

Promoting Linguistic Diversity through Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education in Eastern Visayas

Challenges, Innovations, and Policy Directions

Voltaire Q. Oyzon  and Antonino Salvador S. de Veyra 

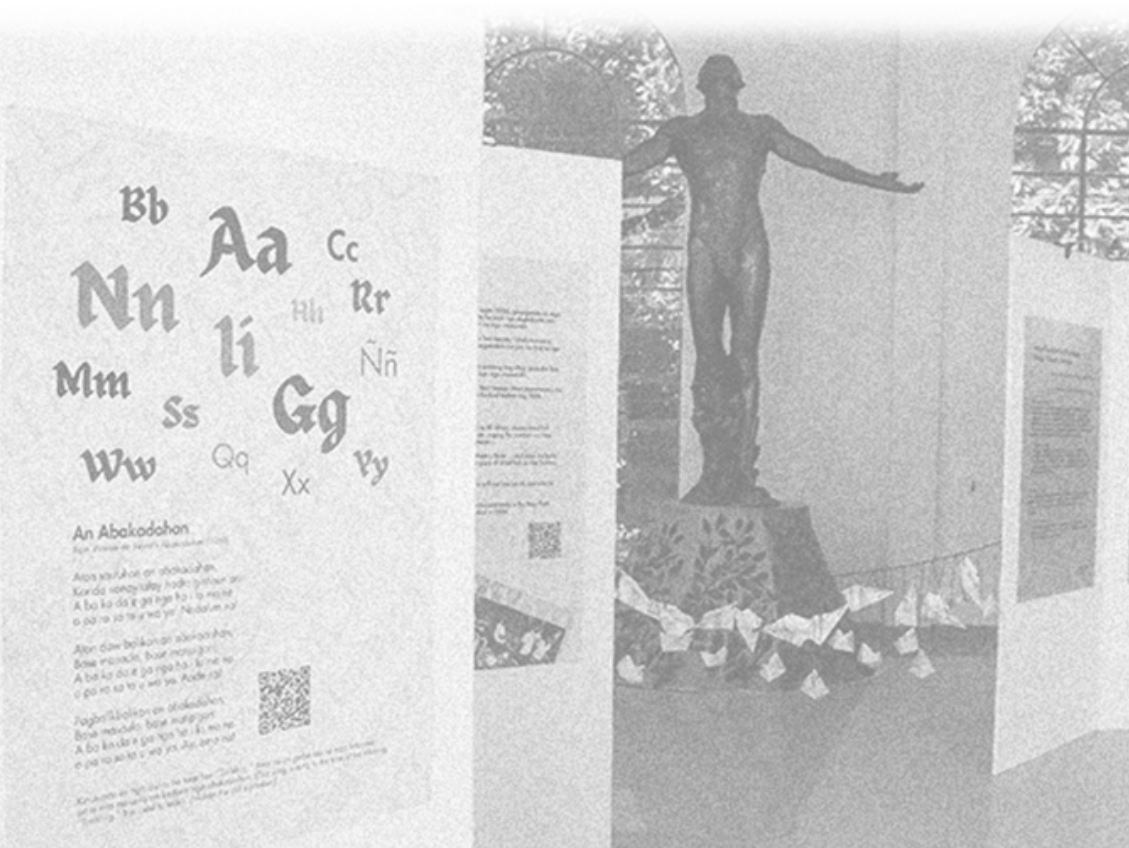


Local Regional Studies Network

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The photos are from their interactive exhibit on Waray language held last Oct. 18, 2023 to Jan. 26, 2024.

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A Discussion on the Policy Standards for Heritage and Cultural Tourism in the Cordillera

Jeffrey H. Javier



Local Regional Studies Network

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DISCUSSION PAPER

Balancing Culture and Tourism: A Discussion on the Policy Standards for Heritage and Cultural Tourism in the Cordillera

Key Highlights

- The effectiveness of the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) in Eastern Visayas is contingent upon overcoming the dialectal diversity of the Waray language and the resource-related challenges that persist in the region. These challenges are not only linguistic but also logistical and infrastructural, and they have the potential to hinder the full realization of MTB-MLE's goals.
- While the implementation of the MTB-MLE policy gained substantial ground in Eastern Visayas, its relative success will be compromised by the impact of Republic Act No. 12027 that calls for the discontinuance of the mother tongue as medium of instruction from kindergarten to grade 3.
- A thematic analysis of the data gathered through roundtable discussions and interviews with key scholars and implementors of MTB-MLE in the region identifies three major problem areas: resource constraints, dialectical diversity, and teacher preparedness. Added to these problem areas is the community resistance to the use of the mother tongue as medium of instruction.
- This paper proposes several recommendations that address these problem areas, specifically: the development of learning materials, preferably with the use of digital technology, tailored to specific dialects; increased teacher training in the Waray language to address dialectical variations and the lack of learning materials; community and media engagement that advocates for the relevance of MTB-MLE; and policy reform for sustainable MTB-MLE implementation.

Introduction

Eastern Visayas is a region rich in linguistic diversity, with several distinct languages and dialects spoken across its provinces. The region primarily consists of the islands of Leyte, Samar, and Biliran, and is home to a variety of languages, most notably Waray, Cebuano, and Inabaknon. These languages not only vary in vocabulary and grammar but also reflect the region's complex social and cultural fabric. Waray, for instance, has multiple dialects that differ from one area to another, such as the Tacloban Waray, Calbayog Waray, Northern Samar Waray, and Eastern Samar Waray. Each has its unique set of words, pronunciations, and expressions.

This linguistic diversity poses significant challenges for the educational system in Eastern Visayas, particularly when it comes to the development of teaching materials and curricula that are universally applicable across the region. In classrooms where multiple dialects are spoken, the use of a single language for instruction can often result in confusion and hinder the learning process. For example, terms that are widely understood in one dialect may be unfamiliar in another, leading to gaps in comprehension. The challenge is further compounded by the fact that many teaching materials are developed using Leyte or Tacloban Waray, which is not entirely intelligible to students from more distant regions like Catarman or Borongan, where other dialects are spoken.

Moreover, the rapid spread of Filipino and English in urban areas, driven by national policies and the influence of mass media, often leads to a decline in the use of local languages, particularly in younger generations. As children are increasingly exposed to Filipino and English at school and through media, they may struggle to maintain proficiency in their mother tongues, further deepening the divide between regional dialects and the national language. This linguistic shift complicates the development of teaching materials that resonate with local learners, as students may feel disconnected from content that does not reflect their everyday language and culture.

To address these challenges, Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) was introduced as a policy aimed at using the mother tongue as the primary medium of instruction in the early grades, with the transition to Filipino and English occurring gradually in later years. The goal of MTB-MLE is to build a strong linguistic foundation that fosters better comprehension and academic performance, while also promoting cultural identity and pride in local languages.

Statement of the Argument

The implementation of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) in Eastern Visayas holds significant promise for improving educational outcomes, fostering cultural preservation, and addressing the unique linguistic needs of the region. However, its effectiveness is contingent upon overcoming the dialectal diversity and resource-related challenges that persist in the region. These challenges are not only linguistic but also logistical and infrastructural, and they have the potential to hinder the full realization of MTB-MLE's goals.

The linguistic variations across these areas make it difficult to implement a one-size-fits-all educational approach. For example, words that are commonly used in Leyte Waray may not be understood by students from Borongan, where different terms are used for the same concepts. This dialectal fragmentation requires a localized approach to the development of teaching materials and curricula, ensuring that each community's specific linguistic characteristics are addressed in the educational process. Without such adaptations, students may struggle to engage with learning materials, which could affect their academic success and their connection to the content.

In addition to dialectal challenges, resource shortages pose a significant barrier to the successful implementation of MTB-MLE. The region faces a lack of locally produced learning materials that reflect the linguistic and cultural realities of the communities. This shortage is particularly acute in rural areas, where access to educational resources is more limited. The lack of textbooks, visual aids, and technology-based learning tools compounds the challenge, as teachers in these areas are often forced to rely on improvised materials or standardized resources that do not align with the local dialects or cultural contexts.

Furthermore, the insufficient teacher training in multilingual education exacerbates these resource gaps. Many educators in Eastern Visayas have not received specialized training in language pedagogy for multilingual classrooms, which is crucial for effectively teaching students in their mother tongue and supporting their transition to Filipino and English in later grades. Inadequate professional development opportunities and limited access to training programs further hinder the ability of teachers to meet the needs of their students, particularly in communities with dialectal differences.

The impact of Republic Act No. 12027 further complicates this situation. Entitled An Act Discounting the Use of the Mother Tongue as Medium of Instruction from Kindergarten to Grade 3, Providing for Its Optional

Implementation in Monolingual Classes, and Amending for the Purpose Sections 4 and 5 of Republic Act No. 10533, Otherwise Known as the “Enhanced Basic Education Act Of 2013,” RA No. 12027 prohibits the use of the mother language in educational settings unless it is a monolingual class and the stipulated conditions of the law are satisfied, further complicates the situation. While the MTB-MLE program has been shown to improve early literacy and cognitive development when students learn in their mother tongue, the shift away from the mother tongue in later grades weakens the program’s long-term potential. The discontinuation of mother tongue instruction, as prescribed by RA No. 12027, risks undermining the gains made in language proficiency and cultural retention, particularly in marginalized communities where Filipino and English are not widely spoken or understood.

Thus, the significance of MTB-MLE in Eastern Visayas lies in its potential to bridge the gap between linguistic diversity and educational access. However, its success requires a concerted effort to address the dialectal differences and resource constraints that are pervasive in the region. Addressing these challenges will ensure that MTB-MLE can fulfill its goal of providing inclusive, culturally relevant, and effective education for all learners, empowering them with the skills they need to thrive in an increasingly multilingual and globalized world.

Research Questions

1. How can dialectal variations be addressed in the development of MTB-MLE materials?
2. What are the key obstacles to successful implementation, and how can they be mitigated?
3. How can media and community involvement strengthen the implementation of MTB-MLE?

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

BICS and CALP in the Context of MTB-MLE

To understand the effectiveness of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE), it is crucial to ground the discussion in theoretical frameworks that explain how language acquisition occurs and how educational

practices can enhance this process. Two key concepts in language development, (1) basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS), and (2) cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP), are central to this understanding. These concepts, introduced by Jim Cummins (2000), provide a comprehensive framework for analyzing how children acquire and use languages in different contexts.

BICS, as defined by Cummins, refers to the social language skills used in everyday communication. It includes the ability to engage in informal conversations, understand simple questions, and participate in basic interactions. BICS typically develops quickly, often within six months to two years of exposure to a new language. In the context of MTB-MLE, BICS corresponds to the informal use of the mother tongue, where children are already proficient and can communicate comfortably with their peers, family, and community members.

On the other hand, CALP involves the academic language proficiency required for school-based learning. CALP refers to the skills necessary for understanding and producing complex ideas, interpreting academic texts, and engaging in higher-order thinking. Developing CALP typically takes five to seven years of consistent exposure and practice. In the MTB-MLE context, CALP is developed when students use their mother tongue for formal academic purposes, such as reading, writing, and engaging with subject-specific concepts. While BICS is relatively easy to acquire, CALP requires more extensive and deliberate instructional support, especially when transitioning to Filipino or English in later grades.

Cummins' framework is particularly relevant for understanding the goals of MTB-MLE, which seeks to build CALP in the mother tongue during the early years of education. This approach ensures that children develop a strong foundation in their first language before transitioning to second or third languages. The process not only enhances academic performance but also fosters greater cognitive development and cultural continuity. According to Cummins, students who are proficient in their mother tongue will more easily acquire CALP in additional languages, as the cognitive skills developed through their first language transfer to second and third languages (Cummins 2000).

Furthermore, Lev Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory provides additional insights into language acquisition. Vygotsky argued that language is a tool for cognitive development and that social interaction plays a critical role in learning. He emphasized the importance of scaffolding, where more knowledgeable individuals (teachers, peers, community members) provide support to help learners reach higher levels of understanding. In the context of MTB-MLE,

Vygotsky's theory reinforces the importance of community involvement in the educational process, as local language use and cultural knowledge are embedded in social interactions that support cognitive development. The scaffolded use of the mother tongue in early education enables students to build CALP through structured, teacher-guided activities that incorporate local knowledge and language.

Thus, the theoretical frameworks of BICS and CALP provide a foundation for understanding the critical role of MTB-MLE in enhancing language acquisition. By first promoting BICS in the mother tongue, students can develop the cognitive and academic language skills necessary for future academic success. In this way, MTB-MLE supports the long-term goal of multilingualism, where children are empowered to use multiple languages to navigate different academic and social contexts.

Existing Research

MTB-MLE in the Philippines, with a Focus on Eastern Visayas

In the Philippines, MTB-MLE has been an important policy initiative aimed at improving educational outcomes, especially in marginalized regions where students may not have full proficiency in Filipino or English. Studies on the implementation of MTB-MLE highlight both the opportunities and the challenges that arise from its adoption, particularly in linguistically diverse areas such as Eastern Visayas.

Voltaire Q. Oyzon's (2025) research on the dialectal differences within Waray has been instrumental in shedding light on one of the most significant barriers to the effective implementation of MTB-MLE in Eastern Visayas. In his study, Oyzon compares various Waray dialects spoken in different parts of the region, including Tacloban Waray, Catarman Waray, Catbalogan Waray, Calbayog Waray, and Borongan Waray. Through his Waray Dialect Distance Index (DDI), he quantifies the linguistic distance between these dialects, revealing that while some dialects are highly intelligible, others show significant variation in vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammatical structures. These dialectal differences create challenges for producing uniform educational materials, as terms used in one dialect may be unfamiliar or confusing to students from other regions. Oyzon's research emphasizes the need for region-specific materials that account for these dialectal variations, ensuring that students receive content that aligns with their linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

In addition to the work on dialects, Analyn C. España's (2025) research on the use of folklore in language education offers a compelling approach to making MTB-MLE both linguistically and culturally relevant. España's doctoral dissertation focuses on the collection and documentation of Samareño folktales, which she has used as pedagogical resources in the region, complementing Merlie Alunan's *Susumaton: Oral Narratives of Leyte* (2016). By integrating local narratives such as myths, legends, and folktales into the curriculum, España helps students connect with the material in a deeper, more meaningful way. This method not only aids in language acquisition but also preserves local culture and strengthens students' cultural identity. Her work highlights the importance of using culturally grounded content in the curriculum to support language learning and ensure that education is relevant to students' lives and experiences.

Additionally, Mat C. Banagbanag's (2025) efforts in Capul, Northern Samar, where Inabaknon is spoken, focus on creating language resources for the local dialect. Recognizing the absence of teaching materials in Inabaknon, Banagbanag developed a Grade 3 worktext that integrates local vocabulary and culturally relevant stories. His work addresses the scarcity of Inabaknon language materials, providing students with the necessary tools to learn in their mother tongue. By incorporating local folklore and community-based narratives, Banagbanag's work ensures that the MTB-MLE program is both linguistically accurate and culturally meaningful. His initiatives exemplify the importance of community involvement and the creation of localized educational materials to support the preservation of minority languages like Inabaknon.

These studies underscore the necessity of localized and culturally relevant resources to make MTB-MLE successful in Eastern Visayas. They also highlight the critical role of local languages in not only improving educational outcomes but also in fostering cultural pride and language preservation. However, challenges such as dialectal diversity, resource scarcity, and the need for specialized teacher training must be addressed to ensure that MTB-MLE reaches its full potential in the region.

The existing research on MTB-MLE in the Philippines, particularly in Eastern Visayas, provides important insights into the opportunities and challenges faced in implementing the program. The works of Oyzon, España, and Banagbanag offer valuable strategies for localizing the curriculum and ensuring that MTB-MLE is both effective and culturally relevant for diverse communities across the region. These studies contribute significantly to the ongoing conversation about how to improve language education and preserve local languages in the Philippines.

Regional Context

The Challenges Faced by the Region, Including Limited Resources, the Impact of RA No. 12027, and the Role of Community Resistance

1. Limited Resources

One of the primary challenges facing the Eastern Visayas region in the implementation of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) is the limited availability of educational resources. In many parts of the region, particularly in rural and remote areas, schools struggle with insufficient learning materials, including textbooks, workbooks, visual aids, and technological tools. The lack of locally-produced resources in the mother tongues of the region—such as Waray, Leyte Cebuano, Inabaknon, and other dialects—compounds this issue, as most educational content is created in Filipino or English, which may not be fully comprehensible to all students. The linguistic diversity in Eastern Visayas, with its varying dialects of Waray alone, presents a significant hurdle in creating uniform materials that can be used across the entire region.

Voltaire Q. Oyzon's (2025) research on the dialectal differences within Waray underscores the complexity of resource development in such a linguistically diverse area. For example, Tacloban Waray, the dialect of the region's capital, differs substantially from Catarman Waray or Borongan Waray in both vocabulary and grammar.

This variation means that textbooks and teaching materials created in Tacloban Waray might not be understandable to students in Borongan, where the dialect is markedly different. The absence of dialect-specific educational resources forces teachers to rely on improvised materials or universal content, which may not resonate with students' cultural and linguistic realities, thereby impeding their learning progress.

Additionally, in remote communities, access to technology is often limited, further restricting the ability to utilize digital learning tools, e-learning platforms, and mobile applications that could enhance the reach of MTB-MLE programs. The digital divide, particularly in island communities like Capul, where Inabaknon is spoken, makes it difficult for both students and teachers to access the online materials and resources necessary to support multilingual education effectively.

2. The Impact of RA No. 12027 on MTB-MLE

The passage of RA No. 12027, which mandates to revert back to the use of Filipino and English as the primary mediums of instruction, unless the class is monolingual, presents another significant challenge to the long-term viability of MTB-MLE in the region. While MTB-MLE has shown considerable success in the early grades, helping students improve literacy skills and cognitive development in their mother tongues, RA No. 12027's stipulation to transition away from the mother tongue after Grade 3 creates a disconnect between early education and the continued academic journey of students.

This policy shift limits the opportunities for students to develop Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) in their native languages. As Jim Cummins's (2000) theory suggests, CALP is crucial for academic success, and it is most effectively developed when children are given extended opportunities to use their mother tongue as the medium of instruction. By abruptly switching to Filipino or English beyond Grade 3, students face the challenge of acquiring academic proficiency in these languages without the necessary foundation in their mother tongue. As a result, MTB-MLE's potential to enhance academic outcomes for students in the long run is diminished, particularly in linguistically diverse areas where Filipino and English are not the primary languages of communication.

Furthermore, RA No. 12027 has created confusion and resistance among some teachers and school administrators who are committed to using the mother tongue for effective teaching but are bound by the mandate to switch languages after Grade 3. This policy shift not only undermines the cultural relevance of the curriculum but also leads to inconsistent application of MTB-MLE across different schools and communities, particularly in areas where local languages are still widely spoken and understood.

3. The Role of Community Resistance

Community resistance to MTB-MLE is another significant challenge in the region. While the Philippine education system has embraced MTB-MLE in theory, many communities remain hesitant about its implementation, often due to misconceptions about the value of local languages. For instance, some parents and local leaders still believe that proficiency in English is a prerequisite for success in the modern world, leading to a preference for foreign languages over local dialects. As Gretel Laura M.

Cadiong and Rosemarie M. Guino pointed out during the roundtable discussions, many parents resist the idea of their children learning in their mother tongues, fearing that it may limit their children's ability to succeed in higher education and the job market, where proficiency in Filipino and English is often prioritized.

Moreover, the historical legacy of colonialism, which has long favored the use of Spanish and later English as markers of prestige and educational success, continues to shape the attitudes of many in Eastern Visayas. This colonial mentality persists in some communities, leading to the devaluation of local languages and the belief that using the mother tongue in education is a step backward.

To overcome this resistance, it is essential to engage with communities through awareness campaigns that highlight the benefits of learning in the mother tongue—not only for academic achievement but also for preserving cultural identity. Educators and policymakers must emphasize that proficiency in local languages does not hinder the acquisition of Filipino or English but rather provides a strong linguistic foundation that facilitates the learning of additional languages later on. Analyn C. España's (2025) integration of Samareño folklore into educational content is one such example of how culturally relevant materials can help shift the perception of MTB-MLE from an educational burden to a cultural asset.

The challenges faced by Eastern Visayas in implementing MTB-MLE are multifaceted, involving issues related to linguistic diversity, resource limitations, policy constraints, and community resistance. To ensure the success and sustainability of MTB-MLE, it is essential to develop a policy framework that addresses the dialectal variations within the region, promotes localized educational materials, and encourages community engagement to overcome resistance. Additionally, overcoming the limitations imposed by RA No. 12027 requires the recognition of the long-term benefits of mother tongue education and its critical role in the academic success and cultural preservation of students in Eastern Visayas.

Methodology and Theoretical Framework

Field Data Collection

The data for this study were primarily collected from the Roundtable Discussion (RTD) on Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE), which took place on 24 September 2025 at the Leyte–Samar Heritage Center, University of the Philippines Tacloban College. This RTD brought together a diverse group of participants, including educators, policymakers, community leaders, and linguists from the Eastern Visayas region. The event was designed to explore the challenges and successes of MTB-MLE in the region, focusing on the production of learning materials using local languages.

Data was collected through various channels during the RTD, such as panel discussions, keynote speeches, and open forums. These discussions provided a rich source of insights into the real-world challenges faced by educators and policy-makers in implementing MTB-MLE. Notably, the panels featured Voltaire Q. Oyzon, Analyn C. España, and Mat C. Banagbanag, whose research and experiences directly addressed the complexities of working with diverse dialects and linguistic resources in the region. In addition, interviews were conducted with local educators, school administrators, and community leaders, offering perspectives on how MTB-MLE is being applied in practice.

Through these interviews, we gathered qualitative data on resource constraints, including the shortage of locally-produced teaching materials and the limited access to technology in more remote areas. Educators shared their experiences with language shift and the impact of dialectal variations on the learning process. Policymakers and community leaders discussed the role of local languages in the educational system and the challenges of integrating local languages into formal curricula. This field data provides an invaluable understanding of the on-the-ground realities of MTB-MLE implementation in Eastern Visayas, as well as the opinions and attitudes of key stakeholders involved in the process.

Analytical Framework

To analyze the data collected from the RTD, a qualitative analysis was conducted using thematic coding. Thematic coding is a widely used method for analyzing qualitative data, as it allows for the identification of recurring themes and patterns across different sources of data. This approach was particularly suitable for analyzing the diverse and complex discussions from

the RTD, as it enabled the researcher to systematically explore the key issues related to resource constraints, dialectal diversity, and teacher preparedness in the context of MTB-MLE.

The analysis focused on several key areas of discussion:

1. **Resource constraints:** Data was coded to identify discussions about the shortage of teaching materials in local languages, the lack of technological resources, and the challenges faced by teachers in accessing or creating effective learning tools. Commonly cited issues included the insufficient availability of dialect-specific materials, the inadequate training in technology integration, and the scarcity of government-provided resources in remote areas.
2. **Dialectal diversity:** Another major theme that emerged was the challenge of dialectal variation within local languages. Data was coded to capture the complexities of teaching in a region with multiple Waray dialects and other languages like Leyte Cebuano and Inabaknon. Discussions around the Waray Dialect Distance Index (DDI), developed by Oyzon, were particularly pertinent here, as they highlighted how linguistic differences between regions affect the effectiveness of standardized educational materials. The analysis explored how these dialectal differences impact student comprehension and engagement, and how localized educational resources could address these issues.
3. **Teacher Preparedness:** The third key theme revolved around teacher training and capacity-building. The data was coded to evaluate the discussions on the lack of specialized training for teachers in multilingual education and mother tongue instruction. Many educators noted that while they were capable of teaching in the local dialect, they often lacked the training in linguistics, pedagogy, and multilingual teaching strategies necessary to effectively implement MTB-MLE. Moreover, there was a discussion of the need for ongoing professional development to support teachers in adapting to the evolving demands of MTB-MLE.

By identifying recurring themes, this analysis sheds light on the systemic barriers that need to be addressed in order to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of MTB-MLE programs in Eastern Visayas. Furthermore, the analysis highlights the importance of a multistakeholder approach in addressing these challenges, involving teachers, policymakers, community leaders, and linguists in the development of region-specific solutions.

Discussion

Dialectal Variations and Impact on MTB-MLE

One of the most significant challenges in the successful implementation of Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE) in Eastern Visayas is the region's dialectal diversity, particularly within the Waray language. Oyzon's dialectal distance index (DDI) provides a crucial analytical tool for understanding how dialectal variations can affect the development of educational materials and their effectiveness in the classroom.

Oyzon's study on Waray dialects highlights substantial differences in vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammatical structures between the dialects spoken in different parts of Eastern Visayas. For example, while Tacloban Waray uses the term *baba* for mouth, Catarman Waray uses *biwa* for the same concept, and Borongan Waray uses entirely different terms.

These discrepancies create significant challenges when attempting to develop uniform educational resources for MTB-MLE, as students from different regions may encounter unfamiliar vocabulary in teaching materials, making it more difficult for them to grasp the content.

Oyzon's Waray Dialect Distance Index (DDI) quantifies these differences by measuring the degree of linguistic divergence between dialects. The index uses tools like the Leipzig-Jakarta 100-item list of basic vocabulary and the perspectivizing affixes common in the Waray language to assess how dialects differ in terms of their core lexicon and grammatical structures. The study found that Catbalogan, with a DDI score of 0.996, is the most linguistically similar to Tacloban Waray, meaning materials developed in Tacloban could be used effectively in Catbalogan. However, the DDI scores for Borongan and Catarman (0.792 and 0.677, respectively) indicate more pronounced differences, suggesting that region-specific materials are needed to ensure that students in these areas can fully engage with the content.

The implications of these findings are far-reaching. First, the development of MTB-MLE materials in the region must take these dialectal variations into account. Standardized textbooks and teaching aids that assume uniformity in the Waray language will fail to reach students in areas where linguistic differences are marked. To ensure that all students benefit equally from MTB-MLE, the creation of localized learning materials tailored to the specific dialects of each community is essential.

Furthermore, teacher training must address the diversity of Waray dialects and equip educators with the skills to navigate these linguistic differences. Teachers need to be trained not only in language instruction but also in how to adapt materials and strategies for the specific dialects spoken in their classrooms. Oyzon's work provides a foundation for this by offering a quantitative assessment of dialectal differences, enabling educators to understand the linguistic landscape of their students and adjust their teaching accordingly.

Cultural Relevance in Education

Another significant contribution to the success of MTB-MLE in Eastern Visayas is the work of Analyn C. España, who has integrated Samareño folklore into the curriculum as a pedagogical tool. España's research highlights the importance of culturally relevant content in language education, emphasizing that local myths, legends, and folktales can enhance both language acquisition and cultural retention. By using Samareño narratives as teaching materials, España not only preserves the Waray language but also fosters a deeper connection to regional identity among students.

España's collection, *Tipasi: Susumaton han mga Samarnon* (2023), contains 17 folktales from Northern, Eastern, and Western Samar, documenting stories such as Kamug from Bobon, Bungansakit from Basey, and Layong Uray from Balangiga.

These stories are not only educational tools for learning the language but also serve as windows into the cultural heritage of the region. Through the inclusion of such content, students are able to engage with the local language in a way that is personally meaningful and culturally enriching, while also gaining a deeper appreciation for the rich history and traditions of their communities.

The effectiveness of these cultural resources in enhancing language retention is evident in España's integration of folklore into the EVSU Department of Languages and Literature's extension programs. By engaging students with stories they can relate to and understand, España has shown that culturally grounded materials are more likely to foster long-term language retention and active engagement in the learning process. The use of local stories also helps students connect with the cultural nuances of the language, making it more relevant to their daily lives and reinforcing their sense of cultural identity.

This approach demonstrates the power of contextualized pedagogy, where learning is rooted in the local context and reflects the values, beliefs, and traditions of the community. Integrating cultural narratives into MTB-MLE not only strengthens language skills but also promotes cultural preservation and community engagement, which are critical to the success of the program in linguistically diverse areas like Eastern Visayas.

Teacher Training and Professional Development

A recurring challenge in the implementation of MTB-MLE in Eastern Visayas is the lack of specialized teacher training in multilingual education. As noted by Gretel Laura M. Cadiong and other panelists, many teachers in the region are not sufficiently prepared to teach using local languages in multilingual classrooms. While teachers may be familiar with the mother tongue, they often lack training in linguistics, pedagogy, and multilingual instructional strategies, which are essential for effective MTB-MLE delivery.

For MTB-MLE to succeed in Eastern Visayas, teacher preparation must go beyond basic language proficiency and include specialized training in the linguistic diversity of the region. Teachers need to be equipped with the knowledge and skills to teach in multilingual classrooms, where students may speak a variety of local languages or dialects. Training should include methods for assessing language proficiency, strategies for adapting materials, and approaches for teaching academic content in the mother tongue while transitioning to Filipino and English in later grades.

Moreover, ongoing professional development programs are crucial to ensuring that teachers remain up-to-date with the latest developments in MTB-MLE pedagogy. These programs should focus on providing teachers with practical tools for teaching local languages and supporting linguistic diversity in the classroom. Partnerships with local universities and language experts can help build sustainable training programs that cater to the specific needs of Eastern Visayas educators.

Parental Resistance and Community Engagement

Parental resistance to MTB-MLE remains a significant barrier to the success of the program in Eastern Visayas. As discussed by Rosemarie M. Guino and Firie Jill T. Ramos, many parents in the region continue to perceive Filipino and English as superior languages for academic and professional success. This belief

leads to resistance against the use of local languages in the classroom, as parents fear that proficiency in their children's mother tongue will hinder their ability to succeed in higher education and the job market.

To overcome this resistance, a comprehensive advocacy campaign is needed to educate parents about the cognitive, academic, and cultural benefits of MTB-MLE. Research has consistently shown that children who learn in their mother tongue during the early grades develop stronger literacy skills, which in turn support their learning in Filipino and English later on. Educating parents on these benefits, as well as on the importance of language preservation, will help shift attitudes and garner widespread support for MTB-MLE.

Community engagement also plays a vital role in the successful implementation of MTB-MLE. Local leaders, educators, and community members must work together to create an environment that values the local languages and supports their use in education. Local media—such as radio shows, television programs, and community events—can be effective tools for raising awareness and promoting mother tongue literacy.

Innovations and Technology

The use of digital tools and mobile applications represents an exciting opportunity to address some of the resource shortages that hinder the effectiveness of MTB-MLE in Eastern Visayas. Digital platforms can serve as an alternative to printed materials, particularly in remote areas, where access to physical resources is often limited. Mobile apps, e-learning platforms, text readability instruments, and audio-visual media can be used to distribute educational content in local languages, making learning more accessible and interactive for students.

For instance, the integration of local language radio shows and television programs has proven effective in maintaining language use outside the classroom. Programs like *DYVL Siday* and those aired on PRTV-12 in Tacloban have created platforms for local language content, which can be used to support MTB-MLE learning in schools.

Moreover, mobile applications designed to teach local languages, such as Waray, Inabaknon, or Cebuano, could provide an interactive learning experience that can be accessed by students at any time. These applications can include games, quizzes, and storytelling tools that reinforce language skills and make learning more engaging.

The challenges faced by MTB-MLE in Eastern Visayas are multifaceted, but they can be addressed through targeted innovations, community involvement, and strategic policy reforms. The work of scholars like Oyzon, España, and Banagbanag provides valuable insights into how dialectal diversity, cultural relevance, and teacher preparedness can be integrated into the MTB-MLE framework. Addressing the needs of local communities, engaging parents, and leveraging technology will help ensure that MTB-MLE succeeds in its goal of fostering inclusive, culturally relevant, and effective education for all students in the region.

Conclusion

Summary of Key Findings

This study explored the challenges and opportunities in implementing MTB-MLE in Eastern Visayas, emphasizing the dialectal diversity, resource challenges, and community resistance that the region faces.

Dialectal variation emerged as one of the most significant barriers to effective MTB-MLE implementation. Oyzon's research on the Waray dialects demonstrated that substantial differences in vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar exist between dialects like Tacloban Waray, Calbayog Waray, Catarman Waray, Catbalogan Waray, and Borongan Waray. This variation complicates the development of uniform educational materials, as terms familiar in one dialect may be entirely unknown in another. Oyzon's Waray Dialect Distance Index (DDI) highlights the need for region-specific learning materials tailored to the linguistic realities of each community.

In addition to dialectal challenges, resource shortages are a major hurdle. Schools across Eastern Visayas, particularly in rural and remote areas, lack sufficient teaching materials in the local languages, including textbooks, workbooks, and technology-based tools. The absence of these resources forces teachers to rely on improvised content, which may not align with the linguistic or cultural context of their students, hindering the effectiveness of MTB-MLE. Furthermore, the lack of teacher training in multilingual education exacerbates these challenges. Teachers often lack the necessary pedagogical skills and linguistic knowledge to teach effectively in multilingual classrooms, leading to suboptimal learning outcomes.

Finally, community resistance to MTB-MLE remains a significant barrier. Despite the program's educational benefits, many parents and community leaders continue to view Filipino and English as superior languages, believing that proficiency in these languages is essential for academic success and economic advancement. This perception fuels resistance to using local languages in education, making it crucial to engage parents and the broader community in advocacy efforts that highlight the cognitive and cultural advantages of mother tongue education.

Recommendations

1. Development of Region-Specific Learning Materials

Given the linguistic diversity in Eastern Visayas, it is essential to customize educational resources based on the specific dialectal needs of each region. The development of dialect-specific textbooks, workbooks, and digital materials will ensure that all students can engage with the content in their native language, enhancing their understanding and retention. These materials should be developed through a collaborative process involving linguists, educators, and local communities, ensuring they are both linguistically accurate and culturally relevant.

2. Increased Teacher Training

To address the challenges of multilingual classrooms, there is a need for continuous professional development programs for teachers. These programs should focus on building linguistic competencies in local languages, as well as pedagogical strategies for teaching in a multilingual environment. Teacher training should also cover the use of dialect-specific resources and the integration of local narratives and folklore into the curriculum. This will empower educators to provide effective MTB-MLE instruction and ensure that they are fully equipped to meet the diverse needs of their students.

3. Stronger Parental and Community Engagement

Parental resistance to MTB-MLE can be overcome through a comprehensive advocacy campaign that educates parents about the long-term benefits of learning in the mother tongue. This campaign should focus on dispelling myths about the inferiority of local languages and emphasize the cognitive, academic, and cultural advantages of mother tongue education. Local communities must also be engaged in the promotion of local languages as

a valuable resource for educational and cultural development. Community leaders, local media, and educators should collaborate to foster widespread support for MTB-MLE and encourage its sustained implementation.

4. Use of Digital Platforms

To address resource shortages, there should be an increased focus on the integration of technology in education. The development of mobile apps, e-books, online platforms, and digital learning tools can help distribute educational materials in local languages and provide students with interactive and engaging learning experiences. Digital platforms can also bridge the gap between urban and rural areas, providing access to educational content for students in remote communities. Furthermore, local language radio programs and TV shows can be leveraged to promote mother tongue literacy outside the classroom, ensuring that students remain connected to their language and culture.

MTB-MLE has the potential to revolutionize education in Eastern Visayas, but its success depends on addressing the dialectal, resource, and community challenges identified in this study. By developing region-specific learning materials, investing in teacher training, engaging with parents and communities, and utilizing digital platforms, MTB-MLE can be effectively implemented to support inclusive, culturally relevant, and effective education for all students in the region.

Policy Recommendations

1. Tailored Educational Materials

The diversity of dialects in Eastern Visayas necessitates the development of tailored educational materials specific to the linguistic needs of different communities. Drawing from the findings of Voltaire Q. Oyzon's (2025) dialectal studies, it is evident that a one-size-fits-all approach to learning resources will not work in this region. Waray dialects differ significantly across areas like Tacloban, Calbayog, Catbalogan, Borongan, and Catarman, making it imperative to develop region-specific textbooks, workbooks, and digital learning tools. These materials should be grounded in ongoing dialectal research to ensure accuracy and effectiveness in promoting language comprehension. Localized learning resources will not only enhance understanding but also encourage active engagement with the educational content, as students will find it more relatable and

comprehensible. Policy should mandate that DepEd and other educational bodies collaborate with linguists and local language experts to create and distribute dialect-specific materials to schools across the region.

2. Integration of Local Folklore and Cultural Content

One of the key components for ensuring the success of MTB-MLE is the inclusion of local culture and folklore in the curriculum. As demonstrated by Analyn C. España's (2025) work on Samareño folklore, integrating indigenous stories, songs, and traditions into educational materials can significantly enhance language learning while also fostering a sense of cultural pride among students. The inclusion of culturally relevant content helps bridge the gap between the classroom and students' daily lives, making the learning process more engaging and meaningful. Cultural content such as myths, legends, and local music not only strengthens students' linguistic abilities but also preserves indigenous knowledge and fosters a deep connection to their heritage. Policy should encourage the development of pedagogical resources that incorporate local narratives and traditions, which should be made an integral part of the MTB-MLE curriculum.

3. Teacher Development Programs

Effective implementation of MTB-MLE hinges on the training and preparation of teachers. Many educators in Eastern Visayas face challenges in multilingual classroom management and teaching local languages, often lacking the linguistic expertise needed to teach effectively in the mother tongue. As Gretel Laura M. Cadiong and other panelists pointed out, teacher training programs need to focus on linguistic skills, multilingual pedagogy, and the integration of technology in language instruction. Teachers should be equipped with strategies for managing multilingual classrooms, and should be trained to use local dialects alongside Filipino and English in a way that promotes language fluency and academic success. Specialized training in language development and culturally responsive teaching will ensure that educators are fully prepared to meet the diverse needs of their students. Furthermore, continuous professional development opportunities should be made available to teachers to keep them up-to-date with new teaching methods, technological tools, and regional linguistic developments. Policy should prioritize the allocation of resources for teacher development in linguistically diverse environments like Eastern Visayas.

4. Community and Media Engagement

To ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of MTB-MLE, it is essential to engage local communities and media outlets in promoting the use of local languages. Community leaders, local media outlets, and educators must work together to raise awareness about the importance of mother tongue education and encourage families to support their children's language development at home. Local media channels, such as radio stations, TV programs, and community events, should incorporate Waray, Inabaknon, and other local languages in their broadcasts to normalize and celebrate these languages in public life. Media outlets, especially in the digital era, have the power to significantly influence public opinion and behavior, making them essential allies in the advocacy for local languages. Additionally, community-based initiatives, such as literary contests, storytelling events, and cultural festivals, can be used to promote the use of local languages in everyday interactions. Policy should encourage collaborations between education authorities and media to create campaigns that reinforce the value of mother tongue education and cultural pride.

5. Policy Reform for Sustainable MTB-MLE

For MTB-MLE to be truly successful in the long term, policy reform is necessary at the national and regional levels. One such area of reform is the impact of Republic Act 12027, which mandates stopping the use of the mother tongue in the classroom unless it is a monolingual class and the conditions set by the said law are met. While MTB-MLE has demonstrated academic benefits in the early grades, the mandated shift to Filipino and English after Grade 3 under RA No. 12027 undermines the potential for mother tongue development beyond the initial years of schooling. To rectify this, policy should advocate for the continuation of mother tongue instruction throughout primary and secondary education, and the gradual integration of national languages into the curriculum after students have developed sufficient proficiency in their mother tongue.

Additionally, policy reforms should prioritize the allocation of resources to support the development of multilingual educational materials, teacher training, and community engagement. The success of MTB-MLE requires sustained government support, not only in the form of funding but also in policy consistency. Reforms should ensure that regional languages continue to be valued and supported at all educational levels, and that local communities are actively involved in language preservation efforts.

The success of MTB-MLE in Eastern Visayas depends on a holistic approach that integrates region-specific learning materials, teacher development, community engagement, and policy reforms. By prioritizing linguistically and culturally relevant education, this approach will not only improve educational outcomes but also contribute to the preservation and celebration of the region's rich linguistic heritage. These recommendations provide a roadmap for ensuring that MTB-MLE can reach its full potential and become a sustainable educational model for the future.

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