

Chavacano as a Medium of Instruction: Its Implications for the Reading Levels of English in Elementary School Pupils

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This study aimed to determine the impact of Chavacano as a medium of instruction of reading skills in English of grade 3 Chavacano-speaker pupils. Specifically, it sought to find out the pupils' performance in oral and silent reading. This research made use of the Descriptive Quantitative Research Design. The supplied answers of the respondents in the guided questions are used as qualitative data. The quantitative part was taken from the respondents' scores on the oral and silent passages adapted from the Phil-IRI (Morris and Gunning, 2008). Based on the findings of this study it is concluded that one of the factors that influenced the students' poor performance in reading in English is their negative perception and views about their L1 Chavacano. Their English teachers' role could be one of the causes of this non-valorisation of their L1 in the English classroom. English teachers, to date, are still viewing the hegemony of the English language over Chavacano, hence, the existence of the multilingual policy which contradicts the principles set forth in the mother-tongue education law as mandated for Grade 1 to Grade 3 curriculum levels.

Key words: *Chavacano, English, Phil-IRI, reading skills, instruction, Western Mindanao State University, Zamboanga City, Philippines.*

Introduction

The medium of instruction is the language used by the teacher. Teaching the language, or educational content, through the target language increases the amount of exposure to the learner, and the opportunities they have to communicate in it, and therefore to develop their control of it (British Council Magazine, 2008).

In the Philippines, the Department of Education (DepEd) has issued a series of memoranda and orders in which it said that our country has made use of different media of instruction since the colonisation period. During that time, there were no clear mandates as to what particular MOI should be used in the educational arena. This changed when the language provision in the 1987 Constitution of the Republic of the Philippines embodied in article XIV section 6 and 7 the issue on MOI had its clear cut and legal bases.

Consistent with the 1987 constitutional mandate and a declared policy of the National Board of Education (NBE) on bilingualism in the school (NBE resolution No. 73-7 s.1973), the Department of Education Culture and Sports (DECS) promulgated its language policy. The policy was first implemented in 1974 when DECS issued Department Order No. 25 s. 1974 titled “Implementing Guidelines for the Policy on Bilingual Education”.

Bilingual education in the Philippines is defined operationally as the separate use of Filipino and English as the media of instruction in specific subject areas. As embodied in DECS order No. 25, Pilipino (change to Filipino in 1987) shall be used as the MOI in social studies, social sciences, music, arts, physical education, home economics, practical arts and character education. English on the other hand is allocated to science, mathematics and technology subjects (Espiritu, 2009).

However, in 2013, there was a big shift in the educational setting, not only on the curriculum but on the MOI as well. This started when President Benigno C. Aquino III signed Republic Act 10533 known as the “Enhanced Basic Education Act of 2013.” One of the features of the new curriculum, K to 12, is the mandate of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction from Kindergarten to Grade 3.

Although, there are many people who share negative opinions on this issue, positive ideas were expressed by others. According to DepEd secretary Bro. Armin A. Luistro, the language spoken at home and in early grades help improve the pupils’ language and cognitive development in addition to strengthening their socio-cultural awareness.

According to Natividad (2014), mother tongue is recognised through DepEd order No.60 as the most effective way to improve student learning and shall also serve as the strong bridge for a learner to a second language. Similarly, the Dept. Order No. 78 s.2009 of DepEd institutionalises the mother tongue based-multilingual instruction. It is stipulated in this memorandum that the language in education is central to improving educational outcomes and addressing the problems of national development.



In relation to the aforementioned MTB-MLE in the city, Mayor Celso Lobregat (2012) regarded the policy as divisive since the pupils in coastal Muslim and Cebuano dominated barangays are segregated according to their own dialects. He elaborated that MTB-MLE implementation in the city is totally unacceptable to local government. In response to this policy, the Mayor issued Executive Order CL-459-2012 enjoining the speaking of Chavacano in all schools, government offices and establishments in the city. This aims to preserve, perpetuate, and promote the Chabacano language (Natividad, 2014).

This new feature in the K to grade 12 curriculum serves as a challenge to pupils whose mother tongue or first language is not Chabacano since they will have to learn the language first so they could understand the lessons taught using Chabacano as MOI. According to Rutherford, (1987) the characterisation of language learning entails the successful mastery of steadily accumulating structural entities and organising this knowledge into coherent structures that lead to effective communication in the target language. If this were case, then we would expect that well-formed accurate and complete target language structures would, one after another, emerge on the learner's path towards eventual mastery of the language. If the learner went on to master the language, we could, in principle, tabulate the expansion of his/her repertoire up to the point where all of the well-formed structures of the target language had been accounted for (Beardsmore, 1982 and Hoffman, 1991).

Aside from the mentioned issues in the previous paragraphs, the reading skills of the pupils are also one of the problems that most of the schools noted in their School Improvement Plan (SIP) for the school year 2014-2015. This was discovered after the yearly assessment of the reading skills of pupils particularly in English and Filipino using the Philippine Informal Reading Instrument (Phil-IRI), which is a standardised tool utilized by all elementary public schools nationwide. As reflected in the consolidated report of the Phil-IRI, most of the pupils in the Division of Zamboanga City belonged to the Frustration Level, the lowest level of reading skills. This observation is very alarming since reading is a macro skill that should be given attention. Poor poor reading skills could lead to poor performance of the pupils academically. In this respect, if the school has many pupils who are poor readers, this will lead to the poor performance of the school as well later on.

Hence, in relation to the aforementioned concepts on the Chavacano as a medium of instruction, the researcher aim to find out the impact of the curriculum's salient feature, the use of Chavacano as medium of instruction of reading skills in English of the grade 3 Chavacano-speaker pupils.

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed to determine the Impact of Chavacano as a medium of instruction to reading skills in English of grade 3 Chavacano-speaker pupils. Specifically, it sought to find out the pupils' performance in oral and silent reading.

Methodology

This research made use of the Descriptive Quantitative Research Design. The supplied answers of the respondents in the guided questions were used as qualitative data. This study aimed to find out the impact of using Chavacano as a medium of instruction of reading skills of the grade 3 pupils.

The quantitative part was taken from the respondents' scores on the oral and silent passages adapted from the Phil-IRI (Morris and Gunning, 2008).

The study was delimited to the impact of the Chavacano as medium of instruction to the respondents. There were 37 respondents who were Grade 3 pupils under the K to 12 Curriculum with Chavacano as the medium of instruction from their earlier grades. The respondents belonged to different sections of grade 3 who were identified as Chavacano-speakers and whose first language was Chavacano.

Purposive and total enumeration sampling was employed in the study since all respondents were Chavacano speakers. This was done to find out if Chavacano as medium of instruction has a great impact to the pupils, especially to the L1 users.

The Phil IRI Oral Test (Johnson, Kress and Pikulski, 1987) is a standardised informal reading test that measures and assesses the pupils word identification, vocabulary and comprehension skills in oral reading. It consists of graded reading passages from grade 1 to grade 6. Each graded passage is followed by comprehension questions. The questions are categorised into three dimensions namely literal, interpretive and applied. The critical questions are subsumed in the applied dimension. This instrument was used to measure the oral reading ability of the respondents.

Table 1: Phil IRI Oral Test Criteria

Reading Level	Word Recognition	Comprehension
Independent	97-100%	80%-100% correct answers
Instructional	90-96%	59%-79% correct answers
Frustration	89% below	58% below correct answers

The Phil-IRI Silent Reading Test (Morris and Gunning, 2008) gives quantitative information about the pupil's silent reading capabilities. Quantitative information shows the reading levels, namely frustration, instructional and independent. Furthermore, it uses a predetermined set of criteria to identify the reading levels of the pupils such as the reading speed and percentage of correct answers to comprehension questions. It has adapted the combination of bands of reading rate (words per minute) proposed by Morris and Gunning. This instrument is a standardised tool of the DepEd used to find out the silent reading ability of the respondents.

Table 2: Phil-IRI Silent Reading Test Criteria

Reading Level	Reading Speed Word Per Minute (WPR)	Comprehension
Independent	160 below	90% -100% correct answers
Instructional	161-189	75%-89% correct answers
Frustration	190 above	74% below correct answers

Results and Discussion

Grade 3 pupils' performance in terms of oral reading and silent reading

Table 3: The Pupils' Performance on Oral Reading (N=39)

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	Descriptor
Oral Reading	26.1538	23.90941	Frustration

Frustration - 58% and below correct answers; Instructional - 59%-79% correct answers; Independent - 90%-100% correct Answer (Phil-IRI Reading Test Criteria)

Table 3 presents the Grade 3 pupils' oral reading performance. As shown in this table, the students fall under *frustration level* with the mean of 26.1538 and a standard deviation of 23.90941, which appears to be of big value. It means that the students are heterogeneously grouped in terms of their performance in oral reading.

The study has the same result with the study "*An evaluation of the Acquired Reading Skills on the Students of a private Elementary School in WMSU*" conducted by Gonzales (1992). That study discovered that the respondents acquired reading skills that averaged 43.93% and did not reach the 50% competency level. The students' vocabulary skills are the highest acquired reading skill among the students. The students' comprehension and interpretation skills are second in rank among the basic reading skills acquired by the students. While the study skills are the least developed skills among the three basic reading skills that were

evaluated. The study concluded that the reading skills of the students as stated in the reading program of the school were not developed above the competency level.

Furthermore, in Salem & Cachero (2013) study on the Respondents' Reading Comprehension Levels in English, Science and Mathematics, according to the Twelve Reading Comprehension Skills, the results of the study disclosed that the overall reading comprehension performance in English, Science and Mathematics across reading skills of the Grade 4 pupils of Bayombong Central School/SPED Center was at the beginning level. Among the twelve reading comprehension skills details consistently registered the highest across the three content areas. Conversely, the pupils established the least reading comprehension performance in determining tone and mood (English), drawing inferences (science and mathematics) and determining propaganda (over-all).

Salem & Cachero's study is consistent with the findings of Bernardino (2010), Merino (2000) and Fulig (1997) when they concluded in their respective studies that a great majority of the pupils were on the frustration level described as poor in performing comprehension skills test. Among the three content areas, the pupils performed best in English since reading comprehension has always been an integral part in this content area especially in examinations, home reading reports and other relative pupil activities as compared in the fields of Science and Mathematics.

Furthermore, the National Achievement Test performance of the Grade 3 pupils of the school for the past three years documents the dropping performance of the pupils across the three content areas. Similarly, Bernardino (2000) concluded in his study that the students performed best in English as compared to the other two fields although they were still on the frustration level.

Table 4: The Pupils' Performance on Silent Reading (N=39)

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	Descriptor
Silent Reading	51.6477	30.14482	Frustration

Frustration - 74% and below correct answers; Instructional - 75%-89% correct answers; Independent - 90%-100% correct Answer (Phil-IRI Reading Test Criteria)

Table 4 presents the pupils' performance on silent reading. It shows that the students fall under *frustration level* with the mean 51.6477 and a standard deviation of 30.14482, which is considered low. It means that the students are grouped heterogeneously in terms of their performance on silent reading.



The data here supports the research reviewed by Tizon's (2011) in her study on the "Reading Comprehension Ability of the Grade VI Pupils of Kinangay Sur Elementary School". It was discovered that more than the majority of the grade 6 pupils were average in their overall levels of reading comprehension ability. The majority of the pupils had an average literacy ability however their higher level of thinking/comprehension was very low as reflected in their lowest creative ability, and lower interpretative and evaluative skills. Thus, their higher level of thinking/comprehension must be enhanced.

In addition, Figuerres (2011) also found in her study "The Reading Literacy Extension Program of the University of the Northern Philippines" that the Grades 1, 2 and 3 pupils of Nagsangalan Elementary School obtained low percentage of competency in reading before the conduct of the Tutorial Sessions of the Literacy Program. Their diagnostic tests show that the Grade 1 pupils obtained 33% of competency; Grade 2 got 33% and Grade 3 obtained 34. Hence the pupils really needed the remedial reading in English because their reading competencies did not reach the 75 percent level.

Conclusions

Based on the findings of this study, it is safe to conclude that one of the factors that influence the students' poor performance in reading in the English language is their negative perception and views about their L1 Chavacano. Their English teachers' role could be one of the causes as to why they have developed this non-valorisation of their L1 in the English classroom. English teachers, to date, are still viewing the hegemony of the English language over Chavacano and hence the existence of the multilingual policy which contradicts the principles set forth in the mother-tongue education law as mandated for Grade 1 to Grade 3 curriculum levels.

Furthermore, this result may have some connection on the study of Natividad (2014) on the Implementers' Perception on the K o 12 curriculum that also yielded negative result. The study emphasised that even Chavacano-speaking teachers find it hard to teach lessons using Mother Tongue (Chavacano). Due to the teachers' negative perception and lack of instructional materials, the pupils might not appropriately practice the language and therefore they do not get enough exposure to acquiring the language.



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