

## USING “MOTHER TONGUE” IN TEACHING SCIENCE

by:

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Language plays an essential role in society; it is how humans first establish the different social norms and structures through a systematized way of using verbal communication. One of its downfalls, however, is that different nations have developed their languages differently from one another. Through time, English has become the standard for universal language since it's one of the oldest languages in the Western part of the world. Another importance of using the English language is its application in the academic field since more countries use English as a means of teaching other subjects such as Science and Mathematics.

But other countries especially in the Asian region such as Japan disregarded this standard and decided to use their language in translating certain terminologies which were then used in schools and universities. Is there a slight difference in teaching by using the mother tongue rather than English? How does it help in educating the students? According to Binsin 2017, language can be your most powerful weapon or even your worst weakness in a discourse, if you are not familiar enough with a certain language, you could end up saying the wrong things, but if you are familiar with the language that you are using then it will be easier for you to comprehend and even express your thoughts more academically accurate.

In the Philippines, the language that is being used in teaching science is a mix of the Philippine native language (depending on the area or ethnicity) and English. The use of layman's terms is quite a common practice in the Philippines, inside the church, in schools, and even during government hearings. The reason is that; first, a concept is

explained using English to practice basic comprehension since English is also considered an important aspect as a Filipino student/ citizen, second, since not everyone can speak English fluently, the concept is then translated into Tagalog for everyone to understand the lesson.

In the field of science, however, not everyone is familiar with these science terms translated in Tagalog such as; liknayan- physics, haynayan-biology, initsigan-thermodynamics, balnian-magnetism, etc. Since the English language has been more traditionally used in teaching science, it will be difficult not only for the students but also for the teachers since this would be a shock for everyone. The use of the so-called “Taglish” sure is an informal approach, but if this is the approach that will make things easier, then why would anyone change that?

The use of the mother tongue as a way of communication is a great way of preserving a nation’s culture and keeping the essence of one’s nationality. However, there are some exceptions to that, if its use would only cause more problems, especially in the educational system, then we must start considering these factors that may affect the student's development, It would be a good idea to do an experimental trial in teaching math using Filipino terminologies, but if it proves otherwise that it is less efficient, then English would still be our final resort.

In conclusion, the debate over whether to use the mother tongue or English in teaching science reflects the complex interplay between language, culture, and education. While English has emerged as a global lingua franca, facilitating communication and access to knowledge across borders, the use of the mother tongue can serve as a means of cultural preservation and inclusivity. In the Philippines, the practice of incorporating both English and the local language (Tagalog) in science education highlights the pragmatic approach to accommodate linguistic diversity while ensuring comprehension.

Ultimately, the choice between using the mother tongue or English in teaching science should prioritize the educational outcomes and the needs of students. While preserving cultural identity is important, ensuring effective communication and comprehension in scientific education is paramount. Thus, a balanced approach that considers both linguistic diversity and academic rigor is essential in navigating the complexities of language in science education.

### *References:*

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