minute Waray reading session every Wednesday. She noted

that this will be facilitated by Bachelor of Early Childhood Education students from LNU under the course ECED 109: Content and Pedagogy in Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education. In addition, they plan to continue using the Waray reading primer and reading workbook in their extension services, particularly through Project “Boxskwelahan: An Enrichment Program for Young Children.” This initiative aims to strengthen their goal for an intensive reading program for young learners. Lastly, Dr. Sanchez-Danday shared that she currently leads two project proposals at LNU related to MTB-MLE: the “Disaster Risk Reduction Advocacy Materials for Children” (DREAM Project) and the “Waray-based Application for Kindergarten: An Interactive Learning Platform for Young Learners” (Waray AK Project). However, both projects have yet to secure funding. She explained that they have already submitted proposals to the regional office but were unsuccessful. They also applied to the National Research Council of the Philippines (NRCP), but were unsuccessful there as well because the NRCP does not consider Waray an endangered language. This, according to Dr. Sanchez-Danday, highlights the scarcity of resources available for initiatives that promote local languages.

Mga Yamog sa Pinulongan: My MTB-MLE Experience

Prof. Georgina M. Orbeta

Professor, Eastern Visayas State University - Ormoc

Prof. Orbeta discussed her thesis on MTB-MLE, “Parents’ Experiences in Using the Mother Tongue during Pandemic Home-Based Teaching in the Philippines: Starting Points for Strengthening Home-School Partnership Beyond the Pandemic.” She shared that she presented this at the 7th International Conference on Language and Education: Multilingual Education for Transformative Education Systems and Resilient Futures in Bangkok, Thailand. It became part of the Asia Pacific case studies, alongside countries such as Afghanistan and India, with the aim of raising awareness and supporting the implementation of MTB-MLE programs. Based on her experience and insights gained from the conference, she confidently stated that the Philippines has had a positive experience with MTB-MLE. The country has even been recognized as a “trailblazer” for being the first to implement the program through an institutional policy that strongly supports the promotion of local languages. However, she highlighted a setback for the country, noting

that instead of addressing the issues in R.A. No. 10533, the government chose to halt the program through R.A. No. 12027.

Prof. Orbeta's study examined parents' use of the mother tongue as a medium of instruction at home during the pandemic. The research explored whether the challenges faced by teachers in schools were similar to those experienced by parents while assisting their children with learning modules. The study identified six major themes.

The first theme highlighted the difficulties and dissatisfaction parents experienced in using Cebuano as the medium of instruction. Challenges included explaining unfamiliar or complex words, the lack of formal teaching training or background, and insufficient Cebuano learning materials. This is closely connected to the second theme, which revealed a preference for using English over Cebuano. Prof. Orbeta explained that this preference stems from the widespread belief that proficiency in English provides better opportunities for learners.

The third theme emphasized the misconception that using Cebuano as the medium of instruction would be easy simply because it is the language they use everyday. Parents initially underestimated the challenges involved in teaching their children in Cebuano, thinking that familiarity with the language would make instruction straightforward.

The fifth theme showed how parents developed and applied specific strategies and techniques in teaching Cebuano. Using pseudonyms for the participants, Prof. Orbeta shared examples such as "Meg and Mike's Use of Audiolingual Method Strategies and Use of Cebuano and English, Nonverbal and Digital Tools as Techniques," and "Beth's Use of Lessons and Tasks as Strategies, and Use of English and Realia as Techniques." Based on their teaching experiences, the sixth theme revealed that parents recognized that their children had limited proficiency in their mother tongue, largely due to frequent exposure to English and digital content on the Internet.

However, even though many parents were new to teaching and using their mother tongue as the medium of instruction, the study also found that this experience brought certain advantages. Teaching felt more natural for them because it was done in their L1. Prof. Orbeta explained that this familiarity made it easier for parents to clarify lessons, especially those connected to their culture. For example, she mentioned *budbud*, a local delicacy commonly found in their homes, as something parents could easily discuss and relate to



Figure 13. Presentation by discussant Prof. Georgina M. Orbeta

Parents' Used Strategies and Techniques Related to Teaching the MT and Using it as MOI During Remote Teaching

- Meg and Mike's Use of Audiolingual Method Strategies and Use of Cebuano and English, Nonverbal and Digital Tools as Techniques
- Jo's Use of Total Physical Response and Audiolingual Strategies, and Use of English , Non-verbal Techniques and Writing Tools to Teach Lessons in the MT
- Beth's Use of Lessons and Tasks as Strategies, and Use of English and Realia as Techniques
- Amy's Use of Direct Method and Content and Language Integrated Learning Strategies, and Use of Study Area, Realia and Multiple Writing Tools Technique

Figure 14. Parents' Used Strategies and Techniques Related to Teaching the MT and Using it as MOI During Remote Teaching

when teaching their children. Parents likewise noted significant improvements in their children's Cebuano proficiency, along with a heightened interest in the Cebuano mother tongue. Prof. Orbeta emphasized that these outcomes illustrate the capacity of parents to effectively facilitate home-based instruction. However, she also noted, echoing Dr. Oyzon's point, that mother tongue proficiency should reach the level of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency to ensure meaningful and effective learning.

Prof. Orbeta summarized the key findings of her study into three. The first conclusion emphasized that parents' perceptions of the MTB-MLE program significantly influence how they use the mother tongue in teaching during

remote learning. She explained that the effectiveness of the program is largely affected by the level of support it receives. When parents are not in favor of MTB-MLE, its implementation at home becomes more difficult because they may lack the motivation or commitment to teach it effectively; similar to what happens in schools when teachers do not fully support the program. The study further revealed that parents' educational background and experience influence the strategies and techniques they employ when teaching in the mother tongue. Prof. Orbeta noted that this poses a considerable challenge because many parents do not have training in education, come from unrelated fields, or are not college graduates. This makes it difficult for them to confidently and effectively guide their children's learning. Finally, the study found that the challenges experienced by teachers in using the mother tongue as the medium of instruction before the pandemic closely resemble those encountered by parents during remote learning. These similarities include limited access to instructional materials, insufficient training, and a lack of institutional support.

Drawing from the MTB-MLE experiences of the parents and teachers, Prof. Orbeta shared that a workshop had been conducted to bring together local educators in Ormoc. This workshop aimed to foster collaboration in improving educational practices in the region, particularly by developing new strategies and techniques to better support students' learning needs. She also introduced the "*Kabuhi*" Program, a capacity-building initiative focused on the holistic development of daycare teachers. According to her, strengthening the foundation of early childhood educators is essential because they play a crucial role in shaping learners' initial understanding of their mother tongue. In addition, Prof. Orbeta discussed the Managing Reading at Home and Teaching Strategies (MAREHTES) Project, implemented under Project Lucy of their local government, which focuses on training the parents. She noted that it is only fitting that the provision of MTB-MLE training to teachers be complemented by specialized training for parents, especially given their direct involvement in their children's learning at home. Improving parents' understanding of MTB-MLE is essential, not only to shift long-standing misconceptions about the program but also to address the persistent reading difficulties observed among learners in their communities.

The MAREHTES Project builds on her earlier study on parents' experiences with mother tongue instruction during the pandemic and connects to another study she is set to present on November 2025, titled "Evaluation of Literacy Skills of Struggling Learners after their Attendance to a Learning Camp." This research involved 112 third-grade students from 38 classrooms and assessed their reading performance. Results showed that about 13 percent of these

learners exhibited substantial reading challenges, and across all reading levels, their fluency scores fell below national norms for grade three. Common errors included syllable repetition and word misreading—patterns that, according to Prof. Orbeta, align with the findings presented earlier by Dr. Danday. With this, she emphasized the need for sustained training for both parents and teachers to ensure that they fully understand the goals of mother tongue instruction. Encouragingly, she shared that after just three months in the MAREHTES program, participating parents had already begun to show a greater appreciation for MTB-MLE.

In closing, Prof. Orbeta shared another initiative she leads to promote the use of the local language. At the end of each semester, she requires her students to conduct an advocacy seminar in various barangays in Ormoc. She explained that her overarching goal is to gradually shift public attitudes toward MTB-MLE, with the hope that this will create a domino effect in which more community members come to appreciate and understand the broader vision of the program. Ultimately, she envisions that this growing awareness will contribute to stronger government support for MTB-MLE efforts.

Best Practices in Teaching Inabaknon Mother Tongue

Ms. Milen C. Esteria and Dr. Mat C. Banagbanag

Master Teacher, Capul Agro-Industrial School; Teacher III, Capul Central II Elementary School

Ms. Esteria and Dr. Banagbanag both shared their experiences in teaching through their mother tongue, Inabaknon. As educators from Capul, Northern Samar, they offered complementary perspectives based on the grade levels they teach. Ms. Esteria spoke from her experience as a high school Filipino teacher, expounding on how she uses Inabaknon as a bridge to facilitate the learning of Filipino. Meanwhile, Dr. Banagbanag discussed his direct involvement in implementing the MTB-MLE program at the elementary level. Both of them admitted that it was a significant challenge because Inabaknon lacks an established orthography, and the learning materials available were not written in their mother tongue. They had to create their own instructional resources and develop strategies that would allow them to sustain and remain aligned with the MTB-MLE program.



Figure 15. Presentation by discussant Ms. Milen C. Esteria



Figure 16. Presentation by discussant Dr. Mat C. Banagbanag

In teaching Filipino, Ms. Esteria shared that she incorporates translation through their local language, Inabaknon, as a key instructional strategy. For example, when introducing the Filipino term “*nagalit*”, she first presents the corresponding Inabaknon term, “*asina*.” She explained that this approach helps make lessons more comprehensible for her students, many of whom have limited proficiency in Filipino and are more confident and knowledgeable in their mother tongue. Similarly, Dr. Banagbanag shared that he applies the same principle in his elementary classes by linking Inabaknon to both Filipino and English. For instance, he connects the Inabaknon word “*allaw*” with “*araw*” in Filipino and “sun” in English.

Ms. Esteria also incorporates local literature as a core part of her teaching, including legends, folktales, folk songs, and riddles. Instead of relying solely on textbook materials, she uses her own original works written in Inabaknon to make lessons more accessible and culturally meaningful for her students. This approach, particularly in her regional literature classes in Filipino 7, helps students grasp concepts more quickly because of their connection to the subject matter. Dr. Banagbanag shared that he employs a similar strategy in his elementary classes by creating storybooks in Inabaknon and teaching folk tales and legends in the mother tongue. He also mentioned that some of his big and small books have been submitted to the division office and became part of their library hub, serving not only to enhance student learning but also to support the preservation and promotion of Inabaknon.

To further enhance learning, Ms. Esteria engages her students in a range of activities, including writing poems and essays, as well as conducting research on the first 1,000 words in Inabaknon. In the poetry exercises, students first write their pieces in Inabaknon before translating them into Filipino. Ms. Esteria believes that through this, the students will be able to develop a stronger command of both their mother tongue and Filipino to communicate more effectively and confidently in both languages. Moreover, through activities like essay writing and research on foundational Inabaknon vocabulary, Ms. Esteria encourages students to develop their writing and analytical skills while simultaneously contributing to the documentation and potential establishment of an orthography for their mother tongue.

Similarly, Dr. Banagbanag shared his integration of visual and oral activities in the classroom to support the development of his students' mother tongue skills. Beyond using drawings, puppets, and role-playing exercises, he incorporates traditional songs and encourages the oral recitation of proverbs to help learners connect language learning with cultural practices. He also mentioned that he occasionally invites elders to share stories to make learning more engaging and meaningful for his pupils. For him, these interactions serve as reference points for planning future lessons. He maintains close contact with the community elders for validation of oral histories to ensure that the knowledge and narratives he shares in class are accurate.

Furthermore, beyond her classroom practices, Ms. Esteria is actively compiling a comprehensive list of Inabaknon words with their corresponding Filipino translations to support more effective language learning for her students. She also leverages digital platforms, such as Facebook Live and short video reels, to share both existing and original literary works, particularly folk tales, with

a broader audience. This initiative not only provides students with additional exposure to Inabaknon in an engaging way but also serves as a cultural bridge for members of the Capul community who are already living outside the island. Building on these efforts, Ms. Esteria mentioned a growing concern over the declining number of Inabaknon speakers because many Abaknons are migrating to other areas in search of better livelihoods. Consequently, fewer native speakers remain in the community, and children of returning migrants often speak only Filipino. Thus, Ms. Esteria emphasized that integrating the L1 into instruction is vital in making learners better understand new concepts in Filipino, English, or other languages, strengthen their cognitive skills, and foster a deeper connection to their heritage.

Dr. Banagbanag, on the other hand, shared that he conducts continuous assessments of his pupils using a variety of approaches, including oral storytelling, portfolio work, and creative outputs. By using these diverse assessment strategies, he strengthens his pupils' connection to their mother tongue and motivates them to participate more actively in the learning process. However, Dr. Banagbanag noted that despite such efforts, teachers in Capul like him continue to face significant challenges due to the lack of formal instructional materials in Inabaknon and limited opportunities for teacher training. There is also a pressing need for comprehensive linguistic documentation to support both teaching and preservation of their language. He expressed that these place an additional burden on teachers, who, in addition to their regular teaching duties, are required to translate existing MTB-MLE materials into Inabaknon, often without adequate training. He also highlighted the strong influence of dominant languages in their community and identified the digital divide as another major challenge. Because Capul is an island, internet connectivity is often weak and unreliable, limiting teachers' access to important online resources and learning materials. Dr. Banagbanag underscored that these challenges make it increasingly difficult for teachers to sustain their motivation in carrying out the goals of the MTB-MLE program in their community. Thus, he called for stronger government support to ensure that teachers are adequately equipped to continue implementing the program effectively.

Together, Ms. Esteria and Dr. Banagbanag's accounts highlighted their resourceful approaches in navigating the demands of the program despite the challenges they faced. They continue to view the use of Inabaknon in education as an essential step toward empowering learners and preserving their linguistic and cultural heritage.

Open Forum

Prof. Jessa A. Amarille, Chair of the Division of Humanities, facilitated the open forum for the second panel of discussants under the theme “MTB-MLE on the Ground.” Mx. Jles Permejo, a BA Literature student from UPTC, was the first one to raise the question, which was focused on the perceived disparity between the implementation of MTB-MLE in public and private schools. Many private school teachers tend to sideline MTB-MLE on the assumption that their students’ L1 is English rather than Waray. Jles asked how advocates of MTB-MLE can respond to this situation and whether there are existing efforts—such as interventions from DepEd—to encourage private institutions to adopt better practices in promoting local languages, given that discussions on MTB-MLE often center on public schools.

In her response, Dr. Sanchez-Danday clarified that the implementation of MTB-MLE follows specific guidelines. She emphasized that “mother tongue” is not limited to Waray; thus, if the children in private schools genuinely acquire English as their L1, this falls outside the direct control of external stakeholders. However, she stressed that this does not prevent schools and educators from promoting local languages. She suggested that organized activities and community-based initiatives can be undertaken to advocate for the appreciation and use of the local language. After all, according to her, these children remain part of the broader community, and the native language of the community should not be foreign to them. Dr. Sanchez-Danday also recalled their experience during the initial months of the MTB-MLE pilot implementation at the LNU Laboratory School. According to her, many parents strongly opposed the program to the point that tensions rose. Despite this, the school remained firm in upholding the principles of the laboratory school and the objectives of MTB-MLE. They conducted a formal orientation to explain the rationale and benefits of the program, and parents who remained unwilling to support MTB-MLE were advised to consider enrolling their children in other schools. However, Dr. Sanchez-Danday mentioned that the parents eventually chose not to withdraw their children after gaining a clearer understanding of the program’s purpose.

Adding to Dr. Sanchez-Danday’s insights, Prof. Orbeta shared a similar experience, which she learned from the parents who participated in her study. Parents who were initially opposed to the use of the mother tongue were also advised to consider enrolling their children in private schools, where English-only policies are more strictly enforced. Reflecting on this, Prof. Orbeta expressed her concern about why some parents in Ormoc

insist on prioritizing English when their children's peers predominantly speak Cebuano. She noted that this, makes it difficult for their children to communicate, form relationships, and feel a sense of belonging within their own community. Alongside this, she emphasized that children have a linguistic right to learn and use their mother tongue. Thus, Prof. Orbeta advocates for a shared commitment between parents and teachers, emphasizing that it is their responsibility to foster and strengthen children's knowledge of their mother tongue. She further recommended increased advocacy efforts from the government to promote local languages, noting that when parents are made aware of the benefits of mother tongue education, they are more likely to support its use.

Dr. Guino clarified that both private and public schools fall under the jurisdiction of DepEd for basic education, and thus are required to follow its MTB-MLE guidelines. She agreed with Dr. Sanchez-Danday's point regarding the presence of multiple mother tongues within a single community. Nevertheless, Dr. Guino emphasized that even if a child's L1 is Filipino or English, parents in Waray-speaking communities should still play an active role in introducing the local language to their children. She underscored that no language is inherently superior and that proficiency in English does not automatically make a child more intelligent than others. Dr. Guino called for stronger advocacy directed at parents whose children speak Filipino or English as their L1. She highlighted that parents must realize that proficiency in the mother tongue is not harmless but actually beneficial because it can help their children become multilingual, multiliterate, and even multicultural, which is the very goal of MTB-MLE.

The second question was raised by Mr. Rovene Ramos, a BA Psychology student from UPTC. He asked whether there are interdisciplinary studies on MTB-MLE, noting that the program's implementation could benefit from insights from fields like Child Psychology. Specifically, he wanted to know if there are studies conducted in collaboration with psychologists that examine child development in relation to the learning of their languages.

Dr. Banagbanag briefly responded, admitting that he has not yet come across any studies on MTB-MLE that relates to Child Psychology. He did, however, refer to the Lubuagan study, which provides evidence that learners who are taught in their mother tongue are better able to understand and acquire additional languages, such as their second and third languages. In addition to this, Prof. Orbeta shared that she has conducted a case study examining the use of the mother tongue in relation to theories on children's developmental

milestones. She noted, however, that she has not yet conducted a study in collaboration with a psychologist. Nonetheless, she emphasized that this is a compelling question because language development and communication are actually connected to psychology because children's learning and knowledge acquisition are fundamentally shaped by their cognitive and developmental processes. Dr. Sanchez-Danday shared similar insights, noting that, to her knowledge, no such study currently exists at LNU or within the region. She emphasized, however, that the MTB-MLE program was informed by international longitudinal studies that included components of psychology before it was proposed and implemented. In addition to the first three discussants, Dr. Guino explained that she has also not encountered any study of that nature in the region so far. She pointed out, however, that it is possible for DepEd Region VIII to encourage their teachers to explore this gap in their future works.

Moving forward, the third question was raised by Mr. Christian Fergus Delabajan, a first-year BA Literature student from UPTC. His question centered on the situation of Inabaknon as an isolated language, since Capul, Northern Samar is the only community in Northern Samar that speaks the language. Specifically, he asked what frameworks or methods can be used to ensure that Inabaknon is transmitted from one generation to the next, while still allowing students to learn and use dominant regional and national languages.

Dr. Banagbanag addressed the question by sharing that Capul has been exploring innovative approaches, including a game-based application that introduces Inabaknon words along with their meanings. The app is currently being used by elementary school students, and he noted that it provides a practical way to adapt to contemporary learning environments. With children increasingly exposed to digital devices, this tool allows them to engage with their mother tongue in a captivating way. Additionally, Dr. Banagbanag highlighted that it also helps that they make it a point to integrate local literatures into their lessons to help students internalize and connect with their mother tongue more. Building on this, Ms. Esteria briefly shared that Inabaknon words can now also be accessed and verified online through Bandilyo.com.

The fourth question was read by Prof. Amarille from the set of questions submitted by online registrants. It focused on how MTB-MLE can make sure that children can still keep up with national and global languages while being taught in their mother tongue, given parents' worry that their children might fall behind in dominant languages.

Dr. Sanchez-Danday responded to this by clarifying that supporting children in learning national and global languages is precisely one of the goals of the MTB-MLE program. Research has shown that a solid foundation in a child's mother tongue actually facilitates the easier acquisition of their second, third, and even fourth languages. She emphasized the need to address parental misconceptions because they have significantly impeded the effective implementation of the program. Ms. Esteria concurred, emphasizing the equal value of all languages because they all allow their speakers to connect, share ideas, and express their identity. Building on these, Dr. Guino highlighted that the government's support for MTB-MLE is based on its proven benefits for learners. The problem, she noted, lies with the proponents of R.A. No. 12027, who may not have fully understood the purpose of the program.

Furthermore, Prof. Orbeta noted that the effectiveness of MTB-MLE has been recognized internationally. She explained that the program not only facilitates the learning of other languages, but also supports broader cognitive and academic development. She cited Japan as an example, where mother tongue-based education has contributed to producing highly competent scientists. However, she stressed that implementing MTB-MLE in the Philippines remains challenging due to gaps in public understanding of the program's purpose. Thus, Prof. Orbeta emphasized the importance of providing opportunities for discussion to raise awareness and foster a deeper appreciation of the program.

Moving forward, Mr. Herminigildo A. Sanchez, a local writer, shared his insights in relation to the ongoing discussion. He began by emphasizing that the mother tongue is first passed on to the younger generation by their parents, which is why the home is the most important place for children nowadays to learn it. However, according to him, the process becomes hard because of the influence of social media. Many parents today are influenced by social media and tend to believe that their children's abilities would be mediocre when they use the local language when conversing with them. Children are also now heavily exposed to online content, where they tend to imitate the language they encounter there. He also pointed out the limited availability of Waray-language materials, such as animated stories, which further reduces opportunities for children to engage with their mother tongue.

Mr. Sanchez illustrated this through a personal experience. He shared that his own child is among the many parents who prioritize teaching English to their children. In response, whenever he spends time with his grandchildren, he intentionally speaks to them in Waray. Over time, he has observed a change in

their expressions—for instance, instead of saying “Oh, I’m hurt,” they now say “*Masakit!*” when they feel pain. For him, this reflects the impact of consistent exposure and the importance of teaching the mother tongue early.

To conclude his sharing, Mr. Sanchez performed a piece from his “Haglipot nga Siday” (Short Poems): “*Kabug-at pas-anon/Kaguol pinsaron/Kun kita, magkakaupod/Magaan ug kaya naton.*” He remarked that, in the same way that a poem does not need to be long or elaborate to be meaningful, efforts to promote the local language need not be grand. What is essential, he emphasized, is that the mother tongue continues to be used, taught, and passed on.

Moreover, Dr. Guino recalled her high school years, when the local radio station DYVL regularly organized siday (poetry) contests. She suggested that reviving similar activities could help encourage the use and appreciation of the local language among younger generations. She further proposed that, given the lack of existing materials in Waray, teachers and parents can make use of traditional Waray songs. This, she noted, would not only familiarize learners with the language but also strengthen their appreciation of Waray culture. Just as children easily pick up English from the media they are exposed to, she emphasized that they can also learn their mother tongue through consistent exposure to songs and other cultural materials in their local language.

The fifth question read by Prof. Amarille focused on the possibility of introducing MTB-based board examinations or other assessments administered entirely in the local language. Dr. Guino responded by explaining that, first and foremost, introducing board examinations or formal tests in the local language would require appropriate legislation before it could be implemented. She also emphasized that this would require substantial work because test items would need to be carefully developed and quality-assured in that local language. Building on this, Dr. Sanchez-Danday added that such examinations are actually possible. She explained that constitutional provisions could eventually be amended for it, especially if there will be sufficient advocacy and support.

Concluding the open forum, Prof. Amarille invited each discussant to share a brief closing statement. Dr. Banagbanag reiterated his call to support the continued implementation of MTB-MLE, while Ms. Esteria encouraged the audience to love their mother tongue, describing it as the “root of life.” Following this, Prof. Orbeta highlighted that MTB-MLE is one of the solutions to the many issues faced by the country, particularly in the education sector. She urged everyone to continuously raise awareness and to use the mother tongue both in school and at home because continuity is key to keeping it alive.

In addition, Dr. Sanchez-Danday shared a reminder that she always tells her students—intelligence should not be equated with English-speaking fluency. She encouraged the audience to love their own language and to take pride in their regional identity. Dr. Guino then reiterated her quote, “*Ang wika ay may buhay; limutin mong gamitin, ito’y kusang mamamata’y*,” underscoring that the life of a language depends on its speakers. She urged the audience to begin with themselves in sustaining and strengthening their local languages. Finally, Dr. Oyzon expressed his gratitude to all who remain committed to their local languages. He recalled that he once felt alone in this advocacy, but now, seeing his students and others increasingly recognize the importance of learning and using their local language gives him a renewed sense of hope. He acknowledged that there is still a long journey ahead but emphasized that persistence and collective effort are needed to carry the advocacy forward.

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