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## Research Article

### Interplay of Language Instruction and Academic Performance of Junior High School Students in Multilingual Classrooms

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#### ABSTRACT

Multilingual classrooms are educational settings where unique challenges and opportunities for language instruction can be found which requires pedagogical practices and approaches that are tailored to the linguistic diversity of students. This study investigated and examined the relationship between the interplay of the language of instruction and the academic performance of junior high school students in linguistically diverse settings like Masbate, with the goal of determining the impact of incorporating students' native languages alongside the target language. This study utilized a mixed-method research design specifically the explanatory-sequential research design. It also used the Kruskal-Wallis test as its statistical tool to analyse the relationship between language instruction methods and the academic performance of students in four content areas. Data on student academic performance and language use by teachers was collected through interview and survey. The participants of this study were 80 secondary teachers from 8 schools in the North and South Districts of Mandaonss. The results revealed a statistically significant relationship between language instruction and students' academic performance with  $H = 13.753$  and a p-value of 0.001032. These findings revealed that the language of instruction, used by teachers, significantly impacts student academic performance in multilingual classrooms. Thus, these support the idea that the use of multilingual approaches that incorporate students' native languages could be a key factor in the achievement of learning for students. Thus, this study suggests that further research should be conducted along with specific effective multilingual strategies to explore their long-term impact on student learning.

**Keywords:** *Code-switching, Content area, Dialect, Multilingualism, Translanguaging*

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## **Introduction**

The results of the 2019 and 2022 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) revealed that the primary language of instruction in many Philippine schools remains English, despite Filipino being the national language. This creates significant challenges to students who come from diverse linguistic backgrounds, particularly those whose first language is not English. According to PISA, teachers need specialized training in teaching English as a second language (TESOL) to effectively cater to the diversity of students when it comes to linguistic needs and gain effective strategies that will enhance teaching and learning. It is suggested that the use of the mother tongue in early education must be integrated which can greatly aid students develop a strong foundation in their first language, which can then support the learning of English and the student's academic performance. The language utilized in instruction plays a crucial role in student learning and significantly impacts the Philippines' performance in PISA (PISA 2022 results). Addressing the challenges related to language instruction is essential for improving educational outcomes and ensuring that all students have the opportunity to succeed.

In the Philippine context, despite the dominant role that English language plays in almost all fields Rao (2019), teaching using the English as the medium of instruction in a multilingual classroom has been the biggest challenge among educators in the country. They are faced with students who are using different home languages which becomes a challenge in the teaching and learning process. Yelvia (2024) emphasized that teaching using English language in a multilingual context presents a significant challenge for English teacher due to the linguistic diversity in classrooms. Multilingual students often lack confidence in using English due to a reluctance to make mistakes. This leads to the students' limited participation and interaction inside the classroom which later on contributes to the low quality of learning and low effectiveness of teaching. This suggests that teachers who utilize the English language in instruction should come up with strategies in order to enhance learning despite the challenges brought by the diversity in language

on the students or the existence of multilingualism inside the classroom.

These relevant concerns in the national-level have been further intensified in so many linguistically-diverse places in the country such as Masbate. Due to its geographical location, the province has been considered as a melting pot of dialects and cultures Wolfenden (2001). Where dialects co-exist alongside the diverse cultures in the province. People living in Masbate converse in various languages and dialects according to the places and location where they belong and reside. Those who reside in the central area of Masbate use the native dialect called Masbatenyo or sometimes referred to as Masbateño or Minasbate, with a hint and touch of the Bikol dialect; people who are native of the third districts namely in Cataingan, Palanas, and Dimasalang including the east coast areas use Samar Visayan; residents from Pio V. Corpus, Cataingan and Placer while those who reside in the southern part speak Bohol and Cebu Visayan; including the western coast of Mandaon and Balud, people speak in Hiligaynon and Capiznon while natives from its two major islands, Ticao and Burias, converse in variants of the Bicol dialect and Visayan due primarily to the droves of migrants to the island during the sixties (Rosero, 2011).

## **Materials and Methods**

This study utilized the mixed-method research design to gather reliable and relevant data. Specifically, this study utilized the explanatory-sequential designs. The purpose of the explanatory sequential design is to initiate the research with a quantitative study for both data collection and analysis, and then conduct a qualitative study based on the data obtained from this initial quantitative phase (Creswell, 2015). This research design focuses on understanding human experiences, behaviors, and perspectives through in-depth exploration and analysis. This design is often used to gather rich, detailed data that leads to accurate and reliable results. This approach offers several advantages and can be used to answer a wide range of research questions. Mixed methods research offers a powerful and flexible approach to addressing complex research questions. By combining the strengths of both quantitative

and qualitative methods, researchers can gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

This research design primarily concentrates on gathering detailed information that describes attributes, behaviors, attitudes, and first-hand experiences regarding the topic being studied. This can be done through the use of research tools such as Likert Scales, surveys, and interview guides with prepared and identified questions from the researcher. The integration of qualitative and quantitative methods, often referred to as mixed methods research, is another significant trend in data gathering.

### **Data Collection**

The data collection procedure of this study involved processes including location identification, approval, initial respondent selection, instrument validation, initial contact and offer, coding, conduct, analysis, and interpretation. The data gathering procedure employed a face-to-face/offline scheme integrating different and rigorous steps to ensure the accuracy, reliability, and concreteness of the data to be collected from the target respondents.

A total of 80 secondary school teachers from Mandaon North and South Districts participated in this study. These teachers were selected through random and convenient sampling to gather data relevant to the experience in the interplay of languages used in instruction inside the classroom and its impact on the academic performance of the students. Ten (10) Secondary teachers who are handling or teaching English, Science, Mathematics, and History or Social Sciences subjects from each school were selected as participants based on their availability and willingness to participate. There was no age, gender, or even length of service required for the participants of the study.

The data-gathering instruments particularly the Survey Form and Interview Guide were subjected to content validity approval from three Master Teachers around Masbate Province through the Content Validity Tool adopted from the study of Dr. Michael L. Estremera and Mary Ann Mendoza - Sarmiento entitled "Content Validity and Reliability of Questionnaires: Trends, Prospects and

Innovation in the Digital Research Epoch". The interview and survey were then conducted upon approval of the school's district superintendent of Masbate Province and the school principal of each target school. Available respondents were interviewed on the spot while others were given two days to answer. When the identified respondent was not available, the researcher selected another respondent who was available and willing to participate. The study utilized a survey to gather the numerical grades of the students from the second grading period of the current school year from four subjects; English, Mathematics, Science, and History/Social Studies.

### **Statistical Tools**

This study ensured the validity and reliability of processes, results, and findings through validation from experts, statisticians, and peer reviewers in the field to identify potential biases or weaknesses in the study and theoretical saturation through the continuous collection of data until no new insights or themes emerge, ensuring that the findings are comprehensive. Mean averaging and the nonparametric test - Kruskal-Willis Test - were used to determine the magnitude of the data or the impact of the language used in teaching content areas on the academic performance of the students. This test is particularly useful when the assumptions of a one-way ANOVA (analysis of variance) are not met, especially when data is not normally distributed. This statistical tool was used to determine the impact of the language used by teachers in instruction on the academic performance of the students.

## **Results and Discussions**

### ***Languages Used in Teaching the Content Areas in a Multilingual Classroom***

In the context of Masbate, teachers are faced with different challenges and opportunities alongside instruction due to the diversity of students in different aspects particularly in the linguistic backgrounds. Students in Masbate possess different home languages which becomes a challenge to teachers in choosing the language of instruction that could elevate the learning of students and still achieve effective teaching strategy while still developing the

students' skills in the target language. With these challenges, teachers opt to select the language that the majority of the students could understand and where they feel comfortable in expressing themselves, especially during discussions.

Table 2 below presents the languages that teachers used in instruction in the context of a multilingual classroom in Mandaon.

As shown in Table 1, out of the 80 respondents, 1.25% (1/80) responded that he/she used Pure English as the primary language of instruction highlighting the idea that this is the prescribed medium of instruction in the curriculum, while 5% (4/80) utilized the blended English and Filipino particularly the inclusion of code-switching between the two languages, while 92.5% (74/80) incorporated English, Filipino, and Minasbate dialect in instruction, and 1.25% (1/80) used the combination of the three including Hiligaynon which is also a dialect in the municipality of Mandaon. These languages are utilized in teaching content areas while maintaining the goal of teaching and learning. These results indicate that most of the respondents are integrating multilingual approach to teaching, where teachers utilize multiple languages to deliver content. Furthermore, English language raises dominance over other languages and dialects

as the medium of instruction, likely due to its status as a global language and its use in academic and professional contexts as well as its mandate on the Philippines' educational system/curriculum. Poggensee (2016) highlighted that the dominance of English language is linked to its effective communicative purpose across various lingual borders while Johnson (2009) underscored that English is perceived as a detrimental force to the world's cultural diversity.

Additionally, Filipino, as the national language, serves as a bridge for communication and cultural identity, while the use of the Minasbate and Hiligaynon dialect reflects an effort to connect with students on a regional and cultural level highlighting its consideration to the linguistic background of the students in the context of Masbate. The fusion of these languages is used by the respondents in delivering instruction taking into account the linguistic diversity and needs of students in the context of a multilingual classroom. Additionally, these results were similar to the study conducted by Azores & Tarrayo (2020) where they found that students who are taught using Filipino language have higher Science and Math scores compared to students who are taught using pure English.

Table 1. The Language of Instruction Utilized by Secondary Teachers in Teaching Content Areas

Language of Instruction	f	p	r
Pure English	1	1.25	3.5
English and Filipino (Dual Language)	4	5	2
Multilingual (English, Filipino, and Minasbate,)	74	92.5	1
Multilingual (English, Filipino, and Minasbate with Hiligaynon)	1	1.25	3.5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100</b>	

As presented in Table 2, the identified recurring themes and patterns on the results of the question asked to the respondents on the basis and factors taken into consideration in choosing and deciding what language to use in teaching content areas. For each respondent, there were more than two factors given. The decision of choosing the most suited language to use in

teaching content areas was dominated by two factors as discussed below first and followed by the other factors.

The dominance of these two themes indicate that teachers are more particular in ensuring that students are able to understand the subject matter in order to facilitate learning using the language that the students can

understand well. These results revealed that teachers are more on taking into account the possibility that students' level of understanding can vary from one another and the complexity of the subject matter could affect the attainment of the goal in teaching and learning.

Additionally, this also indicates that teachers can adjust the language used in teaching in order for students to cope up with the complexities of the topics. This allows the students to perform well because the language being used is on the level of their understanding.

Table 2. Basis of Language of Instruction in Teaching Content Areas

Basis for Language Choice in Teaching Content Areas	F	P	R
Level of Students' Understanding	80	100	1.5
Complexity of the Subject Matter and Concepts	80	100	1.5
Students' Linguistic Competence	68	85	3
Students' Linguistic Identity and Background	59	73.75	4
Curriculum	40	50	5
Cultural background	20	25	6

**Average Academic Performance of Junior High School Students in Content Areas (English, Mathematics, Science, and History)**

With the languages used by teachers in instruction, it is necessary to examine its impact to the academic performance of the students

inside a multilingual classroom. The figure below presents the average academic performance of students analyzed using Kruskal-Wallis Test in four content areas (English, Mathematics, Science, and History).

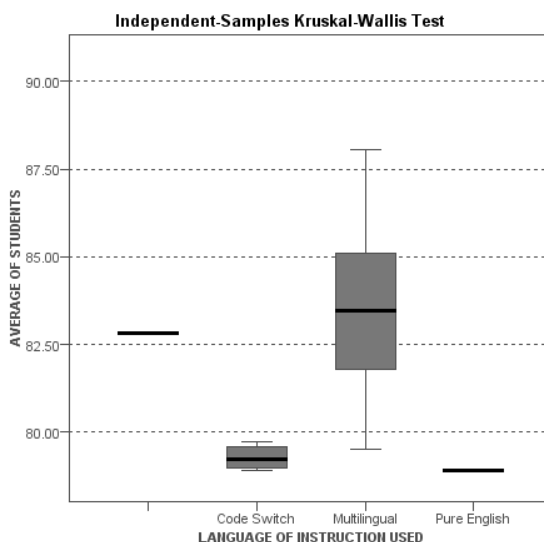


Figure 1. Average Academic Performance of Students in Content Area

Figure 1 presents the average performance through the numerical ratings of the students in four content areas; English, Mathematics, Science, and History. These numerical ratings in every content area were analyzed using the Nonparametric-Kruskal-Wallis Test which is a non-parametric statistical test used to compare three or more independent groups. This test is particularly useful when the assumptions of a one-way ANOVA (analysis of variance) are not

met, especially when data is not normally distributed. This statistical tool was used in order to determine the impact of the language used by teachers in instruction to the academic performance of the students.

**Relationship of Language Instruction Used and Students' Academic Performance**

As presented in Table 3, the use of the Kruskal-Wallis Test which is a non-

parametric test, the data of academic average of all students per teacher were analyzed in order to know the impact of the language of instruction used across the identified content areas such as English, Mathematics, Science, and History. Almost all the respondents utilized multilingual approach to instruction which significantly and positively impacted the performance of the students with due consideration to the limited availability of data to those teachers who practice code-switching with English and Filipino Languages and vice versa because the results of the conducted survey and interview were dominated by teachers who practice multilingual in instruction. The results of the

test conducted with KW Statistics of 13.753 which is a higher value that suggests greater difference between the groups and the p-value of 0.001032 which is lower than 0.05. The p-value indicates that the results are statistically significant and a strong indication to reject the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between the language of instruction used to the academic performance of students in content areas. These results suggests that multilingual approach is a strategy in pedagogy that leverages the student performance and enhances participation and engagement among students as evidenced by the data presented.

Table 3. Results of the Kruskal-Wallis Test

Variable	Kruskal-Wallis	p-value
Students' Academic Performance	13.753	0.001032

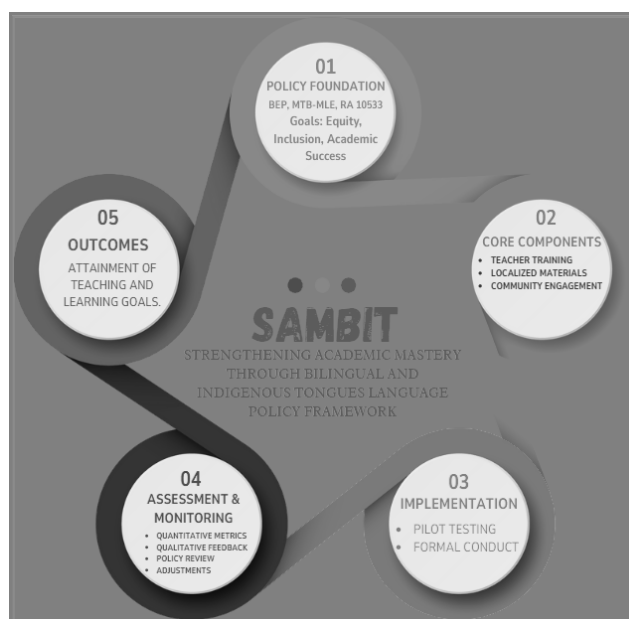


Figure 2. SAMBIT: Strengthening Academic Mastery through Bilingual and Indigenous Tongues Language Policy Framework

**Proposed Language Policy Framework to Improve the Academic Performance of Junior High School Students in a Multilingual Classroom**

With the results and significant findings that this study has gathered, the SAMBIT: Strengthening Academic Mastery through Bilingual and Indigenous Tongues Language Policy

Framework was proposed in order to serve as support to the school administrators, curriculum developers, teachers, and students in the teaching and learning process through language fusion. English, Filipino, and Minasbate were fused together in instruction to elevate the academic performance of students. This proposed framework aims to recognize the

complexities and diversities of students when it comes to linguistic heritage and background which significantly contribute to their learning process. The fusion of the three languages of instruction which are English, Filipino, and Minasbate will be the key elements in unlocking the potential of students and the effectiveness of teachers in the teaching and learning process.

This proposed language policy framework could be implemented through its detailed structure.

### I. Rationale

The Philippines has implemented several existing language policies in education which reflect its complexity and diversity when it comes to the richness of its multilingual landscape. Few of these policies include the Bilingual Education Policy (BEP, 1974, DepEd Order No. 25, s. 1974) and the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE, 2009, DepEd Order No. 74, s. 2009; Strengthened by RA 10533, 2013) which are crucial in the support to the attainment of the goals and vision of the education system. Although the MTBLE has been abolished through Senate Bill No. 2457 which seeks to discontinue the use of the mother tongue as medium of instruction from kindergarten to Grade 3. The bill also provides for its optional implementation in monolingual classes, reverting the medium of instruction to Filipino and English. However, the use of mother-tongue in instruction has been inevitable due to certain factors such as students' limited proficiency, linguistic barrier, and lack of resources in the use of the target language and even Filipino language. This Policy Framework aims to provide support to these policies in the attainment of quality teaching and learning through the use of English, Filipino, Minasbate or other existing dialect in the country aside from Minasbate. This framework is proposed to address linguistic inequities in education by:

- Recognizing students' native languages as valuable learning resources.
- Enhancing comprehension and participation through multilingual instruction.

- Promoting inclusive and culturally responsive pedagogy.
- Improving academic outcomes by leveraging students' linguistic strengths.

This framework aligns with global best practices in multilingual education (García & Kleifgen, 2006; Genesee et al., 2006) and responds to the need for a paradigm shift especially in Philippine language-in-education policies.

### II. General and Specific Objectives

This framework generally aims to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in the Philippine multilingual classrooms by systematically integrating English, Filipino, and regional languages, like Minasbate and other existing dialects in the country, through a flexible, research-based multilingual approach that builds upon existing policies, such as the BEP and MTB-MLE.

Specifically, this framework aims to:

- Enhance comprehension and engagement by allowing teachers to strategically use code-switching, translation, and translanguaging in teaching complex concepts. Translanguaging maximizes cognitive and linguistic resources, Baker (2011).
- Train teachers in multilingual pedagogies (e.g., dynamic language allocation, scaffolded transitions) to replace rigid monolingual practices. Teachers need strategies to flexibly use multiple languages, García (2009).
- Establish peer-learning networks for educators to share best practices in linguistically diverse classrooms. Freeman et al., 2015 believed that collaborative teacher development sustains policy implementation.
- Cultivate teaching approaches that cater to diverse linguistic prerequisites, concentrating on preserving bilingualism and/or multilingualism in the classroom (Leider *et al.* 2024)
- Integrate cultural understanding and consciousness into language instruction (Hossain, 2023).

### **III. Description of the Framework**

This crafted SAMBIT Language Policy Framework is grounded in the results driven by this academic requirement on the interplay of language of instruction and the academic performance of students in the context of multilingual classrooms. This aims to explore the underlying factors that affect the choice of language of instruction such as the linguistic competence and proficiency of students, level of complexity of the subject matter, students' cultural background, the current curriculum, and the students' level of understanding. This framework emphasizes teacher training in multilingual strategies such as code-switching and translanguaging, development of localized learning materials, and community engagement to create an inclusive, pedagogically sound approach that values linguistic diversity as a resource rather than a barrier in order to create a learning environment where students perform and participate well because it fosters and embrace their linguistic background. This aims to bridge equity gaps while maintaining high academic standards through translanguaging, culturally responsive teaching, and systematic monitoring of student progress across all languages of instruction.

### **IV. Implementation Strategies**

The proposed language policy framework SAMBIT: Strengthening Academic Mastery through Bilingual and Indigenous Tongues Language Policy Framework suggests that teacher should implement some measures in the use of multilingual policy in instruction along with the use of different strategies in order to address challenges that multilingual students are facing while learning. With the use of the three languages plus another existing dialect in the country, teachers will be able to encourage active participation from the students while developing their L1 skills. The SAMBIT: Strengthening Academic Mastery through Bilingual and Indigenous Tongues Language Policy Framework will be implemented through a multi-phase strategy that begins with teacher training programs on multilingual pedagogies (code-switching, translanguaging) and localized material development, followed by school-

based pilot testing with close monitoring of student engagement and performance metrics, then regional expansion with adapted lesson plans and assessment tools, while continuously engaging parents and community stakeholders through awareness campaigns and feedback mechanisms to ensure cultural relevance and sustainability, all supported by policy adjustments at institutional levels to legitimize and resource these multilingual practices.

### **V. Assessment and Monitoring Scheme**

The framework employs a multi-layered monitoring system to track implementation fidelity and effectiveness. Quantitative metrics include language-specific academic performance (comparative analysis of test scores across monolingual vs. multilingual instruction), student participation rates, and teacher compliance with multilingual strategies. Qualitative tools such as classroom observations, teacher reflective journals, and student/parent feedback surveys capture contextual challenges and successes. A digital dashboard aggregates this data for real-time analysis, enabling DepEd and school administrators to identify gaps and adjust support.

Assessment is competency-based rather than language-exclusive, focusing on content mastery demonstrated through flexible multilingual outputs (e.g., explaining science concepts in L1 while writing reports in English). Triangulated evaluation combines standardized test results, portfolio assessments of multilingual work samples, and sociolinguistic profiling to measure both academic progress and linguistic identity development. Annual policy review cycles use this evidence to refine training, materials, and language allocation guidelines, ensuring the framework remains responsive to diverse classroom realities while maintaining national education standards.

This proposed language policy framework does not only serve as a guide but it also emphasizes the importance of teacher training, curriculum development, and community engagement in achieving its objectives. With proper implementation and continuous evaluation, this framework can serve as a model for other multilingual educational contexts. This

framework will be aimed to improving students' academic performance through the use of multilingual approach to instruction which offers leveraged accessibility to content.

### Conclusion and Recommendation

The results of this study highlight the paramount relationship between language instruction and academic performance among junior high school students, underscoring the critical need to embrace multilingualism in education, especially in linguistically diverse settings. Utilizing English, Filipino, Minasbate, and other native dialects in Masbate allows teachers to address students varied linguistic backgrounds, thereby enhancing content accessibility and fostering inclusivity. Strategies like translation, code-switching, and code-mixing reflect a learner-centred approach that prioritizes understanding and engagement over rigid monolingual norms.

Furthermore, these findings challenge the prevailing monolingual instruction model in the Philippines and advocate for a shift toward inclusive language policies that acknowledge and value students' multilingual capabilities. The need to revise current language policies is evident, emphasizing a move from a one-language-fits-all model to a more diverse framework that sees native languages not as barriers, but as vital tools for learning. The research highlights how secondary teachers in Mandaon North and South Districts adopt flexible, responsive methods by integrating multiple languages, including English, Filipino, Minasbate, and other dialects, to meet learners' diverse needs—enhancing both comprehension and participation. These practices validate the importance of inclusivity and respect for linguistic diversity in improving student outcomes.

With the results from the interview and survey conducted on the interplay of language of instruction and academic performance in the context of multilingual classrooms to 80 secondary teachers in 8 secondary schools in South and North Districts of Mandaon, the teachers may utilize the multilingual approach where English, Filipino, Minasbate and other existing local dialects in the province are being integrated to the teaching and learning process which revealed to have a significant positive

impact to the academic performance of students.

The results of this study can be used as basis or guide in the revision or redirecting of the current curriculum particularly in the identified content areas and promote Multilingual Policies in Pedagogical Approach. The need for the integration of multilingual approach to instruction can be an element to the attainment of the goals and objectives of the teaching and learning process. By incorporating these

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