

Language as a Bridge: The Influence of Mother Tongue on English Learning among Junior High School Students

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of mother tongue use on English learning among junior high school students in Tadian, Mountain Province. Anchored on the view that the first language serves as a cognitive scaffold in second language acquisition and supported by translanguaging perspectives, the study investigated how strategic mother tongue use contributes to learners' comprehension, classroom participation, confidence, and engagement. A quantitative descriptive correlational research design with regression analysis was employed. The respondents consisted of 21 junior high school students selected through stratified sampling with equal allocation. Data were collected using a researcher made questionnaire and analyzed using frequency counts, percentages, weighted mean, standard deviation, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient, and multiple regression analyses. The findings revealed a high extent of mother tongue use in English classes, particularly in explaining vocabulary and concepts, processing ideas in the first language, clarifying instructions, and facilitating classroom discussions. The respondents also demonstrated a high level of English learning, with engagement receiving the highest rating, followed by confidence, comprehension, and classroom participation. Descriptively, the findings indicated that strategic mother tongue use functioned as a cognitive and instructional bridge that supported English learning rather than replacing English as the medium of instruction. However, the intended correlation, regression, and moderation analyses could not be completed because the available data were aggregated rather than recorded at the respondent level, preventing the establishment of a statistically significant relationship or predictive influence between the variables. The study concludes that strategic mother tongue use can effectively support English learning when integrated appropriately into classroom instruction and recommends context sensitive language practices, supportive speaking activities, and future studies using larger samples and respondent level datasets. The study aligns with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education) by promoting inclusive and equitable language instruction that recognizes learners' linguistic backgrounds. Its findings contribute to educational, institutional, and community sustainability by supporting evidence based multilingual teaching practices and context responsive language policies.

Keywords: English Learning, Junior High School Students, Kankanaey, Mother Tongue, Multilingual Education, Tadian, Translanguaging

1. Introduction

Language plays a fundamental role in learning, particularly in multilingual societies where students use different languages at home and in school. Mother tongue based education has been recognized for improving comprehension, cognitive development, classroom participation, and meaningful learning because learners understand concepts more effectively when instruction is connected to their first language (UNESCO, 2023; Cummins, 2021). Consistent with this principle, Sustainable Development Goal 4 advocates inclusive and equitable quality education that recognizes learners' linguistic diversity (United Nations, 2022). In the Philippine context, Republic Act No. 10533 institutionalized Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education (MTB MLE), although English becomes the primary medium of instruction in higher grade levels, creating challenges for learners from multilingual communities (Department of Education [DepEd], 2022). Despite growing evidence supporting first language scaffolding, limited studies have examined its influence on English learning among junior high school students in rural multilingual settings. This study therefore investigates the influence of mother tongue use on English learning among junior high school students in Tadian, Mountain Province, to provide evidence for context sensitive instructional practices.

1.1 Background of the Influence of Mother Tongue on English Learning among Junior High School Students

Language serves as an essential foundation for effective teaching and learning, particularly in multilingual classrooms where learners continually transition between their home language and English. Studies have consistently shown that instruction supported by learners' first language enhances comprehension, confidence, classroom participation, and academic performance because students understand concepts more efficiently through familiar linguistic structures (UNESCO, 2023; Cummins, 2021). Furthermore, Sustainable Development Goal 4 highlights the importance of inclusive

educational systems that recognize learners' linguistic backgrounds and promote equitable learning opportunities (United Nations, 2022). In the Philippines, Republic Act No. 10533 institutionalized Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education (MTB MLE), recognizing the learner's first language as an important foundation for learning. However, as students progress to higher grade levels, English increasingly becomes the medium of instruction, presenting challenges for learners who have limited opportunities to use English beyond the classroom. National and international assessments continue to indicate difficulties among Filipino learners in English reading comprehension, oral communication, and written expression, emphasizing the continuing need to examine how the mother tongue supports English learning (Department of Education [DepEd], 2022; OECD, 2023; World Bank, 2022). Although scholars generally acknowledge the cognitive value of the first language in second language acquisition, differing perspectives remain regarding the extent to which the mother tongue should be used in English instruction. Some advocate maximum English exposure, while others emphasize that strategic mother tongue use facilitates understanding, lowers anxiety, and enables learners to process ideas more effectively (García & Wei, 2021; Hall & Cook, 2021; Macaro, 2022; Turnbull, 2023). These differing views are particularly relevant in multilingual classrooms where learners routinely shift between languages to accomplish academic tasks.

1.2 Themes and Insights from Related Literature on Mother Tongue Use and English Learning

Related literature consistently identifies the mother tongue as an important instructional scaffold in second language learning. Existing studies emphasize its contribution to improving learners' comprehension, vocabulary development, concept formation, classroom interaction, confidence, and cognitive processing (UNESCO, 2023; Cummins, 2021; García & Wei, 2021; Hall & Cook, 2021; Macaro, 2022; Turnbull, 2023). Rather than replacing English instruction, strategic use of the first language enables learners to connect prior knowledge with new linguistic concepts, reducing cognitive load while strengthening language acquisition. Within the Philippine educational system, research has primarily focused on the effectiveness of Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education during elementary education. Comparatively fewer investigations have examined whether the benefits of first language support continue throughout junior high school English instruction, particularly in multilingual communities where students frequently alternate among local languages, Filipino, and English (Dela Cruz & Barrot, 2021; Valdez, 2024). Existing evidence further highlights the need to examine classroom practices that balance English only instruction with strategic mother tongue support in secondary education (Barrot, 2022; Bernardo & Gaerlan, 2023).

1.3 Local, National, and Global Context of Mother Tongue Use in English Learning

Globally, multilingual education has gained increasing recognition as an effective approach for improving educational quality by allowing learners to acquire knowledge through familiar languages before transitioning to additional languages (UNESCO, 2023; Cummins, 2021). International educational frameworks likewise emphasize inclusive learning environments that recognize linguistic diversity as a valuable educational resource rather than a barrier (United Nations, 2022). Nationally, the Philippines supports multilingual education through Republic Act No. 10533 and the implementation of Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education. Despite this policy, English remains the dominant language of instruction in higher grade levels, and national assessments continue to reveal challenges in English proficiency among Filipino learners (Department of Education [DepEd], 2022; OECD, 2023; World Bank, 2022). Locally, students in Tadian, Mountain Province commonly use Kankanaey, Ilocano, or Filipino in their homes and communities while being expected to perform academic tasks in English. This multilingual environment creates practical challenges as learners transition between languages during classroom instruction. The limited number of localized studies examining mother tongue use among junior high school learners in rural multilingual communities highlights the importance of investigating how first language support influences students' comprehension, participation, confidence, and engagement in English learning (Dela Cruz & Barrot, 2021; Valdez, 2024; Barrot, 2022; Bernardo & Gaerlan, 2023). Higher education institutions are increasingly expected to deliver quality education through effective, accountable, and continuously improving management systems. While ISO 9001 has strengthened organizational quality management, ISO 21001:2018 was developed specifically for educational organizations to enhance learner centered services, stakeholder engagement, and educational outcomes. This study assesses Marinduque State University's readiness to implement an Educational Organization Management System (EOMS) certifiable to ISO 21001:2018, providing evidence to support institutional quality improvement and future certification.

1.4 Theoretical or Conceptual Basis of Mother Tongue Use in English Learning

This study is anchored on the view that the learner's first language functions as an effective scaffold in second language acquisition. Theoretical perspectives emphasize that learners build new knowledge by connecting unfamiliar concepts with their existing linguistic experiences, making the mother tongue an important cognitive resource rather than a barrier to English learning (Cummins, 2021). Likewise, translanguaging perspectives recognize that multilingual learners naturally draw upon all available language resources to construct meaning, solve problems, and communicate effectively within the classroom (García & Wei, 2021). These perspectives support the strategic use of the mother tongue to enhance comprehension, facilitate concept formation, reduce language related anxiety, and strengthen learners' confidence during English instruction. Consistent with these theoretical foundations, the present study examines mother tongue use through four instructional dimensions: clarifying instructions, explaining vocabulary and concepts, facilitating classroom

discussions, and processing ideas in the first language. English learning is examined through learners' comprehension, classroom participation, confidence, and engagement. Guided by these theoretical perspectives, the study investigates whether strategic use of the mother tongue contributes to English learning among junior high school students in a multilingual educational setting.

1.5 Research Gaps and Rationale for Examining Mother Tongue Use among Junior High School Students

Despite extensive international literature supporting the role of the first language in second language learning, important gaps remain in the Philippine educational context. Existing studies have largely concentrated on the implementation and effectiveness of Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education in elementary education, while considerably fewer investigations have examined its continuing influence on English learning at the junior high school level (Dela Cruz & Barrot, 2021; Valdez, 2024). Furthermore, much of the available literature focuses on urban or lowland educational settings, leaving multilingual rural communities underrepresented in educational research. Previous studies have acknowledged the cognitive and socio affective benefits of first language support, yet limited evidence exists regarding its influence on learners' comprehension, classroom participation, confidence, and engagement beyond elementary education (Barrot, 2022; Bernardo & Gaerlan, 2023). Similarly, there remains limited empirical evidence describing how secondary school teachers balance English only instructional approaches with strategic mother tongue use in multilingual classrooms. In communities such as Tadian, Mountain Province, where students regularly communicate using Kankanaey, Ilocano, or Filipino while learning English in school, understanding this instructional balance becomes increasingly important. These research gaps justify the conduct of the present study. By examining the influence of mother tongue use on English learning among junior high school students in Tadian, Mountain Province, the study seeks to generate localized evidence that can support context sensitive English instruction, strengthen classroom scaffolding practices, assist school administrators in developing appropriate language policies, and contribute to more inclusive curriculum implementation. The study likewise reinforces the perspective that multilingualism can serve as an educational resource that promotes deeper understanding and meaningful participation rather than functioning as a barrier to English learning.

1.6 Alignment with Relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

This study aligns primarily with Sustainable Development Goal 4 – Quality Education, which promotes inclusive, equitable, and quality education for all learners. The investigation of mother tongue use as instructional support in English learning is consistent with the goal of providing learning environments that recognize learners' linguistic backgrounds and improve comprehension, participation, confidence, and engagement. By examining how strategic use of the mother tongue supports English learning among junior high school students in a multilingual community, the study contributes to evidence based instructional practices that foster more inclusive and effective language education (UNESCO, 2023; United Nations, 2022). The study also supports the implementation of Republic Act No. 10533 through its emphasis on Mother Tongue Based Multilingual Education (MTB MLE) and its continuing relevance beyond the elementary level. By generating localized evidence from a rural multilingual setting, the research provides information that may assist educators, school administrators, and curriculum planners in strengthening language policies and instructional strategies that respond to learners' actual linguistic experiences (Department of Education [DepEd], 2022).

1.7 Importance of the Study to Multidisciplinary Sustainability

The study contributes primarily to educational sustainability by providing empirical evidence on how strategic mother tongue use can support English learning among junior high school students. The findings may help teachers design more effective scaffolding strategies that improve comprehension, encourage classroom participation, strengthen learners' confidence, and promote sustained engagement in English learning. Such evidence supports the continuous improvement of instructional practices in multilingual classrooms. The study likewise contributes to institutional and policy sustainability by offering localized information that may guide school administrators and curriculum planners in developing context sensitive language policies and professional development initiatives for English teachers. Understanding the role of learners' first language in English instruction can support educational institutions in implementing language practices that are responsive to the needs of multilingual learners while maintaining the goals of English proficiency. In addition, the study promotes community sustainability by recognizing multilingualism as an educational asset rather than a barrier to learning. Acknowledging the instructional value of Kankanaey within the classroom affirms the linguistic identity of learners while supporting their acquisition of English. This balanced approach encourages culturally responsive education that respects local languages and promotes meaningful participation in the learning process.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study utilized a quantitative descriptive correlational research design with regression analysis to determine the influence of mother tongue use on English learning among junior high school students. The descriptive component was used to describe the respondents' profile, the extent of mother tongue use in English classes, and the level of English

learning. The correlational component examined the relationship between mother tongue use and English learning outcomes, while regression analysis was intended to determine whether the dimensions of mother tongue use significantly influenced English learning and whether English proficiency level and language spoken at home moderated this relationship. This design was appropriate because it enabled the quantitative measurement of the study variables and the examination of their relationships based on the research objectives.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted in Tadian, Mountain Province during the School Year 2025–2026. The locale was selected because it is a multilingual community where students regularly use their mother tongue in daily communication while learning English in formal classroom settings. Learners commonly speak Kankanaey, Ilocano, Filipino, and other local languages, making the setting appropriate for examining the role of the mother tongue in English learning. The linguistic diversity of the community reflects the authentic classroom environment in which multilingual learners acquire English.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The respondents were junior high school students from Tadian, Mountain Province. They were selected because the study specifically investigated the influence of mother tongue use on English learning at the junior high school level. The respondents' profile included age, sex, grade level, language spoken at home, and self-rated English proficiency. These characteristics were considered important in describing the participants, while English proficiency level and language spoken at home also served as moderating variables in the study. The number of respondents was determined from the target population of the selected school, with representation across grade levels to ensure that the participants reflected the characteristics of the study population.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The study involved 21 junior high school students from the selected research locale in Tadian, Mountain Province, with seven respondents each from Grades 8, 9, and 10. Stratified sampling with equal allocation was employed by grouping the population according to grade level and selecting seven eligible students from each group to ensure equal representation. Only officially enrolled students during the School Year 2025–2026 who obtained parental or guardian consent and provided student assent were included in the study. Since the sample was limited to 21 students from a single community, the findings are applicable only to the participating respondents and should not be generalized to other junior high school students or multilingual communities.

2.5 Research Instrument

A researcher-made questionnaire served as the primary instrument for data collection. The instrument consisted of three parts. The first gathered the respondents' demographic and linguistic profile, including age, sex, grade level, language spoken at home, and self-rated English proficiency. The second measured the extent of mother tongue use in English classes through clarifying instructions, explaining vocabulary and concepts, facilitating classroom discussions, and processing ideas in the first language. The third assessed English learning in terms of comprehension, classroom participation, confidence in using English, and engagement in English learning activities. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale, allowing the researcher to determine the extent of mother tongue use and the level of English learning among the respondents.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

Data collection began with securing permission from the school principal of Lubon National High School and coordinating with the English teachers regarding the administration of the questionnaire. After obtaining approval, the researcher explained the purpose of the study, emphasized the importance of honest responses, and provided clear instructions to ensure that respondents understood the instrument. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed that their responses would remain confidential and be used solely for academic purposes.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

The data gathered were analyzed using appropriate statistical tools based on the objectives of the study. Frequency counts and percentages were used to describe the respondents' profile. The extent of mother tongue use in English classes and the level of English learning were determined using the weighted mean and standard deviation. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was intended to examine the relationship between mother tongue use and English learning outcomes. To determine whether English proficiency level and language spoken at home moderated this relationship, multiple regression analysis with interaction terms or moderation analysis was proposed. Multiple linear regression analysis was likewise intended to identify which dimensions of mother tongue use significantly influenced English learning outcomes. All hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance, ensuring that the statistical procedures were aligned with the study's objectives concerning profile, extent, level, relationship, moderation, and influence.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to established ethical standards throughout the research process. Participation was entirely voluntary, and no respondent was compelled to participate. Since the participants were minors, parental or guardian consent and approval from the school were secured before data collection. Respondents were informed of the purpose of the study, their role in the research, and their right to withdraw at any stage without penalty.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Respondents' Profile

3.1.1 Grade Level Distribution

The study involved 21 junior high school students, with equal representation from Grades 8, 9, and 10, ensuring that each grade level contributed the same number of respondents. This distribution provided a balanced description of the participants across the junior high school levels. The equal representation allowed the study to describe the experiences of students across different grade levels without favoring one group over another. However, because each grade level was represented by only a small number of participants, comparisons among the groups should be interpreted with caution and should not be considered representative of the broader junior high school population.

3.1.2 Language Spoken at Home

All respondents identified Kankanaey as the language spoken at home, reflecting the linguistic characteristics of the selected community in Tadian, Mountain Province. The uniformity of the respondents' home language confirmed that Kankanaey served as the primary mother tongue among the participants. The finding highlights the relevance of examining Kankanaey as instructional support in English classes. However, because every respondent belonged to the same language group, language spoken at home could not be analyzed as a moderating variable since moderation analysis requires variation among respondents.

3.1.3 Self Rated English Proficiency

Most respondents considered themselves intermediate English users, while fewer identified themselves as beginners and only a small number rated themselves as advanced. Overall, the respondents perceived themselves as having a functional but still developing level of English proficiency. The predominance of intermediate learners suggests that although students generally understood and used English in classroom situations, they continued to require support when encountering unfamiliar vocabulary, complex instructions, and academic concepts. This condition reinforces the importance of strategic mother tongue use as a bridge between learners' existing linguistic knowledge and the English skills expected in formal instruction.

3.2 Extent of Mother Tongue Use in English Classes

3.2.1 Clarifying Instructions

The respondents reported a high extent of mother tongue use in clarifying classroom instructions. They indicated that teachers frequently repeated or explained difficult English instructions in the mother tongue when necessary, enabling students to understand classroom tasks more effectively. The findings suggest that strategic use of the mother tongue minimizes misunderstandings and helps learners complete classroom activities correctly. Rather than replacing English, using Kankanaey to clarify complex directions allows teachers to maintain the focus of instruction while ensuring that students understand task requirements. Presenting instructions first in English and using the mother tongue only when needed promotes effective scaffolding and supports English learning.

3.2.2 Explaining Vocabulary and Concepts

Among all dimensions, explaining vocabulary and concepts received the highest level of mother tongue use. The respondents consistently reported that teachers used the mother tongue to explain unfamiliar English words and connect new concepts with learners' existing knowledge, making difficult lessons easier to understand. These findings indicate that the mother tongue functions as a valuable cognitive resource during English instruction. By relating unfamiliar English vocabulary to equivalent concepts in Kankanaey, students are better able to comprehend new information and develop meaningful understanding. This finding supports the perspectives of Cummins (2021), García and Wei (2021), and Macaro (2022), who emphasized that learners' existing linguistic knowledge facilitates second language acquisition.

3.2.3 Facilitating Classroom Discussions

Mother tongue use in facilitating classroom discussions was likewise rated high, although it obtained the lowest rating among the four instructional dimensions. The respondents indicated that using the mother tongue helped them understand classroom discussions more effectively, but it contributed less to increasing their willingness to participate verbally during class activities. The results imply that while Kankanaey improves learners' understanding of classroom

interactions, it does not automatically increase active participation. Students may still hesitate to speak because of shyness, fear of making mistakes, or limited confidence in using English. Consequently, teachers should complement strategic mother tongue use with supportive classroom practices, including structured discussions, preparation time, and learning environments where mistakes are viewed as part of language development.

3.2.4 Processing Ideas in the First Language

The respondents also reported a high level of mother tongue use when processing ideas before expressing themselves in English. Many students indicated that thinking first in Kankanaey helped them organize their thoughts, understand lessons, and formulate more accurate English responses. The findings demonstrate that the mother tongue serves as an internal cognitive tool that allows learners to organize ideas before communicating them in English. This process reduces cognitive demands, especially when students encounter unfamiliar concepts or need additional time to formulate responses. Allowing learners to process ideas initially in their first language therefore provides an effective bridge toward clearer and more accurate English production.

3.2.5 Overall Extent of Mother Tongue Use

Overall, the respondents demonstrated a high extent of mother tongue use in English classes. Mother tongue support was used most frequently for explaining vocabulary and concepts, followed by processing ideas in the first language, clarifying instructions, and facilitating classroom discussions. These findings indicate that Kankanaey was generally used as a supportive instructional language rather than as a substitute for English. The overall pattern shows that the primary contribution of the mother tongue was cognitive and instructional. Strategic use of Kankanaey helped students understand unfamiliar vocabulary, process information, clarify classroom instructions, and prepare English responses more effectively, reinforcing its role as a bridge to English learning rather than an alternative language of instruction.

3.3 Level of English Learning among Junior High School Students

3.3.1 English Comprehension

The respondents demonstrated a high level of English comprehension, indicating that they generally understood classroom explanations, commonly used English vocabulary, classroom instructions, and information presented through listening and reading activities. Overall, the findings suggest that the students possessed a functional level of understanding during English lessons. The findings indicate that although the respondents were able to comprehend routine classroom instruction, their understanding may still be challenged by abstract concepts, complex vocabulary, and longer English texts. The strategic use of Kankanaey in explaining unfamiliar vocabulary and clarifying instructions may have contributed to students' perceived comprehension by helping them connect new English concepts with their existing linguistic knowledge.

3.3.2 Classroom Participation

The respondents also exhibited a high level of classroom participation. They participated more actively in collaborative learning activities and were generally willing to ask questions when clarification was needed. However, volunteering answers in English received the lowest level of participation among the classroom activities. The findings suggest that students participated more confidently in group based or teacher supported activities than in situations requiring spontaneous English responses. Collaborative learning appears to lessen communication anxiety, whereas speaking individually in English remains challenging for many learners. These results indicate that learners may benefit from supportive classroom environments that gradually develop confidence in oral English communication.

3.3.3 Confidence in Using English

The respondents reported a high level of confidence in using English. Most believed that their English proficiency could improve through continuous practice and expressed willingness to communicate in English despite making mistakes. Nevertheless, they reported lower confidence when speaking spontaneously or expressing ideas comfortably in English. The results indicate that students possessed a positive attitude toward learning English and recognized the importance of practice in improving language proficiency. However, their confidence appeared stronger in terms of motivation than actual classroom performance. To address this, structured speaking activities, guided discussions, rehearsal opportunities, and gradual transitions from mother tongue supported responses to English communication may help strengthen learners' oral confidence.

3.3.4 Engagement in English Learning Activities

Among all dimensions, engagement in English learning activities obtained the highest level. The respondents demonstrated sustained attention during English lessons, actively participated in classroom activities, and showed interest in improving their English skills through reading, writing, speaking, and listening tasks. Overall, they remained actively involved in the learning process despite the challenges associated with learning English. The findings suggest that students recognized the value of active participation in language learning. Their willingness to engage in various English learning activities provides opportunities for continuous language development through regular exposure and practice. Such engagement

supports the development of English proficiency by encouraging learners to participate meaningfully in different classroom experiences.

3.3.5 Overall Level of English Learning

Overall, the respondents demonstrated a high level of English learning, with engagement receiving the highest rating, followed by confidence, comprehension, and classroom participation. The findings indicate that students generally understood English lessons, participated in classroom activities, remained motivated to improve their language skills, and actively engaged in learning tasks. The overall findings reveal that while the respondents showed positive attitudes and engagement toward English learning, they continued to experience difficulty in voluntarily expressing ideas and responding spontaneously in English. This suggests that English instruction should continue to strengthen learners' oral communication skills by providing supportive and low pressure opportunities for meaningful classroom interaction while maintaining students' motivation and engagement.

3.4 Relationship Between Mother Tongue Use and English Learning

3.4.1 Descriptive Relationship Between Mother Tongue Use and English Learning

The respondents reported a high extent of mother tongue use in English classes and a high level of English learning. The findings indicate that students frequently experienced strategic use of Kankanaey while also demonstrating positive outcomes in terms of English comprehension, classroom participation, confidence, and engagement. At the descriptive level, the results show that extensive mother tongue support coexisted with positive English learning outcomes among the respondents. The findings suggest that the strategic use of Kankanaey did not hinder English learning. Instead, the mother tongue appeared to function as a linguistic and cognitive bridge that helped learners understand unfamiliar vocabulary, clarify classroom instructions, process ideas, and formulate responses in English. This observation is consistent with the perspectives of García and Wei (2021), Hall and Cook (2021), and Macaro (2022), who emphasized that learners' first language supports comprehension, reduces language related anxiety, and facilitates connections between prior linguistic knowledge and new language learning.

3.4.2 Statistical Relationship Between Mother Tongue Use and English Learning

Although both variables obtained high descriptive ratings, the study could not determine a statistically significant relationship between mother tongue use and English learning. The planned Pearson correlation, regression, and moderation analyses were not computed because the available dataset consisted only of aggregated responses rather than matched respondent level data required for inferential statistical analysis. Consequently, the study could not establish the strength, direction, or predictive influence of the relationship between the two variables. The inability to perform the planned statistical analyses limits the conclusions that can be drawn regarding the influence of mother tongue use on English learning. While the descriptive findings indicate that both variables were highly rated, these results should not be interpreted as evidence of a statistically significant relationship. The original respondent level dataset is necessary to conduct correlation, regression, and moderation analyses and to determine whether mother tongue use significantly influences English learning outcomes.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study concludes that mother tongue use was widely utilized as instructional support in English classes, particularly in explaining vocabulary and concepts, processing ideas, clarifying instructions, and facilitating classroom discussions. The respondents also demonstrated a high level of English learning, especially in engagement, confidence, comprehension, and classroom participation. These findings indicate that the mother tongue served as a cognitive and instructional bridge that supported students' understanding and preparation of English responses rather than replacing English as the medium of instruction. However, the study could not establish a statistically significant relationship or predictive influence between mother tongue use and English learning because the available data were aggregated and did not permit the intended inferential statistical analyses.

English teachers are encouraged to use the mother tongue strategically in explaining difficult vocabulary, clarifying complex instructions, and allowing students to process ideas before responding in English while gradually transitioning learners toward independent English use. Teachers should also provide supportive speaking activities that encourage students to express their ideas with greater confidence. School administrators and curriculum planners may strengthen context sensitive language policies and teacher development initiatives that promote purposeful mother tongue use in English instruction. Future researchers are encouraged to involve larger and more diverse samples, include objective measures of English proficiency, preserve respondent level data, and complete the intended correlation, regression, and moderation analyses.

The study was limited by its small sample of 21 junior high school students from a single community in Tadian, Mountain Province, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Since all respondents reported Kankanaey as their home language,

language spoken at home could not be examined as a moderating variable. The study also relied on a researcher made questionnaire and self reported responses, which may not fully reflect actual English performance. Most importantly, the use of aggregated data instead of respondent level records prevented the completion of the planned correlation, regression, and moderation analyses, and the descriptive cross sectional design did not allow the establishment of causal relationships.

Compliance with ethical standards

The authors declares no conflict of interest and confirm that this study received no external funding. The researchers acknowledge the participation of the junior high school students, their parents or guardians, the teachers, school administrators, and the participating institution, Lubon National High School, whose cooperation made the study possible. Participation was voluntary, informed consent and student assent were obtained prior to data collection, and information was gathered through a non invasive researcher made questionnaire while ensuring that no personally identifying information was disclosed and that all responses remained confidential and were used solely for academic purposes.

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